



What We
Heard Report

GOVERNANCE AND COLLABORATION

FEBRUARY 2020



What We Heard Report
Governance and Collaboration
February 2020

Project Lunenburg
Town of Lunenburg Comprehensive Plan

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This report was prepared by Upland Planning and Design.

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The approach to municipal government has changed over the years, and will continue to shift. One of the key aspects to this evolution is the role of collaboration in governance and community building. This What We Heard Report highlights existing strengths and challenges to governance and collaboration in Lunenburg, and identifies opportunities for improvement. The Project Team collected feedback on Governance and Collaboration through three means:

- ▶ The Lunenburg Individual Survey;
- ▶ Social Pinpoint; and,
- ▶ The Governance and Collaboration Community Workshop.

The Lunenburg Individual Survey, which asked respondents open- and closed-ended questions, was released to the public through a variety of methods including a mail-out invitation enclosed in Lunenburg residents' electricity bills. Survey responses were collected between February 27 and April 7, 2019. Also opened to the public at this time was Social Pinpoint—a web-based engagement platform that allows community members to leave location-specific comments by clicking on a map of Lunenburg. Social Pinpoint was active throughout the engagement phase of Project Lunenburg so for the purpose of this report, the comments received on Social Pinpoint between February 28, 2019 and January 27th, 2020 were analyzed.

The [Governance and Collaboration Discussion Paper](#) explored how the role of municipalities is changing. In contrast with the traditional role of municipalities in regulation and service delivery, new community values and dynamics demand that these bodies adopt additional, more flexible roles. Trends in municipal government are increasingly adding *facilitation* and *capacity building* to the job descriptions of Councils and staff.



Building upon the analysis of this Discussion Paper, the Governance and Collaboration Community Workshop was held on January 23, 2020 between 6:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. The workshop began with a presentation from Rachel Derrah of Bravespace, an organization that specializes in facilitating participatory methods of social change. As a graphic facilitator, Rachel organizes and supports creative engagements and trainings. This presentation provided an introduction to the principles of collaboration and the roles of public and private organizations and residents in a collaborative process.

Small group discussions created opportunities for workshop participants to reflect on and discuss collaborative approaches that have the potential to address some of the Town's complex issues. The Project Team organized this feedback into themes, which form the basis of this What We Heard Report.

This report is the ninth in a series of nine, summarizing the input from the community regarding Governance and Collaboration in Lunenburg. Results contained within this report will be incorporated into the Project Lunenburg Comprehensive Community Plan.

Who Was Involved



Between February 2019 and January 2020, there were over 750 engagement interactions that contributed to this report. This included:

- ▶ 35 participants at the Governance and Collaboration Community Workshop;
- ▶ 465 Social Pinpoint submissions; and,
- ▶ 262 respondents to the Lunenburg Individual Survey.

Engagement Results Overview

The objectives of the Project Lunenburg Comprehensive Community Plan will require the community to collaborate in new ways, and this Community Workshop enabled participants to discuss these issues, and explore innovative ways that the public sector, community groups, businesses and citizens can work together towards these goals. This dialogue was not limited to the workshop—Governance and Collaboration were identified as important issues throughout the community engagement process. Feedback from the community workshop, along with comments from Social Pinpoint and the individual survey, fell into four primary themes: engagement, communication, innovation, and thinking regionally.

The community workshop began with an introduction to three types of problems, using a typology of contexts which guides the appropriate solutions and explanations for each. Problems in this sense do not suggest a negative task but any issue, situation or system. This framework is intended to illustrate the evolutionary nature of complex problems, and their inherent uncertainty; leadership and decision making changes as problems move from simple to complex. Simple problems have a single, correct answer, typically solved by a facts-based approach. When asked for relevant local examples, workshop participants discussed routine service delivery



and maintenance jobs, reflecting the traditional role of Municipal government.

Like simple problems, complicated problems also have a clear cause and effect, but often require experts to understand this relationship and identify solutions. Examples provided by participants focused on land use matters such as major infrastructure improvements, heritage regulations and public transit. Others felt that communication and engagement fall within this range, processes that require innovative approaches but follow a clear process.

Complex problems require the most collaboration, and these were the focus of most workshop discussions. This category often involves an intersection between two or more problems, and may not result in a single *solution*, but rather an iterative process to address the concern. With this background information, participants were asked to consider the different types of problems in Lunenburg. Common examples of complexity shared by participant groups included economic growth and employment, population growth, as well as affordable and accessible housing.

A couple groups broke down the ways in which Lunenburg's waste water management is a prime example of the complex problem. Although there is strong support for addressing this issue, multiple barriers create challenges to finding and implementing solutions. These include administrative concerns around the overlapping jurisdictional powers, the effects of surrounding Municipalities' activities, as well as staffing and budget constraints. The impacts of climate change and sea level rise add another layer of complexity to the problem, which are largely out of the community's control.



A primary theme to emerge from this process was *engagement*. Participants expressed a desire to see more conversations between Town representatives and community members, and they added that these conversations should be as inclusive as possible, bringing all voices to the table and taking advantage of new technology. This goes hand in hand with the second theme of communication, but engagement focuses on the insight that can be gained from community members input and the importance of strong listening skills, while communication looks at how the government can best provide information to community members.

Listen

When discussing the theme of listening, participants suggested that Town engagement requires a two-way conversation. They added that this calls on all community members to show up (in any way that they can), and asks the public sector and the community to practice listening with the goal of understanding. Participants hope to see a facilitation process that deters defensive behaviour and works towards empathy and mutual understanding. Participants felt that this enables leaders to take on a more facilitative role which will help build stronger relationships with residents. One Social Pinpoint respondent noted that the opportunity to use feedback as a learning opportunity is a powerful tool for decision makers. Another Social Pinpoint respondent commented that facilitators must avoid false dichotomies and leave their preconceptions aside. Workshop participants wrote that active listening processes in public engagement should lead to clear direction and vision, a theme that is touched on further in regards to innovation.

Listening is key to engagement as well as collaboration between the public sector and residents. Participants suggested taking engagement a step further beyond just preliminary feedback and toward empowering community members to be a part of the implementation process. This comes with the commitment to use feedback and report back, something that is explored further in the section on communication.



Inclusion

Workshop participants suggested that inclusive engagement requires leaders to examine who is missing from the conversation, and amplify the voices of those who are typically underrepresented. Workshop participants want vulnerable community members to be top of mind, with the impacts of all Town projects viewed through an equity lens even where these groups are not immediately visible. Similar to the theme of listening, participants added that inclusion requires leaders to aim to understand the reasoning behind all points of view. One survey respondent noted the financial barrier to holding public office, which may create an inherent challenge to diverse representation.

As another component of inclusive engagement, multiple comments focused on the need to take advantage of social media and other new technology, with a focus on engaging youth and other often excluded groups. Suggestions included expanding the use of online engagement activities like surveys, an online dashboard for the Town, improved use of municipal social media accounts, and promotion of the Next Door discussion board forum (a platform which allows residents to vote on “best of” recommendations, post ads, ask for advice, and set alerts). In addition to engagement activities, workshop participants added that social media can also be used as a tool for transparency through information and data sharing.



Participants feel that the theme of *Communication* is the foundation of trust, transparency and the logistics of ongoing collaboration. It follows many similar principles to engagement, but participants noted that these forms of communication take the process further into implementation and management.

Trust

Building trust was a secondary theme that came up throughout the workshop, and it was also reflected in survey responses. Participants identified an “us versus them” narrative that is common within the community, and noted that trust can be established only through mutual respect and dialogue which encourages collaboration and understanding. Participants added that developing more effective conflict resolution skills and strategies is essential to this.

Transparency

Workshop participants feel that transparency on behalf of Town staff and Council is one of the most important aspects of strong communication. One concern voiced by several participants was the proper administration around the rules of in-camera meetings. In general, participants want a focus on improving public information sharing and general communications. This also includes careful scheduling of all public meetings to accommodate the widest proportion of community members. Another component of this raised by many survey respondents was the need for user friendly regulations and enforcement which are clear and easy to understand. Improving the clarity of regulations can involve streamlined permitting processes, but it can also mean simplifying regulatory documents by modernizing the language and formatting, adding graphic illustration, outlining the purpose of documents and regulations, and improving the consistency between documents.

Participants noted that Council and staff, as well as the wider public sector and residents, need to work together in order to be effective. Clarifying the roles and job descriptions of all involved will support this process. Developing and implementing a Municipal performance plan was recommended as a way to keep all parties on track.



Ongoing Discussion

This secondary theme relates to the topic of engagement but participants also emphasized continual, regular and consistent communication with the community, allowing room for residents and community groups to meet with the public sector and also with each other. Participants added that meeting with a focus and purpose is important to collaboration and problem solving, but some discussions may serve the simple purpose of strengthening relationships. Some opportunities for discussion recommended by engagement participants included:

- ▶ Open meetings with Town Council and residents;
- ▶ Informal settings which foster understanding, mutual respect, and collaboration;
- ▶ More community breakfasts in collaboration with local farmers and chefs;
- ▶ A Town Hall suggestion box with weekly topics; and
- ▶ Inter-generational mentoring.



Innovation has been a recurring theme throughout Project Lunenburg. It has crossover with almost all topic areas, and community members have continued to emphasize the value of flexible, innovative and forward-thinking approaches both in public and private sectors.

Vision and Values

Engagement participants discussed the need for vision and values as the foundation of innovation. Participants added that the values of collaboration require leaders to let go of control, empower staff and citizens, and avoid micromanaging. For participants, innovation means being open to new ideas, taking worthwhile risks and focusing on proactive solutions rather than just risk avoidance. Both workshop participants and survey respondents talked about how to promote opportunity through compromise and collaboration. Rather than starting with “no”, participants suggested local leaders need to take a more proactive approach to resolving issues. Social Pinpoint participants suggested that this calls for action-oriented leaders, and all community members need to be committed to a more collaborative approach.

Build on Existing Assets

Participants suggested that future decision-making needs to identify existing resources within the community, including skills, equipment, facilities, funding, and more. Participants added that by building relationships, Town leaders will have a better understanding of the expertise that exists within the community.



The fourth primary theme to emerge deals with thinking beyond the local level. Community concerns rarely follow jurisdictional boundaries, so *regional thinking* is essential considering the interconnectedness of local issues. Participants suggested that collaboration among all stakeholders (including all levels of government, surrounding Municipalities, community groups, businesses, etc.) is a crucial element of planning for the future, and a requirement to creating new solutions to complex problems.

For some, regional thinking brought to mind growth management. Growth management is a prime example of a complex problem which necessitates collaboration with both local and regional partners. Participants identified a range of related issues, including:

- ▶ Population retention;
- ▶ Management to avoid inappropriate growth;
- ▶ Intensified development and density;
- ▶ Population growth through the attraction of new residents; and,
- ▶ Population growth through land mass acquisition (whether annexation or amalgamation).

While amalgamation or basic service sharing may be the most obvious example of regional collaboration, participants offered many other instances that require Lunenburg to think beyond its local community. Some examples:

- ▶ Working with all levels of government on issues which intersect jurisdictions like housing or harbour activities;
- ▶ Economic collaboration between the Town and the regional businesses which employ Lunenburg residents; and,
- ▶ Land use planning at the boundary between adjacent municipalities.



“The Town’s governance structure needs to follow more modern practices of management, leadership, (...) and evaluate the overall culture”

“Carry (our) history with pride, and (be) open to new ideas and new ways of being a community”

“(Be) willing to listen to and work with people who have new ideas”

- Direct comments from workshop participants and survey respondents.

Governance and collaboration were one of the most prominent themes throughout Project Lunenburg’s initial engagement. The community strongly values collaboration, and this emerged as a clear priority for implementation. Engagement participants felt that the key principles of strong collaboration are engagement, communication, innovation and regional thinking. In addition to the above themes, some participants offered suggestions and insight relating to the theory and process of collaborating.

Alluding to the work ahead, one participant called Lunenburg “a small town with big city problems”. Throughout engagement, community members emphasized their desire to create / maintain a positive place to live. Some wisdom gathered which may help in advancing this vision:

- ▶ Avoid oversimplifying issues and acknowledge complexity;
- ▶ Do not expect linear solutions;
- ▶ Break issues down into workable components; and,
- ▶ Form clear steps towards a resolution.

The desire for new approaches is rooted in the goals of creating a high quality of life, protecting sensitive natural environments, and preserving local heritage and culture, among others.

These recommendations are intended to expand the community’s ability to address complex problems, build capacity, leverage opportunities, and to create a more inclusive place for everyone.



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