



# Municipality of Port Hope

## Staff Report

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### Report Title: Community Engagement Policy

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**Report to:** Corporate Services Committee

**Date of meeting:** August 2, 2022

**Report Author:**

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**Department responsible:**

Corporate Services

**Report Number:** CS-12-22

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### Recommendation:

1. That a resolution be presented to Council to adopt the Community Engagement Policy; and
2. That a by-law be presented to repeal By-law 56/2011 being the former Community Consultation Policy.

### Highlights:

- The Community Engagement Policy is part of a broader initiative to develop, update, and modernize policies, plans, and frameworks that fall under the Communications portfolio.
- The purpose of the policy is to better understand information involving community challenges, wants, and needs, and to foster conversations related to the future of the community.
- The policy outlines a streamlined process of community engagement and provides flexibility to ensure that stakeholder engagement is incorporated into the decision-making process.
- The draft Community Engagement Policy was posted for community engagement via the My Port Hope community engagement website for a period of 19 days and garnered six responses.

### Background:

Council approved additional staff resources in the Communications division to increase capacity and allow staff to commit more time and resources to addressing pressing strategic initiatives, including modernizing, updating, and developing policies, plans, and frameworks that fall under the Communications portfolio. To date, staff has revised, and council has adopted, the Communications Policy, Social Media Policy, and Notice Policy. To further fulfill this commitment, Communications staff present the attached

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Schedule A – Draft Community Engagement Policy.

**Discussion:**

The purpose of the proposed Community Engagement Policy is to build capacity to better understand complex information involving community challenges and stakeholder wants and needs, and to foster conversations and differing perspectives related to the future of the community.

The Policy outlines the process of community engagement to:

- Ensure the purpose of engagement with stakeholders is meaningful and relevant and the methods used are well suited to generate highly effective feedback from the broadest range of stakeholders possible.
- Establish the process by which community engagement is activated by the Municipality.
- Establish the responsibilities for staff, Council and municipal stakeholders who participate in community engagement activities with the Municipality.
- Ensure that community engagement initiatives are presented in a professional, clear, easy to understand, and accessible manner to all people.

The new Community Engagement Policy appends current key policies and documents relevant to the engagement process, including the Accountability and Transparency Policy, Social Media Policy, Communications Policy, and Branding Guidelines. This policy applies to Council, appointed members of all municipal committees, staff, contractors, consultants, temporary and other workers, and volunteers.

This policy is intended to replace the previous Community Consultation Policy adopted under By-law 56/2011. The previous policy includes and recommends use of an outdated resource from the Local Government Participatory Practices Manual, which was originally published in 1999 and is 60 pages long. Best practices and technology advancements have evolved since its publication and the information within the manual is no longer current.

The draft Policy was presented to the Corporate Services Committee at their meeting on July 5, 2022, where Committee directed staff to post the Policy for public feedback and comments. The Policy was posted on the My Port Hope Community Engagement website for 19 days and six comment forms were received with recommendations and suggestions for the policy development.

Based on the feedback provided, staff amended the Policy to address and incorporate recommendations and comments received. These amendments include,

- broadening the definition of the term feedback to include comments, recommendations, ideas, suggestions, input, and information.
- including analysis of feedback under the responsibility of organizing department.

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- broadening the responsibility for communications staff to include, where relevant and applicable, the use of external guides, organizations, and support resources to assist and provide guidance in the development of an engagement plan for the organizing department.
  - Expanding the policy administration section to include projects with significant community profile or media interest and at Council discretion.

Other suggestions provided through comments include incorporating the methods and tools used to conduct community engagement. This information will be included in the future standard operating procedure planned to be completed by staff. Additionally, the various tools and methods used to communicate with and engage stakeholders is outlined in the Communications Policy.

It should be noted that some feedback received requests specific definitions and prescriptive lists of project engagement. The previous Community Consultation Policy adopted this format, which was problematic as projects can vary in scope, size, impact, and interest and would often fall outside of the consultation matrix. This policy provides an overview of the types of projects that typically and traditionally include community engagement and allows for staff and Council discretion on initiatives. It also permits staff to use their expertise and judgement to develop community engagement plans that best suit the needs of the community and the scale of the project.

#### **Financial Considerations:**

There are no financial considerations for this Policy.

#### **Communication and Public Engagement:**

The draft Community Engagement Policy was posted on the My Port Hope community engagement website on July 6, 2022, to allow residents and community stakeholders an opportunity to review the plan and provide feedback and input. Staff in the Communications Division ran a campaign to promote the posting of this document using the following tools and mediums:

- Posting on social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter)
- Advertisement in the newspaper
- Public Notice on municipal website (includes notification email to all website news subscribers)
- My Port Hope newsletter (includes notification email to all My Port Hope subscribers)

#### **Conclusion:**

Civic engagement provides Council, staff, stakeholders, and the public opportunities to foster conversations about the future of the community and builds capacity to gather differing perspectives on challenges and items of community interest. The Community Engagement Policy outlines the ways in which community engagement is conducted by

the Municipality of Port Hope to build trust with the community and enhance the decision-making process for our elected officials.

Staff also plan to develop a standard operating procedure for community engagement, to align with this Policy and inform, streamline, and clarify internal processes for community engagement campaigns.

**Attachments:**

Attachment 1 – Community Engagement Policy

Attachment 2 – Comment Form Responses