



Public Consultation Policy

Intent

Town of Thorsby recognizes the importance of well conceived external communications and consultation in promoting public understanding of Town of Thorsby policies, programs and services, and providing Town of Thorsby with a critical insight into public attitudes and expectations.

It values public consultation as a means to address the expectations of the citizens, and to achieve improved policies, programs and initiatives in serving the public.

Town of Thorsby is committed to ensuring that administrative and policy processes are open and accessible, respectful of the public's right to be involved, and responsive to the public need for information.

This policy provides direction for Town of Thorsby and a framework for a process of engagement with the public in order to solicit their views as an integrated part of the decision-making process at Town of Thorsby.

The Public Consultation policy supports Town of Thorsby's vision statement and is fundamental to acquiring public understanding and support for the actions of Town of Thorsby.

Guidelines

The benefits of public consultation include:

- Being responsive to the community's right to know and to be involved, as well as Town of Thorsby's obligation to make decisions on behalf of the community;
- Recognizing the value of the opinions and expertise offered by members of the public;
- Acknowledging public sensitivity to change in the community and its desire to participate effectively in policy and program development processes;
- Ensuring information and knowledge is shared with and/or received from the public;
- Providing opportunities to build consensus around issues or changes; and
- Encouraging active public promotion regarding implementation of Town of Thorsby initiatives.

Town of Thorsby shall ensure:

Values that Support Public Consultation

The following values that support public consultation are fostered and in place throughout Town of Thorsby:

- Consultation is instilled as a way of organizational life- Town of Thorsby will consult the community as a normal part of its work.
- Consultation occurs early in the process- consultation is much more fruitful and less demanding of resources when it occurs early in the process.
- Two-way communication- communication with the public not only flows both ways, but also can be initiated by either side. Town of Thorsby should consult the community, and the community should consult Town of Thorsby.
- Uniqueness is recognized- each problem and situation is unique. Town of Thorsby should be innovative, flexible, and sensitive to local conditions, all of which require close contact with both the affected community and community at large.

- Multi-faceted input is sought- by considering each problem from many points of view, Town of Thorsby is more likely to achieve a preferred solution.
- Community leadership is recognized as valuable- community leaders are a valuable resource to Town of Thorsby.
- Town of Thorsby knows the community- be familiar with the community, their concerns, their goals, their strengths and their needs.
- The importance of continuity is recognized- Town of Thorsby should recognize that change may disrupt the lives of its citizens. Change may be viewed negatively when it:
 - Does not serve the needs of those experiencing the change;
 - Occurs without time to adjust;
 - Is not preceded by opportunities for consultation; or
 - Seems to create impacts and benefits which are not fairly distributed.

Process for Consultation

The following principles related to the process for consultation will be practiced by members of Town of Thorsby:

- Town of Thorsby must routinely assess its activities, their impacts on citizens and the need for public consultation, and identify early on in the process which issues require public consultation. Due to the diversity and complexity of activities undertaken by Town of Thorsby, the requirement for public consultation is not always clear. Not all issues involved in the day-to-day operation or administrative functioning of Town of Thorsby require public consultation.
- Town of Thorsby is frequently a partner or participant with other governments and agencies for joint projects. In these instances, Town of Thorsby does not always have the authority to determine the process for public consultation. Town of Thorsby will encourage and promote implementation of a public consultation process as a key component of any project/activity along with needs and approaches utilized by others, but a decision not to embrace a public consultation approach by the lead organization will not preclude Town of Thorsby from participating in projects/activities.
- Consultation should be considered for every project that has a direct impact on the public and consideration given to the most effective and appropriate method of consultation. There is no single method for successful communication and consultation. Consultation may be as simple as informing people of a proposed change, or it may take the form of an informal discussion, or a formal event such as an open house or public meeting.

General Principles

The following general principles are adopted throughout the organization:

- A climate is created in which public consultation is utilized as a management function;
- Consultation and communications planning are integrated within the overall organization and strategic planning;
- Staff are aware of their roles, responsibilities, and accountability for consultation, including a thorough knowledge of the components of the consultation function;
- Cooperation and liaison exists between consultation staff and communication staff both within Town of Thorsby and with other partners and outside agencies;
- The level of accountability and support is appropriate to the form, scope and expected requirements of a consultation process;
- Reports to the Town of Thorsby Board contain information on what consultation took place and how the staff recommendation reflects or does not reflect the input received;
- Staff required to conduct and manage effective consultation receive adequate resources, training and professional development;
- Consultation requirements are developed and reflected in employee assessments, and in policy, program design and service delivery;

- Periodic evaluations of the results of the consultation process are conducted to ensure they reflect client needs;
- An environment is fostered that encourages and values feedback to and from individuals, the public and employees by communicating the results of consultation to interested participants;
- A training module is adopted;
- The consultative approach is incorporated in employee training;
- A list of community groups and criteria to determine when and how to contact them, is developed and maintained in a format that can be quickly queried and/or disseminated;
- Public consultation literature is acquired and made accessible; and
- Evaluation of past consultations and establishment of best practices be done to achieve continuous service improvements.

Acknowledgement and Agreement

I, _____(Name),

acknowledge that I have read and understand the Public Consultation Policy of Town of Thorsby.

Further, I agree to adhere to this Policy and will ensure that employees working under my direction adhere to this policy. I understand that if I violate the rules/procedures outlined in this Policy, I may face disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.
