

Petitions to County Council Policy

Policy Type: Corporate Services

Subsection: Legislative Services

Policy Title: Petitions to County Council

Policy Number:

Policy Approved By:

Effective Date:

Reviewed:

Revised:

Applicable To: Council / Staff / Public

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Petitions to County Council Policy Statement

Northumberland County is committed to community engagement and supports petitions as a tool for members of the public to participate in municipal government processes and provide input to Council, enhancing decision-making.

Definitions

For the purpose to this policy:

Clerk means the Clerk, appointed under Section 228 of the Municipal Act, 2001, S.O. 2001, c. 25, or their designate.

Council means the Council of the Corporation of the County of Northumberland.

Petition means a formal written request made to Northumberland County Council for a particular action to be taken or to voice an opinion on a matter.

Petition organizer means the person who has initiated and is the main contact for the petition.

Objective(s)

The purpose of this policy is to outline Northumberland County's procedure / requirements for receiving electronic and paper-based petitions.

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Authority

- The Municipal Act, 2001, S.O. 2001, c. 25
- The Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. M.56
- Northumberland County Council Procedural By-law

Scope

This policy applies to petitions presented by members of the public to Northumberland County Council with respect to a particular issue relevant to a County program or service and within the authority of Council.

Procedures

1.0 General Provisions

- Petitions are a way for members of the public to communicate their opinions to Council and bring attention to a matter of public interest or concern that is within the authority of Northumberland County Council.
- Matters that are administrative or operational in nature should first be raised with staff in the relevant County department.
- All petitions are subject to the specific requirements outlined below, which help ensure their authenticity and validity.
- This policy shall not limit any statutory petition process outlined in relevant legislation.

1.2 Responsibilities

- It is the responsibility of the petition organizer, Council and staff to:
 - Adhere to the guidelines and parameters established by this policy.
- It is the responsibility of the Clerk to:
 - Administer this policy and provide for any related procedures as deemed necessary or in accordance with any related by-laws.

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1.3 Petition Requirements

- Petitions must be addressed to '**The Council of the County of Northumberland**'.
- Petitions must be relevant to County programs or services and within the authority of Council.
- The petition request should be stated at the top of each page of the petition.
- The petition must clearly disclose on each page that it will be considered a public document and form part of the public record. Signatories to a petition are deemed to have waived any expectation of privacy, as a petition is considered a public document. If the petition does not contain such a statement on each page, it will not be accepted.
- The petition organizer's name, address, and contact information must be included on each page of the petition.
- Petitions submitted via an external petition website (e.g. change.org) will not be accepted.
- Petitions will not be accepted if they are ruled by the Clerk to contain content that is:
 - Abusive, profane, or derogatory;
 - Slanderous or defamatory remarks, obscene language or sexual content;
 - Content that promotes, fosters, or encourages discrimination based on race, creed, colour, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation;
 - Encouragement of illegal activity;
 - Promotion of political candidates;
 - Information that may compromise the safety or security of the public, public systems or employees of the County.
- The County is not accountable for the accuracy or reliability of petitions that are submitted.
- Petition organizers are strongly encouraged to use the County's petition templates (see Appendix "A" and "B"), which adhere to the petition requirements outlined in this policy. Other forms may be accepted, provided that all requirements are met, as outlined in this policy.
- Petitions can be either electronic petitions, or paper-based petitions. A hybrid petition, consisting of elements of both electronic and paper-based, will not be accepted.

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Electronic Petition Requirements:

- Electronic petitions must include a minimum of two (2) persons and include their name (first and last), full address and valid email address in place of the original signature.
- The petition signatory must provide all of the mandatory information outlined above, otherwise the petition signatory will be redacted from the petition document.

Paper-Based Petition Requirements:

- Paper-based petitions must include a minimum of two (2) persons and include their name (first and last), full address, contact information (email address or phone number), and original signature written directly on the petition. Entries must be legible.
- Digital signatures will not be accepted.
- The petition signatory must provide all of the mandatory information outlined above, otherwise the petition signatory will be redacted from the petition document.

1.4 Submission

- Electronic petitions meeting the requirements of this policy must be emailed to clerk@northumberland.ca.
 - The County's email server has a file size limit of 25 Megabyte (MB) per message. If the file size of an electronic petition is over 25 MB, petition organizers must contact the Clerk to arrange submission through an online file share.
- Paper-based petitions containing original signatures and meeting the requirements of this policy can be mailed to Northumberland County headquarters (555 Courthouse Road, Cobourg, ON, K9A 5J6) at the attention of the Clerk, or delivered in person to the Clerk's Office (555 Courthouse Road, Cobourg, ON, K9A 5J6).
- The Clerk will confirm receipt of the petition with the identified petition organizer.
- Petitions received by the Clerk, that meet requirements of this policy will be added to the 'Communications' section of the agenda of the next relevant Standing Committee / County Council meeting (if received six business days before the scheduled meeting date), or the meeting at which the subject of the petition is to be discussed.

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1.5 Monitoring / Contraventions

- The Clerk will evaluate all petitions to ensure that the requirements of the policy are met. The Clerk has the authority to refuse petitions based on non-compliance with the policy or if the content is deemed inappropriate.

1.6 Retention and Disclosure

- Petitions will be retained in accordance with the County's records retention by-law.

Review

The Clerk will ensure that this policy is regularly reviewed and remains relevant to the needs of Northumberland County, in accordance with legislative requirements and best practices.

Attachments

Appendix "A"- Electronic Petition Template

Appendix "B"- Paper-Based Petition Template

Appendix “A” – Electronic Petition Template

Petition Organizer

Name	
Address	
Contact Information (Email Address or Phone #)	

To: The Council of the County of Northumberland

We the undersigned, petition the Council of the County of Northumberland as follows:

<i>Petition subject matter:</i> <i>(Briefly state the subject matter of your petition and the request for action within the authority of Council)</i>
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*Name (first and last)	*Full Address	*Contact Information (Email Address)

*** = Denotes mandatory information.** The petition signatory must provide all mandatory information, otherwise the petition signatory will be redacted from the document.

Signatories to a petition are deemed to have waived any expectation of privacy, as a petition is considered a public document. If the petition meets the requirements outlined in the ‘Petitions to County Council Policy’, the petition will be placed on a Standing Committee and/or Council agenda in its entirety, including the name, address, and contact information of all petition signatories.

Schedule “B” – Paper-Based Petition Template

Petition Organizer

Name	
Address	
Contact Information (Email Address or Phone #)	

To: The Council of the County of Northumberland

We the undersigned, petition the Council of the County of Northumberland as follows:

Petition subject matter: *(Briefly state the subject matter of your petition and the request for action within the authority of Council)*

*Name (first and last)	*Full Address	*Contact Information (email address or phone number)	*Signature (original signatures only)

*** = Denotes mandatory information.** The petition signatory must provide all mandatory information, otherwise the petition signatory will be redacted from the document.

Signatories to a petition are deemed to have waived any expectation of privacy, as a petition is considered a public document. If the petition meets the requirements outlined in the ‘Petitions to County Council Policy’, the petition will be placed on a Standing Committee and/or Council agenda in its entirety, including the name, address, contact information, and signature of all petition signatories.