



THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF WASAGA BEACH
POLICY MANUAL

SECTION NAME: General Administration	POLICY NUMBER: 2-14
POLICY: Corporate Complaint Policy	REVIEW DATE: February 2019
EFFECTIVE DATE: February 2016	REVISIONS:
ADOPTED BY BY-LAW: By-Law No. 2016-28	ADMINISTERED BY: Chief Administrative Officer/HR Coordinator

PURPOSE

The Town of Wasaga Beach is committed to a consistent and uniform process to respond to complaints received from members of the public regarding programs, facilities, Town services, staff or operational procedures. This policy outlines the process to be followed for the handling of public complaints.

The Town of Wasaga Beach recognises the importance of public input and welcomes complaints as a valuable form of feedback regarding our services, operations and facilities. The information gained from complaints helps improve the quality of the services provided by the Town and the client experience of residents.

SCOPE

Complaints are expressions of dissatisfaction about the action or lack of action taken, operations, facilities or the service provided by the Town of Wasaga Beach or by a person or body acting on behalf of the Town. All written complaints filed necessitate a response.

Anyone who uses or is affected by Town services can make a complaint. This includes:

- residents
- people who work in or visit the Town
- local businesses

- community groups

The Town of Wasaga Beach will deal with all written complaints promptly, courteously, impartially and professionally. All complainants will be treated with respect and will not receive adverse treatment or any form of reprisal.

1. What guides the Town in its complaint handling?

- Customer-focus: We are committed to continuous improvement in service delivery.
- Accountability: Complaints are handled in a fair, respectful and transparent manner, as quickly as possible.
- Responsiveness: Complaints are tracked and the Complainant is informed of each step.
- Accessibility: Information on how to submit a complaint is easily found on the Town's website.
- Simplicity: The process must be simple to understand and easy to use. Complainants are guided on what to include in the complaint (e.g. the "five Ws").
- Confidentiality: Complaints will be dealt with in a confidential manner according to MFIPPA. Information will be collected, used and disclosed in accordance with the Act.

The complaints process will not deal with:

- Requests for service
- Feedback and compliments
- Inquiries
- Anonymous complaints

In these cases, the Complainant will be referred to the proper forum (if possible).

Early and informal resolution is encouraged. Staff must have clear delegation and authority to resolve complaints in an informal manner at first contact, without the necessity of engaging this formal process.

2. Complaints

- a) Complaints regarding the conduct of municipal employees are to be submitted in writing with contact information and processed in accordance with the provisions of the Personnel Policy and/or Code of Conduct, as deemed applicable.
- b) Complaints regarding the conduct of members of Council are to be submitted in writing and processed in accordance with the provisions of the Personnel Policy and/or Code of Conduct, as deemed applicable and will be referred to the Town appointed Integrity Commissioner.
- c) Complaints regarding the conduct of closed meetings are to be submitted in writing and processed in accordance with the provisions of the Closed Meeting

Investigations Policy and will be referred to the Town appointed Closed Meeting Investigator.

- d) Complaints regarding by-law violations are to be submitted in writing and processed in accordance with Council's Policy on Municipal Law Enforcement.
- e) Complaints regarding municipal services or facilities are to be submitted in writing to the appropriate department.
- f) Anonymous complaints or complaints lacking sufficient information may not be investigated.
- g) Frivolous and vexatious complaints, as determined by the CAO or designate in consultation with the appropriate Department may not be investigated.
- h) In the event complaints cannot be resolved through the Town's complaint process and policy may be submitted to the Provincial Ombudsman's office in accordance with the provisions of Bill 8.

3. *How can complaints be submitted*

- In person at the Town of Wasaga Beach Townhall, 30 Lewis Street;
- By fax at 705-429-6732;
- By e-mail;
- By mail.

4. *Formal complaint process*

a) Formal complaints

Formal complaints should be in writing and include information such as:

- Details of what happened.
- Where did this happen? Is it within the Town's areas of responsibility?
- When?
- Who was involved?
- What was said or done?
- What kind of resolution is being sought?
- Contact details of the Complainant.

b) Complaint response

This needs to include:

- Setting out the complaint
- Detailing how the investigation was conducted
- Summarizing the facts
- Outlining the findings

- Suggesting appropriate resolution along with the rationale supporting the proposed resolution.

Resolutions may include an explanation, apology, reconsideration, reimbursement, restitution and/or change in policy – all are possible remedies. The *Apology Act* provides that apologies are not admissible as evidence of fault or liability.

c) Communication of the decision

- Providing the Complainant the response.
- Identifying next steps/appeal (appeal to the CAO).

If the Complainant is satisfied, the complaint is closed.

5. **Service Standards**

The following Service Standards will be adhered to in the handling of all complaints received.

- Complainants must receive an acknowledgement of receipt of their complaint within five business days. This acknowledgement must identify who will be following up on the complaint as well as their contact information. If a complaint was received by a department in error and it should be handled by another department, the complaint will be forwarded to the appropriate department and the complainant will be advised that their complaint has been forwarded, and be provided with the name of the forwarded department.
- A final response or update must be sent to the complainant within 30 business days, barring exceptional circumstances.
- Complaints may be prioritized, depending on the circumstances. Complainant is to be notified of timelines.

6. **Responsibilities**

Employees: All employees are to have knowledge and awareness of the Town's requirement to receive complaints, the process through which a complaint can be made and the service standards that apply to complaints.

Supervisors: Supervisors are responsible for facilitating prompt response to all complaints by their staff to ensure that service standards are achieved.

Department Heads: Department Heads are responsible to ensure that the proper complaint forms are available for the receipt and response of all complaints according to the service standards set out. Department Heads hold responsibility for compliance to the complaints policy.

7. Monitoring and Tracking Complaints

The complaint needs to be tracked from its initial receipt to its resolution.

- a) All complaint records will be kept securely and in accordance with corporate policy requirements and legislative responsibilities. The complaints records will be needed for regular future review and analysis so as to capture recurring issues and improve customer service and satisfaction.
- b) Each department should ensure they have a method in place for keeping track of complaints. This can be as simple as an excel spreadsheet labelled “received” “acknowledged” “actioned” and “resolved”.
- c) If action is taken on a complaint by telephone/voicemail, ensure that a record of this action is saved for your records in case of escalation to the CAO or to the provincial Ombudsman.

8. Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

- a) All complaints will be dealt with in accordance with *the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and other applicable legislation. The identity of the complainant will be made known only to those who need to know in order to consider the complaint. All participants in the complaints process shall keep the details of the complaint confidential except as may be required by law.
- b) Complaints received by one department are to be limited to that specific department unless the complaint involves more than one department. Generally, Department A will not be able to view complaints received by Department B unless operationally required to address the complaint.
- c) Nothing contained in this Policy is intended to neither conflict with nor derogate from the provisions of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

Delegation & Dispute

The Chief Administrative Officer of the Corporation is delegated the responsibilities related to the processing of complaints having regard for the nature of the complaint. Any dispute from the public regarding any provision of this policy shall be referred to the Chief Administrative Officer, who shall make a determination regarding the issue.

POLICY ADMINISTRATION AND REVIEW

This policy shall be administered by the Chief Administrative Officer and HR Coordinator.

This policy will be reviewed every three (3) years or as required based on revisions to

corporate practises or Provincial legislation.