TOWN OF CALMAR
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION POLICY

Policy Number: 2018-053

Date of Adoption: June 4, 2018

Signature: _____ _____

Mayor **Town Manager**

POLICY STATEMENT:

The Town of Calmar values public engagement processes and activities that contribute to policy, program, service and project decisions by providing Town Council and Administration with the best possible information to support decision making.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the Town of Calmar:

- Achieve a consistent, coordinated and outcomes-driven approach to public engagement;
- Facilitates public input to decision making through effective and efficient consultation, involvement, collaboration and empowerment processes, and
- Adheres to public engagement requirements within the Municipal Government Act and other applicable legislation.

This policy does this by describing:

- When the policy applies,
- The role of decision makers in public engagement,
- The importance of respect and safe discussion and debate,
- A clear definition of public engagement,
- A vision and guiding principles for public engagement,
- A public engagement spectrum,
- Key supporting elements for public engagement.

APPLICATION:

This policy applies to all of the Town's policies, programs, projects and services that have an impact on the public. There are many reasons why public engagement may be undertaken, but they should all ultimately support a decision making process for the purpose of:

- Designing or implementing a new policy, program, project or service,
- Evaluating, changing or ending an existing policy, program, project or service,
- Fulfilling a legislated or regulated requirement, or
- Responding to a community-initiated request.

This policy applies to public engagement regarding all of the Town's policies, programs, projects and services whether it is planned and delivered by Town staff, contractors or community volunteers.

ROLE OF DECISION MAKERS:

The role of decision makers, Town Council and Administration, in public engagement is to strive for the best understanding of the public's views and perspectives on topics and issues, consider public input in decision making, and communicate to the public how their input was used and why decision were made.

Public engagement is one factor in the decision making process and will have more or less influence relative to other factors for every specific decision.

Public engagement offers the opportunity for Town Council to:

- Deepen its role as community representatives through enhanced understanding of the interests, values and perspectives of the public.
- Work with Administration to identify areas where public engagement can and will make a meaningful difference to Council decisions,
- Promote and direct the public to public engagement activities;
- Carefully and thoughtfully consider public input as part of the decision-making process,
- Ensure public expectations for public engagement opportunities and influence are balanced with awareness of resource capacity, fiscal realities and other important context and considerations, and
- Clearly explain the rationale for decisions and how public input was used in decision making.

RESPECTFUL AND SAFE DISCUSSION AND DEBATE:

The policy also recognizes that the discussion and debate that underlies public engagement activities will be conducted in a respectful and safe manner by all participants – Town staff, contractors, stakeholders and the general public.

DEFINITION OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

Public Engagement creates opportunity for people to contribute in decision making by Town Council and Administration about the Town's policies, programs, projects and services and communicates how public input is collected and used.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SPECTRUM:

The Public Engagement Spectrum is a tool that explains the four roles the public can play when they participate in Town of Calmar public engagement activities. As you move within the spectrum, there is an increased level of public influence and commitment from the Town and the public.

Advise – The public is consulted by the Town to share feedback and perspectives that are considered for policies, programs, projects and services.

Refine – The public is involved by the Town to adapt and adjust approaches to policies, programs, projects and services.

Create – The public collaborates with the Town to develop and build solutions regarding policies, programs, projects and services. This can include community initiated engagement.

Decide – The public is empowered to make decisions directly or on behalf of the Town about policies, programs, projects and services.

VISION FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

A Town where we are connected, invested, and proud to participate in shaping our community.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

A shared responsibility – Engagement of people in an authentic way contributes to robust solutions to challenging issues and encourages participation that supports democratic decision making.

Relationship-building and perspective seeking – Meaning engagement values varies and local perspectives and community experiences; it recognizes that respect and equitable processes foster trust and stronger relationships.

Proactive, timely and transparent – People have enough time and notice to engage early in the process which enables considered input and impact on decision making, and clearly communicates how input will be assessed and used during engagement and reported on afterwards.

Inclusive and accessible – Engagement planning and delivery is inclusive and accessible to best serve our Town by encouraging two-way conversations and strategies that reach diverse communities and ensure people feel heard and know their input is valued.

Innovative and continuously improving – as Calmar grows and evolves, we aspire to co-create and embrace new and better engagement processes, tools and tactics based on a sound approach to evaluating success.

SUPPORTING ACTIVITES FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

The following are activities that support effective public engagement, but only doing these activities is not considered public engagement. Public engagement and its activities are describes above in the definition of public engagement and the public engagement spectrum.

Communications – The Town and the public are informed about, listen and learn about Town policies, programs, projects and services through clear and transparent communications focused on plain language, active listening and responsiveness. This is a key activity underlying all four levels of public engagement spectrum.

Project Management – Carrying out engagement within an effective and aligned project management process.

Decision making – Clearly identifying decisions, decision makers and decision-making processes for every public engagement process.

Relationships – Developing and enhancing through meaningful dialogue that is based on respect and trust.

Capacity Building – Providing the knowledge and tools to engage by building capacity internally and within communities.

Leadership Development – Building community and staff leadership by facilitating leadership development opportunities.

REVIEW:

This policy shall be reviewed, at minimum, every four (4) years.