

Public Process And Community Engagement Handbook



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WE ARE ALL PART OF THIS COMMUNITY

Many of the important decisions that affect you, your family and neighbours on a daily basis are made at the local government level. The community, as a whole, benefits when there is a strong working partnership between citizens, Council and staff.

At the District we recognize that providing citizens with knowledge and tools about public process and encouraging public participation is an integral part of good governance. The more informed and involved citizens and community groups are, the better able we are to build the community we want. Involving the public improves the quality of decisions and ensures diverse opinions, information and experiences are considered in the decision making process.

Through this Public Process Handbook we will provide information about the District and outline some strategies for how we can successfully work together.

Thank you for your interest and your involvement.



Highlanders take great pride in the stewardship of our environment.

We're proud of our volunteers and appreciate their community involvement.

WHAT IS THIS ALL ABOUT?

Before we start talking about how and why to become involved in public participation in the Highlands it is important to understand what the District does.

This handbook will provide you with:

Understanding about local government decision making, public process and public participation.

Knowledge about the legislative framework, financial accountability, the budget and community design planning and development in Highlands.

Information about how the District engages its citizens and other stakeholder groups.

Skills to contribute to the public participation processes in a meaningful way.

HOW DOES THE DISTRICT WORK?

Municipal government decisions and the services impact us daily. The water we drink, the roads we travel, the sidewalks and trails we walk, the sports fields, arenas and pools we play in, the community centres where we gather, our personal and property safety, environmental concerns, how communities are planned and developed, parking, running a special event, selling goods or having a noisy dog or neighbour — are all connected with decisions and services at a local government level. Understanding how the District works and how to be involved will help us create the kind of community we all want to live in.

Did You KNOW ?

The District:

- Has a population of 2,200*
 - Has 830 dwellings*
 - Participates in the Greater Victoria Public Library Service
 - Participates in the West Shore Parks and Recreation Society Services
 - Maintains 47.3 kms of paved roads
 - Approximately 38% of the District is Parkland
- * based on 2011 stats

How Are We Governed?

Highlands is governed through an elected Council comprised of a Mayor and six Councillors.

WHERE TO FIND IT

Get to Know Your Council Members
Under “Your Government” section of the website (Highlands.ca) under Your Government choose “Council” to learn more and to find contact information.



The Community Charter and the Local Government Act form the legislative framework under which all British Columbia municipalities operate. The Community Charter establishes municipal powers and responsibilities while still providing the flexibility to address community needs. The broad powers provided by the Community Charter are balanced with an accountability and public participation framework while the Local Government Act includes provisions for public information and participation in land use regulatory processes.

The Community Charter also states each member of Council, including the Mayor, has an equal vote, no one member has greater authority. A Council must adopt a procedure bylaw that outlines the process it must follow to adopt bylaws, pass resolutions, and conduct its business. Highlands’s Procedure Bylaw establishes rules of procedure by which Council (and Committees) function and facilitate public participation which is vital to the decision making process.

Did You KNOW?

The election cycle has changed and will be held in the fall of every 4th year (the next one being held in 2018).

Who Is Responsible for What?

Here are some examples:

District of Highlands	Capital Regional District	Province of British Columbia	Federal Government of Canada
Local roads	Hospitals	Transit	Postal Services
Recreation centres	Sewers	Public schooling	Citizenship and Immigration
Local planning	Drinking water	Health	Military and National
Noise bylaws	Community Health	Social Services	Defense
Animal Control	Recycling	Highways	Marriage and Divorce
Building Inspection	Animal Control	Liquor license applications	Patents of Invention and Discovery
Fire Services	Capital Region Housing	Forestry resources	

Highlands's Role in the CRD

The District of Highlands is part of the Capital Regional District (CRD). The CRD's jurisdiction is the Southern tip of Vancouver Island and the surrounding 70 Gulf Islands. As a corporate entity the CRD is governed by a Board of Directors, made up of elected municipal and electoral area representatives from 13 municipalities and three electoral (unincorporated) areas. The members that make up the CRD are:

- Central Saanich
- Colwood
- Esquimalt
- Highlands
- Langford
- Metchosin
- North Saanich
- Oak Bay
- Saanich
- Sidney
- Sooke
- Victoria
- View Royal
- Juan de Fuca (electoral)
- Saltspring Island (electoral)
- South Gulf Islands (electoral)

Did You Know

The CRD was created in 1966 as part of the BC Provincial Government's initiative to establish the 'regional district' concept of local government province-wide

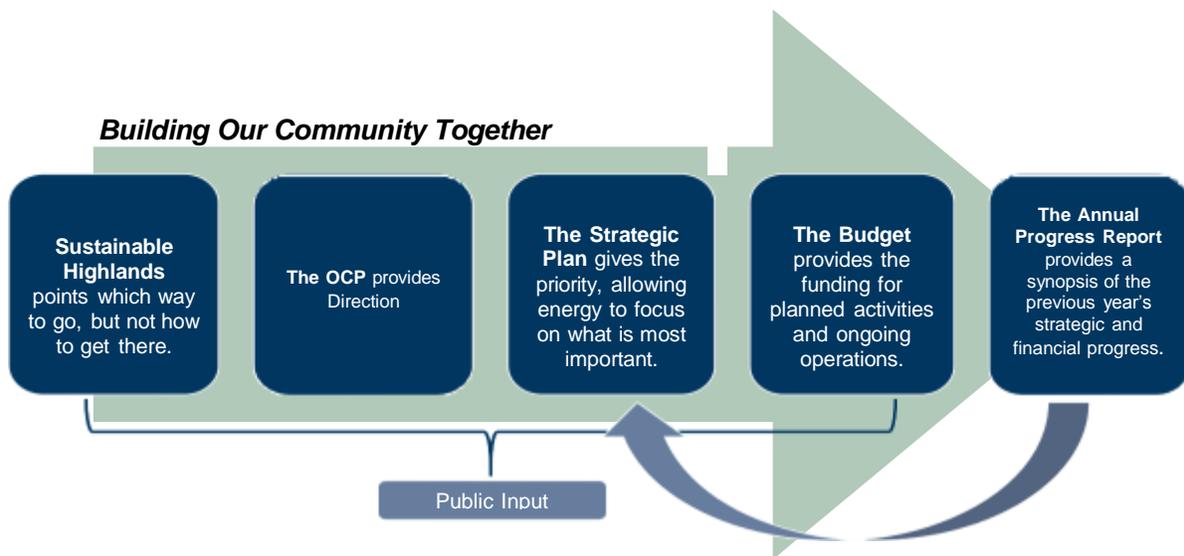
The CRD is governed by a 24-member Board of Directors, who also sit as members of the Regional Hospital Board. The Board is made up of Municipal Directors (who are appointed by their respective councils), and Directors from the Electoral Areas (who are elected for a four year term). The Board provides a political forum for representation of regional residents and communities and a vehicle for advancing the interests of the region as a whole. Board meetings are held once a month and are guided by the Local Government Act and the Community Charter. Meetings are open to the public.

Representation on the CRD Board balances the need to reflect varying population bases cross the region with different community interests. Each local government gets one vote for every 5,000 population (or portion thereof). Each local government gets one director for every 25,000 population (or portion thereof). If a member municipality has more than one director, then the number of votes are divided as evenly as possible.

HOW ARE DECISIONS MADE?

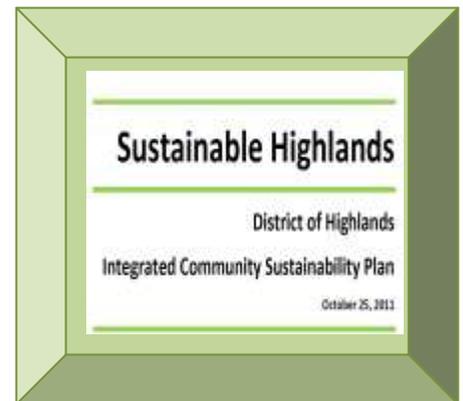
There is a predictable cycle that Council follows when setting the policies that guide the operations, programs and activities of the District. At each phase in this cycle, Council welcomes public input. The cycle begins with the creation of a vision statement which articulates the dreams and hopes of Highlands in the future.





Sustainable Highlands (Integrated Community Sustainability Plan)

The first phase of this cycle is Sustainable Highlands (ICSP). The purpose of the Highlands ICSP is to provide a framework to identify what kind of community the Highlands residents want in the year 2030 and what needs to happen now in order to get there. Based on sustainability objectives, it contains the community's vision statement, nine strategy areas and descriptions of success. It applies to the entire municipality and is one of the principal policy documents (as well as the OCP) that Council uses to make decisions on matters such as land use, growth management, design of the built environment, protection of the environment, transportation and mobility, economic development, infrastructure, and housing needs.



Official Community Plan

The second phase of this cycle is the Official Community Plan (OCP). This plan is the umbrella document which provides Highlands with the overall community values, vision, direction and focus. It helps Council and citizens manage future growth and change in our community.

Strategic Plan

The third phase of this cycle is the Strategic Plan. This document outlines a number of the key initiatives that the District will focus its energy and resources on. The plan maps out the actions that the District will undertake to achieve the future vision. Each of the initiatives are aligned with one of the ICSP Theme areas – Building and Sites, Economy and Work, Education and Leisure, Energy, Healthy Community, Food, Land Use and Natural Areas, Transportation and Mobility, and Water and Waste Systems.

Budget

The fourth phase in the cycle is for Council to approve a budget that provides the funding for not only the activities included in the Strategic Plan, but also funding for the ongoing operations of the District.

Annual Progress Report

The Annual Progress Report is the final phase and the method by which the District provides information and demonstrates accountability to Highlands's residents. Strategic, financial and activity progress is reported annually to citizens through this report.

The combination of these plans and reports provide a clear map to travel from today to the future.

WHO DOES WHAT AT THE DISTRICT?

The local government structure can be divided into two categories – policy and administration. Council is responsible for determining overall policy which it carries out through actions like the adoption of the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan, Official Community Plan, the Financial Plan, and the Strategic Plan. Carrying out the policy decisions made by Council falls to the administration (municipal staff) under the responsibility of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). Municipal staff oversees the day to day operations and delivery of services as well as the implementation of Council bylaws and decisions.

How Council Makes Decisions

- An issue or item is introduced by Council, staff, citizens or it can come from the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan, Official Community Plan, budget or Strategic Plan.
- Information is presented by staff on this issue or item; Council considers the information and the options presented may require more information related to policies, bylaws or the Community Charter, and public input may be needed.
- Each decision is put to a vote; Council members each have one vote with equal weight; a quorum of four members is required.
- All decisions are recorded in the minutes which are stored on the website at Highlands.ca.



Financial Sustainability

Each year the District creates / updates its Five Year Financial Plan (budget) which includes revenues and expenses for both day to day operations and capital or project budgets.

Where does the money come from?

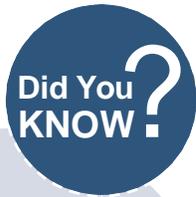
The District uses a variety of revenue sources to pay for services that residents and businesses depend on and use regularly. The major revenue sources used to pay for day to day services include:

- Property tax
- Other user fees (eg. rezoning application fees)
- Permits and licensing fees (e.g. development permits, building permits, business licenses)

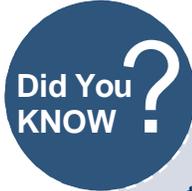
The District also has access to funding which is generally used for capital projects like building roads, sidewalks and bridges.

These funding sources include:

- Grants from the provincial and federal governments and their agencies
- Reserve funds (funds saved up over time for large projects)

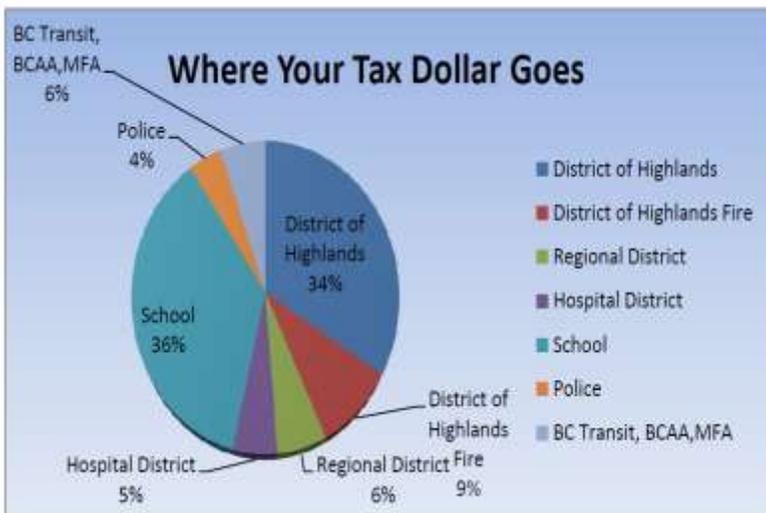


By law, the District of Highlands has to have a balanced budget. The District is not allowed to run a deficit so all decisions on services and infrastructure has to be made with this in mind.



Every \$100 the average household pays in taxes is divided between the federal, provincial and municipal governments with only \$8 going to their respective municipality.

Example of where your Municipal Property goes:



Planning Process

The planning process provides Council with professional and technical guidance on current and future land uses as well as a wide range of issues including housing, heritage, environment, and social policy.



Municipal Staff:

- Advise Council on current and future land use, housing, heritage, environment, and social policy.
- Promote conservation and enhancement of Highlands's natural environment through policies, bylaws, education and outreach.
- Develop the Official Community Plan (OCP).
- Support the development of livable, sustainable and affordable neighbourhoods.
- Act as a link between Council decisions and how builders and designers implement those decisions.
- Ensure that all involved in land use changes have an opportunity to provide input.

**Did You
KNOW?**

Community Development

When development applications are considered by the District, planning tools such as the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan, Official Community Plan, the Regional Sustainability Strategy, and the Zoning Bylaw help the District make decisions and realize its goal as a community.

To meet our sustainability initiatives and objectives, the District strongly encourages new development to incorporate a full range of sustainable features from site planning to new construction. This means taking a holistic view of various environmental, social and economic elements combined within the neighbourhood context, site planning, proposed building design and construction techniques to create the most sustainable project possible. To that end, the municipal staff issue permits for the development, construction and use of all properties and buildings.

WHERE TO FIND IT

Our ICSP, OCP, and Zoning bylaw can be found on the Highlands website under "Planning".

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - WHAT IS IT?

So now that you know more about what the District does, it is time to think about how you can become involved and why. Public participation is a reciprocal process that involves the public (anyone who is interested in or affected by the issue under discussion) in problem solving or discussion, and links public input to the decision. It is an opportunity to build relationships and trust.



What Makes Public Participation Meaningful?

- 1. Decision oriented:** a decision needs to be made and the input of the public and stakeholders will have a clearly stated degree of influence over the final outcome or decision.
- 2. Values based:** the dialogue and interaction between the public/ stakeholders and the District is grounded in sharing and understanding the needs, interests and values of all participants.
- 3. Goal driven:** the process will have clearly defined goals and objectives and will determine specific, purposeful and productive outcomes that will be achieved over the course of the project. The role of the public is clear.

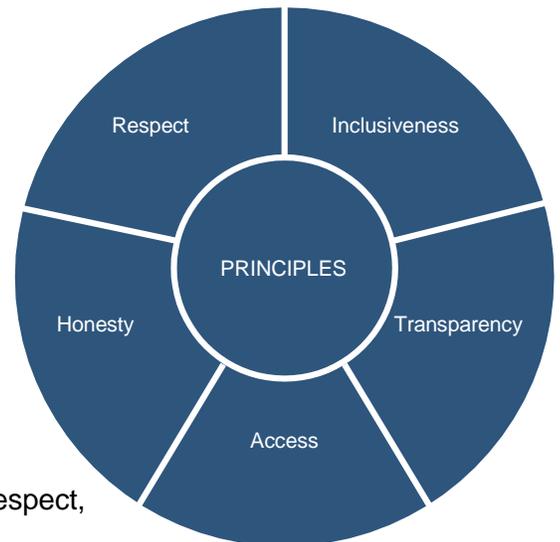
Guiding Principles for Meaningful Participation

Guiding principles for meaningful participation refer to the attitudes and behaviours that guide interactions between the District and the public. These principles articulate the District's fundamental values associated with the practice of public participation and provide overall direction and guidance to the planning, implementation and evaluation of public participation initiatives (see *Appendix A – Public Participation Policy*).

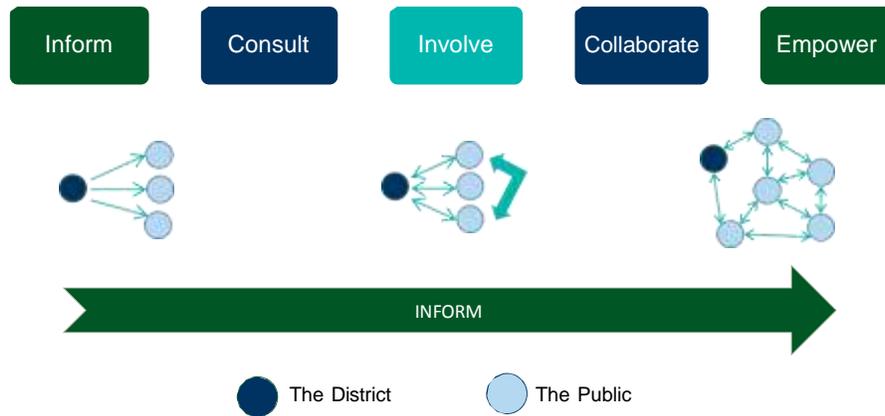
Effective public participation is about continuing to build trusting relationships. In addition to transparency and respect, the public participation process is founded on:

- Everyone's time and input being respected;
- Participants knowing what to expect, how to engage and how their input will contribute to the decision;
- Clear and forthright two-way communication;
- Discussion and recommendations which reflect the full range of stakeholder perspectives;
- People feeling comfortable to share their ideas and opinions;
- Issues being moved beyond "positions" by listening to other's opinions; and
- Public confidence in government activity increasing while resources are effectively targeted to those issues of citizen priority and value.

Source: Dialogue Partners Inc., "Standing in the Fire: Transforming Conflict Through Collaboration"®



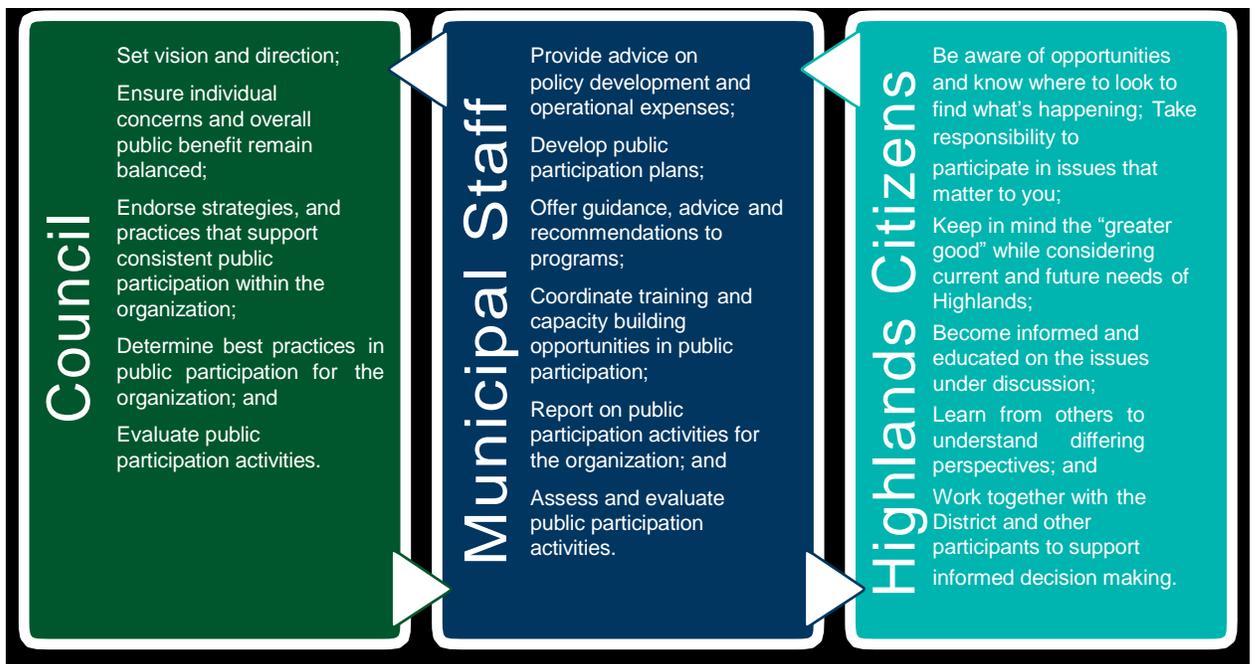
HOW WILL THE DISTRICT ENGAGE YOU? – The Public Participation Continuum



The goal of public participation is to create opportunities for citizens from different cultures, backgrounds and with different points of view to come together to share their opinions and views with staff and elected officials. Listening and learning from citizens assists Council as they move forward in solving problems and making decisions. Public participation is not always meant to achieve absolute consensus or agreement, nor is it intended to delegate the final decision to the community. Mayor and Council still have to make the final decisions, but with valuable input from citizens, those decisions are more informed and responsive to public concerns and values.

We All Have a Role

Public participation involves a three-way conversation between Council, municipal staff and Highlands's citizens.



POTENTIAL BENEFITS

- » Sharing of information and perspectives.
- » Understanding issues more clearly.
- » Developing new ideas and recommendations.
- » Building cooperative working relationships with the District and among the public.
- » Reaching balanced decisions and resolving issues.
- » Collaborating on decisions.
- » Building understanding and support for District initiatives.
- » Increasing trust in the District's decision making.
- » Improving quality and delivery of programs, projects, services and initiatives.

The process brings together individuals and groups from many areas and builds mutual understanding. Consulting with neighbourhoods, interest groups, businesses and other affected parties is both desirable and necessary for the District to achieve excellence in decision making.

So You Want to Get Involved — Here Are Some Helpful Tips and Tools

Considerations when becoming involved in the decision making process:

Do some homework: Consider doing a little detective work. You need to find out what changes / issues are being considered. Take the time to learn about when and where you can provide your input. Early inquiries are always a good idea. Take some time to understand the dynamics of your neighbourhood — How is your neighbourhood unique? Get the facts. It is essential to do some research and analysis to build a case for making change. Public documents, reports, newspapers and magazine articles, scientific studies, the internet and personal experiences are all important sources of information.

The District of Highlands homepage is a portal to many citizen-friendly resources.



Educate yourself: Learn what decisions have already been made, and what decisions or parts of decisions remain to be made and will be affected by public input, and what the public input is intended to achieve. Sometimes your input addresses only a part of a decision, and other (and possibly larger) parts may already have been decided and are no longer open for public discussion.



Pose questions to help define the issue:

It helps if you think of answers to the following questions:

- What is the problem? Who is affected by it? How serious or widespread are the effects?
- What has been done to date? What has worked, not worked and why?
- Who else has a stake in the issue? What are their concerns?
- What will happen if nothing changes?
- What will happen if the issue / problem is resolved? How will individuals and the community as a whole benefit?
- What would a win-win look like?

Understand the decision making process. Recognize that municipal staff and Council may have practical and legal constraints on what they can do. Council is the ultimate decision maker and must consider what is good for all Highlands residents.

Know what's important to you. Think through some of the following questions before deciding on a specific solution, consider what's important to you and why.

Concerns - What is it that concerns you about...?

Hopes - What are you hoping for when...?

Expectations - What are you expecting when you...?

Assumptions - What assumptions lead you to...?

Priorities - What is important to you about this situation/issue?

Beliefs or Values - What do you believe would be...?

Fears - What fears do you have? What are you most afraid of?

Impact/Importance/Issue - How has this impacted you? What is most important to you? What issues are you concerned about?

Consequences or Care - What consequences do you foresee with this process/project...??? What do you care about?

Source: Dialogue Partners Inc., "Group Facilitation Skills for Public Engagement"®

Council must make decisions that consider the needs of all parties concerned, the possible solutions and how might they work. They must also understand all of the costs – fiscal, social, economic and environmental.

Other levels of government may sometimes need to be involved in what appears to be a simple municipal matter. You can take the initiative to involve other government officials or take your input to forums set up under provincial or federal legislation.

Never underestimate your power as a citizen to affect change in a positive and productive way.

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE — PARTICIPATE AND HAVE YOUR SAY

With an understanding of what the District does, what meaningful public participation is and how the District of Highlands approaches it, how do you become involved? There are many different ways to engage with your municipality.



Select Committees

Highlands Committees

- Heritage Select Committee
- Social Sustainability Select Committee
- Sustainable Land Use Select Committee
- Board of Variance

Committee and board meetings are open to the public with their location and start time available on the District's website. If you have an idea for an agenda item, please talk to the Council Liaison or the Chair of the committee.

Council Meetings

Council Meetings are where decisions are made on bylaws, land use and development applications, and other official business. Meetings are held on the first and third Monday of each month (with the exception of July and August) at 7:00 pm at the School House on the Caleb Pike Heritage Grounds. Meetings are open to the public with the agenda and minutes posted on the Highlands website (**Highlands.ca**) on the Friday prior to the meeting.

Public input opportunities at Council meetings include:

Delegations – provided 5 minutes per delegation

For more information, see Highlands's **Council Procedure Bylaw** at Highlands.ca - Bylaws.

Committee of the Whole Meetings

All Council members attend Committee of the Whole Meetings. These meetings are held the second Monday of each month (with the exception of July and August). Issues which require a more detailed examination and discussion are dealt with here then passed to a regular Council Meeting for a decision. Meeting agendas and minutes are published on our website (**Highlands.ca**).

The Committee of the Whole Meeting presents a key opportunity for residents to provide feedback and comments directly to Council during the meeting. The District is required to provide public notification for various forms of development applications. This provides members of the public with advance information and notice should they wish to speak to Mayor and Council on a particular topic. If you cannot attend the meeting or are uncomfortable with public speaking, your written submission is equally welcomed.

Public Hearings

Public Hearings occur when there is a proposed amendment to the Zoning Bylaw or Official Community Plan. Public notification will be placed on our website and in newspapers announcing the date and time of a meeting. Council's role at a Public Hearing is to listen to the members of the public who will be affected by the proposed bylaw or OCP amendment. Council does not debate or challenge the comments being offered, but may question what they hear to make sure they understand what is being said. All comments presented are to be on the merits of the application before Council.

As a Public Hearing is a formal session, subject to specific legislation and common-law rules, Council cannot receive further communication from the applicant or public between the closing of the Public Hearing and the enactment of the bylaw.

Budget Meetings

The public is invited to budget meetings held from February or March through April each year. Each meeting provides opportunity for you to contribute thoughts and suggestions or to ask questions. Budget meetings focus on departmental operations, budget requests submitted from other organizations (e.g. Greater Victoria Public Library), budget requests from organizations seeking grant aid applications (e.g. Highland District Community Association) as well as capital projects planned for the inclusion in the Five Year Financial Plan. Public notification will be placed on our website announcing the dates and times of meetings.



Communicating with Council

If you have an idea or suggestion to share with Council we encourage you to call or email them via the contact information listed on our website. As well, all correspondence e-mailed is provided to all members of Council.

WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION

Council needs the feedback and the interest of the residents they represent to help bring about change. Information on how to do this is provided on the website or alternatively contact the District Office.

TITLE:	PUBLIC PARTICIPATION/ COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	Page 1 of 3	
SECTION:	Council Organization and Process	POLICY No. II-111	
Adopted:		Resolution:	
Amended:		Resolution:	

1. PURPOSE

The District of Highlands believes that decisions are improved by engaging citizens and other stakeholder groups. The District is committed to undertaking public participation on issues that affect citizens’ lives and their municipality. The District is committed to reporting back to citizens on how their views have been considered in the decision making process. The District is committed to transparent and inclusive processes that are supported by factual information, are inclusive of the diversity of Highlands and are within the District’s ability to finance and resource.

2. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following principles will guide public participation activities conducted by the District;

1. Inclusiveness: The District will endeavor to involve and enable the participation of all interested by using informative tools such as: the District’s website (news flash, calendar and event postings) and the Highlands Newsletter, across the full range of our diverse population.
2. Transparency: The District will endeavor to ensure decision processes, procedures and constraints are understood and followed. The purpose and limitations on public participation will be made clear. Respective roles and responsibilities will be clearly communicated. Feedback will be provided on what stakeholders said and how their opinion was considered by decision makers.
3. Access: The District will ensure that accurate information is available to participants in a timely manner.
4. Respect: Public participation requires the mutual respect of all participants. The District will listen with an open mind and show consideration and value for another person’s point of view.
5. Honesty: In conducting public participation the District will demonstrate our core value of honesty; we will tell the truth, follow through on commitments and act in a trustworthy manner.

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION FRAMEWORK

Whenever the District undertakes a public participation process, the objective of the participation, the commitment for performance and the level of the framework will be clarified at the beginning of the process. Each level describes a type or depth of participation that may be appropriate to support the pending decision.

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
OBJECTIVES OF THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide balanced and objective information to support understanding by the public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To obtain feedback on analysis, alternatives, issues and/or decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To work with the public to ensure that concerns and aspirations are understood and considered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To facilitate discussions and agreements between public parties to identify common ground for action and solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To place final decision making in the hands of the public
DISTRICT OF HIGHLANDS COMMITMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To inform the public by way of the District website, Highlands Newsletter or other social media opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To listen to and consider the public's concerns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To work with the public to exchange information, ideas and concerns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To seek advice and innovations from amongst various public parties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To work with the public to implement agreed upon decisions
EXAMPLES OF ISSUES/ TECHNIQUE THAT MIGHT FALL IN THESE CATEGORIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repair or replace existing park asset Open House Notice of construction/ repair 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change of program format Mapping Update Capital project planning or designing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New park asset such as new playground or new trail Climate Change Adaptation Plan Roadside Trail Network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Plan Integrated Community Sustainability Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Referendum Election/ by-election Alternate approval process
PARTICIPANT'S RESPONSIBILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To become informed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be open to other points of view and work with staff and other members of the public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To put aside person agendas and participate in discussions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To work with staff to implement agreed upon decisions

4. COMMITMENT & RESOURCES

The District, within its ability and capacity, will allocate adequate financial, human and technical resources for effective public participation.

The District will support citizens and stakeholder groups to develop their skills and ability to participate effectively. This support will involve education and information about District processes, initiatives and policies.

5. ACCOUNTABILITY AND EVALUATION

The District will be accountable for acting in accordance with this policy. Public participation processes will be measured for consistency with the stated objective and commitment. The District will report, on an annual basis, on the public participation activities that have been conducted.