



Est. 1873

REPORT TO MAYOR AND COUNCIL

PRESENTED:	SEPTEMBER 12, 2016 - REGULAR AFTERNOON MEETING	REPORT:	16-84
FROM:	COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION	FILE:	6430-06
SUBJECT:	PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT CHARTER		

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council adopt the Public Engagement Charter for Community Planning and Community Development purposes, presented as Attachment A to this report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In March 2016, Council endorsed the Public Engagement Strategy (PES) for Planning and Development. One of the deliverables of the PES is a Public Engagement Charter (PEC). A draft PEC was developed based on the substantial amount of research, analysis and consultation completed by the Mayor's Standing Committee on Public Engagement in 2015. The draft was presented to Council on May 30, 2016. Council authorized staff to hold a Public Open House to obtain further community input on the draft document.

A Public Open House was held on June 7, 2016, with a total of 23 people attending the Public Open House and 10 questionnaires completed. Generally, overall feedback was supportive, reinforcing the findings of the Mayor's Standing Committee on Public Engagement and the community's desire for broader community participation, early and on-going engagement, accessible information, and transparent decision-making. A summary of questionnaire responses is provided in Attachment B.

The draft PEC commits the Township to strengthen the spirit of collaboration and ensure meaningful community consultation contributing to the best possible quality of life for all residents. In addition, best practices, applicable legislation and Township policies have been considered as part of the preparation process. The PEC provides a high level framework and principles for the Township to involve its residents in planning and development and a legacy beyond the implementation of the Public Engagement Strategy. Further, it equally encourages citizens to make a commitment to participate and engage in dialogue about the future of our community, and offers ways to do so.

As a high level corporate policy, the draft PEC contains aspirations, principles and commitments for the Township to build organizational capacity and become engagement-friendly as a responsive community-serving institution.

It is recommended that Council adopt the Public Engagement Charter.

PURPOSE:

This report responds to Council's previous direction and recommends adoption of the Public Engagement Charter for Planning and Development, presented as Attachment A.

BACKGROUND/HISTORY:

In 2015, the Mayor's Standing Committee on Public Engagement was struck to explore better ways of engaging residents and enhancing communications between the public and Council. It was tasked to make recommendations to Council with respect to improved public engagement in planning and development activities.

In November 2015, the Mayor's Standing Committee on Public Engagement presented a draft Public Engagement Strategy for Planning and Development (PES). On March 21, 2016, Council endorsed the PES and authorized staff to commence implementation.

One of the main deliverables is a Public Engagement Charter (PEC), committing the Township to enhanced public engagement in planning and development on an on-going basis. A draft Charter was presented to Council on May 30, 2016. Council authorized staff to hold a Public Open House to obtain community input on the draft document and report back to Council.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:

A Public Open House was held on June 7, 2016. The event was advertised and promoted using the following methods:

- a Township Page advertisement in the local newspapers during the first week of June;
- targeted notifications to over 300 subscribers who opted to receive 'e-Alerts' specifically pertaining to the *engageTOL* initiative;
- notification on the *engageTOL* project webpage (tol.ca/engagetol);
- social media listings on the Township's Facebook and Twitter accounts; and
- a Press Release issued on May 31, which resulted in 2 online articles in the Langley Times and the Aldergrove Star websites as well as coverage on the CivicInfo BC website (civicinfo.bc.ca).

In addition, the display panels of the Public Open House and an online questionnaire were available on the *engageTOL* project webpage from June 7 to June 29.

A total of 23 people attended the Public Open House and 10 questionnaires were received by the conclusion of the consultation window on June 29. Generally, overall feedback was supportive, reinforcing the findings of the Mayor's Standing Committee on Public Engagement and the community's desire for broader community participation, early and on-going engagement, accessible information, and transparent decision-making. A summary of questionnaire responses is provided in Attachment B.

The draft PEC has been prepared based on the work of the Mayor's Standing Committee on Public Engagement, including written and verbal input from over 300 community members who participated in 3 open houses in late 2015. In addition, best practices, applicable legislation and Township policies have been considered as part of the Charter preparation process. The PEC would provide a high level framework and principles for the Township to involve its residents in planning and development and a legacy beyond the implementation of the Public Engagement Strategy.

The PEC has been prepared based on the understanding that commitments are necessary to be made by three main groups of participants of the engagement process; namely: Mayor and Council, staff and the public. It is recognized that Mayor and Council, citizens, and staff each have a responsibility to participate and engage in shaping the future of the community. It encourages citizens to make a commitment to participate and engage in dialogue about the future of our community, and offers ways to do so. Some of the key guiding principles that set the general direction for the Township to build organizational capacity and become an engagement-friendly and responsive community-serving institution include:

- early, ongoing, and meaningful opportunities for participation;
- inclusivity, representativeness, and diversity in participation;
- accountability, transparency, and responsiveness;
- clear, simple, and timely communications;
- making appropriate information available at the right time in a variety of ways;
- identifying and eliminating barriers to participation;
- making engagement activities fun and worthwhile for all ages;
- providing staff and funding resources for engagement activities;
- considering input gathered and providing rationale for decisions;
- building mutual trust and respect; and
- evaluating results and improving engagement activities on an ongoing basis.

It is recommended that Council adopt the Public Engagement Charter for Planning and Development.

Respectfully submitted,

Jason Chu
MANAGER, LONG RANGE PLANNING

This report has been prepared in consultation with the following listed departments.

CONCURRENCES	
Division / Department	Name
CORPORATE ADMINISTRATION DIVISION	V. Gafka

ATTACHMENT A DRAFT PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT CHARTER FOR
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

ATTACHMENT B SUMMARY OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

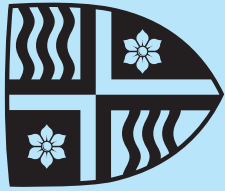
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Policy Framework and Process

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The Public Engagement Charter builds on a high-level policy framework, which aims to build a sustainable community characterized by a high quality of life and active citizen participation, as follows:

- In 2008, the Township of Langley adopted the Sustainability Charter to build a legacy for future generations by leading and committing the community to a lifestyle that is socially, culturally, economically, and environmentally balanced. The Sustainability Charter aims to integrate and balance competing community expectations, by committing to community involvement: “Council believes that open, inclusive, and consultative community involvement is vital to effective decision making.”
- The Official Community Plan (2013, at third reading) has a goal to support meaningful community engagement: “Good planning requires transparent and collective decision making for the long-term good of the community. Meaningful community engagement during the planning process (especially at the neighbourhood level) promotes greater understanding and more responsive decisions.”
- In 2015, a Mayor’s Standing Committee on Public Engagement was struck to explore better ways of engaging residents and enhancing communications between the public and Council. The Mayor’s Standing Committee presented a draft Public Engagement Strategy for Planning and Development, which was adopted by Council in March 2016. One of the main deliverables is a Public Engagement Charter.
- On May 30, 2016, Council received a draft Public Engagement Charter for Planning and Development. The draft Charter was based on the work of the Mayor’s Standing Committee, a review of best practices, provincial legislation, current Township policies, and discussions with staff. In addition, a public open house was held on June 7, 2016 to obtain community input. Other engagement activities included an online project website and online input opportunities that took place between June 7 and June 29, 2016.
- On _____, Council adopted the Public Engagement Charter.



Public Engagement Charter



The Public Engagement Charter commits the Township of Langley to strengthen a spirit of collaboration and to ensure meaningful community consultation contributing to the best possible quality of life for all residents, current and future.

Aspirations

The Township of Langley aspires to:

- initiate deeper dialogues among Council, staff, and community stakeholders
- foster mutual understanding of roles and responsibilities for all involved
- provide the right information at the right time
- explore ideas and information that enrich a policy direction which also incorporates best practices and technical studies
- have greater responsiveness and creativity in providing solutions and strategies
- promote civic pride as the community grows and changes



Principles

Guiding Principles set the general direction for the Township of Langley to build organizational capacity and become an engagement-friendly and responsive community-serving institution. The following Guiding Principles establish the fundamental standards for public engagement:

- provide early, ongoing, and meaningful opportunities for participation
- strive for inclusivity, representativeness, and diversity in participation
- ensure accountability, transparency, and responsiveness
- provide clear, simple, and timely communications
- make appropriate information available at the right time in a variety of ways
- identify and eliminate barriers to participation
- make engagement activities fun and worthwhile for all ages
- provide sufficient staff and funding resources for engagement activities
- consider input gathered and provide rationale for decisions
- build mutual trust and respect
- evaluate results and improve engagement activities on an ongoing basis

Commitments

As a responsive community-serving institution, the Township of Langley is committed to public engagement as an

organizational priority, by implementing the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Public Participation to inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and empower residents.

Mayor and Council, citizens, and staff have a responsibility to participate and engage in shaping the future of our community.

Mayor and Council are committed to:

- valuing public input as a community asset
- identifying, supporting, and funding public engagement opportunities
- raising awareness of public engagement opportunities among all residents
- remaining neutral during public engagement activities
- reviewing public engagement processes, including input gathering, participation rates, findings, and staff recommendations
- retaining their right as duly elected officials to make decisions which they feel are most appropriate for the overall community


Citizens are committed to:

- being informed of planning and development issues and processes
- understanding the decision-making process
- obtaining information from trusted and reliable sources
- sharing accurate information and raising the awareness of fellow citizens
- contributing constructively to minimize conflict
- offering perspectives and identifying important issues to address
- listening to others with an open mind and recognizing that no one has all the answers
- acknowledging the potential for compromise in evaluating options thoughtfully

Staff are committed to:

- identifying planning and development initiatives for public engagement
- designing engagement activities that include timely and appropriate communications
- supporting broad citizen awareness to reduce barriers to participation
- using diverse engagement tools and formats most suited to a variety of audiences
- reporting back to participants, including recommendations and decisions made
- acting with professionalism and consistency



	<h2 style="margin: 0;">Public Engagement Charter</h2> <p style="margin: 10px 0 0 0;">June 6, 2016 Open House</p> <h2 style="margin: 0;">Summary of Questionnaire Results</h2>
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Total Number of Respondents: 10

Overall, how satisfied are you with the draft Public Engagement Charter? Circle one; 1 is least satisfied and 5 is most satisfied.

1	2	3	4	5
0	1	3	4	2

How much do you agreed with the following statement? The draft Public Engagement Charter would meet the future community engagement needs of the Township of Langley.

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
0	1	3	4	2

What do you like most about the Aspirations of the draft Public Engagement charter?

- I like the ideology of broadening the core of people that typically engage in our democratic process.
- I like that there will be more opportunities for the public to voice their opinion - not only at Council meetings.
- Promote civic pride as the community grows and changes.
- When the public are engaged they have a sense of pride & commitment and are less likely to be negative.
- More communication with the citizens.
- Needs more thought in Willoughby area.
- Aspirations are good deliverables are better.
- The part about providing the right info at the right time.
- Positive focus on involvement of council, staff & community. Requirements for responsiveness: creativity in providing strategies.

What do you like most about the Principles of the draft Public Engagement Charter?

- It seems there is an overall approach to more public input and awareness.
- Opportunity to build mutual trust and respect.
- All of them; but especially “build mutual trust & respect” & “evaluate results and improve engagement activities on an ongoing basis.
- All of it but mostly the last 3.
- Providing information in a timely fashion, using a variety of ways.
- Strive for inclusivity, representatives and diversity in participation.
- Principles are good but results are better.
- Timely communication, variety of ways.
- Requirement for accountability, transparency& responsiveness. Sufficient staff and finding resources for engagement. Goal to build mutual trust: respect.

What do you like least about the draft Principles Engagement Charter?

- I dislike the use of words like “fun”. I feel it leaves too much room for misuse in keeping facts available in the interest of coming across “boring”.
- I wonder how feasible they really are to achieve in real life.
- None
- Nothing
- No mention of prospective developer requirements.
- Principles should deliver a quality product not a developer’s vision of a community.
- It appears to be comprehensive.

What do you like most about the Commitments of the draft Public Engagement Charter?

- I like raising awareness and trying to engage more people in the process.
- Raising awareness of opportunities.
- Valuing public input as a community asset.
- Pretty well all of it.
- Valuing public input & remaining neutral.
- Valuing public input as a community asset.
- Commitments must lead to Action will it?
- It seems encompassing.
- Last point “retain their right...” under “community” means the TOL or the specific community (Brookwood/Willoughby, etc.).

What do you like least about the draft Commitments Engagement Charter?

- I have a little concern with the term “trusted & reliable” sources. It can be read as only sources approved by Council. That would defeat the purpose of independent research.
- “Retaining their right as duly elected officials to make decisions which they feel are most appropriate for the overall community” when their campaigns are heavily financed by developers.

- The last statement under Mayor and Council; could leave the door open to accommodate/listen to developers over citizens.
- Telling the citizens they have to be committed to this plan instead of showing why they should be.
- But I don't see where the "buy-in" is for current staff.

What specific changes /improvements would like to see made as part of revisions to the draft Public Engagement Charter?

- I would like the charter to include more concise language with regards to how can reach a broader market without "dumbing it down" so to speak.
- None
- More specifics on how the communication is going to be accomplished.
- A better plan for Willoughby especially on 208 Street 64 to 78.
- Start the process then revisit to make improvements.
- A way to recognize local community groups.

Please provide other comments about the draft Public Engagement Charter

- I think that the engagement process needs to incorporate avenues for independent research & studies to be incorporated, or at least considered, when looking at a planning process. I would also like to see a more specific discussion with regards to funding, i.e. engagement process should be set by a council elected committee that is independent of the prospective developer but is funded by the prospective developers.
- I think this sounds great – however this 'Charter' doesn't seem to be being used currently by Council - is there an implementation date?
- If it is the intent to change the 'culture' of staff and Council, it is going to be a very large challenge. "Policy Framework and Process". Good planning requires transparent and collective decision making for the long term good of the community. I truly believe that first staff and then Council do not take this as priority #1 when making ongoing development planning & rezoning decisions. TOL should maintain a long term relationship with Modus. They display an integrity that the process needs in order to develop community trust.
- There is a lot to be gained with this Charter and hopefully that will be the end result – both with Township and citizens. Sometimes the understanding of things is what it takes to come to mutual agreement & acceptance. Respect is paramount to both people and the environment. Meaningful engagement should lead to responsible decision making.
- I am surprised that in this day and age electronic communication with the public is almost non-existent. This needs to be developed quickly.
- Make concerns have been identified already but still need to be addressed, for example, schools, street upgrades, transit, and parking.
- Engagement often waits until decision time and then the real input comes to a climax
- Details on "Process" are missing or limited.
- Some way to tell the hundreds of new residents how they can become involved – specifically addressed. A way to create "community" by somehow contacting new residents – eg. We didn't know you were having this except we stumbled on it by accident.

- Overall looks great and glad to be from the TOL where public opinion and engagement is being given the value it deserves – on paper. Looking forward to seeing council take this into their roles and apply to their position as Elective Officials
- I was fortunate enough to be able to observe the Mayor's Standing Committee on Public Engagement tackle the difficult issue of "improving engagement" in the Township of Langley. In the end, I am of two minds about the process of engagement: I appreciate that collaboration and cooperation can result in better decision-making, better problem-solving and more satisfied participants. On the other hand, the process of trying to engage the public can be viewed as patronizing, especially where there is deep conflict among citizens. Adults do not want to be handled or placated and as much as we would like to, some people cannot always be reasoned with.
- What the Charter will do, I think is keep the idea that citizens should be consulted on what is happening in their neighbourhoods at the top-of-mind for staff, which is a good thing. Hopefully this will develop into a culture of inclusivity.
- May I suggest that you pare down and simplify the Charter to one page and then develop a policy statement on how you will implement the ideas values expressed in the Charter. I would avoid telling citizens that they must be committed to or agree to "rules" in order to participate in processes. I would like to see something included about Staff's responsibility to ensure the accuracy of information provided to the public and to correct misinformation disseminated through the media. I believe this was one of the failures identified by the consultants in their review of the case studies.
- Overall problems with the Charter:
 1. One of the many problems of this Charter is the lack of definitions and the omission of statements of rights and values. What is a "high quality of life" for example? For some people, just the opportunity to have someplace decent to live or to own home is a high quality of life. Others demand lots of amenities and speedy resolutions to their problems in order to claim a high quality of life. Secondly, for example, how far does the citizen's right to information extend. Is the default position of the Township going to be privacy or transparency and will that determination vary, as it should, depending upon the stage of the process and the task at hand ?
 2. Another problem is the lack of concrete goals by which success can be measured. A goal such as ensuring that citizen inquiries are replied to promptly, is a goal that can be measured. We can know how often government is able to meet this expectation and staff can always strive to be better.
 3. The poor rate of participation in the engagement process that resulted in this document is problematic. I was disappointed by the low numbers of people who participated in the engagement open houses and therefore the few people who gave their input on the future of engagement in the Township. It perhaps confirmed my impression that most people will only come out when they feel passionate about a specific issue. Engagement was simply too nebulous a concept for many people to want to spend time on. I was also disappointed, but not surprised by the homogeneity of the participants. On a *per capita* basis most participants were older and were from Brookwood and Fort Langley –two neighbourhoods where rancour over development has recently occurred. Low attendance challenges the validity of the outcome.
 4. Cost: Engagement appears to be an expensive endeavour. There is a price tag to keeping people informed and encouraging feedback. I would like to see a mechanism that would enable the Township to evaluate the effectiveness of certain engagement expenditures and a way for citizens to learn how much it

costs to ensure public participation in the planning process. Will the budget for engagement depend upon the endeavour? Will people have to sign up to participate (sort of RSVP) before money is allotted to the process. What if no one (or very few) shows up? Engagement needs to be scalable.

- Specific issues:
 - Aspirations for the Township:
 - a) *“Initiate deeper dialogues among Council, staff and community stakeholders”*. The phrase “community stakeholders” needs to be clarified in each circumstance. Some people do not recognize that “developers” are also interested parties in our community. Renters as well as property owners are members of the community. But some do have greater financial interests and or emotional stakes in a given community/neighbourhood than others and that inequality does not need to be acknowledge and dealt with somehow. (Venn diagrams might help in some circumstances.)
 - b) *“foster mutual understanding of roles and responsibilities for all involved.”* Roles and responsibilities are generally not well understood in many organizations. Participants need to be directed to specific enabling legislation that spells out the responsibilities of the municipal government in each circumstance. Sometimes roles are circumspect because that is what has been established by the provincial government.
 - c) *“Provide the right information at the right time”* is too abstract to be useful, and frankly, sounds like a motto. Do you mean “correct information”, do you mean necessary information, do you mean the most complete information? Information can evolve, it can be basic and it can change drastically. I would rather hear that current information will be accessible at important junctures in the process.
 - d) *“explore ideas and information that enrich a policy direction which also incorporates best practices and technical studies”*. I have no idea what this means. Perhaps provide an example.
 - e) *“have greater responsiveness and creativity providing solutions and strategies”*. Does this mean the government aspires to be more responsive to the public and to provide more creative strategies and solutions to problems?
 - f) *“promote civic pride as the community grows and changes”*. I think you could stop at “promote civic pride”. Or perhaps you mean encourage a sense of community.
- Principles: [I think these are more guidelines or goals than principles]
 - *“provide early, ongoing and meaningful opportunities for participation”*
 - *“strive for inclusivity, representativeness and diversity in participation”*
 - *“ensure accountability, transparency and responsiveness”*
 - *“provide clear, simple and timely communication”* (I would add the word “concise” to this after simple)
 - Paragraphs a) though d) are well stated and are measureable to some degree.
 - e) *“make appropriate information available at the right time in a variety of ways”* This seems to be just restarting and slightly expanding item 1(c). Use one or the other rather than being repetitive.
 - f) *“identify and eliminate barriers to participation”* The is part and parcel of 2(b) and I think that it unnecessary in a Charter, It is more like a direction to staff or a general policy statement for all Township actions.

- g) *“make engagement activities fun and worthwhile for all ages”* Why do you think we need to be entertained by our government or that this is something the taxpayer would agree to pay for? This is bordering on patronizing. I would eliminate this guideline.
- h) *“provide sufficient staff and funding resources for engagement activities”* I don’t know how you are going to accomplish 2 a-d without this, however it is a questionable “principle” in a Charter. Are you simply signalling to the public that the process of engagement is costly?
- i) *“consider input gathered and provide rationale for decisions”* Having reasons attached to a decision is always a good idea and should not necessarily depend upon the engagement process. What if no one participates does that mean there is no requirement for giving reasons?
- Commitments: [This whole section is problematic. Some of these comments seem better placed in a policy statement than a Charter and many others of them are better stated as responsibilities rather than commitments. Good luck arguing that citizens’ participation should be discounted because they failed to follow the commitments.]

a) Mayor and Council are committed to:

- i. *valuing public input as a community asset.* This should not have to be said.
- ii. *identifying, supporting and funding public engagement opportunities.* If the budget allows?
- iii. *raising awareness of public engagement opportunities among all residents.* Is this really a function for elected officials?
- iv. *remaining neutral of public engagement activities.* Does this mean throughout the whole process? Is there no opportunity for officials to provide their opinions during the process? Is there no opportunity for officials to provide their opinions during the process? When is the appropriate time for councillors to release their reasons for a particular endeavour, because people do expect to be able to debate with them? This was brought up during the Mayor’s standing committee. It seems to me that you are expecting officials to act in a quasi-judicial fashion throughout the process instead of primarily at the public hearing phase.
- v. *reviewing public engagement processes, including input gathering, participation rates, findings and staff recommendations.* This seems to be a self-evident statement about what constitutes their job.
- vi. *retaining their right as duly elected officials to make decisions which they feel are most appropriate for the overall community.* No matter what, officials will not be able to please all of the people all of the time and sometimes they won’t be able to please most people. Citizens can accept or reject their reasons for their actions and elect them or not at the next opportunity. Are you reminding the public what the official’s job is?

b) Citizens are committed to:

[This section is particularly patronizing. Why do you find it necessary to remind people not to rely on rumour and innuendo when engaging with the Township? Some people do so routinely in their lives; those who do so before the Charter will continue to do so after the Charter. Why don’t you entitle this section “Rules of Engagement”]

- i. *being informed of planning and development issue and processes.* What happens if some people are not informed? Do we all get to ignore what they say?

- ii. *understanding the decision-making process* This is a pretty tall order for most people not involved in the decision making process and even some involved in the process seem to lack understanding at times.
 - iii. *obtaining information from a trusted and reliable sources* Are you going to provide a list of reliable sources? Are you going to ask for the identification of sources of information to ensure reliability before are allowed to contribute. Do you intend to enforce this?
 - iv. *sharing accurate information and raising the awareness of fellow citizens* Seems to me that you are asking that people not to gossip and to correct others when they are wrong.
 - v. *contributing constructively to minimize conflict* This seems like a rule of engagement. If you cannot contribute constructively, will you be asked to leave?
 - vi. *offering perspectives and identifying important issues to address* Okay, isn't that what people would be doing as a matter of course? Do you really have to remind them of what they are to do?
 - vii. *listening to others with an open mind and recognizing that no one has all the answers* You mean we should all act like civilized people?
 - viii. *acknowledging the potential for compromise in evaluating options thoughtfully.* Are you suggesting that participants be should be willing to compromise? How will compromise be achieved when it doesn't "cost" the participants anything to "stick to their guns"?
- c) Staff are committed to:
- (This section seems to be terms of reference for staff for the purpose of engaging the public)
- i. *identifying planning and development initiatives for public engagement*
 - ii. *designing engagement activities that include timely and appropriate communications*
 - iii. *supporting broad citizen awareness to reduce barriers to participation*
 - iv. *using diverse engagement tools and formats most suited to a variety of audiences*
 - v. *reporting back to participants, including recommendations and decisions made*