

The City of



# GRAYLING

MICHIGAN

## Public Participation Plan

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# Overview and Purpose

Public input is crucial in making well informed decisions for the community. City Council is a position that is intended to be the voice of the people, so they understand that the residents and business owners need to be involved to help the City prosper.

The community should be engaged from the beginning. Gathering information at the start, middle, and end only helps a project and shows that we are fully transparent. Bringing in the public to understand what the project(s) are about helps alleviate citizen pushback later on.

This plan is to help engage the public with a detailed outline that gives options on how to solicit input. The plan will also be used to help future boards and staff to have a “road map” on how to effectively bring the community together. There will also be an outline on how to document the successes or struggle for each community involvement session. This will help us learn from what did or did not work.

The Public Participation Plan is a guide that gives many different options in which the City can effectively reach out to the public. It should also be mentioned that this is a document that will need to be updated as new ways of communicating to the public emerge. The City of Grayling realizes the best way to grow in a positive matter is to reach out and be transparent. For that reason, we have created the Public Participation Plan.

# Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives are the foundation on how we will pursue public involvement. This list will reflect our ideas along with great ideas from other communities.

➤ **Solicit public participation in all areas of Governmental decisions.**

The City knows small and large decisions need public input and citizen participation.

➤ **Seek broad identification and representative involvement of all community members.**

Input should be heard from residents, non-residents, business owners and the City encourages participation by persons of low and moderate incomes, citizens with Limited English Proficiency and citizens with disabilities. Anyone who shops, walks, or utilizes the community's services should be involved with decision making.

➤ **Utilize effective and equitable avenues for distributing information and receiving comments.**

There are many techniques and mechanisms available to ensure that a diverse public is well-informed and able to play a role in the planning process. The City recognizes that no single technique or mechanism will work in all cases, so we will strive to use the best approach for each situation.

➤ **Provide educational materials and design participation initiatives that will support and encourage effective participation.**

Public meetings are meant to inform the public and get feedback/ideas. The City wants to know what the community has to say so we can make Grayling a better place for all.

➤ **Maintain and develop staff expertise in all aspects of participation.**

This includes techniques for bridging language, cultural and economic differences that affect participation; ways to convey issues and information in meaningful ways to various cultural groups; and means for ensuring equitable representation for all segments of the population and sectors of the economy.

The City will provide technical assistance to individual citizens and citizen groups, especially those groups representative of persons of low and moderate income, as may be required to adequately provide for citizen participation.

The City will take all reasonable actions necessary to provide interpreters or materials in the appropriate language or format for persons with Limited English Proficiency.

The locations of all public meetings and or hearings shall be made accessible to persons with disabilities.

Such technical assistance is intended to increase citizen participation in the community development decision making process and to ensure that such participation is meaningful.

- **Support and encourage continuous improvements in the methods used to meet the public need for information and involvement.**

The City knows methods for getting information out to the public is always evolving. We will continually seek new ways to engage and keep the public involved throughout the process.

- **Record results of public engagement and recount these results back to the public.**
- Keeping a record helps determine what worked or did not work for present and future employees. They will also make it easier to relay the information back to other boards or the public.

## Public Participation Requirements

The State of Michigan and the Federal Government passed a statute called the Open Meetings Act (OMA), which requires all sectors of government to follow. The OMA was developed to ensure the citizens are being included in the decision-making process. Restrictions on discussions outside of a public forum and advanced notice of meetings serve to ensure there is a level of transparency in government.

### Meetings

The City of Grayling takes the Open Meetings Act seriously. The OMA has set rules during public meetings to ensure the public has an opportunity to be included in the decision-making process and to ensure that a record of decisions will be kept and accessible to the public for review. Some of the guidelines are spelled out below.

### Michigan's Open Meetings Act

In accordance with the Michigan Open Meetings Act (PA 267 of 1976), the municipality will hold meetings in City Hall located at 1020 City Boulevard, which is accessible to the general public.

The public will be notified within 10 days of the first meeting of a public body in each calendar or fiscal year; the body will publicly post a list stating the dates, times and places of all its regular meetings at its principle office.

If there is a change in schedule, within three days of the meeting in which the change is made, the public body will post a notice stating the new dates, times and places of regular meetings.

For special and irregular meetings, public bodies will post a notice indicating the date, time and place at least 18 hours in advance.

Public bodies will hold emergency sessions without a written notice of times constraints if the public health, safety or welfare is severely threatened and if two-thirds of the body's members vote to hold the emergency meeting.

Each public body shall keep minutes of each meeting showing the date, time, place, members present, members absent, any decisions made at a meeting open to the public, and the purpose or purposes for which a closed session is held. The minutes shall include all roll call votes taken at the meeting.

Minutes are public records open to public inspection, and a public body shall make the minutes available at the address designated on posted public notices.

## Stakeholder Outreach

This plan should not only look at businesses and residents. There are numerous other boards and committees that play an active role in Grayling's growth. These boards have worked hard to add to the quality of Grayling and should be included on all projects that affect the community. Here is a list of all known organizations:

- City Council
- City of Grayling Planning Commission
- Downtown Development Authority (DDA)
- Grayling Main Street (GMS)
- City of Grayling Parks & Recreation Committee
- Grayling Promotional Association (GPA)
- Grayling Rotary
- Grayling Masonic Lodge
- Grayling Charter Township
- Crawford County Collaborative Body
- Crawford AuSable Schools
- Crawford County Economic Development Partnership (CCEDP)
- Crawford County Commissioners
- Crawford County Planning Commission
- The American Legion
- Veterans of Foreign War (VFW)
- Commission on Aging (COA)
- Crawford County Housing Authority
- Habitat for Humanity
- Grayling Regional Chamber of Commerce
- Grayling Visitors Bureau
- 4 Mile Economic Development Group
- Kirtland Community College

This list is to help all the boards remember that there are many groups trying to accomplish the same goals. Not every board will want to be involved but they should still be notified of upcoming projects. The City's goal is to make sure all groups know that what they have to say does matter. Projects in a small community need to have the support of residents, businesses and all other boards in the community. This document will also be an evolving document as ways of notification and outreach change.

# Methods of Communication

There are many approaches in getting the public aware of meetings or projects. We have the passive approach which is the bare minimum set by the state. Many times, this does not result in involvement of all stakeholders, especially those with visual impairments, non-English speakers, the illiterate, youth, citizens with limited mobility and those who work during the time of the public meeting.

- **Newspaper Posting**
- **Website Posting**
- **Flier posted at City Hall**
- **Announcements at public meetings**
- **Postcard mailings**
- **Local Cable Notification**

Then there is the proactive approach. This method is focused on education and collaborative visioning. Many of these methods have been used by the City and have proven to work. To ensure that applicants seeking project approval pursue early and effective public participation in conjunction with their proposed developments, we strongly encourage developers to discuss development plans with surrounding neighbors. Getting the public involved from the beginning only helps with community supporting a project.

- **Surveys:** Surveys are useful for identifying specific areas of interest or concentration from a broad scope of ideas or issues. These areas of interest can then be further explored using other methods like the ones outlined below. The City has sent out many surveys over the years with great response. We have sent out surveys for Master Plan updates, sign ordinance feedback and other small projects.
- **Community Workshops:** These could be as simple as a series of question and answer sessions or as creative as creating a board game. Often workshops are a great way to educate the community surrounding a specific topic and hear concerns, questions and ideas. As noted above, workshop venues need to be accessible and approachable for all attendees. If a meeting is for a neighborhood level project, all efforts should be made to hold the workshop in the neighborhood and at convenient times. An experienced meeting facilitator is a must and they must understand the desired input and ultimate use of the input and be able to relay the process. The City held a community workshop for Project Rising Tide.
- **Charrettes:** The charrette differs from a workshop because it is a multi-day event where designers and planners work on a plan in-between what are called “feedback loops”. Citizens can come to the “charrette studio”, which is usually located on or near the location of the proposed project. Citizens offer ideas while the charrette team facilitates and observes. From these suggestions, the designers and planners change the plan to suit community input and present their creation the next day where the community offers feedback again. This makes up one cycle of a “feedback loop”. There can be up to five feedback loops, resulting in a final plan shortly thereafter.
- **Walkabouts:** Walkabouts offer candid feedback from a variety of stakeholders when discussing a specific area. They can be paired with community workshops or charrettes to measure the perceived safety and comfort of pedestrians in a downtown,

neighborhood or corridor. Walkabouts are also useful for identifying desired design, problem properties or safety concerns.

- **One-on-One Interviews:** Interviews are a great way to get specifics on a topic. Specific community leaders may have been identified, making them ideal candidates for an interview. Some communities have individuals that are very vocal about issues in the community. Interviewing them may give some perspective on how to address their concerns.
- **Focus Groups:** Like interviews, focus groups can help to narrow down concepts or get a specific side of the story.
- **Social Networking:** Technology offers a unique opportunity to give and receive information to a mass of people. Municipalities can post events, share information and even solicit feedback. This public participation method is best used in conjunction with other methods because it excludes those who do not use social media.

# Opportunities for Public Outreach

The City of Grayling will follow this public engagement plan to the best of their ability. While we will strive to include everyone, some projects do not require public hearings and we cannot force the developer to include the public. The City knows including the public from the beginning makes for a better relationship among all parties. Here are some projects that the City has control over and will always include the public in updating.

- **Master Plan:** The Master Plan is a visionary document that lays out the foundation on which to build the community. It has the community's goals, objectives and strategies for implementation. For the Master Plan to be a true community document the public needs to be involved from the beginning. The Master Plan is tasked to Planning Commission to oversee but should be developed through many of the public outreach strategies listed above.
- **Zoning Ordinance Update:** Like the Master Plan, the Zoning Ordinance is a document that reflects the vision of the community. To this end, it is important the public be involved in its revision. As each revision process is unique and not necessarily related to the entire document, the stakeholders may vary to some extent. However, a general process of public outreach will contain early and frequent public input and a continuous facilitation of involvement throughout the decision-making process. The creation of citizen study groups, or ad-hoc committees, or workshops with directly affected property owners will be encouraged when tackling more complicated issues. The thought processes of City Officials will be explained in each public meeting so that citizens are aware of the development if they are not directly involved. Also, one or more public hearings will be held before passage of any ordinance. Particular attention will be paid to public outreach and communication when dealing with controversial development projects. The website will be updated and social media and e-newsletter updates will be sent out regularly on decision-making processes and projects.
- **DDA Master Plan:** This document is much like the Master Plan but only focuses on the DDA district. The DDA board oversees the creation of this document but like the Master Plan it should be a community driven project. The success of the City's downtown is crucial in helping with growth and becoming a destination area.

These are some of the ways to get involved with shaping how Grayling will grow. A more direct approach would be to join one of our boards or committees or show up for a meeting. The City is involved with many State programs and has multiple smaller sub-committees that are always in need of volunteers. Being on a board or committee is the best way to let your voice be heard and make a difference. Here is a list of committees that do not fall under the Open Meetings Act and therefore are not well known.

- GMS Economic Restructuring
- GMS Design
- GMS Organization
- GMS
- Project Rising Tide Steering Committee
- Grayling Farmers Market

# Communicating Results

Gathering information is the first phase, relaying the results is the next step. Communicating back to the public the information gathered during the public involvement process will result in another layer of transparency and a greater understanding from the public that we value public input and are actively seeking to involve the citizens in our community.

In general, the following is a list of ways the City will communicate public feedback.

- **Public Meetings:** City Council meetings minutes will be posted on line no later than one week after the minutes are approved. For other public body meetings, minutes will also be made available on line.
- **Surveys:** Surveys performed by city staff will be compiled by a designated staff person and posted no later than one week after the survey was completed. The results, or a link to the results, will be posted online.
- **Community workshops/ Charrettes:** An official will be charged with taking notes during community workshops and charrettes and getting names, addresses and emails of all in attendance. These notes will be posted on the City website (Facebook Page) no later than one week after the workshop or the charrette. In addition, the results of these events will be sent to participants via email and the meeting summary will be publicized at other public meetings such as City Council and Planning Commission.
- **Walkabouts:** The facilitator(s) of walkabouts will take notes during the walkabout. A summary of the input received will be produced and posted on the City website within two weeks of the walkabout.
- **One-on-one interviews:** Interview results will be kept confidential for the comfort of the participants unless requested otherwise, but a summary of all comments will be compiled.
- **Focus groups:** Focus group results will be kept confidential for the comfort of the participants unless requested otherwise, but a summary of all comments will be compiled.
- **Standing committees:** Recommendations coming out of standing committees will be summarized and provided to the board or commission to which they report.
- **Social networking:** The Office of City Manager will be responsible for monitoring the municipal social networking sites. The Office will respond to public posts no later than 24 hours after the post was made and will make posts on behalf of the municipality concerning community events and public participation results.

# Public Participation Evaluation

The Plan will be formally reviewed on an annual basis. A City official will be responsible for keeping records of the participation efforts and will be responsible for compiling the data and presenting it to the City and public with suggestions for actions. The results should identify strengths and weaknesses and give examples of how to adjust our behavior to better maximize outreach. However, if the plan is implemented as stated, the feedback loop should create a continuous review process that enables City officials to successfully make changes through a consistently improved upon, dynamic process.