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**File #:** AR-17-200, **Version:** 1

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**TAMRMS#:** B09

## **Public Consultation Plan**

Presented by: Darija Slokar, Lead, Corporate Business Planning and Special Projects

## **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

That the Standing Committee of the Whole recommend to Council that the public participation plan related to receiving input for Council's strategic direction and business planning and budget cycle be approved.

## **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The report presents the future plan for public participation activities including timing, method and use of community input received related to Council's strategic direction, services and service levels and the ongoing business planning and budget cycle.

## **COUNCIL (OR COMMITTEE) DIRECTION**

On March 20, 2017, Council passed the following motions:

### AR-17-444

That Administration bring forward a plan for ongoing public participation approach for input into business plan and budget development, for Council's consideration and discussion at a Standing Committee of the Whole meeting at a date to be determined by Agenda Committee.

Council Policy C-CAO-20, Public Participation Policy sets direction for public participation related to involving stakeholders, early and ongoing, in providing input into decisions that affect the community. The Service Standard Expectation states:

Point 2: The City shall offer public participation opportunities when:

- a. Identifying Council priorities
- b. Formulating recommendations to Council regarding the proposed business plan and budgets
- c. Gathering community input following the presentation of proposed business plan and budgets
- d. Reviewing existing programs, services, and associated service levels
- e. Establish a new program, service and service levels
- f. Otherwise deemed necessary by Council or the City Manager

Point 3: The City shall organize at least one statistically representative public participation activity, at least every two years, to obtain the community's overall perceptions of quality of life and satisfaction

with programs and services.

Point 7: The City shall, where possible, use various methods and techniques for public participation that meet the varied needs of the community whether it be demographic, physical, social or cultural.

Council Policy C-CG-06, Strategic Framework standard 2 d) states:

“Consultation with the community through various public engagement methods will provide input into Council’s Strategic Direction. These shall be determined and arranged in the first quarter of each year, to be held during the balance of the year.”

Council Policy C-FS-05 Budget and Taxation Guiding Principles, Standards 1 d) states:

“Council shall engage the public prior and during the budget process when required by established policies with support from the City. Public input will be taken into consideration during the development of the proposed budget and in Council’s deliberation of the proposed budget.”

Council Policy C-CG-02 City of St. Albert Strategic Plan, outcome “Cultivate Excellence in Government” states:

“Engage the community to incorporate resident input and improve decision making:

2.1. Communicate and engage the community to promote two-way information sharing and provide the opportunity to provide input into the development of the City’s plans, budgets, decisions and implementation of decisions that affect them.

2.2. Develop strategies to utilize online public engagement tools, social media and emerging technologies to enhance existing public engagement processes.

2.3. Improve access, remove barriers and provide opportunities for the community to get involved in the democratic process.”

Council Policy C-CAO-15 Program and Service Review Policy states that the City Manager shall ensure that, when deemed appropriate, residents, clients, stakeholders and administration have opportunity to provide input during the review process. Also, standard b) states that public participation and resident/stakeholder feedback/input may be one of the inputs used to establish priorities for service review(s)

## **BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION**

Based on Council’s direction (Council Policy C-FS-05 and C-CG-06), public participation activities have been delivered to gather residents’ opinions and to assist with confirming Council’s strategic direction and deliberation towards the approved business plan and budget.

With Council’s direction and the new Council C-CAO-20 Public Participation Policy, Council Policy C-FS-05 was amended to include public participation activities to also take place in preparation of the proposed plan and budget to ensure resident input is considered earlier in

the cycle.

The report provides proposed approach to align public participation activities with the Council strategic and annual business planning and budget cycle. With the new approach, consideration was given to ensure that proper balance of open participation, randomly selected participation and statistically representative participation activities are included in the plan. This approach provides all residents an opportunity to participate on an annual basis. The methods of delivery for each activity consider most preferred methods as indicated by residents, during the development of the Public Participation Policy, and the results of the Community Satisfaction Survey.

**The proposed approach is focusing on the following areas:**

Resident input into Council's strategic direction and development of the proposed business plan and budget:

1. Input into the City of St. Albert Strategic Plan and Council's and community priorities  
The objective is to gather residents' input into strategic planning and to establish Council and community priorities. Council and Administration would receive residents input prior to preparation of the annual business plan and budget. This would allow Council to confirm direction based on residents' input and Administration would be able to incorporate resident input into the proposed business plan and budget.
2. Input into services and service levels  
The objective is to discuss potential changes to programs, services and associated service levels. Administration would receive residents' input prior to the development of business cases and/or project charters so that input can be considered when/if changes to services and/or service levels are being proposed.

Input into proposed budget prior to Council deliberations:

1. Input into proposed budget  
The objective is to gather residents' opinions on the proposed business plan and budget. Council would hear public feedback before they start budget deliberations.

To achieve stated objectives the following timing and public participation activities aligned to business planning and budget cycle are being proposed:

2. February - Community Satisfaction Survey will continue to be conducted every two years as per approved budget. This is statistically representative survey to gather input into the City's services and to gauge how the City is meeting resident expectations with the existing services and service levels. The survey would be conducted by phone and an online version for randomly invited residents as well as a separate version for all stakeholders. The year that the survey is not scheduled to take place, the online budget

survey will be conducted instead.

or

2. February - Online Budget Survey for input into development of proposed business plan and budget. Budget for this activity for future years is currently not approved. The online budget survey would provide input from a representative sample of residents invited to participate in an online survey. Residents would have an opportunity to provide input into the City's services and service levels and other budget related items, for consideration during development of the proposed budget.
3. February/March - Round Table Discussion for input into development of proposed business plan and budget. Budget for this activity is currently not approved for future years. This method would provide a qualitative gathering of public opinion. Residents would be randomly selected to participate in this discussion with Council members present. The discussion would focus on providing input into Council's strategic direction and priorities, on opportunities to amend service levels and other budget related activities.
4. November - Round Table Discussion in November for input into proposed business plan and budget for the current year and Council's strategic direction for the following budget year, to be considered by Council during the Strategic Planning session currently taking place in January of every year. This session will be with randomly selected residents. Budget for this activity is currently not approved for future years.
5. Open Round Table Discussion in November for input into proposed budget, open for public. Budget for this activity is currently approved with budget for facilitator, approximately \$1,000, is requested annually. This method provides an opportunity for open participation, where all community members can attend, hear about the proposed plan and budget and participate in facilitated discussion with Council. The third party facilitator will ensure objective facilitation with subject matters present to respond to plan and budget specific questions.

Use of social media for community participation will be considered and implemented as resources allow and as appropriate for each of the activities listed above.

**Use of public input for each of the key strategic and business planning and budget activities is further outlined below:**

Council Strategic Planning Session (January) - Outcome of this session is Council's direction for Administration into development of the next year budget. For this session, public input from previous year's Round Table Discussion and Community Satisfaction Survey or online budget survey will be considered.

Proposed Business Plan and Budget (March to June) - Administration would use direction

from Council's strategic planning session and community input from the online budget survey (January) and Round Table Discussion (February) as well as previous years Community Satisfaction Survey results.

Approved Business Plan and Budget (October/December) - Input from November Round Table Discussion and Open Round Table Discussion will be considered by Council during deliberation of proposed business plan and budget.

Council's feedback will continue to be requested and considered in determining/confirming the preferred activities and approaches.

### **IMPLICATIONS OF RECOMMENDATION(S)**

#### **Financial:**

The ability to execute the Public consultation plan as described is dependant on budget approval annually for each stage of the plan. Request for funding is presented for Council annually, by the end of quarter one, as per Council Policy C-CG-06, Strategic Framework.

The estimate cost for each activity is as follows:

Round Table Discussion - Approximately \$10,000 per Round Table Discussion (approximately \$20,000), which includes recruitment of participants, development of facilitation plan and facilitation of the Round Table Discussion. Budget for these activities has been requested annually.

Online Budget Survey - Approximately \$10,000 which includes assistance with development of a questionnaire, survey design, mailout of invitations, survey results analysis and final report. Budget for this activity is currently not approved as part of the operating budget.

Community Satisfaction Survey - Approximately \$28,000 which includes assistance with development of questionnaire, survey design, phone survey, two online surveys; by invitation and open, stakeholder survey and analysis of the results (3 separate reports and presentation). Budget for this activity has been approved as part of the operating budget for the survey to take place every two years.

Open Round Table Discussion - Approximately \$1,500 which includes rental of the facility, materials required and a facilitator. Funding required for a facilitator, approximately \$1,000 is not currently part of the operating budget thus has been requested annually.

#### **Legal / Risk:**

None at this time.

#### **Program or Service:**

Input received from public participation activities will be considered to maintain and improve programs and services delivered to community.

#### **Organizational:**

Time will be required by all departments in development of questions to be used for public

participation activities and to consider input received from the community during the development of business plan and budget as well as to maintain and improve program and service delivery.

## **ALTERNATIVES AND IMPLICATIONS CONSIDERED**

1. Continue to organize only events with the operating budget approved; Community Satisfaction Survey every two years and Town Hall Meeting.

For 2017, Council approved budget for Round Table Discussion and facilitator for Town Hall (Open Round Table Discussion) so those activities will be proceed as approved.

Report Date: June 19, 2017

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