

TOWNSHIP OF ESSA
CORPORATE POLICY MANUAL

Policy Title: Accountability and Transparency

Number: A07-07

Department: Clerks

Approved by Council: November 2007

1. AUTHORITY

Section 270 (1) of the *Municipal Act, 2001*, as amended, (the Act) requires all municipalities adopt and maintain a policy with respect to the manner in which the Township of Essa will try to ensure that it is accountable to the public for its actions, and that its actions are transparent and open to the public.

2. PURPOSE STATEMENT

Accountability, transparency and openness are standards of good government that enhance public trust. They are achieved through the adoption of measures to ensure that all activities and services are carried out utilizing a process that is open and accessible to residents and other stakeholders. In addition, the Township will engage stakeholders in its decision making process which will be open, visible and transparent to the public whenever possible.

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance for the delivery of the municipality's services and activities in accordance with the principles outlined herein.

3. DEFINITIONS:

- a) **Accountability** – refers to the principle that the Township will be responsible to its stakeholders for decisions made and policies implemented, as well as its actions or inactions.
- b) **Transparency** – refers to the principle that the Township actively encourages and fosters public participation and openness in its decision making processes. Additionally, transparency means that the Township's decision making process is open and clear to the public.

4. PROCEDURE AND IMPLEMENTATION

The Council of the Township of Essa acknowledges that it is responsible to provide good government for its stakeholders in an accountable and transparent manner by:

- Promoting the efficient use of public resources;
- Delivering high quality services to our ratepayers and residents; and
- Encouraging public access and participation to ensure that decision making is responsive to the needs of its constituents and receptive to their opinions.

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5. RESPONSIBILITIES

The principles of accountability and transparency shall apply equally to the political decision making processes used by Council, and the decision making process of the administration staff.

a. Financial Matters

The municipality will be open, accountable and transparent to its stakeholders in all financial dealings as required under the Act. Some examples of how the municipality provides such accountability and transparency are as follows:

1. interim and final audits conducted twice each year
2. reporting/statements made available to the public upon request
3. asset management
4. purchasing/procurement policies which provide fair and equal opportunity
5. sale of land procedures
6. an open budgeting process
7. public discussion of any matters which may affect the Township budget and any impact to ratepayers

b. Internal Governance

The municipality's administrative practices ensure accountability on the part of its employees through the following initiatives:

1. Employee Code of Conduct
2. Council adherence to the *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act*
3. Procurement policy
4. Annual performance management and evaluation
5. Hiring policy
6. Computer Usage policy
7. Policy to Eliminate Discrimination and Harassment in the Workplace
8. Continuing education and professional development
9. Employee's Guide to Occupational Health and Safety
10. Access to Information and Privacy policy
11. Responsibility for ensuring that administrative practices and procedures recognize Council's commitment to accountability and transparency
12. Ensuring equal treatment and equal opportunity to all persons in the provision of services.

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c. Public Participation and Information Sharing

The municipality ensures that it is open and accountable to its ratepayers and residents by implementing processes outlining how, when and under what regulations meetings will take place (Procedure By-law).

The municipality's meetings will be open to the public when and as required under the Act, and members of the public will have an opportunity to make deputations or comments in writing or in person on specific items in accordance with the Township's Procedure By-law. In addition, the municipality has adopted policies to ensure that participation by the public can be meaningful and effective through timely disclosure of information by various means of public notification such as print media, websites, etc. Some specific examples include:

1. Procedure by-law
2. Deputation rules
3. Records management and retention
4. Open and public planning processes
5. Public notice policy
6. Availability of budget and audited statements
7. Access to information through the Municipal Freedom of Information (MFIPPA) process
8. Municipal Performance Measurement Program (MPMP)
9. The appointment of a Closed Meeting Investigator

6. CLOSED MEETINGS

In accordance with Section 239 (1) of the *Municipal Act*, 2001, as amended, and in complying with this Policy, all meetings shall be open to the public.

Notwithstanding Sec. 239 (1) above, The Township of Essa retains the right to close a meeting to the public under Section 239 (2) of the Act, if the subject matter being considered is one of the following:

- the security of the property of the Municipality or local board;
- personal matters about an identifiable individual, including Municipal or local board employees;
- a proposed or pending acquisition or disposition of land for Municipal or local board purposes;
- labour relations or employee negotiations;
- litigation or potential litigation, including matters before administrative tribunals, affecting the Municipality or local board;
- advice that is subject to solicitor/client privilege, including communications necessary for that purpose;

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- a matter in respect of which a Council, Board, Committee or other body has authorized a meeting to be closed under another Act;
 - the subject matter relates to the consideration of a request under the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act;

A meeting shall be closed to the public if the subject matter relates to the consideration of a request under the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* if the Council, board or subcommittee is the head of an institution for the purposes of that Act.

A meeting of a Council or Local Board, or a subcommittee of either of them, may be closed to the public if the following conditions are satisfied:

- i) the meeting is held for the purpose of educating or training the members; or
- ii) at the meeting, no member discusses or otherwise deals with any matter in a way that materially advances the business or decision making of the council, board or committee.

7. SUMMARY

Members of the Council and all staff of The Township of Essa shall ensure that the practices outlined in this policy will be complied with to ensure open, accountable and transparent governance in the provision of all services.