



REPORT

Council

Meeting Date: March 24, 2025

FROM: Corporate Strategy and Government Relations Department

DATE: March 11, 2025

SUBJECT: **Public Notice and Engagement Policy and Procedure**

LOCATION: Town Hall

WARD: Town-wide

Page 1

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the updated Public Notice and Engagement Policy be approved.
2. That the updated Public Notice and Engagement Procedure be received.

KEY FACTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- On [June 17, 2024](#), staff presented a revised Public Notice and Engagement Policy and Procedure to Council. Council deferred the report and requested staff to evaluate the notice distance requirement for statutory public meetings and the timeframe to inform Council members of the matters within their wards.
- On [November 18, 2024](#), staff reported back to Council on the outstanding matters requested at the June 17th meeting.
- At the November 18, 2024 Council meeting, Council deferred the staff report and requested staff further review procedures to ensure that Council members are informed of local issues in advance of the public when permitted by law.
- Staff held a number of follow-up consultation meetings with Members of Council to obtain their feedback and discuss their concerns related to the draft policy and procedure.

BACKGROUND:

On November 18, 2024, staff [reported](#) back to Council on two matters related to the Public Notice and Engagement Policy (previously presented to Council on [June 17,](#)

[2024](#)). The two matters were the public notice distance requirements for statutory public meetings and the timeframe to inform Council members of the matters within their ward.

At the November Council meeting, Council directed staff to review procedures to ensure that Council members are informed of local issues in advance of the public when permitted by law.

COMMENT/OPTIONS:

Staff held four follow-up consultation meetings with Members of Council to obtain their feedback and discuss their concerns related to the draft policy and procedure. Edited versions of the policy and procedure are attached as Appendix A and B respectively.

The general feedback received included:

- Clarifying the intent of public meetings so members of the public understand that no decisions have been made, especially for information meetings or open house sessions
- Clarify that public input is one input in the public engagement process and that recommendations are made based on all feedback received
- Concern over meetings initiated and held by developers with the public, but notification of these meetings is not always sent to the local councillors by the developer
- Contentious issues should be flagged to Councillors in advance of public notice
- Two-way communication with Members of Council and staff; intentional sharing of information when it's available
- Comments made by members of the public should be accurately reflected in the report back to Council
- Understanding that in some instances it may be difficult for staff to provide advanced notice of public notice, but when staff have lead-time, commitment to notify councillors of matters

Changes made to the draft policy:

- “Transparent and accountable” guiding principle amended to reference a report back to council on public feedback and to clarify that input is considered but not treated as direction to staff.
- Additional minor edits have been made to provide greater clarity to statements.

Changes made to the draft procedure:

- Added language to ensure reporting comments back to Council are “accurate and transparent”

- Statement to clarify that informal engagement should clearly indicate the intent and objective of the session and make clear that no decisions have been made or will be made at the session
- Statement to ensure every effort is taken by staff to notify Councillors of local matters with as much advanced notice as possible
- Information on “Content of Notice” and “Notice of Subsequent Meetings” elevated from Appendix A to the Procedure
- Additional minor edits have been made to provide greater clarity to statements.

The plan to cascade the policy and procedure to staff, once approved by Council, includes:

- Internal communications:
 - Profile policy, procedure and guide on Portico page
 - Tip sheet on staff obligations contained in the policy and procedure
 - Send communications out to senior leadership to share with their staff who are responsible for engagement
 - Profile in next CAO Town Hall
 - Profile in newsletter to staff
 - Utilize working team to share/promote within their departments
- Discuss with HR more in-depth training on engagement to be provided to staff responsible for engagement activities

CONSIDERATIONS:

(A) PUBLIC

The Public Notice and Engagement Policy and Procedure provides guidance and instructions on how staff will conduct engagement activities and provide notice to the public.

(B) FINANCIAL

There are no financial impacts as a result of this report at this time.

(C) IMPACT ON OTHER DEPARTMENTS & USERS

All departments and staff responsible for conducting public engagement are responsible for reading and understanding this policy and procedure.

(D) COUNCIL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

This report addresses Council’s strategic priorities: Community Belonging and Accountable Government.

(E) CLIMATE CHANGE/ACTION

There is no direct impact to climate change or action as a result of this report.

APPENDICES:

Appendix A: Public Notice and Engagement Policy

Appendix B: Public Notice and Engagement Procedure

Prepared by:

Shahada Khan, Corporate Strategy Program Advisor

Recommended by:

Swaraj Mann, Manager, Corporate Strategy

Submitted by:

Julie Clarke, Director, Corporate Strategy and Government Relations