



NEWS RELEASE

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PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY ENDORSED BY COUNCIL

A new Public Engagement Strategy that will enhance communications between the public and the Township of Langley for planning and development will be put in place over the next two years.

On March 21, Township Council endorsed the Strategy and committed \$110,000 towards implementing its recommendations, which include creating an Engagement Charter and boosting the capacity for engagement in departments throughout the Township.

“We need to give staff the tools they need to put these ideas into action and make these recommendations part of our everyday routine,” said Township Mayor Jack Froese. “This is an excellent step towards improving how the Township, citizens, and stakeholders interact and share information during planning processes and projects. Langley Township is a thriving, growing community and it is vital that we all work together as we plan our neighbourhoods and shape our future.”

The Public Engagement Strategy for Planning and Development was put forward by the Mayor’s Standing Committee on Public Engagement, which was established by Froese in early 2015. The Committee, made up of members of Council and volunteers from the community, was tasked with exploring additional and innovative ways to communicate with the public during planning processes. Input from the public was sought by holding three open houses, conducting interviews and surveys, and through the engageTOL webpage.

The Committee’s findings were presented in November 2015, and a review was undertaken to determine how much the Strategy would cost to implement, its implications to staffing, and how it will comply with legislation.

A report received by Council on March 21 indicated the Strategy would cost approximately \$160,000 to implement over two years. Of that, \$50,000 to cover the cost of training and administration is currently available in the Township’s existing budgets.

To cover the remainder, Council approved allocating \$55,000 from 2016 contingencies and authorized staff to include \$55,000 as part of the 2017 annual budget.

The first step towards implementing the Strategy will be to develop an Engagement Charter that will commit the Township to enhanced public engagement in planning and development on an on-going basis. Using the background information and community input obtained by the Mayor’s Standing Committee as a foundation, the Charter would guide community engagement activities and provide an evaluation framework for engagement processes. A draft of the Charter is to be presented for Council’s consideration by the summer.

Other actions recommended in the Public Engagement Strategy include providing tools and training to Township staff, using experts and facilitators to ensure public confidence in projects, creating databases, and developing accessible information, including videos to explain planning processes. The Township will also strive to go out to the public and offer opportunities for input that fit into people's busy schedules.

Many of the actions will see existing planning and engagement processes modified, and will be implemented as part of regular and on-going community and neighbourhood planning efforts.

Of the 55 actions suggested in the Public Engagement Strategy, the majority would be implemented in 2016 to coincide with current planning processes, including those for Brookwood-Fernridge and the Williams area in Willoughby. The remainder will be put in place in 2017 or deemed to be ongoing, as the Township's public engagement process evolves.

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