



LEGISLATIVE SERVICES

TO: Council
DATE: July 27, 2021 **DIVISION:** All
FILE: N/A **APPLICATION:** N/A
SUBJECT: Public Hearing Participation Methods

POLICY DIRECTION:

Rocky View County's *Procedure Bylaw* outlines how the public can participate in public hearings at Council meetings.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Beginning in December of 2020, public participation in Council meetings was varied as a result of the COVID-19 restrictions in the province.

With the restrictions in the province being lifted, Administration recommends that Council meetings return to in-person attendance and presentations, starting in September. The public can participate, as per the *Procedure Bylaw*, with written submissions in advance and in-person presentations.

Administration also recommends that minor amendments be made to the *Procedure Bylaw* that gives the public the option to submit audio/video presentations.

If Council wishes to make this change for the September public hearings, amendments to the *Procedure Bylaw* have been included for Council's consideration. Any additional amendment suggestions can be reviewed with the fulsome review of the *Procedure Bylaw* that is planned for the fall of 2021.

ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION:

Administration recommends approval in accordance with Option 1.

BACKGROUND:

The *Meeting Procedures (COVID-19 Suppression) Regulation* set out by the province allowed public meetings to be held electronically during the COVID-19 restrictions. This changed the way the public could participate in public hearings at Rocky View County. During this period, in addition to advance written submissions, the public were allowed to participate in the following ways:

- Submission of audio/video presentations to be played during the meeting; and
- Submission of emails during the public hearing.

Audio/video Presentations

Individuals and groups who would like to make a presentation to Council rather than submitting a letter could submit an audio/video submissions. Administration received feedback that this method of submission was well utilized by residents, albeit there were learning curves by both Administration and the residents. It was appreciated that even though County Hall was closed to the public they could still be seen by Council during the public hearing.

Administration Resources

Michelle Mitton, Legislative Services



This method of submission requires minimal Administration resources and provides an additional, effective method for public participation.

Live Emails

Prior to COVID restrictions, the public could attend public hearings in-person, listen to presentations by Administration and the Applicant, and then speak to Council. This would allow speakers to adjust their presentations according to any information they heard during the presentations. To approximate these conditions during the restrictions, live email submissions were allowed during the hearings and presented to Council, Administration and the applicant prior to the rebuttal by the applicant. The *Meeting Procedures (COVID-19 Suppression) Regulation* that allowed the allowed public meetings to be held electronically during the COVID-19 restrictions contained a requirement that allowed for a live form of participation during electronic hearings.

The live email submissions provided two benefits to residents, the ability to hear information and then provide a submission, and the ability to submit late letters that were not received in time to be included in the agenda package.

However, live email submissions are resource intensive for Administration who must manage, redact, and distribute them during the hearing. At times, the live emails were used by residents to send in multiple emails and comments during the public hearing, rather than a single, comprehensive submission.

RECOMMENDATION:

During the restrictions, Administration received feedback from the public indicating satisfaction that they could still have their voices heard during a public hearing with more than the submission of a letter in the agenda. With the province returning to normal and Council meetings slated to return to in-person attendance in September, Administration recommends that the public be allowed the ability to submit audio/video presentations in advance of the hearing. This will allow for greater public participation and provide a participation opportunity for those who cannot attend the meeting or are not comfortable attending County Hall in-person.

With the return to in-person meetings and presentations, Administration recommends discontinuing the use of live email submissions during the hearings.

Administration is currently undertaking a fulsome review of the *Procedure Bylaw*, to be considered by Council in the fall of 2021, after the Municipal Election. Items such as length of presentations, definition of a group, and remote participation will be examined through this review and vetted with Council. If there are any additional changes that Council wishes to consider in terms of public hearing procedure, Administration would appreciate direction to review as part of the Procedure Bylaw Review process. The proposed amendment to include audio/video presentations is minor and will allow this practice to continue for the September Public hearings.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS:

There are no budget implications.



COMMUNICATIONS PLAN:

Public participation in Council meetings is outlined in the public hearing notices and on the Rocky View County website.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

Council’s Strategic Plan includes the strategic objective of creating a culture of customer service. This objective falls under the strategic theme of service excellence.

OPTIONS:

- Option #1: Motion 1: THAT Bylaw C-8216-2021 be given first reading.
- Motion 2: THAT Bylaw C-8216-2021 be given second reading.
- Motion 3: THAT Bylaw C-8216-2021 be considered for third reading.
- Motion 4: THAT Bylaw C-8216-2021 be given third and final reading.
- Option #2: THAT alternative direction be provided.

Respectfully submitted,

Concurrence,

“Amy Zaluski”

“Kent Robinson”

Director, Legislative Services

Acting Chief Administrative Officer

MM

ATTACHMENTS:

ATTACHMENT ‘A’: Bylaw C-8216-2021