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Town of Erie
Community Engagement and Transparency Policy
(March 18, 2019 Draft)

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Policy

Engaging the community in policy making, making the basis for decisions clear (transparency), and ensuring public information is easily available, are all essential elements of the Town's representative form of government. To be transparent and promote effective community engagement, Town officials, advisory board members, and staff will observe the following guiding principles and all those interested in an issue should act in ways that help contribute to successful engagement:

Guiding Principles for Community Engagement and Transparency

- **Engage to Make Better Decisions –** Engage residents', business leaders' and visitors' to fully understand their expectations and perspectives; doing so results in better decisions that are more likely to satisfy those expectations.

- **Identify Interested Parties –** Welcome everyone's participation. Take reasonable steps early in the decision making process to identify everyone who may have an interest in the issue, and invite and encourage them to be involved.

- **Adapt the Process to the Issue –** Adapt the engagement process so the level of community engagement reflects the magnitude of the issue and the interests of those affected by the potential outcomes.

- **Use Time Effectively –** Time is precious; create an engagement plan that reflects that and optimizes opportunities to contribute while avoiding "engagement fatigue". Execute that plan to make good use of everyone's time.

- **Observe Budget and Legal Constraints –** Set and observe the resource budgets (time, staff, financial) in the engagement plan, and adhere to all legal and regulatory requirements.

- **Communicate Effectively Both Ways –** Convey information and respond to comments so interested parties feel well informed and heard. If you don't use someone's suggestion, explain why.

- **Provide Easy Access to Information –** Provide interested parties with timely access to all relevant information in an understandable and user-friendly way.

- **Respect Diverse Interests –** Demonstrate respect for the diverse values, interests and knowledge of those who are or may be interested.

- **Explore Options –** Evaluate all reasonable options and summarize the advantages and disadvantages of each option.

- **Explain Decision Making –** Summarize the rational for each decision.

Actions for Success

All participants share responsibility for successful community engagement. The outcomes of the engagement will reflect the extent to which the Board of Trustees, advisory boards, staff, and interested parties reflect these actions:

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- Working in a cooperative and civil manner;

- Focusing on real issues and not on furthering personal agendas;

- Balancing personal concerns with the needs of the community as a whole;

- Maintaining realistic expectations;

- Participating openly, honestly and constructively, offering ideas, suggestions and alternatives;

- Listening carefully and actively considering everyone's perspectives;

- Identifying their concerns and issues early in the process;

- Ensuring everyone who wants to contribute is heard and no single voice dominates the discussion;

- Working within the project schedule and accepting that process schedules may be constrained by external factors such as limited resources, other higher priorities, or legal requirements;

- Working collaboratively to achieve excellent outcomes as well as a fair process (reflecting the end and the means to that end are both important).