

Why do we Engage?

We Desire to Hear From a Broad Range of People:

- To Ensure the Public is Aware of Decisions Being Made
- To Receive the Knowledge of Individuals that Live and Work in a Community
- To Understand the Diversity of Opinions in a Community
- To Hear Thoughts and Suggestions on How to Make a Project Better

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Current HRM Engagement Practice

- Public Information Meetings (PIM's) are the Standard Engagement Tool for Most Planning Applications
- On-Site Signage is Typically Required in Applications and has gone Unchanged Since Conception
- Planning Policy Projects Develop Unique Engagement Strategies on a Project by Project Basis
- A Holistic Approach to Planning Engagement Across the Municipality is Warranted



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What Engagement Does the HRM Charter Require?

- That Council Adopt a Public Participation Program which Establishes the Ways and Means of Seeking the Opinions of the Public
- That Public Hearings be Held for Planning Applications such as Rezoning and Development Agreements
- That Notification of Public Hearings and specific Planning Decisions be Published in the Newspaper
- That Public Consultation for Site Plan Approvals take Place Prior to an Application being Formally Submitted

Very Little Engagement is Legislatively Required

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1997 Public Participation Resolution

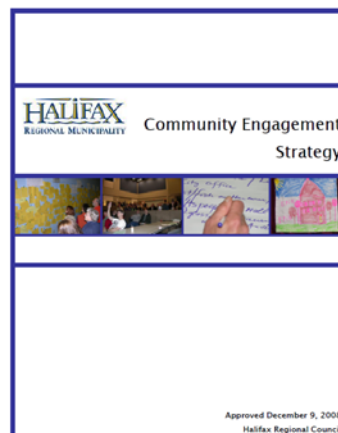
- Applies Only to MPS Policy Amendments Unless Otherwise Specifically Referenced
- Requires a PIM, and Dictates Certain Notification and Minute Keeping Standards for the Process
- Current Practice Often Involves Consultation Over and Above Requirements of the 1997 Resolution

The 1997 Public Participation Resolution Does Not Reflect the Extent of Current Engagement for Many Planning Projects

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2008 Community Engagement Strategy

- A Strategic Direction Guiding how HRM Informs, Consults, and Engages with the Public
- Does Not Mandate Specific Engagement Methods
- Stresses the Importance of Clear and Effective Engagement Fully Integrated with the Project
- Any Planning & Development Engagement Policies would be Consistent with this Overarching Corporate Strategy



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Issues in Existing Processes

- Same Process is Often Used Regardless of Scope or Impact of the Project
- Lacks Clarity and Transparency
- Frequently Used Meeting Format Doesn't Allow for Discussion and Can be Confrontational
- Participation in Existing Process can be Demographically Narrow
- Under-Utilizes Technology Made Available Since 1997
- Methods Used Often Reflect a Different Era

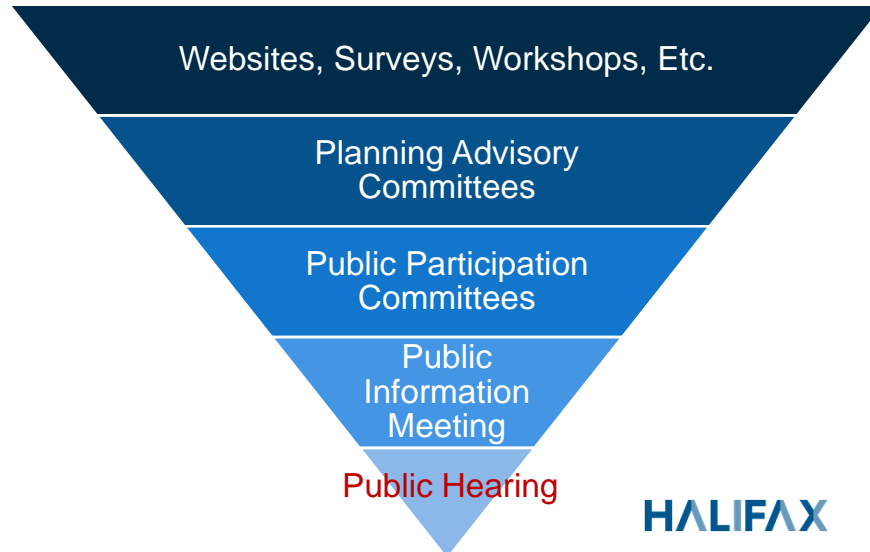
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Cost of our Current Process

- Public Information Meetings (PIM's) Are Currently Held for Over 90% of Planning Applications
- Administrative Processes Surrounding these Meetings can add 1-2 Months to Application Processing Times
- Significant Staff Time and Resources are Dedicated to these Meetings which can impact Application Processing Times
- Staff Resource Requirements for Planning and Attending Meetings also add to Application Processing Costs

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Expectations & Requirements Have Grown Over Time



What Have We Heard?

2015 Councillor Survey

- Concerns Included the need to Improve On-Site Signage, the Reliance on Newspapers for Notification, and a Desire to use Plain Language within Documents, amongst others

2014 Citizen Survey

- Identified 'Development' Issues as the Top Issue Facing the Municipality over the next 5 years
- Planning / Zoning Ranked 4th in a list of Most Recent Regional Service they Contacted the Municipality About

2015 Industry Feedback Session

- Public Information Meeting Process can be Confrontational and not Beneficial to Identifying Solutions
- The Internet and Social Media was thought to be an Underutilized Tool
- The Current Consultation Process creates a `Bottleneck` in the Process

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Planning & Development Renewal

Central Goals

- » Modern
- » Consistent
- » Streamlined
- » Outcome Focused

These Goals would be Shared with an Updated
Public Consultation Standard for Planning Projects

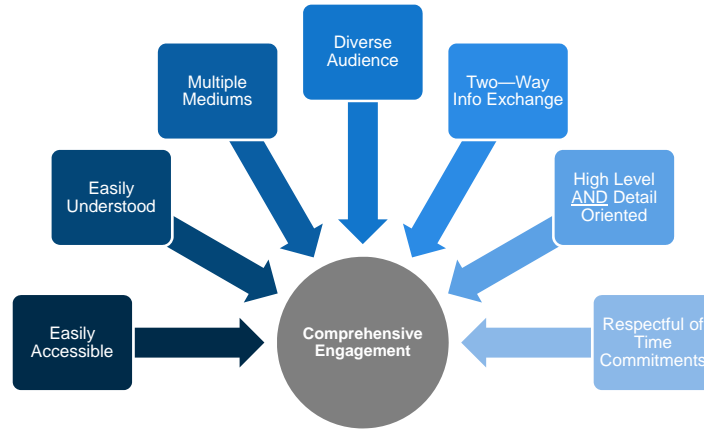
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What Will a New Public Engagement Standard Accomplish?

- The Existing 1997 Resolution on Public Participation is Approaching 20 Years Old
- Today's Engagement Standard Should Reflect the Current Practices
- HRM Currently Engages Much More Extensively than what the 1997 Resolution Requires
- We Currently Hold Ourselves to a High Standard as per the Corporate Engagement Policy
- We Suggest Updating Our Planning & Development Engagement Practices to Increase Transparency, Modernize our Tools, and Reflect Current Standards

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What is Great Engagement?



No Single Tool Accomplishes All These Goals

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Municipal Best Practices



- No 'Standard Engagement' Process
- Trend is to Allow Citizens to Engage More Effectively in Planning Processes
- Multiple Tools Available to Use
- Engagement is 'Right-Sized' For Each Project
- Engagement Scope Expands or Contracts Based on the Context
- Flexibility = Faster Processes and Better Resource Allocation
- Getting Information and/or Providing Feedback is Easy and Done 24/7

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Renewed Engagement

- Introduce Minimum Engagement Standards for All Projects
- Add More Engagement Tools and Increase Flexibility in their Use
- Enhance Web-Presence and Ease of Accessibility
- Communicate Planning Processes more Effectively
- Hear From a Wider Demographic of Citizens
- Modernize Meeting Formats



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Potential Baseline Engagement Standards

Currently, No Baseline Standard of Engagement is Consistently Required for All Applications. A Newly Introduced Baseline Standard Could Include:

1. Publication of Materials on the HRM Website
2. Site Signage
3. Mail-Out Notification
4. Newspaper Notification of Meetings or Hearings

All of the Above Practices would be Improved and Modernized through this Review Process to Focus on Greater Accessibility, Consistency, and Transparency

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Engagement Toolbox

- A Resource Outlining the Tools Available and When they are Best Implemented
- Allows for 'Right-Sized Engagement' Given the Specifics of a Project
- Taken From Best Practices of Municipalities Across North America
- Commitment to Continuous Improvements and Refinements



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Benefits of a New Process

- Faster Application and Project Processing Times
- Anticipated Cost Savings
- Reflective of Public Engagement Standards Found Elsewhere in Canada
- Clear and Transparent Process for Staff, Council, Applicants and the Public
- Enhanced Web-Presence
- Committed to Regular Review and Ongoing Improvement

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Regular Reporting of Activities

- Annual Reporting on Engagement Activities
- Summary of the Engagement Completed in That Year and the Tools Used
- Recommendations on How to Expand On or Improve the Tools in Use to Ensure Consistent Improvement
- Emphasis on Engagement Toolbox Being a Living Document
- Test Ourselves- What Communities and Demographics do we Not Hear From?

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Moving Forward

Phase 1

- Initiate and Implement Website Improvements
- Engage Councillors and Development Community in Assessing Existing Concerns
- Research Best Practices of Other Municipalities

Already Completed

Phase 2

- Identify and Roll-Out Changes to Improve Existing & Create New Engagement Tools as Referenced in this Presentation
- Create and Seek Council Approval of Administrative Order

Present to 6 Months

Phase 3

- Provide Council With 1st Annual Report on Engagement
- Implement Administrative Order on New Planning Projects
- Identify Areas for Improvement and Implement Change

6 Months to 1 Year

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