

Municipality of Grey Highlands Policy

Policy Name: Complaints Policy

Policy Number: A09-A-07

Department: Council & Legislative Services

Authority: Council By-law 2019-091

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1 Purpose

To provide a policy and process for responding to complaints regarding a municipal program, facility, service, actions/non-actions or other matter arising in the course of the administration of the Municipality.

2 Scope

- 2.1** What is a Complaint? - A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction related to a Municipality of Grey Highlands program, facility, staff member, service, actions/non-actions or other matter arising where the citizen believes that the Municipality has not provided a service experience to their satisfaction.
- 2.2** What isn't a complaint? - A complaint is different from a request for service, an inquiry, feedback, compliment or a suggestion. Accommodation requests consistent with the Municipal Accessible Customer Service Policy is not considered a complaint.
- 2.3** Code of Conduct - This Policy does not include complaints related to the conduct of Members of Council, committees or local boards. Complaints of that nature shall be forwarded to the Municipal Integrity Commissioner.
- 2.4** Training - All staff will receive training on this policy during their orientation period.

3 Policy

3.1 Informal Resolutions - Complaints should be resolved informally, if possible. In some cases, a complainant will simply want to vent their frustrations to someone who will listen attentively. If Municipal staff employ common courtesy, it is likely that these complaints will be resolved before formal action is necessary.

3.2 Receipt - A complaint can be received in a number of different ways:

- Verbal Complaints are made in person or by telephone.
- Written Complaints can be made online, be hand delivered, mailed, faxed or emailed.
- A Complaint form will be available both in office and online.

3.3 Monetary Claims – all complaints that relate to a monetary claim against the Municipality shall be forwarded to the Municipal Insurer where required. Notification of referral shall be forwarded to the complainant which will deem the file closed as it relates to this policy.

3.4 Submitting a Complaint - In order to submit a formal complaint to the Municipality, the following information must be provided:

- Details of what happened
- Where did this happen?
- When?
- Who was involved?
- What was said or done?
- What kind of resolution is being sought?
- Contact information for complainant.

3.5 Anonymous Complaints – Anonymous complaints will not be processed.

3.6 Frivolous or Vexatious Complaints – Any complaints deemed by the Director in consultation with the CAO to be frivolous or vexatious in nature shall not be processed.

- 3.7** Privacy - All information collected is pursuant to the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA).
- 3.8** Lodging a Formal Complaint - All formal complaints – those requiring investigation and follow-up - will be recorded and tracked from initial receipt through the entire process until resolution. Recording complaint details ensures that the complaint process will stay on track and followed through to the end, also if the complaint has to be escalated or referred to other business areas, staff will have all relevant information at hand to resolve the complaint. Additionally, staff can extract informative data for service planning, monitoring, controlling and decision making.
- 3.9** Tracking - All new complaints will be assigned a unique tracking number to be used for all correspondence and documentation regarding the complaint.
- 3.10** Follow-Up - Acknowledgement of receipt, along with the tracking number and the contact information for the Director or staff member to which the complaint has been assigned shall be delivered to the complainant in the method in which they specify within 2 business days. Staff will open communication within 5 business days of assignment with resolution to occur within 30 days of contact with the complainant whenever possible. If the 30-day timeline can not be met, a proposed timeline for the resolution along with reasons as to why the 30 days cannot be met shall be forwarded to the complainant.
- 3.11** Resolution - If the proposed resolution is accepted by the complainant, information needs to be recorded and close the complaint. All relevant documentation is stored in accordance with the Municipalities retention by-law. If the complainant does not accept the proposed resolution, they have the option to escalate the complaint to the CAO and/or to Council. Some examples of resolution may be apologies, review or change in policies or procedures, additional training, etc. If the complainant does not reply within 5 days of receipt of the proposed resolution, the file will be deemed to be closed and resolution accepted by the complainant.
- 3.12** Appeal - If a resolution cannot be reached through the Municipal complaint process, it may be submitted by the complainant to the Ontario Ombudsman's office.

- 3.13** Public Statistics – complaint statistics shall be reported on annually to Council.

4 Definitions

- 4.1** CAO: Chief Administrative Officer of the Municipality of Grey Highlands or their designate.
- 4.2** Complainant: the individual or business filing the complaint with the Municipality.
- 4.3** Complaint: an expression of dissatisfaction related to a Municipality of Grey Highlands program, facility, staff member, service, actions/non-actions or other matter arising where the citizen believes that the Municipality has not provided a service experience to their satisfaction. A complaint is different from a request for service, an inquiry, feedback, compliment or a suggestion.
- 4.4** Informal complaint: a complaint received by staff where no formal follow-up is requested or required.
- 4.5** Formal Complaint: A complaint received through the complaint form, that is logged into the system, tracked and follow-up has been requested.
- 4.6** Request for Service: a request for something to be done. Examples include, requesting road repairs, missed garbage collection, no water service.
- 4.7** Inquiry: a general or specific request for information regarding a Municipal product or service made by a resident that is resolved at the point of service delivery.
- 4.8** Feedback: an opinion, comment or expression of interest in a Municipality of Grey Highlands program or service.
- 4.9** Council: The Council of the Municipality of Grey Highlands.
- 4.10** Director: The Department Director to whom the complaint has been assigned.
- 4.11** Policy: The Municipal Complaint Handling Policy.
- 4.12** Municipality: The Municipality of Grey Highlands.

- 4.13** Frivolous and Vexatious: A frivolous complaint is one that has no serious purpose or value. A vexatious complaint is one (or a series of many) that is specifically being pursued to simply harass, annoy or cause financial cost to their Municipality.

5 References and Related Documents

- 5.1** Complaints Standard Operating Procedure – instructions for staff use related to tracking software.
- 5.2** A09-A-05 – Accessible Customer Service Policy