



AGENDA ITEM

MUNICIPAL PLANNING COMMISSION

Public Participation

June 11, 2020

BACKGROUND

Based on current public health guidance due to COVID-19, Alberta continues to restrict gatherings during Stage 1 of relaunch to protect Albertans' health and limit the spread of COVID-19. During Stage 1 of Alberta's relaunch, gatherings are restricted to no more than 15 people allowed in one indoor location, and must still maintain mandated physical distancing of at least 2 metres from each other.

There is potential that during Stage 2 of Alberta's relaunch, larger gatherings might be permitted in some situations, with the number of people to be determined when Stage 2 is announced. Until we are provided with further details from the province, we cannot be sure of the gathering restrictions in place for Municipal Planning Commission (MPC) Meetings to allow all interested members of the public to attend the meetings in person.

Similar to the process that was recently approved by Council, MPC has the option to use Zoom to livestream the meeting and allow participants to listen in and/or participate through Zoom.

Staff feel that this is an appropriate option in these times in order to allow the public to participate if large amount of participants are interested in an application or members of the public are concerned about participating due to the current COVID -19 concerns.

MPC also has the ability to continue to only allow in person participation in combination with the livestreaming into the office foyer. MPC participation is not typically above the numbers allowed through gathering restrictions, but there are times when the numbers will exceed 15 people and monitoring will be needed.

LEGISLATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

The *Municipal Government Act* gives Council the ability to designate an authority to exercise development powers. The Land Use Bylaw designates that the Municipal Planning Commission shall make decisions on certain discretionary use applications.

Section 2.2(5) outlines that the Municipal Planning Commission shall hold public meetings as are necessary to preform their duties.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Lacombe County sees the value in engaging the public through a variety of mediums and is committed to open, accountable and responsive decision making, including different levels of engagement with the public as outlined in the *Policy AD(40): Public Participation Policy*. The levels of engagement within the policy are as follows:

- *Inform*: To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.
- *Consult*: To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.
- *Involve*: To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.
- *Collaborate*: To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.
- *Empower*: To place final decision making in the hands of the public.

A Municipal Planning Commission meeting allows members of the public to provide input into proposed development applications prior to Municipal Planning Commission consideration (*Inform* and *Consult*).

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommend that the public be authorized to participate in Municipal Planning Commission meetings by electronic means during the COVID-19 pandemic.

MPC DECISION

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