

THE R.M. OF ALEXANDER
Administration

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Subject: Complaints	Section: Administration
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Expectations and guidelines on responding to both internal and external complaints

Effective Date: Immediate	Policy No.: ADMIN - 007
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Replaces Policy:	Resolution No.: 2016 444
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Review Date:	Resolution Date: July 12, 2016
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PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for *Staff* (referring to municipal staff and all staff providing service under a service agreement) to process and to prioritize complaints filing by both internal and external customers in order to maintain the level of service while managing the existing workload. This policy is put in place to afford staff the opportunity to respond to complaints within a reasonable timeframe more efficiently and effectively, and, at the same time, to best utilize valuable and limited resources by creating clear expectations for both staff and the public.

There is a wide array of issues that can lead to complaints. Those of a public nature such as grading roads, cutting grass, plowing snow, etc.; as well as potential disputes between or among neighbours such as fences, retaining walls, property maintenance, noise, trees, pets, road games and construction projects. However, such issues are often reported as complaints or repeated complaints that outside the purview of this municipality and result in unnecessary use of municipal resources and enforcement actions in an attempt to resolve concerns of a public nature, or disputes between neighbours. This policy intends to help the municipality to prioritize issues that are deemed hazardous to public health, life and safety and how to respond to complaints. The policy does not provide procedural information on how to process complaints.

POLICY

- A. This policy applies to complaints filed through the municipality.
- B. Priority will be given only to those complaints that are deemed a threat to the public's health, life and safety.
- C. No enforcement action will be taken unless the complaint meets the following criteria:
 - i. To avoid hearsay, all complaints must be filed in writing to the municipal office. No verbal complaints via telephone or in person will constitute formal complaints.
 - ii. All complaints filed against a property must pertain to the relevant section(s) in the municipality's applicable By-Law.
 - iii. An Order or incident report must accompany any complaint(s) filed by internal departments.
- D. Documentation or evidence may be required from the complainants in order to substantiate the complaints.

Procedures/Responsibilities

Staff

- In order to take formal action, or to investigate a complaint, a staff member must require the complainant to file the complaint in writing, either using the complaint form, in writing or through electronic messages.
- A staff member must ensure the written complaint to include the following items:
 - i. complainant's name, address and contact information
 - ii. the nature of the complaint
 - iii. the address of the property in question

If there is a concern from the complainant on the release of personal information to the public, staff should explain that all disclosure of information filed with the municipality will be subject to compliance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA).

- A staff who first receives the complaint must acknowledge upon receipt of the written complaint by contacting the complainant within 48 business hours, and to collect any missing information on the written complaint at that time.
- The intent to not accept a verbal complaint is to avoid hearsay and to eliminate potential frivolous complaints being filed through the municipality; however, staff must exercise sound judgment to determine whether or not the complaint is legitimate, and most importantly, whether the issues as identified in the complaints pose any threats to the health, life and safety of the general public prior to dismissing the verbal complaint.
- Depending on the nature of the complaints, staff may require a meeting with the complainant in order to better understand the nature of the complaint prior to further actions. Due to lack of sufficient information, the department may dismiss the complaint should the complainant refuses to meet in person.
- Upon receipt of a formal complaint, staff should communicate with the appropriate department to make sure the same complaint has not been filed through another department, and to make sure there are no outstanding issues on the property in question.
- If the staff is unsure about which department should be involved in handling the complaint, or believe multiple departments may need to be involved, the staff should contact the department(s) first to confirm prior to forwarding the complaint and its incident report to the other department(s).



COMPLAINT FORM

Please note that **ALL** complaints are completely confidential. Your information will **NOT** be shared.

Date: _____

File No.: _____

Complainant:

Name: _____ Civic Address: _____

Ph #: _____ Roll #: _____

Complaint In Conjunction With:

Name: _____ Civic Address: _____

Ph #: _____ Roll #: _____

NATURE OF COMPLAINT:

Signature of Complainant

Received By