



## COUNTY OF ST. PAUL NO. 19

### BALANCING RURAL HERITAGE WITH A DIVERSE ECONOMY

#### **POLICY OBJECTIVE:**

The County of St. Paul desires to establish the foundations for the County's reasons, guidelines and procedures for conducting public participation. This policy applies to both staff and external consultants.

In accordance with Section 216.1 of the Municipal Government Act, this Public Participation Policy has been developed to recognize the value of public participation and create opportunities for meaningful engagement in decisions that directly impact the Public.

#### **A) DEFINITIONS:**

1. "County" means the municipal corporation of the County of St. Paul No. 19;
2. "Public" means anyone, including groups and individuals, who may have an interest in a specific topic or policy issue under discussion. The Public may, or may not, be directly affected by a decision on the issue.
3. "Public Participation" means a variety of techniques where the Public and Stakeholders are engaged through the provision of relevant information and/or are given the opportunity to provide input to the County regarding a topic or policy issue;
4. "Stakeholder" means an individual or group who has a specific interest or is affected by a topic or policy issue. This includes but is not limited to residents, non-residents, groups, organizations, individuals, representatives, municipalities, and/or County staff, depending on the issue.

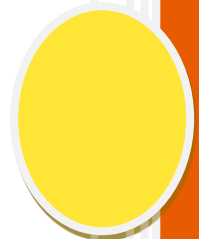
#### **B) GUIDING PRINCIPLES:**

1. Public Participation in the County of St. Paul will be planned, implemented, evaluated and reported using these five guidelines:

- a. Public Participation is **Proactive and Thoughtful**: the process is planned, effectively communicated and implemented early enough to encourage public participation and contribution in an appropriate manner, allowing participants to make informed decisions and impact the outcomes;
- b. Public Participation is **Clear, Relevant, and Focused**: The County and the Public understand their respective roles in a public participation process, including the level of involvement and how input will be used to inform decisions and will have an ongoing focus on relationship building and active listening;
- c. Public Participation is **Inclusive**: It uses a range of methods to engage various audiences to maximize participation and improve the quality of feedback and the Public is provided with a reasonable opportunity to contribute, developing a balanced perspective;
- d. Public Participation increases **Understanding**: Mutual understanding is increased through two-way interaction, where the information presented is easily understood by the intended audience; and
- e. Public Participation **Builds Capacity**: Staff, public and stakeholders are better equipped for future engagement opportunities.

## C) RESPONSIBILITIES

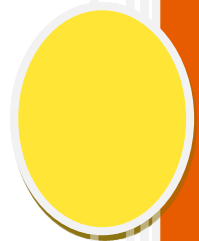
- 1) The Public and Stakeholders of the County of St. Paul shall:
  - a) Have the right to be informed, consulted, and engaged in decisions that affect them;
  - b) Be encouraged to meaningfully engage so their voices strengthen decisions and their involvement helps build a stronger community; and
  - c) Be encouraged to increase their understanding and knowledge about local issues as well as their role in the County's decision-making process so they can participate meaningfully.



- 2) The County of St. Paul shall:
  - a) Provide Public Participation opportunities that are open and transparent;
  - b) Give serious consideration to the public's input gathered in public participation processes and will explain how the input collected was utilized in the decision-making process;
  - c) Be committed to working together with the public to continuously improve its Public Participation processes;
  - d) Support County staff in building their skills and knowledge to engage the public in a meaningful way; and
  - e) Involve the public and stakeholders in Public Participation which leads to better, more informed decisions.
- 3) The County shall consider public input obtained through public participation activities when making decisions, however, the County acknowledges that while taking all information available to them, Council, as the elected authority for the County ultimately has final decision-making authority.

#### **D) PUBLIC PARTICIPATION CONDITIONS:**

- 1) Public participation is required when:
  - i. Legislation requires it; or
  - ii. Council or Administration requests it
- 2) Public participation may be required when:
  - i. The Public requests it;
  - ii. The Public's quality of life may be affected;
  - iii. The natural environment may be affected;
  - iv. Geographical communities or communities of interest may be affected;
  - v. Strong views are already held on the issue; or
  - vi. Many people are affected.
- 3) Public participation is not required when:
  - i. A decision has already been made;
  - ii. The issue relates to the development of an administrative



- policy that does not require or involve the Public or Stakeholder input;
- iii. Public or Stakeholder input will not be considered.

**E) PUBLIC PARTICIPATION APPROACHES:**

- 1) The County of St. Paul uses a four (4) level classification system to provide guidance to Council and County Administration when determining the required level of public participation for a particular circumstance.
- 2) The levels represent increasing degrees to which the public can expect to participate in a decision, as determined on a case-by-case basis by Council and County Administration. These levels include:
  - i. Level 1 - The County shall provide the public with objective information to aid the public in understanding a challenge or decision.
  - ii. Level 2 - The County shall obtain input on projects and gather public feedback prior to making a decision.
  - iii. Level 3 - The County shall work directly with the public throughout the decision-making process to ensure that public concerns are consistently heard, considered, and understood while making decisions.
  - iv. Level 4 - The County shall collaborate with the public at critical stages of the decision-making process to develop alternative approaches and identify the public's preferred solution.

**E) REVIEW:**

- 1) The Public Participation policy must be reviewed at a minimum of every four (4) years, when relevant legislation is amended, and at any time Council considers appropriate to ensure public participation practices are fulfilling the best interests of the County.