



DISTRICT OF NORTH SAANICH PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT HANDBOOK

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT HANDBOOK FOR THE DISTRICT OF NORTH SAANICH

1. Introduction

The purpose of this handbook is to have a document which outlines and explains the public involvement process within the District of North Saanich and provides residents of the municipality with information on how they can become involved in the public process.

1.1 Purpose of the Public Involvement Process

Local government is founded on a belief that the public interest is best served when decisions are made closer to home. Therefore, the purpose of public involvement is to:

- facilitate effective communication among District residents, Council and Staff thereby providing the opportunity for the public to have input into the decision-making process.
- help identify community priorities in conjunction with Council and Staff, thereby ensuring better planning for community needs.

1.2 Objective of the Public Involvement Process

To encourage and enable District residents to participate fully in a decision-making process which is responsive, flexible and open to change by:

- recognizing public involvement processes within the Council's decision-making framework.
- enabling useful feedback by providing District residents with timely access to relevant information concerning District affairs and Council decision making.
- encouraging residents to make suggestions and consult with Council and/or Staff on matters of interest or concern.
- facilitating resident participation in a wide range of District activities and Committees.

1.3 Expectations of the Public Involvement Process

The public involvement process within the District of North Saanich is expected to:

- inform and increase the awareness of Staff, Council and the public including individual citizens, interest groups, businesses and community associations and organizations of the complexities of issues and impacts of associated options.

- improve the quality of decision making by building better understanding of the diverse needs, interests and values of our community.
- where possible, build common ground upon which decisions can be made, so as to lessen controversy and conflict and move to clarity and understanding.
- provide open, effective and transparent opportunities for citizens to be involved in the decision-making processes that affect their community.

The public involvement process is not expected to:

- provide solutions for resolving all conflicting interests, perspectives and values in the community.
- replace the importance of the professional advice provided by District Staff and consultants.
- limit the legislated role of Council as the final decision maker.

1.4 Constraints on the Public Involvement Process

Public involvement processes within the District will be designed and implemented, recognizing the following constraints:

- as a municipal body, the District has legal authority over certain issues and not over others
- Council, as the publicly elected body, has the final decision making authority
- quite often, decisions need to be made within a limited and/or legally defined time frame
- the costs of public involvement (dollars, Staff time, etc.) need to be reflected in the District's budget
- citizens, community groups, and organizations also have limits (dollars, time, energy, etc.) to their involvement.
- Statutes (eg. Municipal Act, etc)

2. Public Involvement Policies

These Public Involvement policies are meant to be the guiding principals which the District of North Saanich Council, Staff and residents will follow during any process that is intended to involve the public.

2.1 Principles for Public Involvement

The Public involvement process must be meaningful to the participants, in terms of the quality of the opportunities for involvement and influence on decision-making. Therefore, the District believes that the following principles are key to the success of public involvement within North Saanich:

- participants in the public involvement process must show integrity and commitment to a fair and objective process.

- the District's decision making process must be flexible enough to meet the situational needs, and sufficiently structured so that participants know how the process will work.
- the process needs to be explained fully and everyone involved needs to respect the agreed-upon process.
- timely feedback must be provided to those involved in a particular issue as to what has emerged from the process thus far and why.
- recognition that building agreement first on the facts and then on the issues and problems is key to mitigating conflicts when looking for solutions.
- the people involved in a particular issue should reflect the full range of interests.
- all participants must be provided with an equal opportunity to express their point of view.

2.2 District Responsibilities

It is the District's responsibility to the public involvement process to ensure that:

- Council and Staff are accountable to residents for their advice and decisions.
- timely access to information is provided so that members of the public have opportunities to become informed about activities, plans and decisions that affect them.
- citizens are provided with opportunities to participate in meaningful and timely ways.
- Council's decision making takes into consideration the full range of opinions expressed through the public involvement process.
- timely feedback is provided to those involved in a particular issue explaining what has emerged from the process and why.
- the public involvement process is evaluated in an on-going manner.
- the public involvement process is transparent, understandable and fair.
- information, meeting locations, the decision makers and Staff are accessible.
- information will be made available in a variety of ways.
- every reasonable attempt will be made to schedule meetings at a time which is convenient for those involved.
- where feasible, meetings will be held close to the area under discussion.
- the public is informed of the opportunities to become involved.

2.3 Public Responsibilities

For the public involvement process to be effective, the public needs to:

- become informed and aware of the issues.
- participate in the opportunities made available (i.e. public functions, open houses, commenting on newsletters and questionnaires, etc.).

- access necessary information regarding activities, plans and decisions that affect them.
- seek informal ways to interact with friends, neighbours, and work colleagues to discuss key community issues.
- respect the diverse interests, needs and values of all of the citizens in our community.
- look for solutions that build positive benefits for all citizens, present and future.

3. Public Involvement Practices

3.1 Public Involvement Committee

The Public Involvement Committee is a standing Committee convened at the discretion of the Mayor and appointments to sit on it are made by the Mayor. The purpose of the Committee is to develop policy and procedures for Public Involvement, to review and facilitate the ongoing process of effective communication as well as to explore, in a public forum, new ideas, initiatives and opportunities for public involvement within the District as required. Rules of Procedure for the Public involvement Committee may be found in Appendix 3.

3.2 Public Involvement Opportunities Regulated by Statute

Opportunities can vary depending on the type of forum in which the issue is being debated or considered.

- passive opportunities are defined as opportunities to present information which is not addressed or debated at the time of presentation, or when material is made available to the public by the District for information purposes.
- interactive opportunities are defined as those in which dialogue may be commenced at the time of presentation.

<u>Passive Opportunities</u>	<u>Interactive Opportunities</u>
Council meetings	Committee of the Whole meetings
Budget Committee meetings	Budget Committee meetings
Public Hearings	Other Committee meetings
Review of Council and Committee agendas	Commission meetings
Letters & petitions received by Council	Letters & petitions referred to Committee of the Whole
Newspaper Advertisements	Neighbourhood contact
	Referenda
	Counter-petitions

- Council meetings:
 - Public Participation period at beginning of meeting (see Appendix 1)

- Committee of the Whole:
 - Public Participation during debate on particular issues following initial input from Councillors (see Appendix 2)

- Budget Committee meetings:
 - Public Participation period at beginning of meeting
 - Public Participation during debate on particular issues following initial input from Councillors (see Appendix 2)

- Other Committee meetings:
 - Public participation period at beginning of meeting (See Appendix 3)

- Commission meetings:
 - Public participation as per Local Government Act (See Appendix 4)
 - Council liaisons to Commission are appointed by Council

- Public Hearings:
 - Council received public comments on Zoning or Official Community Plan Bylaws – no Council discussion at Public Hearings (Section 890 of the Local Government Act)

- Referenda:
 - Co-ordinated by Staff. Eligible electors (those who reside within the District and non-resident property owners) are invited to vote on issues on which Council deems appropriate to hold a voting opportunity (Sections 158 and 245 of the Local Government Act)

- Counter-petitions (co-ordinated by Staff):
 - Provides an opportunity for electors to petition against a proposed by-law, action or other matter of a local government (Division 5 of Part 4 of the Local Government Act)

- Review of Council and Committee agendas:
 - Agendas of all Council, Committee and Commission meetings are available to the public and copies may be obtained at the municipal offices or on the District's web site.

- Newspaper advertisements:
 - Newspaper advertisements are placed in the local newspaper regarding various voting opportunities, public hearings and other municipal business.
- Neighbourhood contact:
 - Contact of adjacent neighbours regarding variance/zoning applications. The municipality is required to notify adjacent neighbours of Development Variance Permit and Board of Variance applications, as well as applications for Zoning amendments.
- Letters and Petitions received by Council:
 - Written communications to Council are forwarded to a meeting of the Council for formal consideration. Sometimes these letters and Petitions are referred to Committee of the Whole for further discussion.

3.3 General Public Involvement Practices

Opportunities can vary depending on the type of forum in which the issue is being presented.

- Passive opportunities are those in which material is made available to the public by the District for information purposes.
- Interactive opportunities are defined as those in which the District is seeking either a response from the public or direct interaction with the public.

<u>Passive Opportunities</u>	<u>Interactive Opportunities</u>
Newsletters	Questionnaires
Brochures	Surveys
Handouts	Neighbourhood meetings
Information inserts included with billings	Attendance at functions
Postings at Municipal hall	Town hall meetings
Internet web site (www.northsaanich.ca)	Open houses
	E-mail

- Printed material
 - newsletters
 - brochures
 - handouts
 - information inserts included with billings
 - postings at Municipal hall

- Questionnaires
- Surveys
- Internet web site (www.northsaanich.ca)
- Direct contact
 - neighbourhood meetings
 - attendance at functions
 - town hall meetings
 - open houses
 - e-mail

3.4 Volunteer Involvement in North Saanich

A “volunteer” is defined in the dictionary as “A person who renders aid, performs a service or assumes an obligation voluntarily”. Since the District of North Saanich was incorporated in 1965, thousands of residents have volunteered their time and expertise to the service of their municipality. Over the years the invaluable contributions of these dedicated volunteers have enhanced the quality of life for District residents in a multitude of ways. Volunteers have made North Saanich a better place to live through their participation in the volunteer fire department, advisory Commissions and Committees as well as a variety of other volunteer programs.

The current volunteer opportunities available in the District are detailed as follows:

- 3.4.1 Volunteer Fire Department: The North Saanich Fire Department proudly protects 12000 people living in an area of 40 square kilometers. Operated out of two stations, the department is a public department with a paid fire chief, and whose members are volunteers required to reside in the District and belong to the North Saanich Volunteer Firefighters’ Association.
- 3.4.2 Municipal Appointees: Each year, the District places advertisements in the local newspapers setting out opportunities for residents to apply to serve on municipal Committees and Commissions. Applicants are requested to submit a letter of application with personal information to Council for consideration in camera. Council regularly conducts interviews with applicants. In order to be appointed to a Committee/Commission, successful applicants must have the approval of a majority of Council. The District also encourages youth membership in the Commissions/Committees and has available two seats on each body to be filled by youth liaison representatives. Applications for the youth positions are handled through the School Councils. The successful applicants receive written notification of their appointment and an orientation package. Rules of Procedure of the Commissions may be found in Appendix 3.
 - Advisory Planning Commission – a Commission established by bylaw to advise Council on matters referred by Council concerning planning and zoning issues; consists of seven public members, one Council liaison, one secretary; public meetings once a month at the Municipal Hall.

- Environmental Advisory Commission - a Commission established by bylaw to advise Council on matters referred by Council concerning environmental matters; consists of 11 public members, one Council liaison, one secretary; public meetings once a month at the Municipal Hall.
- Parks Commission - a Commission established by bylaw to advise Council on matters referred by Council, and on matters the Parks Commission undertakes on their own initiative, that concern District parks; consists of 9 public members (one EAC liaison, one APC liaison), one Council liaison, one secretary; public meetings once a month at the Municipal Hall.
 - Cycling Committee – a Subcommittee of the Parks Commission, established to advise Council on issues that promote the safe and efficient use of bicycles as a valued mode of transportation and recreation; consists of 3 to 5 members of the Parks Commission and one Council liaison.
- Heritage Advisory Commission – a Commission established by bylaw to advise Council on matters referred by Council concerning all matters respecting heritage issues; consists of 7 public members, one Council liaison, one secretary; public meetings once a month at the Municipal Hall.
- Board of Variance- a Board established under the Local Government Act that decides variance issues that are brought to the Board by applications from District property holders; meetings held on an as required basis).

3.4.3 Nominated Residential Representatives

- Victoria Airport Authority - two members of North Saanich community, are each nominated for a three year term.
- Peninsula Recreation Commission - one member of the North Saanich community nominated for a one year term.
- Saanich Peninsula Water Commission - one member of the North Saanich Community nominated for a one year term.
- Saanich Peninsula Wastewater Commission - one member of the North Saanich Community nominated for a one year term.

3.4.4 Program Volunteers

- Adopt-a-Park Volunteers (see Appendix 5 for guidelines)
- Trail Development Volunteers (see Appendix 5 for guidelines)
- Trail/Park Watch Volunteers (see Appendix 5 for guidelines)

3.4.5 Other

- Deep Cove / Pat Bay / McDonald Park Road Sewer Project Resident's Liaison Committee (established to address resident concerns related to the planning and construction of the municipal sewer system).
- Cultural Committee (established to organize various community events and activities to celebrate the spirit of North Saanich and to create an even stronger sense of community spirit within the District).
- University of Victoria/North Saanich Liaison Committee
- Family Court and Youth Justice Committee

- Agricultural Task Force
- Economic Planning Committee
- Peninsula Agriculture Commission (see the District of Saanich website)
- Victoria Airport Environment Committee
- Victoria Airport Noise Committee

3.4.6 Volunteer Recognition

- Annual “CommuniTea”
- Annual New Years Day Levee
- Letter of thanks

Appendix 1

Rules of Procedure for Council Public Participation Session

- (a) Persons wishing to address Council must be either North Saanich residents or non-resident property owners or those affected. Name and address for identification must be given and also the topic involved;
- (b) Subjects must relate strictly to municipal matters or community concerns;
- (c) Subjects must be on topics which are not normally dealt with by municipal Staff as a matter of routine;
- (d) Subjects must be brief and to the point;
- (e) Subjects shall be addressed through the Chair and answers given likewise. Debates with or by individual Council members will not be allowed;
- (f) No commitments shall be made by the Chair in replying to a question. Matters which may require action of the Council shall be referred to a future meeting of the Council;
- (g) Twenty minutes will be allotted for the Public Participation Period.

Appendix 2

Rules of Procedure for public participation at Committee of the Whole/Budget Committee:

See Robert's Rules of Order: "The Scott, Foresman Robert's Rules of Order, newly revised", Copyright 1981.

Appendix 3

Rules of procedure for public participation at the Public Involvement Committee meetings are as follows:

- (a) Persons wishing to address Committee must be either North Saanich residents or non-resident property owners or those affected. Name and address for identification must be given.
- (b) Subjects must be relative to the agenda. Additions to the agenda will be considered by the Chair.
- (c) Speakers must be brief and to the point.
- (d) Time allocation for discussion on each item will be at the discretion of the Chair.
- (e) Debates over current issues occur at Committee of the Whole and other public forums rather than at this Committee.
- (f) Roberts rules of Order will prevail.

Appendix 4

Rules of procedure for public participation at Commission meetings are as follows:

- (a) Persons wishing to address Commission must be either North Saanich residents or non-resident property owners or those affected. Name and address for identification must be given.
- (b) Subjects must be relative to the agenda. Additions to the agenda will be considered by the Chair.
- (c) Speakers must be brief and to the point.
- (d) Time allocation for discussion on each item will be at the discretion of the Chair.
- (e) Debates over current issues occur at Committee of the Whole and other public forums rather than at this Commission.
- (f) Roberts rules of Order will prevail.

Commission meetings are subject to the regulations under section 242.7 of the Local Government Act.

Appendix 5

Guidelines for Adopt-A-Park Program:

Trail/Park Maintenance

Volunteers who have expressed interest in this category of the “Adopt-A-Park” program will be involved in maintaining existing trails in a safe and passable condition. Any need for major repairs or reconstruction should be reported to the Engineering Department of the municipality. Other situations which may be hazardous to users should likewise be reported. One of the mandates of the Parks Commission, having regard to the rural ambiance of North Saanich, is to preserve and maintain habitat and native ground cover, plants, shrubs and trees. Accordingly, any apparent interference with habitat and/or natural growth should be reported. This will be of great assistance to the parks program.

Trail Development

Volunteers expressing interest in this phase of the “Adopt-A-Park” program will be involved with construction of new trails where designated by the Parks Commission. This will be an important contribution to the parks program of North Saanich. Trails, steps and other structures may only be constructed in accordance with previously approved designs and materials. Volunteers may greatly assist by using their own tools or equipment. Works department equipment is generally fully utilized by Staff in day to day activities but may be available from time to time to meet special needs. As in the case of road and other municipal construction in North Saanich, care will be taken to keep destruction to native growth and ground cover to a minimum where parks work is being done.

Trail/Park Watch

Volunteers in this category will, during walks of their adopted area, identify any problems occurring on trail/park or public lands. Volunteers should not take any position of enforcing bylaws or directly confronting individuals who may be causing damage or violating municipal bylaws. The Volunteers should watch for things such as people they do not recognize or who look suspicious, people conducting acts of vandalism, harassing the public, causing a disturbance or under-age drinking. The Volunteers should not approach these people, but should try to get their description, address, or license number if driving and report any incidents directly to the RCMP. Volunteers who witness situations where individuals are cutting trees in parks or on public lands, dumping garbage or compost into a park, trail or public lands should report the incident directly to the Public Works Department at 656-0781 during working hours or directly to the Standby Municipal Dutyman at 920-9235 after hours. Any incidents of a fire or unauthorized burning within a park or public lands should be reported directly to the Fire Department who are dispatched through Saanich at 475-6111. In the event of a large fire, Volunteers should call 911.

Volunteers may wish, in addition to their primary interest, to involve themselves in any of the categories and are welcome and invited to do so.