

Planning Public Participation Program Policy

Date adopted by Council: June 25, 2024



1. POLICY STATEMENT

The Town of Lunenburg is committed to fostering transparent, inclusive, and effective public participation in the review and amendment of planning documents. This policy ensures that all community members can contribute their views, comments, and suggestions on planning matters that shape the Town's development.

2. PURPOSE

This policy establishes a public participation program to review and amend planning documents in the Town of Lunenburg, as mandated by the Municipal Government Act (MGA). It ensures that Council conducts public meetings to gather input before announcing intentions to adopt or amend any planning document. Additionally, this policy facilitates the solicitation of comments from the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg (MODL) on proposed changes to planning documents in compliance with the provincial Engagement Programs Content Regulations and relevant sections of the MGA.

3. DEFINITIONS

"Applicant" refers to the property owner or their representative who has formally applied to the Town of Lunenburg for rezoning, redesignation, or to initiate, amend, or review a development agreement.

"Planning application" is a written request to rezone, redesignate or enter into or revise a development agreement or, in any other way, amend a planning document.

"Planning documents" means:

- A municipal planning strategy and any amendments;
- A land-use by-law adopted to carry out the municipal planning strategy and any amendments;
- A subdivision by-law and an amendment to it; and
- Development agreements.

"Public hearing" is a formal meeting held at regular Council meetings, required by law before the second reading and final approval of planning documents or amendments. It serves to

formally present proposed planning documents or amendments to the public and receive feedback before final Council approval.

“Public Participation Meeting” is a public meeting held in accordance with the Town’s Planning Public Participation Program Policy. At the Town of Lunenburg, a Public Participation Meeting (PPM) may also be called a Public Information Meeting (PIM).

“Undue hardship” occurs when all reasonable means of accommodation have been exhausted, leaving only options that pose significant financial, operational, or safety burdens on the Town.

All other words have the meanings given to them in the MGA.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION MEETING (PPM) PROTOCOLS

Whenever it is intended by Council to adopt or amend a planning document, or an applicant has made a planning application, a PPM will be held.

The purpose of a PPM is to provide an opportunity for the public to comment, make suggestions, discuss and receive information concerning the following:

- The amendment of planning documents
- The adoption of planning documents
- Planning applications

PPMs are hosted by the Town’s Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) or Town Staff.

Meetings will be held in person.

5. PPM INPUT BEFORE PAC

During a PPM, all interested persons will be allowed to have their views, comments and suggestions heard. PPMs before PAC will be live streamed and video recorded.

At the start of the PPM, a staff report detailing the matter for which the PPM is being held will be presented. This presentation aims to inform the public and provide context for their comments and suggestions during the meeting. The presentation will provide background information on the matter for which the PPM is being held, provide any relevant data or analysis, and include a staff recommendation.

Input must adhere to the following criteria:

- Identification: Each submission must include the sender's full name and contact information.
- Relevance: All submissions must be directly relevant to the matter for which the Public Participation Meeting (PPM) is being held. Irrelevant content will not be considered.

- Respectfulness: Submissions must be respectful and free from personal attacks.

Any input that does not meet these standards will not be circulated or shared at the PPM. During the meeting, the PAC Chair can immediately discontinue any input that fails to comply with these guidelines.

Staff reserve the right to withhold or redact any written correspondence, audio recordings, or audio-visual recordings deemed inappropriate or disrespectful. This includes:

- Profane or vulgar language
- Hate speech or discriminatory remarks based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disability, or any other protected characteristic
- Personal attacks or threats against individuals or groups
- Sexual content or explicit imagery
- Insults or name-calling

The submitter will be notified if their content is withheld or redacted, provided with an explanation, and given an opportunity to revise and resubmit their contribution. A record of all withheld content and the reasons for withholding will be maintained.

Input can be provided as follows:

- In-person oral presentations: Individuals wishing to speak during the meeting must register at the start of the meeting. Registration is accomplished by filling out the sign-in sheet provided at the meeting venue. This registration process is on a first-come, first-served basis.
- Virtual oral presentations: Individuals who cannot attend the meeting in person but wish to speak on the matter may request to join the meeting virtually. Any person wishing to provide feedback virtually must advise the Municipal Clerk or designate at least 24 hours before the meeting.
- Prerecorded presentations: Members of the public who cannot present their views in person may submit an audio or video recording. This recording will be played during the meeting as an alternative to an in-person oral presentation.
- Written submissions: This includes submitting input in written form, such as a letter or email.

A staff report detailing the matter for which the PPM is being held, along with received written submissions, will be published on the Town's website at least six clear days before the PPM. Written and audio submissions must be submitted to the Municipal Clerk or their delegated designate at least three business days before the PPM. To have a written submission included in

the agenda package for the PAC meeting where the PPM is scheduled, the submission must be received at least seven days before that meeting. Any written submissions received six to three days before the PPM will be shared with PAC for their consideration but will not be included in the publicly available agenda package.

Presentations are limited to five minutes per person. Written submissions must be 750 words or less.

When a group wishes to present at a PPM, they must designate one individual as their spokesperson. The designated spokesperson is allocated a maximum of five minutes to deliver the group's input.

6. ACCOMMODATIONS

The Town will make reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities to facilitate their participation in public meetings per relevant regulations and up to the point of undue hardship.

Requests for accommodations should be submitted to the Municipal Clerk at least seven days before the meeting to ensure appropriate arrangements can be made. The Town will evaluate these requests in consultation with relevant personnel and may seek documentation as necessary to understand the needs and requirements.

7. CONDUCT

Participants and meeting attendees are expected to always conduct themselves respectfully during the meeting.

If a participant or attendees behave inappropriately, the Chair has the authority to terminate their participation in the discussion immediately and have them exit the meeting, whether participating in person or virtually.

Attendees in the public gallery must maintain respect. Expressions of emotion, such as shouting, applause, or other disruptions, are prohibited.

8. CLARIFICATION AND INFORMATION REQUEST PROTOCOL

The PAC Chair, in collaboration with lead staff, will assess the necessity of an immediate response to information requests made during a PPM. The Chair, with input from lead staff, will decide if the information can be provided immediately without further consultation or follow-up. If the required information is readily available, lead staff may respond verbally during the PPM.

Following the PPM, the follow-up report to Council will include a summary of all information requests made during the meeting. The report will categorize these requests into three groups:

- Requests deemed irrelevant or out of scope.
- Requests that could not be answered at the PPM because the information was not readily available.
- Requests requiring substantial staff resources.

Staff will provide answers to questions that could not be answered at the PPM due to the lack of readily available information in the Council report. Requests identified as irrelevant, out of scope, or resource-intensive will not be addressed unless directed by Council.

9. NOTICES

For PPMs conducted under the Planning Public Participation Policy, the Town will post notices on its website, social media platforms and in a newspaper in general circulation in the Town. These notices will be published at least 14 clear days before the PPM.

If there is an applicant, they will be notified using the contact information provided in their planning application. An electronic version sent by email shall be considered sufficient notice.

If the adoption or amendment of a planning document affects between one and five properties, notice will be served to the assessed property owners of all properties within 30 meters of the affected properties.

10. COST OF NOTIFICATION

In cases where there is an applicant, all expenses related to required newspaper advertisements or notices to assessed property owners shall be the responsibility of the applicant. These fees will be charged at cost, covering only the actual expenses incurred in fulfilling the notification requirements. However, a deposit in the amount set by Council must be paid in full before a planning application will be processed and a PPM scheduled and advertised.

11. NOTICE TO ABUTTING MUNICIPALITIES

Council will consult with the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg (MODL) when:

- Adopting a new Municipal Planning Strategy; or
- When considering amendments to the Municipal Planning Strategy that would affect lands within 500 metres of the Town boundary.

In these cases, the Clerk of MODL will be notified. The notice will provide a timeline for a response to be received and considered by Council. The timeline for a response will expire before the first notice for a public hearing on the matter is published. An electronic version sent by email shall be deemed sufficient for said notice.

12. DOCUMENT REQUESTS

All documents related to a PPM will be accessible on the Town's website. Printed copies are available upon request. A fee of the actual cost of printing will be charged. Full payment of this fee is required to receive printed documents.

13. RECOMMENDATION AND REPORT TO COUNCIL

The PAC must make a recommendation to Council on the matter for which a PPM is held at the same PAC meeting as the PPM or the following PAC Meeting.

Staff will report PAC's recommendation and provide information following the Clarification and Information Request Protocol through a written report to Council.

14. PUBLIC HEARINGS

Following a PPM, per the Municipal Government Act, should a matter related to any planning documents be scheduled for a second reading or approval, Council will hold a public hearing at a regular Council meeting.