



MUNICIPALITY OF THE DISTRICT OF CHESTER

PO Box 20, Chester, NS B0J 1J0
Telephone: 902-275-2599 Facsimile: 902-275-2598

186 Central Street, Chester, NS

Report Municipal Planning Review

Public Participation Strategy May 4, 2011

1.0 Background

Over the next 3 years, elected and appointed officials, residents, the business community, civic organizations, community volunteers, and many others will engage in a discussion about our values as a Municipality and our goals and objectives for the future. Some of this discussion occurred as part of the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan process, but further discussion is required to translate vision of the ICSP into the policies and procedures in our Planning Strategy and Land-use Bylaw.

The decisions made during the process will affect the residents of the Municipality for years to come. Understanding how the public feels about the future of the community, their concerns, and interests will help decision makers to make informed, responsible decisions for the community. Our objective is to have a public participation that results in a set of documents that reflects the goals, vision, and values of the community, and provides the planning, zoning and subdivision tools necessary to realize the vision.

Public participation is not only a desired component of an effective planning program; it is also a legislated requirement. Section 204 of the Municipal Government Act requires that the preparation of planning documents have a public participation program. In the Municipal Planning Strategy, Policy 4.0.3 states that the purpose of the public participation program shall be to hear the opinions of the public.

2.0 Attachments

Attachment A - Planning Review Timeline

Attachment B - Public Participation Strategy Matrix

3.0 Guiding Principles

Public engagement and participation in a community planning process builds a sense of community, and a sense of ownership. People feel more connected when they are involved in development of a plan.

The overall goal of the public engagement program is to make sure that public and private concerns, goals and objectives are heard and understood, and considered in the decision making process.

Planning Department

Generally, unanimous support for every action is an unrealistic goal; rather, we would like to build consensus support for the overall plan.

The principles that form the foundation of the public participation program are:

Openness to All - Participation in the review of the Municipal Planning Documents is an open process. The Municipality encourages any individuals, businesses, organizations across the Municipality to join the process. Each of us has different experiences, preferences, and knowledge that shape our input. We are committed to providing multiple ways to participate in the process in a meaningful way.

Transparency - We want to make sure that stakeholders, as well as the public understand the scope of any pending policy and zoning changes, the decision process and procedures, and any constraints facing the Municipality.

Active Participation - It is essential to ask for public participation, not just wait for it. It is essential to respect and seriously consider input that is received, not just collect it.

Accountability - We want to ensure that the results and outcomes of the process are consistent with the commitment that was made to stakeholder groups and the public at the outset of the initiative.

Integrity - Municipal representatives and staff will address public and stakeholder group concerns in an honest and forthright manner.

Engaging Under-represented Groups - Many public participation processes involve those who are regular contributors to the public decision-making process, or those who are concerned about a particular issue. It is important to provide those groups that are traditionally under-represented in the public participation process (e.g., youth, families with children, renters, and residents who hold more than one job and have little free time) a chance to participate. An effort will be made to provide the opportunity for these groups to participate by offering a variety of engagement opportunities and educational tools.

4.0 Consultation Program

Often, public participation involves holding a large public meeting, and inviting the audience to share their ideas and opinions. This does not tend to be the most effective means of public engagement. The audience consists of people representing different interests, with different levels of education, understanding of the issues, and with various abilities and confidence to communicate their ideas to a large group. As a result, a few people tend to overshadow the majority of the audience, and not everyone gets a change to have their say.

As an alternative to these traditional town-hall style meetings, it is important to have a range of opportunities, from small one-on-one meetings, small group focus sessions, and breakout sessions in a larger meeting. In addition, the opportunity to provide written comments is also necessary. During some phases of the project, the goal of the public participation program will be to inform the public about the

process and findings. At other stages, we will look for more engagement and involvement from the public, seeking their ideas and thoughts on what is being proposed.

Public participation is necessary to obtain public opinion, public expertise, and public acceptance of the plan and regulations.

The phases outlined below are based on a report dated February 16, 2011 titled “Review of Municipal Planning Documents”. The timing of each phase is shown in Attachment ‘A’. The stages, tasks and Planning tools for each phase are summarized in Attachment ‘B’, the Public Participation Strategy Matrix.

Phase I - Community Inventory

Focus Areas – Public Information

- Providing information on the Municipal planning documents and the overall goals and objectives
- Gathering technical, spatial, and community based data for planning elements
- Discussing trends and issues that will affect the update
- Understanding the challenges facing the Municipality, knowing implications

Public Participation Target Audiences

- General Public
- Focus Groups (based on inventory themes)

Public Participation Tools

- Website – Display information on public site
- Discussion Papers – provide on website, present to Council, PAC
- PAC and Council Meetings – open discussion of trends, issues
- Newspaper – Inform public about the planning review process
- Municipal Newsletter - Inform public about the planning review process
- Focus Groups – to refine each report

Phase II - Planning Principles

Public Participation Focus Areas – Engage, Inform, Involve

- Review and Validate ICSP vision and its role shaping the rest of the plan
- Gathering input on planning principles that will guide the review process
- Gathering input on objectives

Public Participation Target Audiences

- Residents
- Businesses/Industry
- Community Groups

Public Participation Tools

- Community Group Meetings – meet with community groups to inform them of the process, and see if they are interested in participating in the process
- Community Roundtables (1 per District) – to identify strengths, weaknesses and opportunities within each community
- Community Questionnaire – Internet, and via Planning Review Newsletter, to identify local issues
- Comment Boxes at Meetings

Planning staff proposes to attend community group meetings (i.e. lions club, legions, etc) to hold more informal discussions. During these meetings, we would discuss the planning review process, present the community inventory, and look for validation of the background data and the vision that was developed during the ICSP. The groups will be invited to be part of the process and to assist in the community engagement process.

These meetings would occur towards the start of Phase II, overlapping with the end of Phase I so that we can be sure that the background information reflects the realities of the community and to revisit the vision and objectives set forth in the ISCP and confirm that they are still appropriate to guide the remainder of the process.

Towards the end of Phase II we will host a Community Roundtable in each District. A brief overview of the process will be followed by breakout sessions to identify and explore the strengths, weakness, concerns and opportunities that exist within each community.

An alternative option would be to hold an initial set of Community Roundtables at the start of Phase II, along with the community focus groups. A second set meetings could then be held in each District to present and validate the findings. Since the larger community meetings require more staff resources, this is not the preferred approach, but it is being presented as a option for Council's consideration.

In order to increase participation rates, and promote community involvement in the process, we could consider using a tool called "Meeting in a Box". A Meeting in a Box is a kit that includes all the materials needed to host a community group meeting, including print materials, a detailed process guide and feedback mechanisms. The kit provides materials that walk a host through conducting community dialogues in which people work through the various planning principles, and share their opinions and comments on policy directions. A kit could be prepared for Phase II, focusing on the Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Challenges faced by the communities, as well as for Phase IV which would focus on the policy directions and seeking feedback from the communities

Phase III – Consultation

Public Participation Focus Areas - Engage, Inform, Involve, Collaborate

- Working with stakeholders to develop policy directions
- Educate stakeholders on planning principles
- Imagining alternative futures

Public Participation Target Audiences

- Residents
- Businesses/Industry
- Community Groups
- Schools/Youth Groups
- Development Community
- Tourism (Bluenose Coast)
- Recreation Department
- Environmental Associations

Public Participation Tools

- Topic Specific Workshops (staff, council, PAC)
- One-on-One Interviews (key stakeholders)
- Focus Groups/Advisory Groups

It is important that the synthesis and analysis of the Community Roundtables and the focus group sessions receive validation from the stakeholders and residents before policy creation. Phase III should include revisiting with the community groups to tell them what we heard during Phase I and II. More specific focus groups and workshops will be held with organizations or individuals based around the planning principle areas.

Phase IV - Plan Development

Public Participation Focus Areas - Engage, Inform, Involve

- Joint CoW & PAC meetings to consider plan directions
- Detailed policy review by topic area

Public Participation Target Audiences

- Residents
- Businesses/Industry
- Community Groups
- Schools/Youth Groups
- Development Community
- Tourism (Bluenose Coast)

- Recreation Department
- Environmental Associations

Public Participation Tools

- Open House meetings (1 per District) to preview documents and receive comments
- Facilitated focus group series

Phase V- Statutory Approval

Public Participation Focus Areas – Consult, Inform

Public Participation Target Audiences

- General Public

Public Participation Tools

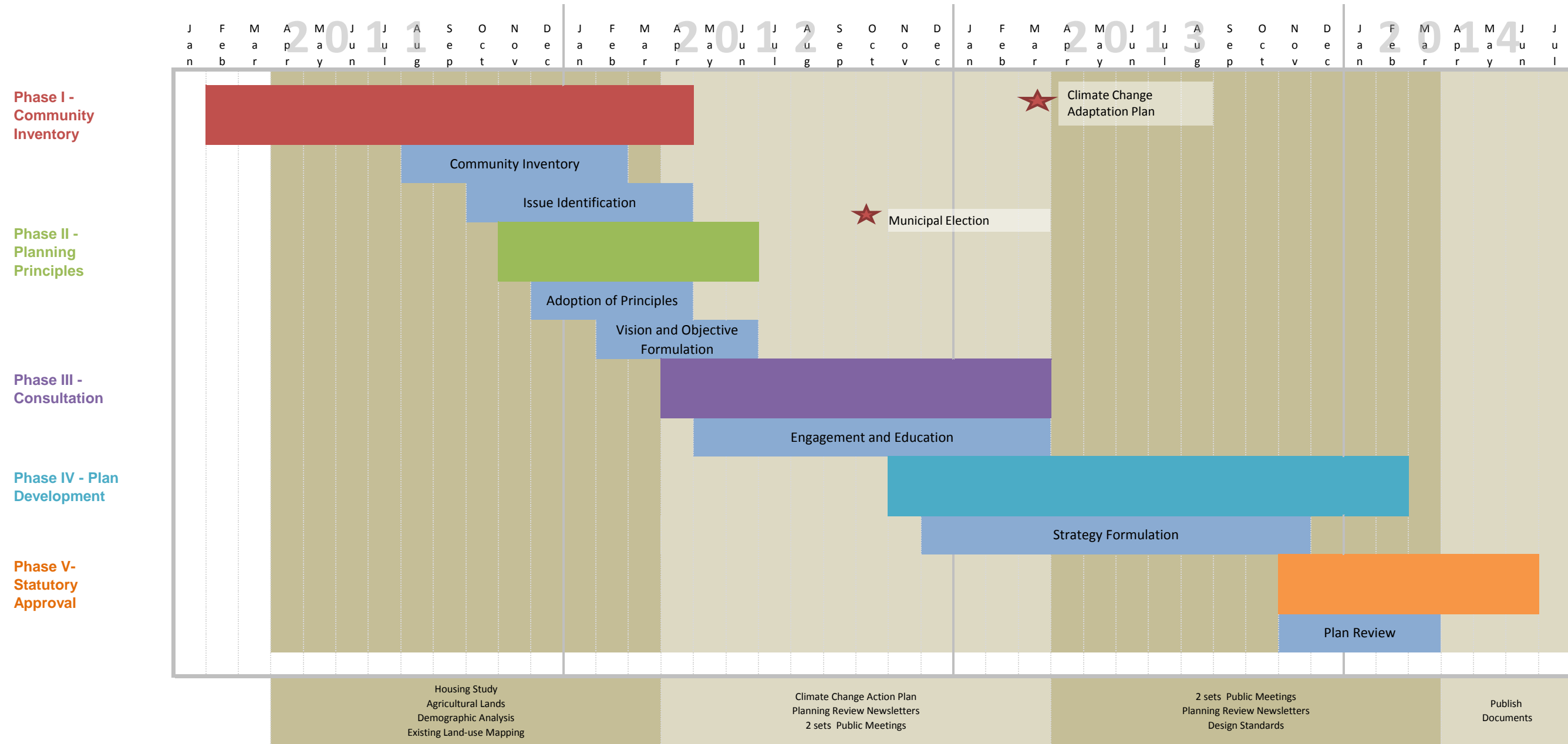
- Public Information Meeting – discuss contents of the draft document, concepts
- Public Hearing – present draft document

May 4, 2011
Tara Maguire

Tara Maguire
Senior Planner

P:\TEXT\CHEM\CHEMPRJ\Planning Docs\2011Review\Discussion Papers\Public Participation\Public Participation Strategy Final.docx

Planning Review Timeline



Phase I - Community Inventory

- Background Research
- Discussion Papers
- Mapping

Milestone:

- Background Report

Phase II - Planning Principles

- Establish planning principles that will guide the review process
- Create a vision and objectives.

Milestone:

- Adoption of Principles
- Vision/Objectives

Phase III - Consultation

- Topic Specific Workshops (staff, council, PAC)
- Design Charettes

Milestone

- Consultation Report

Phase IV - Plan Development

- Joint CoW & PAC meetings to consider plan directions
- Detailed policy review by topic area

Milestone:

- Draft Documents

Phase V - Statutory Approval

- Public Hearings
- Council Adopts Documents
- Provincial Review

Milestone:

- Final Documents

Public Consultation

- General Public Input
- Community Input Meetings
- Targeted Stakeholder Consultations
- Citizen Insight Meetings
- Youth Outreach

Public Participation Strategy Matrix

Planning Phases	Phase I		Phase II		Phase III	Phase IV		Phase V
Planning Stages	Community Inventory	Issue Identification	Adoption of Principles	Vision and Objective Formulation	Engagement and Education	Strategy Formulation	Plan Review	Statutory Approval
Planning Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify data and information needs Gather technical, spatial and community based data Analyze and interpret data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify key issues, challenges, opportunities Verify and support issues using data collected Prioritize Issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish planning principles that will guide the review process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Validate ICSP vision and objectives related to the issues identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold workshops on specific planning issues or principles Meet with key stakeholders to collect their ideas, concerns, objectives, challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop planning alternatives to help meet goals and objectives Evaluate impact of proposed alternatives Select preferred policies, regulations Joint CoW & PAC meetings to consider plan directions Detailed policy review by topic area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present plan for resident, general public, and elected officials to review Make changes to resolve inconsistencies and reflect public concern PAC make recommendation to Council to approve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Reading Hold public hearing Second Reading Provincial Review Notice of Adoption
Planning Tools								
Awareness Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website - page dedicated to Plan Review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Newspaper and Municipal Newsletter - possible series in Progress Enterprise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Newspaper/Local Media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Newspaper - public meeting notices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Newspaper/Local Media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Newspaper - public meeting notices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Newspaper/Local Media - press release 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Newspaper - public hearing notices
Education Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipal Newsletter - Inform public about the planning review process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion Papers - post on website, make available to public, decision makers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion Papers - post on website, make available to public, decision makers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning Review Newsletter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshops for PAC, Council, staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning Review Newsletter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open House 	
Input Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PAC and Council Meetings – open discussion of trends, issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather Citizen input via questionnaire distributed in newsletter and at Community Roundtables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Questionnaire 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possible Visual Preference Survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitated Focus Groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Information Meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Hearing
Engagement Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use local knowledge base to verify data accuracy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Roundtables (1 per district) – to identify strengths, weaknesses and opportunities within each 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Roundtables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Group Meetings (e.g. Lions Clubs, Legions etc) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus Groups/Citizen Input Meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint PAC and CoW meetings 		
Partnership Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Newspaper- inform public about the planning review process 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting in a Box 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PAC make recommendation to Council to approve 	