

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SELECT COMMITTEE  
ON  
PUBLIC TOWN HALL MEETINGS PILOT PROJECT

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PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to seek the Community Engagement Select Committee's feedback on the proposed Public Town Hall Meetings pilot project.

COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN

This report supports Council's strategic priorities and areas of focus regarding:

- **Governance and Service Excellence**
  - Community Engagement: We promote purposeful, available, and innovative engagement opportunities to ensure a range of voices are heard, thus informing decisions, creating transparency, and cultivating relationships.
  - Governance: Council embraces our diversity and shared commitment to the citizens of Kamloops. We put the interests of the City ahead of our own and advocate with a unified voice, fostering public confidence through healthy debate and sound decision-making which we collectively stand behind.
- **Livability and Sustainability**
  - Inclusivity: We reduce barriers for underrepresented groups to bring inclusivity, diversity, and fairness to our community.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Name	Organization	Position
Katie Neustaeter	City of Kamloops	Councillor
Bill Sarai	City of Kamloops	Councillor
Dale Bass	City of Kamloops	Councillor

SUMMARY

Council unanimously wants to connect directly with Kamloops residents and businesses and to listen to the public's ideas and concerns. Council would like to develop a pilot project that will provide residents with the opportunity to address Council directly and provide Council with the opportunity to hear a range of opinions that can inform their decision making.

Based on research and best practices, staff are forwarding a model for the Public Town Hall Meetings pilot project to the Community Engagement Select Committee for review and feedback that will provide opportunities for residents to participate in a respectful way, with the expectation that the pilot project will take place in fall 2023.

**RECOMMENDATION FROM THE COMMITTEE TO COUNCIL:**

**That the Community Engagement Select Committee recommend to Council the following regarding the Public Town Hall Meetings pilot project:**

- a) a hybrid meeting format**
- b) a total of six neighbourhood meetings, as grouped in Attachment “A”, with a virtual option on Let’s Talk**
- c) evaluation criteria as follows:**
  - i) how well attended each event is**
  - ii) the quality and quantity of feedback received**
  - iii) attendees’ satisfaction with the event, measured through an exit survey**
  - iv) feedback on Let’s Talk from people unable to attend, measured through a survey**
- d) a budget of up to \$20,000 to be funded from the Council Contingency Fund**

**SUPPORTING COUNCIL AND CORPORATE DIRECTION**

- February 28, 2023, Regular Council Meeting - Notice of Motion from Councillor Bass for Council to direct the Community Relations and Reconciliation Committee to make a recommendation to Council regarding the development of a public town hall meetings pilot project.
- July 11, 2023, Regular Council Meeting - Council resolved to form a Community Engagement Select Committee to plan for town hall gatherings, among other public engagement activities.

**DISCUSSION**

Council has adopted a bold strategic plan to guide its decision making over this term. The plan outlines four strategic priorities—Safety and Security, Governance and Service Excellence, Livability and Sustainability, and Economic Health—to make Kamloops a safe, vibrant, and resilient community. Council has also acknowledged the importance of advocacy in meeting the needs of the community, as many issues highlighted in the 2022 Citizen Satisfaction Survey fall outside of municipal jurisdiction.

Council highlights community engagement as a key component to good governance and service excellence and promotes purposeful, available, and innovative engagement opportunities to ensure a range of voices are heard, thus informing decisions, creating transparency, and developing relationships.

This report outlines some options for Council to create meaningful opportunities to engage with the public and recommends a pilot project focused on Council’s Strategic Plan as an opportunity to collect input on how Council can advance the plan.

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## Timeline

At the February 28, 2023, meeting, Council directed the Community Relations and Reconciliation Committee to make a recommendation to Council regarding the development of a public town hall meetings pilot project to provide residents with an opportunity to address Council outside of the constraints of a Regular Council Meeting. During Regular Council Meetings, members of the public are limited to asking Council questions about a specific topic on that day's agenda.

Following the March 21, 2023, Special Council Meeting, the Community Relations and Reconciliation Committee and the four other standing committees were suspended pending recommendations from the Council Committee Governance Select Committee on committee structure, membership, and governance.

At the July 11, 2023, Regular Council Meeting, Council authorized the dissolution of the suspended standing committees, including the Community Relations and Reconciliation Committee, and authorized the formation of a Community Engagement Select Committee to plan for town hall gatherings, among other public engagement initiatives.

## Key Considerations

### *Objectives*

Staff has based this report on the objective of collecting input from the community on how to effectively advance Council's Strategic Plan to create a safe, vibrant, and resilient community.

### *Place and Date*

To maximize participation, staff are recommending hosting a series of events throughout the city to provide opportunities for residents to discuss the issues that are most relevant to their neighbourhood. Staff feel working with neighbourhood associations to communicate the engagement opportunities to the public and solicit questions or topics in advance will be beneficial. As staff anticipate that these events will be well attended, the locations and times of these events need to be carefully considered.

In recognition of staff and Council time and the budget to host these events, staff are recommending six events be held, grouping the neighbourhoods as outlined below and shown on Attachment "A". These groupings have been made based on geography, commonalities, and population size. The associated neighbourhood association is listed in brackets, where applicable:

- Core (22% of population):
  - Downtown (Kamloops Downtown Neighbourhood Association)
  - West End
  - Mission Flats
  - Sagebrush (Sagebrush Neighbourhood Association)
  - North Kamloops (McDonald Park Neighbourhood Association, North Shore Central Community Association, Schubert Drive Neighbourhood Association)

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- Southwest 1 (15% of population):
  - Pineview Valley (Pineview Valley Community Association)
  - Aberdeen (Aberdeen Neighbourhood Association - Kamloops)
  - Dufferin (Dufferin Neighbourhood Association)
  - Iron Mask
  - Knutsford
- Southwest 2 (14% of population):
  - Upper Sahali (Upper Sahali Community Communications)
  - Lower Sahali (Lower Sahali Community Association)
  - Southgate
  - Thompson Rivers University
- Southeast (16% of population):
  - Juniper Ridge (Juniper Ridge Community Association)
  - Barnhartvale (Barnhartvale Community Association)
  - Campbell Creek
  - Rose Hill (High Country Neighbourhood Society)
  - Valleyview (Valleyview Community Chat)
  - Dallas (Dallas Community Association)
- Northwest (20% of population):
  - Batchelor Heights (Batchelor Heights Community Association)
  - Brock (Brocklehurst Community Association)
  - Tranquille
- North (14% of population):
  - Westsyde (Westsyde Community Development Society)
  - Noble Creek
  - Rayleigh
  - Heffley (Heffley Creek Community Recreation Association)

### *Meeting Format*

The meeting format can determine the effectiveness of the engagement. An effective meeting will provide allow attendees to do the following:

- voice their opinions, concerns, and frustrations to Council
- participate in whatever manner feels most comfortable
- hear others' input and feedback
- participate in respectful dialogue free from intimidation

Staff recognize that some members of the public and of Council would like an open mic format meeting. Staff also recognize that for other members of the public, this format can be uncomfortable and intimidating. To facilitate dialogue and shared understanding and to meet the objective of collecting meaningful input, staff are recommending a hybrid meeting format that will create opportunities for residents to engage with Council about their strategic plan, allow all attendees to see and hear the input being provided, and deliver meaningful feedback that can be provided to Council following the events.

Each meeting would begin with an overview of Council's Strategic Plan and outlining Council's mission, vision, values, and strategic priorities. Council and attendees would then move to a World Café format, which would be organized around Council's four strategic priorities. At each station, a facilitator would seek input from attendees on what is working well, ideas and opportunities for improvement, where Council should focus their advocacy efforts. Attendees would have the opportunity to move between all four stations. At the end of four rotations, the facilitator at each station would report back on key themes for each area.

After the World Café, there would be an opportunity for attendees to ask questions of Council via an open mic on anything they have heard or provide any input or feedback they did not hear reflected.

### *Virtual Participation*

There is never a perfect time or place to host in-person engagement targeted at the entire City population. Although Council's intention is to provide in-person opportunities for residents to engage with Council, the City's Let's Talk digital engagement platform can provide an alternative method for Council to hear from residents. The site can be used to promote in-person events, but it can also be used to solicit input from those who may be unable or unwilling to attend in person.

The Let's Talk Kamloops site can be set up to collect information on the same three areas as the World Café—what is working well, ideas and opportunities for improvement, and where should Council focus their advocacy efforts—for each of the four strategic priorities and can be provided back to Council following the in-person events.

### *Evaluation*

As this is a pilot project, staff are recommending that Council outline specific evaluation criteria to determine the success of the pilot. Based on the objective outlined in this report, sample metrics could include:

- how well attended each event is
- the quality and quantity of feedback received
- attendees' satisfaction with the event, measured through an exit survey
- feedback on Let's Talk from people unable to attend, measured through a survey

### ALTERNATIVES/OPTIONS

An alternative meeting format would be for Council to host a traditional town hall format. In this format, Council could begin the event with a presentation or panel discussion on their Strategic Plan then open the floor to questions from the public. Best practice has shown that this format does not create an environment where all guests feel empowered or relaxed, and emotions can escalate quickly. The City's goal is to provide a respectful environment where all attendees feel safe and able to participate, no matter their differing or common viewpoints.

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FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Costs to host the events may include facility rental (if City-owned facilities are not available or appropriate), audio/visual support (if not available in the facility), moderator fee, and refreshments. Based on previous events, staff are recommending a budget of approximately \$3,000 per event. If Council wishes to support the events with paid advertising, additional funding would be required.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Following direction from Council, staff will identify possible meeting dates based on the availability of locations, participants, and logistical support, such as audio/visual and moderators. Staff will aim to complete this pilot project by the end of October 2023.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Communications and Community Engagement Division will develop a plan to promote the events to Kamloops residents, including working with neighbourhood associations.

  
K. Rodrigue

Acting Communications  
Manager

Concurrence: D. Hallinan, FCPA, FCMA, Corporate  
Services Director

  
Approved for Committee

KR/kjm

Attachment



## Attachment A

### North (14% of population)

- Westsyde
- Noble Creek
- Rayleigh
- Heffley

### Northwest (20% of population)

- Batchelor Heights
- Brock
- Tranquille

### Core (22% of population)

- Downtown
- West End
- Sagebrush
- North Kamloops
- Mission Flats

### Southeast (16% of population)

- Juniper Ridge
- Barnhartvale
- Campbell Creek
- Rose Hill
- Valleyview
- Dallas

### Southwest 1 (15% of population)

- Pineview Valley
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