

Report on Public Engagement Options for Budget

Council Request

April 13, 2021

Motion

- On November 26, 2019 Council passed a motion that directed Administration to provide a report by the start of the second quarter of 2020 outlining logistics, timing and costs of options for providing a specific annual opportunity for residents to have input on upcoming yearly budgets, the report to address the following:
 - Opportunities for resident input to be provided prior to the end of July each year to allow timely consideration of the input;
 - Include recommendations on how the input is to be received, and who would receive the input

Approach planning

- Corporate Planning and Communications met with Councillors individually to understand desired outcomes of budget engagement
- Further planning discussions held with subject matter experts to identify and analyze public engagement options
- Released 2021 budget documents early through news release/social media/Councillor toolkit - Call for opportunities for public to ask questions and/or send in comments regarding the budget

Desired outcomes

- Stakeholders and the public feel they have input into budget issues that are important to them
- Both rural and urban stakeholders' views are considered as part of the budget deliberations
- Increase understanding on how the County's strategic planning and budgeting process works
- Ensure budget engagement takes into account other engagement efforts and supports current planning/budgeting processes

Public engagement and planning

- Public engagement shapes our corporate plan and budget recommendations
 - Strathcona County surveys (SCOOP) and Satisfaction Surveys – community perspectives
 - Master plan development includes extensive engagement – stakeholder input supports long-term operational plans e.g. Recreation and Culture Strategy, Tourism Strategy, Social Framework
 - Master plan priorities drive business cases that are considered in planning
- Gaps
 - Master plan engagement does not express budget implications of desired infrastructure and service level increases
 - Lack of stakeholder understanding of the broad scope of municipal programs and services and cost

2020 public engagement

- Animal Control Bylaw
- Broadband
- COVID Task Forces' engagement including session with small and medium businesses, agricultural business engagement session, annual summit, advisory committees, Strathcona County 2020 COVID-19 survey
- Indoor Fieldhouse
- Recreation and Culture Strategy
- South of Wye
- Sustainable Rural Roads Master Plan – first phase
- Southwest Strathcona County Functional Planning Study
- Tourism Strategy – residents and businesses
- Waste Management Road Map
- 63 external surveys were conducted in 2020 on a variety of topics (including four major surveys related to seniors)

2021 public engagement

- Astotin Creek Water Management Study
- Community Standards Bylaw
- Dog off-leash park potential expansions
- Election
- Emergency Services Long-Range Plan
- Environmental Framework
- Further engagement on indoor fieldhouse
- Further engagement on South of Wye
- Further engagement on Southwest Strathcona County Functional Planning Study
- Integrated Transportation Master Plan
- North Strathcona Regional Park
- Seniors hub
- Monthly SCOOP surveys

2021 recommendations (2022 budget)

- No in-person public engagement due to COVID
- Minimal public engagement given all the work that has been done to engage and the fact that it is an election year
- Communications can support virtual meetings between individual Councillors and their constituents prior to budget deliberations
- Non-statutory public hearing at budget time
- Option - Include some budget related questions in mixed topic SCOOP surveys prior to budget (would need Council direction on what question(s) you would like some data on – proposed tax rate?)

2022 and onward recommendations

- Implement a combination of public engagement approaches that support the business planning and budgeting process
 - Survey(s)
 - Key questions related to
 - High level planning direction
 - Longer-term strategic planning considerations and
 - General business planning/budget considerations
 - Input will inform the multi-year planning process for the following year – taxes, priorities, etc.
 - Public engagement with Council in attendance
 - Opportunity for residents
 - Dialogue with Mayor and Council
 - Voice specific opportunities, challenges, desires
 - Learn more about planning process and strategic direction
 - Host rural and urban event(s)