



A Guide to the Public Hearing Process

What is a public hearing?

A public hearing is an official meeting where the public and applicant are given an opportunity to provide their input to the Regional District Board on a proposed new bylaw or bylaw change. A public hearing must be held prior to adopting or amending an official community plan bylaw or a zoning bylaw.

Anyone who thinks that they may be affected by the proposed bylaw amendment has the opportunity to speak, or provide written comments at or prior to the public hearing. Following the close of the public hearing there are restrictions on the Regional District Board's ability to receive further input on the bylaws; therefore, it is important that input is provided prior to the close of the public hearing.

Who can attend?

As the name implies, public hearings are open to the public and anyone can attend. A written statement can be submitted before or at the public hearing for those who cannot attend or do not wish to speak. The submission will become part of the public record and attached to the report of the public hearing.

What are the notification procedures?

There are several ways a public hearing is advertised in the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako:

Newspaper advertising in 2 consecutive issues of a local newspaper, the last date no more than ten or less than three days before the hearing.

Mail-out of individual notices to owners and tenants within 200 metres of the subject property.

Signage - When a bylaw amendment applies to a specific property the applicant must post a sign on the property. It must be visible from a public road and posted at least ten days before a public hearing to advise neighbouring and nearby property owners about the official community plan and/or zoning bylaw amendment applications under consideration by the Regional District Board.

The newspaper and mailed notices will state the following:

- Time, date and place of the hearing,
- Purpose of the bylaw,
- Place and times copies of the bylaw and related information, may be inspected.

Copies of the bylaw and associated background documents are made available at the Regional District office in Burns Lake during regular office hours, at the local public library in the closest community, and at the public hearing.

The public hearing notice is also posted under the public meeting section of the RDBN web site.

What is the procedure at a public hearing?

The public hearing is usually scheduled for a weekday evening in a venue located in the community closest to the application area.

Typically the Electoral Area Director is delegated by the Regional District Board to chair the public hearing and report back to the Regional District Board regarding the input provided. Planning Department staff are also present to record the comments received and answer technical questions.

RDBN Planning Department

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The Chair will open the public hearing with an explanation of the proceedings and a short overview of the proposed bylaw. The persons attending the public hearing are then invited to speak or present a written submission. Everyone present will be given an opportunity to speak. Speakers are to state their name and address prior to providing the Chair of the public hearing with their comments.

The applicant has the same standing as any member of the public and may be allowed to provide initial comments at the public hearing.

If there is insufficient time for all the speakers to be heard the hearing can be adjourned by the Chair to another time and location specified at the public hearing.

When the Chair determines that everyone has had a reasonable opportunity to be heard, the Chair will close the public hearing.

Can the bylaw be debated at the public hearing?

A public hearing is not an opportunity to debate the merits of the bylaw. The purpose of the public hearing is to give everyone an opportunity to provide their input to the Regional District Board in a respectful environment.

What happens after a public hearing?

When a public hearing is closed, the ability of the Board to receive new information is limited. The purpose of this rule is to ensure that all persons are

aware of, and have an opportunity to speak to, the information that the Board has received regarding the proposed bylaw.

A public hearing report summarizing the comments made at the public hearing will be presented to the Regional District Board prior to the Board's consideration of the bylaw.

A question & answer session may be held prior to the public hearing if a bylaw is particularly controversial or complicated.



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