



Charter Township of Garfield **Public Participation Strategy**

June 2021

Charter Township of Garfield

3848 Veterans Drive | Traverse City, MI 49684 | 231.941.1620

www.garfield-twp.com

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Purpose, Goal, and Objectives

1. Purpose

This public participation strategy serves as a guide for the Township to utilize effective and inclusive public engagement methods. This strategy:

- a. identifies key stakeholders
- b. describes public participation methods and the appropriate use of each method, and
- c. explains how the results of engagement efforts will be reported

2. Goal

The Charter Township of Garfield strives to:

- a. provide effective communications that meet Township goals and objectives, and
- b. provide transparency in governance through a variety of methods to share ideas and information and understand the needs of residents

3. Objectives

This public participation strategy is based on the following objectives:

- a. **Involve all residents.** The Township is a growing and changing community which needs to give everyone a voice.
- b. **Utilize effective and equitable engagement tools.** The Township is committed to seeking new and innovative ways to engage the public. The Township will consider the communication needs of the public and use the best approaches to accomplish this objective.
- c. **Inform the community.** The Township understands the importance of creating an open and welcoming environment. The Township will convey issues and information in meaningful ways.
- d. **Maintain a transparent environment.** The Township will provide easy access to information and decision-making processes to maintain transparency and consistency. The Township will share results of public participation efforts.

State and Local Regulations

The Township will follow state statutes and local ordinances to guide its participation activities with the community. The Township strives to go beyond traditional practices and be proactive in soliciting public input. The following are relevant statutes and ordinances that will inform the participation process:

1. Michigan Open Meetings Act. The Michigan Open Meetings Act was created to ensure government transparency and accountability to citizens. It requires certain meetings of public bodies to be open to the public, timely public notice of these meetings, and the keeping of minutes at these meetings.
 - a. The Township will hold meetings at the Township Hall located at 3848 Veterans Drive which is accessible to the public.
 - b. The Township sets the schedule for meetings in advance of the new calendar year.
 - c. 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 principal office.
 - d. 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.
 - e. For special and irregular meetings, public bodies will post a notice indicating the date, time, and place at least 18 hours before the meetings.
 - f. Opportunities for public comment are provided at meetings of the Township Board and all boards and commissions, including the Planning Commission, Parks and Recreation Commission, and Zoning Board of Appeals.

2. Michigan Planning Enabling Act. For land use planning activities required by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, the following actions will take place:
 - a. All appropriate parties and stakeholders as required by statute will be notified via first class mail, personal delivery, or email by the planning commission of the intent to plan and request the recipient's cooperation and comment.
 - b. After a draft master plan has been submitted to the Board for review and approval for distribution, the draft master plan will be submitted to the above entities for review.
 - c. Before approving a proposed master plan, the Planning Commission will hold not less than one public hearing on the proposed master plan. The hearing will be held after the expiration of the deadline for comment as outlined in the Act (63 days for a new master plan and 42 days for a master plan amendment).
 - d. The Planning Commission will give notice of the time and place of the public hearing not less than 15 days before the hearing by publication in the Record-Eagle newspaper. The Planning Commission will also submit notice of the public hearing by first class mail, personal delivery, or email to the required entities for review.
 - e. Upon adoption of the master plan, the Planning Commission may publish and distribute copies of the master plan or of any report and employ other means of publicity and education.

- f. Third party consultants, including a engineers or designers, may also work on planning activities on behalf of the Township. Any consultants working for the Township will also follow the requirements of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act and will be expected to follow this strategy when conducting activities at the direction of the Township.
3. Michigan Zoning Enabling Act. For zoning activities required by the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act and as described in the Township Zoning Ordinance, the following actions will take place:
- a. The distribution of notices shall occur as follows:
 - i. Publish notice in the Record-Eagle not less than 15 days before the date of a public hearing.
 - ii. Notice given to all persons whom real property is assessed within 300 feet of the property that is the subject of the request and to the occupants of all structures within 300 feet of the subject property.
 - b. Notice Requirements. The notice shall describe:
 - i. The nature of the request.
 - ii. Indicate the property that is the subject of the request.
 - iii. Time and location when the request will be considered.
 - iv. Time and location where comments will be received concerning the request.
 - c. Actions Requiring Notice. The following actions may be taken depending on the request:
 - i. Zoning Ordinance Text and Map Amendments. Planning Commission will hold at least one public hearing prior to submitting its recommendations to the Board. The Board will hold a public hearing before a decision.
 - ii. Special Use Permit Applications. The Planning Commission will hold at least one public hearing before its decision.
 - iii. Planned Development Applications. Planning Commission will hold at least one public hearing prior to submitting its preliminary recommendations to the Board. The Board will hold a public hearing before its final decision.
4. Township Ordinances. The Township Zoning, General Law and Police Power Ordinances are created and adopted as provided in State statutes. Public hearings are held in accordance with the corresponding State statute.

Key Stakeholders

The Township will evaluate each project on an individual basis to ensure the inclusion of all stakeholders in the community. Stakeholder engagement will vary according to the project being reviewed. Possible key stakeholders include, but are not limited to:

1. Residents and property owners
2. Business owners
3. Township elected and appointed officials
4. County and neighboring municipalities
5. Social organizations and neighborhood groups
6. Homeowner associations
7. Schools and students
8. Senior citizens
9. Local non-profit organizations
10. Transportation organizations
11. Newspapers and media organizations
12. Affordable housing developers and advocates
13. Permitting agencies, including local and state departments

Communication Strategies

The Township uses a variety of public engagement strategies. While there are advantages to certain methods of communication currently in use, there are also opportunities to improve the Township's public engagement strategy.

1. Current Communication Methods

- a. Website posts
- b. Newsletters
- c. Announcements at Board and Commission meetings
- d. Printed postcards
- e. Newspaper public notices
- f. Virtual meetings
- g. Public engagement sessions
- h. Meeting recordings on the GovernmentTV website (www.tacm.tv/govtvnow.asp)

2. Proactive Public Engagement

Traditional announcement methods such as newspaper postings, website postings, post cards, and flyer postings are usually the simplest and quickest methods to advertise public meetings and public engagement opportunities. Many times, these methods do not result in strong 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 a public meeting. Public engagement activities should utilize venues that take into consideration accessibility for disabled citizens and citizens with limited transportation options. The following are some examples of public participation methods that are less reactive and more focused on education and collaborative visioning. Some of these methods have been used in the past, but there is opportunity to increase their use in the future:

- a. **Surveys.** Surveys identify specific areas of interest on a variety of ideas or issues. Surveys are versatile and can be used for a variety of projects such as an update to the Master Plan or revision of the Zoning Ordinance. While surveys are a useful tool, they should not be used as the only way of collecting public input.
- b. **Community Workshops.** Workshops are a great way to educate the community surrounding a specific topic and hear concerns, questions, and ideas. These events can be simple, but also creative in gaining input. Depending on the topic, workshops can be facilitated by Township staff, board, or commissions, or by relevant community partners.
- c. **Charrettes.** A charrette is a multi-day event where designers and planners work with the public to generate ideas and develop solutions. Because charrettes require a substantial amount of preparation, they should be used for very select projects. Township staff and officials can lead the process but should utilize the expertise of other professional planners and designers to maximize the impact of the charrette.
- d. **Walking Tours and Site Visits.** Walking tours and site visits are a casual method for showcasing and gathering feedback from stakeholders when highlighting a specific area. They are useful to gauge "in the field" issues as well as identify possible solutions.

- e. **Interviews.** Interviews with key stakeholders or community members are a great way to get specific information on a topic. However, it is important to remember that interviews only reflect the opinions of one individual and should not be considered the perspective of the entire community.
- f. **Focus Groups.** Like interviews, focus groups can help narrow down concepts or get a specific perspective. Focus groups should be comprised of previously identified key stakeholders and should consider groups that are frequently left out of traditional outreach methods.
- g. **Advisory Committees.** These are focus groups that repeatedly meet and can offer continued input from groups with specific needs or interests, such as seniors or youth.
- h. **Social Networking.** Technology has made it easier to send and receive information to a mass of people than ever before. The Township will continue to work towards developing a social media presence to post events, share information, and gather feedback.
- i. **Virtual Meetings.** In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Township moved public meetings onto virtual platforms to protect the health of officials, staff, and the public while maintaining public access to Township meetings and events. The Township will continue to utilize these tools on an as-required basis.

Improving Public Engagement

The Township will continue to incorporate proactive public engagement tools in coordination with current communication methods. While the engagement strategies mentioned in the prior section will help improve public engagement, it is unnecessary to utilize every tool at one time. Some public engagement tools may also not be appropriate for certain projects. The Communication Toolbox table shown on the next page illustrates which type of engagement tool may be best employed for a specific type of project. The following strategies will help improve public engagement:

1. More Frequent Use of Proactive Engagement Tools

Using proactive engagement tools will allow for the Township to improve the range of ages and backgrounds during the public engagement process. Certain tools can also help improve access for those unable to attend conventional meetings. For example, digital tools such as social media or recording meetings could increase the availability of information for residents that are unable to attend at a certain time or location.

2. Public Engagement During Development Plan Review Process

The Township and applicants can use proactive public engagement during the development plan review process to go beyond just the public comments or public hearings at scheduled meetings, including the following:

- a. **Conceptual Review with Notice.** The Township has a conceptual review process, allowing for the Planning Commission to review projects before they are formally submitted. One option for applicants is to do a conceptual review with public notice, either by mail to the nearby property owners or a full public notice including publishing in the newspaper. The conceptual review with notice can be used to engage people early in the development review process.
- b. **Public Engagement by Applicant.** This strategy is also available to applicants who may wish to engage the public as part of their development review application. The Township can assist the developer in soliciting input by discussing potential strategies and finding which ones are appropriate for their project. This may be potentially beneficial on large or complicated projects.

Communication Toolbox

Each project will require a different combination of approaches to public engagement. The table below can be used to identify the most optimal approach when seeking public input.

Communication Toolbox						
Recommended		Optional			Required	
Type of Engagement Tool	Project Type					
	Master Plan	Zoning Amendments	Environmental Projects	Capital Projects	Parks and Recreation Planning and Projects	Major Developments
Pre-application meeting			Recommended			Recommended
Surveys	Recommended	Optional	Recommended	Recommended	Recommended	
Open house meetings and workshops	Recommended	Recommended	Recommended	Recommended	Recommended	Optional
Charettes and design workshops	Optional				Optional	Optional
Walking tours/Site visits	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional
Interviews	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional
Focus groups	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional
Digital tools of communication	Recommended	Optional	Optional	Optional	Recommended	Recommended
Local events	Recommended	Recommended	Optional		Recommended	Optional
News, media	Optional	Recommended	Optional	Recommended	Optional	Recommended
Public hearing	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required

Communicating Results

An important element of public engagement is ensuring that the results of public feedback make it back to the community. While current methods are in place to share results with the public, the Township will also evaluate the effectiveness of participation strategies to identify the strengths and weaknesses of its public engagement.

1. Current Communication Methods

- a. Website posts
- b. Meeting minutes posted on website
- c. Meeting recordings on the GovernmentTV website
- d. Sharing survey results on website and notifying the public when results are available

2. Opportunities to Improve Public Engagement

- a. Live broadcasting of meetings on the GovernmentTV website
- b. Improve website to better share information or create social media accounts to improve accessibility to information

3. Evaluating the Effectiveness of Public Engagement

- a. Create exit surveys or follow-up surveys for public participation events
- b. Analyze the volume of responses for each public engagement tool
- c. Review and update the public participation strategy

4. Annual Review of Public Participation Strategy

- a. Review this strategy annually concurrently with the Planning Commission Annual Report, the Planning Commission annual priorities and work plan, and the annual review of the Township Strategic Plan
- b. Recommend any updates to the strategy, as necessary
- c. Report back to Township Board with recommendations, as necessary

5. Updating the Public Participation Strategy

The Public Participation Strategy is intended to be a living document that can be adapted to changes in technology and best meet the needs of Township residents. Methods that have been found to be less successful need not be removed but will be reviewed and documented so that the same mistakes will not be made in the future. Staff will review the results to identify the strengths and weaknesses of outreach methods. This feedback loop will create a continuous review process that enables officials to make improvements to strategy.