

Village of Almont
Public Participation
Plan

Plan Objective

The public participation plan ensures that the Village will do its best to involve the public in its decision making processes. Early and continuous public participation helps interested citizens to be as informed as possible throughout the decision making process. This helps to ensure that the resulting plan will reflect the needs and interests of the public. The public can assist as active participants in short and long term planning, discovering solutions, and determining funding priorities. This plan is a tool to ensure transparency and improve communication between Village staff, elected officials, and citizens.

Common times at which public input should be solicited include updates to the Master Plan, Zoning Ordinance, Downtown Development Plan, Master Parks & Recreation Plan, and other projects significant to the community.

State Law Regarding Public Participation

Open Meetings Act

In accordance with the Michigan Open Meetings Act (PA 267 of 1976), the Village of Almont will hold meetings in the municipal building located at 817 N. Main St., Almont MI 48003 in the meeting room unless otherwise posted. This location is accessible to the general public and accessible by people with disabilities.

The public will be notified within 10 days of the first meeting of a public body in each calendar year. The Village Clerk 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 Village Clerk will post a notice stating the new dates, times and places of regular meetings.

A regular meeting of a public body which is recessed for more than 36 hours can only be reconvened if a notice is posted 18 hours in advance.

The Village Clerk will post a notice indicating the date, time, and place at least 18 hours before all special and irregular meetings.

Public bodies may hold emergency sessions without a written notice or time 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.

Upon written request, anyone can be put on a mailing list to be notified by mail in advance of all meetings. This may be subject to annual fees set by resolution of the Village Council. To be added to the mailing list, please contact:

Clerk/Treasurer Kimberly Keesler
817 N. Main St
Almont, MI 48003
kkeesler@almontvillage.org

Michigan Planning Enabling Act

In accordance with the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (PA 33 of 2008) the following parties will be notified via first class mail, personal delivery, or email by the planning commission of the intent to create a master plan and request the recipient's cooperation and comment:

- Lapeer County Board of Commissioners
- The Region V Planning region
- The Lapeer County Planning Commission (presently not in existence)
- Each public utility company, railroad company, and public transportation agency owning or operating a public utility, railroad, or public transportation system within the local unit of government, and any government entity that registers its name and mailing address for this purpose with the planning commission

- If the master plan will include a master street plan, the Lapeer County Road Commission and MDOT will also receive a notice

Once the draft master plan has been submitted to the Village Council for review and approval for distribution, the draft plan will be submitted to the above listed entities for review.

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.

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 Tri-City Times. The planning commission will also submit notice of the public hearing by first class mail, personal delivery, or email to the above listed entities for review.

After the adoption of the master plan, the planning commission will publish and distribute copies of the master plan or of any report and employ other means of publicity and education as appropriate.

Goals & Action Plans

The public participation plan has 7 main goals. Plans associated with these goals have been created to support the overall public participation plan.

Goal 1: We will strive to seek a wide range of stakeholders who represent the community rather than reflect the needs of special interests.

When people from the same group of stakeholders voice their opinion and are the only ones to attend a meeting, it seems that they have the only viewpoint when in fact, there may be many others who feel quite the opposite but did not voice an opinion. That is why reaching out to a variety of stakeholders is so important.

Important stakeholder groups may include:

- Almont Community Schools
- Almont Township Government
- City of Imlay City, Dryden, Romeo, etc.
- Lapeer County Health Department
- Almont Area Seniors
- Almont Fire Department
- Almont Chamber of Commerce
- Almont DDA
- Local Churches
- Youth on Main Street
- Condominium and homeowners associations

Action Plan:

1. Maintain a list of stakeholder groups with appropriate contact information to send them notifications about planning sessions or public meetings that may be of interest to them
2. Encourage the stakeholder groups to communicate and interact with one another outside of public meetings to better understand each other's perspective and leverage one another's strengths
3. Commit Village staff to attend 1-2 meetings of local community groups per year to keep lines of communication open and demonstrate interest

Goal 2: Use effective means of communication. This includes distributing information and recording public comments.

People have different outlets of communication that work well for them. Older people may favor to read about community events in the newspaper while younger people may prefer social media. Some may enjoy attending public meetings while others are prevented from doing so for lack of child care or work requirements. The Village must seek to ensure that information is disseminated in a way that does not favor one group of stakeholders over another.

Action Plan:

1. Follow all provisions of the Open Meetings Act
2. Continue to post meeting schedules in the newspaper and on the website
3. Continue to broadcast live Council meetings on the public cable channel and on our website
4. Hold community forums and workshops when appropriate
5. Create FAQ sheets and charts or graphs to succinctly communicate important information that is easily accessed by citizens
6. Consider the thoughtful use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter to appeal to younger citizens
7. Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the website and reformat the information to make the most sought after information the most accessible
8. Obtain the services of an intern dedicated to marketing the Village and increasing community engagement

Goal 3: Hold events that promote meaningful public participation other than traditional public meetings.

Traditional council and board meetings are very important; however they are commonly not in a format that encourages active participation. The Village should seek to hold meetings and workshops that are more interactive than traditional public meetings.

Action Plan:

1. Hold ribbon cutting ceremonies and municipal open houses to invite citizens to experience what is happening in the Village
2. Offer recruitment events to help fill vacancies on Village boards and committees as well as help people learn how they can volunteer
3. Hold casual meetings quarterly at local establishments where residents can meet with the Manager and another staff member to discuss issues of interest to them

Goal 4: Effectively record public comments

To ensure that public comments are being incorporated into community planning, it is important to record the comments properly and ensure they can be readily accessed.

Action Plan:

1. Distribute well designed surveys via mail or email and compile the data promptly
2. Record responses in a way that is easy to understand (i.e. graphs, tables, etc.)
3. Keep public comments on file along with meeting minutes

Goal 5: Maintain & develop staff expertise in facilitating public participation

Presenting information doesn't always come as second nature, especially when presenting to audiences of wide variety. Staff should be trained in methods of information presentation that will work for a diversity of cultures and ages.

Action Plan:

1. Instruct staff and board members as appropriate in using the Public Participation Work Plan (appendix A) to plan how they will solicit public input for projects and decision making
2. Train staff in public presentation techniques and technology for presenting information such as PowerPoint, Prezi, etc.

Goal 6: Record the results of the participation and distribute the information back to the public

It is important to properly record information received from the public and to demonstrate the results of the public's input. This communicates to the participants that their responses were heard and improves transparency in the planning and decision making process. The Village should use multiple forms of communication to accomplish this.

Action Plan:

1. Make the results of any survey results available online, at the Village office, and in the quarterly newsletter
2. Distribute community satisfaction surveys (appendix B) following public participation driven events
3. Post meeting minutes online for easy access
4. Post photos of public meetings and forums to record the event

Goal 7: Regularly assess the effectiveness of encouraging public participation.

It is important to regularly assess the public participation plan to ensure that it remains current and useful. As communication methods, technology, and laws change, the public participation plan should adapt to those changes.

Action Plan:

1. Public participation notes and comments will be maintained by the Village Clerk
2. Use the results of community satisfaction surveys to plan future public participation events
3. Complete an internal public participation evaluation (appendix C) after events
4. The public participation plan will be reviewed every 5 years to ensure it remains effective and useful

Conclusion

The Village of Almont Public Participation Plan is a daily guide used to allow the public to provide input and direction for their government. The Village will strive to implement the plan effectively at all appropriate times. Through the use of the plan, the Village will be more transparent and receive input from a wide variety of stakeholders.

Appendix A

Public Participation Work Plan

Name of the project or decision:

Responsible Party:

Technique/Tool to be used:

How will this reach underrepresented populations?

Resources/partners needed for implementation

Deadline:

Appendix B

Community Event Satisfaction Survey
What event did you attend today?
How did you hear about the event?
Was the event held at a convenient location and time?
Are you satisfied with the event? Do you have any suggestions for improvement?

Appendix C

Internal Public Participation Evaluation
Type of Public Participation:
How was the event advertised?
Where was the event held?
How many people attended?
Was there a group underrepresented?
What can be improved for future events?

