

Salt Spring Island Fire Protection District

POLICY MANUAL

Section	
Policy Number	
Policy Title	Public Involvement

DEFINITIONS

“*District*” the Salt Spring Island Fire Protection District.

“*Public consultation*” a one-way flow of information from the public to the *District* generally through methods such as public hearings.

“*Public information*” a one-way flow of information from the *District* to the public.

“*Public participation*” or “*public engagement*” a two-way interaction between the public and the *District* involving informed dialogue, discussion and deliberation of alternatives.

“*Public involvement*” includes *public consultation, public information, public participation, and public engagement.*

“*Town hall meeting*” A public meeting that includes the following:

- presentations by staff, community leaders, outside experts, elected officials and anyone else who wants to speak.
- presentations from the public heard by the audience and panel that includes decision makers and technicians who can ask and answer questions and interact with speakers and the audience.
- sufficient time for presentations by persons with particular expertise or experience who may wish to speak more than a few minutes.

POLICY OBJECTIVE

The Trustees of the Salt Spring Island Fire Protection District wish to adopt a *public involvement* policy that represents best practices in this field in order to achieve effective and meaningful involvement of the public in major decisions made by the Board of Trustees.

SCOPE

This policy applies to the Salt Spring Island Fire Protection District Board of Trustees, career and exempt employees, paid-on-call members, and volunteers acting on behalf of the District. The policy will be applied to those decisions that the Board of Trustees deem to be of a level of importance that *public involvement* at regular Board and Committee meetings where time is not sufficient.

KEY PRINCIPALS

1. Early Involvement: The public should be involved as early as possible. The public should be able to contribute in developing the agenda and defining their need for information. No major decisions should be made prior to public engagement.

2. Provide Information:

- Background information should be provided to the public before a meeting via the web, mailed or newspaper.
- Background information should define what the *public involvement* process will be, (i.e. is it “consultation” or “involvement”) and describe the role public will play.
- A brief and general commentary should cover what processes will be used to make a decision.
- Background materials should be short enough that people will read them but can be supplemented by more detailed information on the District’s website.
- Information must be provided to the public such as legal constraints, strengths and weaknesses of the various policy options.
- Information must be both understandable to lay persons and sufficient to provide the basis for thoughtful discussions and deliberations.

3. Representativeness: Participants must be as representative of the population as possible, reflecting geography, demography, political affiliation, ideology or factors relevant to the community.

4. Independence: The process must be perceived as fair and independent. Moderators must be impartial and everybody must have a chance to express himself or herself including those who hold divergent views.

5. Influencing the policy decisions: Participants must have a real impact on the policy and decision-making process. Their input will be integrated in the decision-making

process. There should be a feedback mechanism to inform the general public and the participants about the final decision and how the public process influenced it.

6. Accessibility: Activities must be accessible to participants including having sufficient time to inform themselves and being held at a time and location that is convenient. For some audiences special accommodations may be required such as providing wheelchair access.

7. Public participation or engagement: The best *public involvement* includes not only *public consultation* and *public information*, which are one way communication methods, but also opportunities for *public participation* and/or *public engagement* being two-way communication in which the public can engage in discussion and interaction with elected representatives, staff and other experts such as via a *town hall meeting*.

RESPONSIBILITIES

FIRE CHIEF, ADMINISTRATOR, OR THEIR DESIGNATE

Will implement public participation processes as directed by the Board of Trustees. In some cases a volunteer or private consultant may be appointed to oversee the process.

BOARD DISCRETION

The provisions set out in this policy are subject to revision from time to time at the discretion of the Board of Trustees.

APPROVALS

Approval date:		Approved by:	
1. Amendment date:		Approved by:	
2. Amendment date:		Approved by:	
3. Amendment date:		Approved by:	