

DATE OF MEETING APRIL 8, 2018

AUTHORED BY SHEILA GURRIE, CITY CLERK AND CORPORATE OFFICER

SUBJECT **CITY OF NANAIMO ENGAGEMENT**

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To provide the Governance and Priorities Committee with an update on the current status of City of Nanaimo Engagement and future opportunities to further engagement.

Recommendation

That the report titled “City of Nanaimo Engagement”, dated 2019-APR-08, be received for information.

DISCUSSION

This Council has outlined good governance and management excellence as a theme of their Draft Strategic Plan. Engagement is part of good governance and the City is continually taking steps to improve and enhance engagement opportunities. Currently, there are many ways the City and Council engage with the public and most of these methods of engagement are above and beyond Council’s statutory duties outlined in legislation.

Some examples of engagement currently carried out by the City are as follows:

Council meetings, Public Hearings, ETown Halls, meeting agendas, meeting minutes, meeting notices; meeting videos, Project reports, presentations, event calendar. Twitter, Facebook, news releases, newspaper ads, activity guide, website, blogs, information posts, project pages, project videos and education videos, surveys, maps, pictures, newsletters, email, other correspondence, other public meetings (open houses, roundtables, other engagement meetings), hearing from delegations, opportunities provided for feedback, committees, phone calls, etc.

When examining engagement processes, it is important to review it in comparison to an engagement continuum such as the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Public Participation. Using the IAP2 spectrum Staff must examine where Council’s public engagement goals fall within the spectrum. Local Government, has many statutory duties it must follow outlined in legislation, with no opportunity for compromise. Many of the City’s engagement opportunities therefore, fall under the “inform” or “consult” methods of engagement under this spectrum. It is important to note that not all projects or initiatives of Council could, or should, be further than the “inform” end of the spectrum; however, everything the City does, engages with the public on this scale in some way.

While moving forward and searching for new or different ways to engage, Council has asked Staff to search for other opportunities to increase and improve engagement. The City is fortunate that it has a team of staff that are committed to improving engagement and are always looking for new and innovative ways to engage with its citizens. For example, the City's Communication and Marketing Specialist has suggested the City invest in better online engagement tools such as "Place Speak" or "Bang the Table". This would allow for a more fulsome way of online engagement for City projects and initiatives and also allow for us to gather and report on statistical data to know what is working and what is not. Staff will be bringing forward a request for funding "Bang the Table" at a future meeting. Additionally, Staff recommend, based on feedback from the Special Committee of the Whole (sCOW) workshop on 2019-FEB-25, that Council schedule a Town Hall type meeting in May. This will be six months after the General Election and therefore, a great time to hear from the public on the work Council has accomplished.

Additional tools to attempt to enhance engagement opportunities include a recommendation from Staff coming to the next Finance and Audit Committee requesting that Council adopt the implementation of closed captioning for better accessibility of council meetings. Council would be a leader in this initiative, as there is only one other municipality in Canada utilizing this feature through our software provider eSCRIBE.

The Community Engagement Task Force's final report and recommendations, highlight different methods of engagement and how they are suitable for various engagement opportunities needed. The work done by the Task Force and final report notes that not all methods (World Café, Open House, etc.) will work for all types of meetings and engagement processes. The methods investigated and the work done by the Task Force can be utilized in many future engagement opportunities the City undertakes. An example of the Task Force's work being successful was when the Bylaw Department mirrored one of their four engagement sessions and the event was a huge success. Other City departments, and Council, can incorporate these methods, based on the engagement necessary and desired, based on the project or topic.

Finally, as we continue to enhance engagement at the City of Nanaimo, the City's new Manager of Communications will be working on assessing communications across the organization, and will help facilitate the use of a variety of engagement tools when communicating out on the City's projects and initiatives. After an analysis has been completed, there will be another report to Council on our continuing improvements. With amendments planned for the "Council Procedure Bylaw 2018 No. 7272" the Manager of Communications will have a role in determining engagement opportunities with respect to delegations, and the use of alternative methods for Council to engage with the public in order to hear their thoughts on matters involving the City.

SUMMARY POINTS

- Engagement is part of good governance and the City is continually taking steps to improve and enhance engagement opportunities.
- Local Government, has statutory duties it must follow outlined in legislation, with no opportunity for compromise.
- Staff are committed to improving engagement and are always looking for new and innovative ways to engage citizens.
- The City's new Manager of Communications will be working on assessing communications across the organization, and will help facilitate the use of a variety of engagement tools when communicating out on the City's projects and initiatives.

Submitted by:

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