

Council Meeting Public Input Policy

Date adopted by Council: February 25, 2025



1. POLICY STATEMENT

This policy establishes a framework for public participation in Council meetings, enabling individuals to provide feedback on Town matters. Through multiple avenues of engagement, the Town of Lunenburg seeks to ensure open communication, encourage community involvement, and support informed decision-making

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish clear procedures for presentations, public input, and correspondence at Council meetings.

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all individuals and organizations wishing to participate in or engage with the Town of Lunenburg's Council meetings. This includes, but is not limited to, presentations, public input, correspondence, public hearing submissions, and petitions.

4. DEFINITIONS

"Accommodation Request" is a formal request submitted by an individual seeking modifications or adjustments to facilitate their participation in public meetings.

"Input" refers to any comments, questions, or feedback provided by individuals or organizations regarding municipal affairs during Council meetings. This includes verbal contributions during public input sessions, written submissions, and other communication directed toward Council.

"Operational responsibilities of the CAO and staff" refer to the duties and activities that fall within the scope of the day-to-day administration, management, and execution of municipal plans, policies, and programs.

"Presentation" is an organized and formal delivery of information to the Council during a Council or Committee of the Whole meeting

"Public Hearing" refers to a formal process held during a regular or special Council meeting where Council considers public input on specific matters, such as proposed bylaws or other significant issues.

5. PRESENTATIONS AT COUNCIL MEETINGS

Presentations are made at Council meetings or, when practical, at Committee of the Whole meetings.

A maximum of two presentations may be made at any meeting.

For the purpose of this policy, Council will only hear presentations that fall into one of the following four categories:

- Updating Council on local or regional initiatives, projects, budgets, or operations.
- Raising Council's awareness of community initiatives or projects.
- Highlighting topics of significant public interest or impact on the community that affect the broader community rather than individual concerns.
- Celebrating successes and achievements of local or regional volunteer-based or not-for-profit organizations with a social, cultural, economic, or environmental well-being in their mandate.

Presentations must be respectful and free of personal attacks, defamatory statements, or offensive language.

These presentations will be allotted 15 minutes (10 minutes for the presentation and 5 minutes for questions from Council to the presenter).

Presentations are deemed to be for informational purposes only. If Council wishes to proceed with binding decisions based on the content of a presentation, a notice of motion is required. Non-binding or procedural actions, such as requesting additional information or directing staff to review the matter further, may be initiated through a motion at the same meeting.

6. PROHIBITED PRESENTATION REQUEST

The following types of presentation requests will generally be refused to ensure Council meetings remain efficient and focused on matters within their authority. Exceptions may be made at Council's discretion if the presentation provides significant new information, highlights matters of public interest, or aligns with the Town's strategic priorities:

- **Promotional Presentations:** Requests solely for the promotion of private businesses, groups, or individuals, unless they involve initiatives that align with community or municipal objectives.
- **Matters Outside Jurisdiction:** Subjects that do not fall within the legislative or decision-making authority of the Town of Lunenburg.

- **Public Hearing Topics:** Matters for which a public hearing has already been held or is currently scheduled, to avoid duplication and maintain the integrity of the formal public hearing process.
- **Operational Topics:** Topics that fall exclusively within the operational responsibilities of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) and staff, unless they raise issues of significant public concern requiring Council's awareness.
- **Duplicate Presentations:** Requests that duplicate or closely replicate topics discussed within the past six months, unless they provide significant new information, updates, or perspectives.

The CAO will inform the Council of any presentation requests not granted and provide the rationale for the refusal.

6.2 Subsequent Presentation Requests

Requests to present again on the same matter will only be allowed if the new presentation includes substantial new information, perspectives, or updates not shared before, such as new data, research, evidence, or changed circumstances.

7. PUBLIC INPUT AT COUNCIL MEETINGS

At regular Council meetings, the public can comment and ask questions during the agenda item titled "Public Input and Questions," which will be included as a standing item on all regular agendas. During this period, the public may address any municipal or community matter relevant to the Town of Lunenburg, following these guidelines:

- Topics must relate to Town affairs, services, or community issues.
- Comments and questions must be respectful and constructive.
- Individual speakers are limited to three minutes each, with a maximum of 20 minutes allocated for public input per meeting.

All questions and comments should be directed to the Chair to maintain order and facilitate discussion.

7.2 Follow-up for Public Input and Questions

If information is readily available, staff or Council will address comments or questions during the "Public Input and Questions" section.

For follow-up requests requiring new documents, detailed analysis, or significant staff time, Council must direct staff to take further action. The requester will be informed of the outcome, including any anticipated timelines.

8. CORRESPONDENCE

The public may submit correspondence for possible inclusion in a Council agenda package. To be considered, correspondence must:

- Be addressed to the Mayor and Council.
- Include the sender's full name and contact information.
- Be relevant to matters within Council's jurisdiction.
- Be respectful and free of personal attacks, defamatory statements, or offensive language.

Written Submissions: Letters, emails, or other text-based documents should not exceed two pages. Supporting materials may be attached, but the primary submission must summarize key points within the page limit.

Audiovisual Submissions: Videos or audio recordings should not exceed three minutes. Exceptions may be made for accessibility needs or complex topics

Correspondence will be listed under "Correspondence for Action or Information."

"Correspondence for Action" includes items requiring Council's decision or aligned with existing Town policies (e.g., letters of support, proclamations, flag raisings)

"Correspondence for Information" includes all other submissions.

Correspondence is generally considered for informational purposes. If Council wishes to proceed with binding decisions based on correspondence, a notice of motion is required. Non-binding or procedural actions, such as requesting additional information or directing staff to review the matter further, may be initiated through a motion at the same meeting, provided the action aligns with Council procedures and does not contravene the Municipal Government Act.

8.1 Special Cases:

- Submissions related to a scheduled public hearing will be held until the hearing and included as background information.
- Subsequent submissions from the same author on the same topic will only be included if they provide significantly new information or updates.
- Anonymous submissions will not be acknowledged unless they raise serious public safety or liability concerns.

- Unsolicited goods and services will not be acknowledged.

8.2 Operational Matters

Correspondence regarding operational issues (e.g., inquiries or complaints) will be directed to staff for resolution. If unresolved, the matter will be escalated to the CAO. Staff may recommend when operational matters should be brought to Council for consideration of potential policy or by-law changes.

9. PUBLIC HEARING SUBMISSIONS AND PARTICIPATION

Submissions for a public hearing must be received by the deadline specified in the public notice and will be included in the agenda package for the scheduled hearing.

Public hearing attendees may sign up to speak in person or request to participate virtually. Speakers will be allocated up to five minutes each to present their views. Audio/visual submissions may also be played during the hearing, subject to time limits and content guidelines specified in advance.

There is no limit to the number of speakers at a public hearing; however, the Chair may manage speaking times to ensure all participants have a chance to be heard within a reasonable timeframe.

10. Addressing Misinformation

The Town is committed to ensuring that information included in Council agenda packages is accurate and contributes to informed decision-making. Submissions containing false or misleading information may be excluded from the public agenda package.

The Town will evaluate submissions for accuracy where practical and may request clarifications or supporting evidence from the submitter. If a submission is excluded for containing misinformation, the submitter will be notified and given the opportunity to revise and resubmit their content.

This policy does not restrict opinions, perspectives, or interpretations, provided they are clearly identified as such and do not misrepresent facts

11. PETITIONS

Petitions are deemed presented to Council when filed with the Municipal Clerk. A petition to Council must include each petitioner's full name and residential address.

12. ACCOMMODATIONS

The Town is committed to ensuring that public meetings are accessible and inclusive for all individuals. Reasonable accommodations will be provided to address accessibility needs in compliance with relevant regulations.

Requests for additional accommodations should be submitted in advance to allow sufficient time for arrangements to be made. Accommodations will be provided unless doing so would result in undue hardship, defined as significant financial, operational, or safety challenges.

If an accommodation cannot be provided, the Town will communicate the reasons and work to identify alternative solutions where feasible.

13. RESPECT AND CONDUCT AT COUNCIL MEETINGS

All participants in Council meetings, including presenters, individuals speaking during public input opportunities, and members of the public gallery, are expected to conduct themselves respectfully. This includes:

- Refraining from shouting or other disruptive audience participation.
- Avoiding personal attacks, defamatory statements, or offensive language.

The Chair is responsible for maintaining order during Council meetings. If a presentation or public input does not comply with the guidelines in this policy, or if a participant behaves disrespectfully, the Chair may:

- Interrupt or stop the presentation or input.
- Issue a warning to the individual.
- If the behaviour continues, request the individual leave the meeting.

14. PUBLIC RECORD AND LIVESTREAMING

All items included in a Council meeting agenda package, including presentations and correspondence, are part of the public record and will be published on the Town's website.

- **Redaction of Personal Information:** The Town will redact personal information, such as full street addresses, personal phone numbers, and personal email addresses, from written submissions. However, staff will not edit audio-visual submissions to remove personal information. It is the responsibility of the submitter to ensure that audio-visual content does not include information they do not wish to make public.
- **Live-Streaming and Consent:** Council meetings are live-streamed and archived on an online public platform. By participating in a meeting or submitting content, individuals acknowledge and consent that their contributions will be included in the public record and live-stream.

- **Exceptions and Privacy Laws:** In rare cases, such as when sensitive information poses a safety concern, the Town may redact or withhold content in accordance with applicable privacy legislation.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

Public Submission Policy

Date approved by the CAO: February 25, 2025



1. MAKING A PRESENTATION REQUEST

Presentation requests must be made to the Municipal Clerk in writing. The request must include the following:

- Individual's name or the name of the organization
- Contact information of the presenter(s)
- The subject matter and a summary of the presentation
- Provide information on any requests being made by the Town
- Any other relevant background information

Upon receipt of a presentation, the Municipal Clerk will outline the process to the presenter, explaining that presentations are for informational purposes only. Should any follow-up action be directed by Council, the Municipal Clerk will ensure that the presenter is informed of any developments.

Based on this guidelines set out in this policy (Sections 5 & 6), the Municipal Clerk will review presentation requests to determine their suitability for a Council meeting. If approved, will work with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor to determine at which Council meeting the presentation will be scheduled.

1.2 Approved Presentation Requests

Once a presentation request has been approved, all documentation intended for Council must be submitted to the Municipal Clerk at least eight days before the meeting. These documents will be included in the public Council agenda package. Failure to meet this deadline may result in rescheduling the presentation to a later Council meeting.

The preferred method for presentations is in person. However, presenters may request to present virtually. Anyone wishing to present virtually must notify the Municipal Clerk at least 24 hours before the meeting.

1.3 Prohibited Presentation Requests

The Municipal Clerk will notify the requester if a presentation request is refused based on the paramaters outlines in this policy. The notification will include the reason(s) for the refusal and,

if applicable, suggestions for resubmitting the request or other avenues for presenting the information to Council. The CAO will be informed of all refusals and ensure the rationale aligns with this policy.

2. REGISTRATION FOR PUBLIC INPUT

Individuals wishing to speak must register at the start of the Council meeting by filling out the sign-in sheet available at the meeting venue. Registration is on a first-come, first-served basis. Staff may adjust this process when necessary, provided it continues to offer the same opportunity for public input as outlined in this policy.

2.1 Follow-up Process for Public Input and Questions

When members of the public sign up to speak during the "Public Input and Questions" portion of the meeting, on the sign-up sheet, they have the option to request a follow-up from staff in writing regarding any questions posed. If the follow-up request is outside the scope of the report on the Council agenda or requires significant staff time to answer, staff will provide a rationale to the requestor and Council explaining why their request cannot be accommodated and possible next steps.

3. SUBMITTING CORRESPONDENCE FOR A COUNCIL AGENDA

Submissions must be received at least eight business days before the meeting to be included in the agenda. Failure to meet this deadline may result in the submission being added to a later Council agenda.

Upon receipt of incomplete or ambiguous correspondence, the Municipal Clerk will contact the sender to request additional information or clarification. If the sender does not respond or provide the required information, the correspondence will not be included in the Council agenda package and will not be considered for further action. The Municipal Clerk will inform the sender of this outcome.

The Municipal Clerk will confirm with those who have submitted correspondence whether they intend to include their letter in a public agenda package or if they prefer it to be sent directly and solely to Council for information.

Upon receipt of correspondence, the Municipal Clerk will outline the process to the sender, explaining that correspondence is initially considered for informational purposes only unless a request aligns with existing Town legislation or practices. Should any follow-up action be directed by Council, the Municipal Clerk will ensure that the sender is informed of any

developments.

3.2 Handling of Correspondence Received by Individual Council Members

All correspondence addressed to any Council member, including the Mayor, will be handled at the recipient's discretion. A copy of the correspondence may be shared with other Councillors for their information.

If a Council member, including the Mayor, receives correspondence directly and wishes to bring it forward for consideration by Council, they must submit the correspondence to the Municipal Clerk to be considered for a future meeting agenda, in accordance with this policy.

3.3 Correspondence Received by All Council Members

When a correspondence item has been sent to all Council members, but staff have not been included, it is the responsibility of Council to forward the correspondence to the Municipal Clerk for staff follow-up or consideration for inclusion in a Council agenda package.

3.4 Correspondence Received by the CAO

If the CAO receives information they deem relevant as correspondence, it may be included in the agenda package.

3.5 Anonymous Correspondence

The CAO will determine whether an investigation is warranted if any anonymous correspondence raises potential safety, liability, or health issues.

3.6 Handling of Inappropriate or Disrespectful Content

Staff reserve the right to withhold or redact any written correspondence, audio recordings, or audio-visual recordings deemed inappropriate or disrespectful. This includes:

- Profane or vulgar language
- Hate speech or discriminatory remarks based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disability, or any other protected characteristic
- Personal attacks or threats against individuals or groups
- Sexual content or explicit imagery
- Insults or name-calling

The submitter will be notified if their content is withheld or redacted, provided with an explanation, and given an opportunity to revise and resubmit their contribution. A record of all withheld content and the reasons for withholding will be maintained.

4. PUBLIC HEARING SUBMISSIONS AND PARTICIPATION PROCEDURES

The Municipal Clerk must receive any submissions at least eight days before the meeting. Submissions received after this deadline will be circulated to Council and relevant staff but will not be included in the public record.

Unless otherwise stated in this section, submitting submissions for a public hearing adheres to the rules outlined in the correspondence sections of this policy and procedures.

Anyone wishing to participate virtually in the public hearing must notify the Municipal Clerk at least 24 hours before the meeting.

5. PETITIONS

To protect personal information, the Municipal Clerk will create a summary of any petitions received, noting their rationale and the number of signatures they received. This summary will be included as correspondence within a Council agenda package.

6. ACCOMMODATION REQUESTS

Accommodation requests should be submitted to the Municipal Clerk at least seven days before the meeting to allow sufficient time for arrangements. The Town will review requests in consultation with relevant personnel and may request additional information to better understand the requirements.

If an accommodation cannot be provided due to undue hardship, the Municipal Clerk will notify the requester with the reasons and, where possible, propose alternative solutions