

The Corporation of the Municipality of Whitestone
MUNICIPAL COMPLAINT HANDLING POLICY

Policy Statement

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

Purpose

The Municipality of Whitestone recognizes the importance of public feedback 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 Municipality and the client experience of residents.

Policy Requirements

The Municipality of Whitestone will deal with all complaints promptly, courteously, impartially and professionally. All complaints will be treated with respect and will not receive adverse treatment or any form of reprisal.

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. If the matter goes to arbitration, it may be necessary to release the complainant's name and contact information during the resolution process.

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.

What is a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the action or lack of action taken regarding operations, facilities or services provided by the Municipality or by a person or body acting on behalf of the Municipality of Whitestone.

All complaints filed necessitate a response.

Approved by Council Resolution No. 2016-405
September 19, 2016

This policy **does not apply to:**

- Requests for service
- Feedback
- Compliments
- Inquiries
- Anonymous complaints
- Non-Municipal Services.
- Outside boards and agencies which have their own complaints handling processes.
- Internal Employee Complaints

Who can make a Complaint?

Anyone who uses or is affected by Municipal services can make a complaint.

This includes:

- residents
- people who work in or visit the Municipality
- people who volunteer in the Municipality
- local businesses
- community groups

Some individuals may require assistance to make a complaint, and complaints can be made on their behalf, provided that the person affected has given their consent. A consent form for this purpose is available from the Municipal Office.

Complaints can be submitted:

- by email to clerk.administrator@whitestone.ca or
- by mail to 21 Church Street, Dunchurch, Ontario P0A 1G0 – addressed to the CAO-Clerk-Treasurer/Department Head and marked “Confidential”.

Complaints must be in writing and must include:

- the name, phone number, email address and mailing address of the individual submitting the complaint
- the nature of the complaint including:
 - i) background leading to the issue(s);
 - ii) date(s), time(s), and location(s) of any incident(s);
 - iii) name(s) of any employee(s) previously contacted regarding the issue(s).
 - iv) name(s) of any staff members that are employed by a service provider contracted by the Municipality shall be handled by the CAO-Clerk-Treasurer and Department Head.
- any action(s) being requested of the Municipality.

The Municipality will not consider anonymous complaints.

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 and an assigned tracking number within five (5) business days. This acknowledgment must identify who will be following up on the complaint as well as their contact information.

A final response or update must be sent to the complainant within thirty (30) calendar days, barring exceptional circumstances.

Compliance

Senior Management is responsible for implementation and ongoing compliance with the Corporate Complaints Handling Policy.

Responsibilities

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

Investigation

The CAO-Clerk-Treasurer and Department Head will review the issues identified by the complainant, and in doing so will:

- review the Municipality's and the relevant Department's policies and procedures;
- review any existing file documents;
- interview employee(s), agent(s) or member(s) of the public involved in the issue;
- identify actions that may be taken to address the complaint or improve Municipal operations; and
- take other actions that the CAO-Clerk-Treasurer and Department Head deems appropriate to resolve the matter.

The CAO-Clerk-Treasurer may, at his/her discretion, notify Council of an open complaint investigation for purposes of information or obtaining direction.

If a complaint is made against the CAO-Clerk-Treasurer, the Mayor will consult with Council who will designate a qualified individual at arms' length from the Municipality to investigate it. (i.e. – Ombudsman, OPP and/or legal counsel).

If a complaint is made against the Mayor or a member of Council, the CAO-Clerk-Treasurer will designate a qualified individual at arms' length from the Municipality to investigate. (i.e. – Ombudsman, OPP and/or legal counsel).

Decision

Within thirty (30) calendar days of receipt of a complaint, the CAO-Clerk-Treasurer shall provide a response in writing to the complainant that will include:

- whether the complaint was substantiated; and
- any actions the Municipality has taken or will take as a result of the complaint.

If the CAO-Clerk-Treasurer/Department Head is unable to provide a response within thirty (30) calendar days, he/she will notify the complainant of the delay and provide an estimate of when a response will be provided.

Once the investigation of the complaint is completed, a determination, if substantiated will be made by the CAO-Clerk-Treasurer and the Department Head as to the appropriate course of action, disciplinary or otherwise.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the resolution, he or she may consider filing a complaint with the Ombudsman's office. The Ombudsman's contact information is as follows:

Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario
Bell Trinity Square
483 Bay Street
10th Floor, South Tower
Toronto, Ontario
M5G 2C9

Telephone No.: 1-800-263-1830
www.ombudsman.on.ca

Record

In compliance with the Municipality's records management policy, the CAO-Clerk-Treasurer will maintain a file of the complaint that will include:

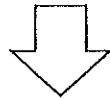
- Copies of all correspondence and notices, dated and identified by author.
- Where appropriate, copies of correspondence will also be placed in the personnel file of the subject of the complaint.

Communications with a complainant shall not provide details of disciplinary measures imposed on any employee or agent.

PROCESS FOR HANDLING COMPLAINT

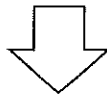
Clerk's Department:

1. Receives written complaint.
2. Logs complaint.
3. Forwards copy of complaint to appropriate Department Head.
4. Acknowledges receipt to complainant within five (5) business days.



Designated Investigator – CAO-Clerk-Treasurer and Department Head:

1. Investigate complaint.
2. Make a decision.
3. Notify complainant of outcome, or estimated timeline for resolution, within thirty (30) calendar days.



Clerk's Department:

1. File decision.
2. Complete complaint log.