

# THE CORPORATION OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF MISSISSIPPI MILLS

## STAFF REPORT

**DATE:** June 20, 2023

**TO:** Committee of the Whole

**FROM:** Jeanne Harfield, Clerk & Deputy CAO  
Ashley Kulp, Communications Coordinator

**SUBJECT: Community Engagement Framework**

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### **RECOMMENDATION:**

**THAT Committee of the Whole provide direction to staff on the proposed framework for the Community Engagement Strategy by July 10, 2023.**

### **BACKGROUND:**

The Clerks Department has been in the process of conducting a governance review of policies and procedures. An element of this process included developing a comprehensive community engagement strategy.

### **DISCUSSION:**

The former Communications Coordinator developed a framework that will be utilized when developing the final community engagement strategy. The framework presented is to provide Members with the framework and to garner feedback in the development stages of the strategy. Staff will then incorporate feedback into the final strategy which will be presented for consideration in August. The goals, principals and vision may be changed as a result of building out the engagement strategy. This framework is being presented to Council to provide a general overview of what will be included in the final strategy.

The purpose of the framework is to develop a community engagement strategy to ensure the Municipality is meeting the needs of its residents and promoting a healthy and inclusive community. With the vision being, that:

- Residents are well informed about the functions, actions, and processes of the municipal government.
- Aim to increase understanding on how and why decisions are made and contribute to the decisions of municipal government by weighing in on issues that impact them.

- Municipal government consults and engages with the public to understand their interests, issues, opinions, and perspectives, and factors that into plans and decisions.

A consistent approach to engaging community supports municipal employees and decision makers to incorporate the values, interests, needs and desires of our community in the municipal decision-making processes.

The overall goals for the strategy include the following:

- Support the Municipality's strategic goals through transparent, accountable, consistent and accessible community engagement.
- Build engagement opportunities that inspire community stakeholders to shape Mississippi Mills' future.
- Make it easy for the community to participate and sustain an informed public.
- Ensure participation reflects diversity in our Municipality and seek understanding of community perspectives.
- Build staff capacity to lead community engagement processes.
- Build community stakeholder trust in the Municipality's decision-making process.

The final engagement strategy will be guided by the following principles:

- A shared responsibility - Engaging people in a meaningful way encourages participation and provides members of Council additional tools when making decisions.
- Relationship-building and perspective seeking – to garner diverse input from individuals or organizations across Mississippi Mills.
- Proactive, timely, and transparent – Set expectations for timelines for engagement, the process and how engagement results will be considered.
- Inclusive and accessible – Ensuring that tools used will be inclusive and accessible in order to accommodate and encourage engagement.
- Innovative and continuously improving – The Clerk's Department will continue to review best practices and areas that we can grow in order to adapt and encourage continued and greater engagement.

As with all communications-related strategies, target audiences will be identified and will include: residents, community and service groups, Indigenous community and diverse populations, employees, other municipalities and other levels of government or associations.

The strategy will also investigate tools that can be leveraged to facilitate engagement and include options as well as associated costs. Tools explored may include: postcards (direct mail for smaller scope projects), water/tax bill inserts, social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube), e-Newsletter, website (new software or add on to existing website), press releases, digital sign, advertising, FAQs, info booths, and event calendar. There are also techniques that can be utilized by staff to facilitate engagement

such as: focus groups, public meetings, open houses, workshops, site visit (guided or self-guided), information videos, or surveys.

The following is the timeline associated with the development of the strategy will be as follows:

Date	Deliverable
July 10, 2023	Members of Council to provide comments to staff on the framework.*
August 15, 2023	Present draft Community Engagement Strategy to Committee of the Whole
September 5, 2023	Final approval by Council of Community Engagement Strategy
Fall 2023	Develop a step-by-step engagement handbook, complete with resources for staff (handouts, etc.)
Ongoing	Evaluate the success of project-specific engagements

\*Depending on what option is recommended to Council.

By following this framework, the Municipality can create an effective community engagement strategy that promotes a healthy and inclusive community and meets the needs of residents, businesses, and other stakeholders.

*\*\*Follow International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Canada spectrum: Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate. For each, include Goal, Action, Outcomes.*

**OPTIONS:**

Option 1: Council Members provide input to staff by July 10<sup>th</sup>, to be included in the final Community Engagement Strategy.

Option 2: Direct staff to proceed with the drafting of the final Community Engagement Strategy without input from Council.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

**SUMMARY:**

This report provides Members with the framework of the Community Engagement Strategy. Staff is seeking input from Council which will then be incorporated into the final strategy. This framework is subject to change and will be used as a guiding document by staff when drafting the Community Engagement Strategy, a draft Community Engagement Strategy will be presented to Committee of the Whole on August 15, 2023.

Respectfully submitted by,

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Jeanne Harfield,  
Clerk & Deputy CAO

and by:

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Ashley Kulp,  
Communications Coordinator

Reviewed by,

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Ken Kelly,  
CAO