


Council Conflict Resolution

Effective Date: March 28, 2019
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Cancels: Policy142-2: Council Conflict Resolution
Resolution #: 199-19

CAO Signature: 

Policy Statement:

To identify common causes of unproductive conflict with County Council, and to identify the best practices for avoiding or minimizing unnecessary conflict with County Council.

Guidelines:

Common Causes of Intra-Council Conflict

- Lack of common vision for the County
- Poor or nonexistent land use planning
- Unclear policy or inconsistent application of policy
- Poor or unclear decision making process
- Poor inter personal relationships

Potential Options for Resolving Council Conflict

a) Lack of Common Vision for the County

- Council may undertake a process to develop a vision for the County to serve as a framework for later decisions.
- The vision may be reviewed at a Council/Administration retreat at the beginning of each new term. Participation in such a retreat is mandatory for all Councillors and Senior Administration.
- Council may conduct an annual review to identify Council goals and priorities.

b) Poor or Nonexistent Land Use Planning

- Develop short or long term plans (i.e. transportation and recreation).

- Begin planning to address emerging conflicts (i.e. between residential development and ILO's, commercial and industrial).
- Research solutions found in other communities to help develop a plan.
- Develop conflict prevention strategies.

c) Unclear Policy on Inconsistent Application of Policy

- Clarify roles and responsibilities of Councillors as policy makers.
- May develop a policy for the funding of shared services (recreation/fire/ambulance).
- May develop and utilize a dispute resolution clause in all tenders, bids, contracts and agreements.
- May review policies with entire Council at start of new term, to ensure that they are clear, concise and relevant.

d) Poor or Unclear Decision Making Process

- Council may establish a clearly defined decision making process (decide how to decide before you begin making decisions, set this up at first Council retreat), including a clear request for a decision report with a recommended course of action coming from Administration, timelines, a strategy as to when an item can be brought back for review and evaluation.
- Administration and Councils work together to ensure that Council has the information needed to make a decision and that the time spent by Council on a decision is consistent with its importance.
- Council clearly articulates who is the formal spokesperson for Council and that Councillors agree that when they are speaking to the media or publicly they will only comment on their position and refer questions or comments about another Councilor's position back to the appropriate Councillor.

e) Poor Interpersonal Relationships

Individually:

- Councillors are encouraged to take the U of A and AMA courses related to the roles of Councillors.
- Time spent preparing for meetings be recognized and compensated.

- Councillors be aware of their individual responsibility as it relates to conflict of interest and that when making the determination if they are in conflict, Councillors should err on the side of caution.

Corporately:

- Councillors spend time getting to know each other as individuals, recognizing that each brings a different background and history to Council.
- Councillors take regular opportunities to gain a better understanding of the different divisions within the County and issues that are unique to each (go on regular road tours, but don't only look at roads).
- Encourage professional development through workshops, seminars, and pre-meeting preparation.
- During the organizational meeting, Council shall consciously work to assign equal workloads to each Councillor.

Dispute Settlement for Council Conflict

Councillors agree to use their best efforts to resolve any disputes between them as efficiently and cost efficiently as possible. At all times, Councillors will meet and:

- Make bona fide efforts to resolve all disputes by negotiating in good faith.
- Provide frank, candid, and timely disclosure of all relevant facts, information and documents to facilitate the negotiations.

If a dispute cannot be resolved within thirty (30) days of the negotiation meeting (or longer period agreed to), the Councillors shall participate in mediation with a mutually accepted mediator. The mediation is to be jointly agreed upon from a list of mediators (approved by Alberta Municipal Affairs or the Alberta Arbitration and Mediation Society), or appointed by one of the organizations above or a neighbouring municipality. The mediation will be conducted in accordance with rules jointly agreed upon. If the mediation is unsatisfactory to any Councillor, that Councillor may terminate the procedure and pursue other remedies. Any Councillor may propose referring the dispute to arbitration for an advisory or binding decision, but no Councillor is obligated to agree to that proposal.