

2026 SAUGEEN SHORES MUNICIPAL CANDIDATE SURVEY

Section 4: Municipal Projects & Meaningful Consultation

QUESTION 16

When considering municipal projects or policy changes that affect the business community, how will you ensure local businesses and the BIAs are consulted early enough to meaningfully influence the outcome, rather than after key decisions have largely been made?

Brian Putman (Not Putnam)

Mayor

As a Policy Analyst in the area of Municipal Affairs, Housing, Social Services and Healthcare I take the approach of developing a policy framework as part of the change process. Rights holders are identified, issues are validated, initial communication is made, discussions held, data analyzed and draft solutions are developed. Open communication with all rights holders along the way is essential to producing solutions that are most effective and most acceptable.

Jeffrey J James

Mayor

I would apply the principle to "engage early and often" so that local business insights influence the outcome before alternatives are established

Luke Charbonneau

Mayor

As noted, we have strong connections between our BIAs and the municipality. I believe that we can leverage those connections to ensure that the BIAs are aware of planned projects and given the opportunity to have meaningful input. The High Street reconstruction project is an example of an occasion where the BIA was recognized early as a major stakeholder and was engaged throughout the decision making process. I support taking this approach to consulting the BIAs where decisions have major implications for their members.

Diane Huber

Deputy Mayor

The Council rep on the BIA Boards and the economics development team liaison can be helpful with flagging opportunities and with showing how to best participate. Assigning a BIA Board member (other than the Council rep) to attend the annual business planning/budget meetings and then provide feedback to the Board would enable an awareness of what's potentially coming up and possibly a timeline. Additionally, if the BIA Administration Co-ordinator was asked to attend Council meetings or watch the recordings afterward they could prepare messaging following Council meetings for distribution to BIA members..

Odette Bartnicki

Deputy Mayor

The new Council should review the Town's long-term plans using financial, environmental, safety and local-business impact lenses. The BIAs and affected businesses should be consulted at the beginning of that review and before options are narrowed. Their feedback and the Town's response should be documented in staff reports so Council and the public can see how it influenced the final recommendation.

Don Matheson

Vice Deputy Mayor

I think it's pretty simple. If we're going to make a decision that affects our businesses, we need to talk to them before we make it.

That's one of the reasons we have BIAs and Council representatives sitting at those tables. They should be bringing concerns and ideas back to Council early enough that they can actually make a difference.

We're not always going to agree, but people deserve the opportunity to be heard before the decision is made.

For me, that's what good consultation is—talk to people, listen to them and then make the best decision we can.

Jordan MacKinnon

Port Elgin

As stated above, the expectation needs to be clear that BIAs and business communities need to have the opportunity to provide consultation that gives them the opportunity to shape projects and report recommendations, rather than providing comments after they've already been created.

Patricia Corrigan-Frank

Councillor Port Elgin Ward

Before staff recommendations are drafted for the BIA MOU, have the BIA contacted early in the process, summarize input, and ensure that the information is incorporated into the MOU. The MOU should reflect input received from the BIA.

Rachel Stack

Port Elgin Ward Councillor

As noted elsewhere in this survey, early and regular engagement with the BIAs on matters of importance to local business is the best and most effective tool to ensure BIAs are kept up to speed on key decisions that lay ahead and are given ample opportunity to express their opinions on the same.

Tamara McDonald

Councilor- Port Elgin Ward

I think the way things are currently done business consultation too often relies on statutory meetings and standard notices after the staff have already spent time drafting plans, which means our local business owners are brought in after key decisions are largely set. I would want us to shift from late-stage notification to early co-design by establishing a forward looking process that loops BIA leadership in before recommendations are finalized. I would think in this way it ensures that Council sees early BIA feedback before taking a final vote.

Eric Tolton

Saugeen Ward Councillor

My approach is simple: consult before deciding not after. BIA's and affected businesses should be involved while alternatives are still being developed so their practical knowledge can genuinely influence the outcome.

Neil Sarginson

Saugeen Ward Councillor

To ensure Council consistently evaluates potential economic impacts on local businesses before finalizing policies, bylaws, or major capital projects, I would advocate assigning a staff member to act as a single point of contact, ensuring all pertinent information is shared and discussed with the BIA.

Brenda Reeves

Southampton Ward councillor

I would advocate for consultation to be built into every project timeline from the beginning. Both BIAs and affected businesses should be contacted before options are narrowed, invited to working sessions and given clear information about costs, timelines, and trade-offs. Before council votes, public reports should explain what was heard, what changed as a result and why – making consultation, meaningful, transparent and accountable.

Cathe McIntosh

Councillor, Southampton Ward

At the risk of sounding like a broken record: listen to small business. They know what they need and can articulate it. As there is a Council representative on each BIA and meetings are held regularly, there should be ongoing opportunities for the BIA to relay its thoughts and concerns about upcoming changes or decisions before they are finalized. As well, the Council representative can always meet with the BIA at other times if/when an urgent or unexpected issue arises.

Cheryl Grace

Southampton ward councillor

As Council members the most important thing we can do is to ask questions and encourage staff to communicate clearly with local businesses and BIAs about key projects and policy changes. Again, our Council reps are important two-way conduits of information and our Economic development staff should be key parts of that equation as well. In my time on Council I've seen significant improvements in communication and public consultation, especially through our Engage Saugeen Shores page of our website.

Harry Mazmanian

Southampton Ward

By announcing Town hall meetings as widely as possible. Not only the BIA should be consulted, but residents and any other stake holders as well. These meetings must be documented and published. There must be a consensus between all groups before moving forward with any project. Yes, this will take more time, like the red tape as you have asked about earlier in this questionnaire, but the end result will mean less mistrust between entities and a more mutually agreed upon result.

John Divinski

Councillor, Southampton Ward

Communication, communication, communication! It's one of the trending topics of this year's election campaign. Meetings between the municipality and the business community, through the BIA's should happen at the very least, once quarterly if not once a month.
The left hand has to know what the right hand is doing!

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