



SOUTH
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BUSINESS
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Ethel LaValley
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Bryan Martin
CAO/Clerk
Township of South Algonquin
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January 6, 2025

Dear Ms. LaValley and Mr. Martin,

We are writing in follow-up to recent Township of South Algonquin Council Meetings.

Thank you for your quick response to our previous letter following the November 6th, 2024, meeting (for Mr. Martin's reference, we have attached that letter again here. Please note that we have also posted our communications with the Township on our website to ensure transparency to our members and the community).

Thank you for your update regarding the timing of minutes from Council meetings. While we understand that minutes are posted following approval by Council, we believe that it would foster clearer communication with the community if the minutes could be posted much earlier, even if they are watermarked or noted as 'draft' or 'pending approval'. Because Council meets monthly, there is a long lag-time between a meeting and minutes being approved and posted. The result is an associated long gap between decisions made at Council meetings and community awareness of the outcomes of those decisions. This would also better align with the Communications Policy, which was shared in the December 4, 2024 meeting package and which notes a service standard of



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48 hours for communications following or in the lead-up to a Township event or meeting.

Thank you, as well, for your timely reply regarding concerns about non-functioning links on the Township website. In the interest of relationship building and as you are aware, the South Algonquin Business Alliance has gladly provided pro bono assistance to the Township previously at your request with regard to grant writing. Despite several of these goodwill, in-kind donations, entirely to the benefit of staff and council, the Alliance continues to experience a disproportionately negative impact to our Alliance and certain of our members originating from township communication, which staff and council have refused to remedy. I'm sure you can understand that as a volunteer organization and under these circumstances, it is beyond our current resources to also complete a free audit of the Township website for you.

We would greatly appreciate the Township making it a priority to regularly audit and review the functionality of its resources, including the website, as a critical part of its communications and operations within the community. As part of this review, we request that attention be paid to your business directory which contains inaccurate and incomplete information. For example, note that the South Algonquin Business Alliance is listed as the "South Algonquin Business Association" which is incorrect. As noted above, this request is in alignment with the Communications Policy shared at the December 4, 2024, Council meeting, which notes the importance of information on the website being up-to-date and functional. Should it be helpful, we are also happy to work with the Township to complete this work as a contracted service or to connect staff to external contractors who could be hired to complete this work.

With regard to the Communications Policy shared at the December 4, 2024, meeting, we were pleased to see this policy shared as part of the agenda package. We are curious as to how the policy was developed, by whom, and if there were any opportunities afforded to the community to share feedback on communications priorities and processes. Given that timely, meaningful, and effective communications is critical to supporting transparent governance and facilitating democratic participation, the development of the communications policy itself should be based on robust community engagement and consultation so that it reflects the needs and priorities not just of Council and Township



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staff, but of the community that Council and Staff serve. We would welcome opportunities to participate in the ongoing development of this critical Township policy.

Further, with regard to the December 4, 2024, Council meeting, we are concerned with the ongoing practice of reading and approving new or revised by-laws, in their entirety, in a single meeting. The Township appears to, as a matter of course, table by-laws and put forward motions for them to be 'considered read' for the first, second, and third readings in a single meeting. When items such as the new Communications Policy or the Grants and Subsidies Policy, or any other issue that is significant enough to require a legislative response in the form of a by-law, are tabled, read, and approved in a single meeting, there is no time or opportunity for community members to respond, provide feedback, or participate in important decisions that affect their lives (and sometimes their livelihoods). As it stands, even when community members or organizations like SABA have concerns about or feedback on the content of a by-law, there is no productive mechanism for sharing that feedback in a way that could result in changes to the by-law, as it has already been approved and adopted before there is a chance to review or provide comment. While it may be technically allowed, this practice does not align with the spirit of meaningful democratic participation nor the principles of good community governance. It also disproportionately impacts the capacity of persons with disabilities (who may need extra time or assistance to review the proposed changes) to participate in local democracy.

We strongly encourage the Township to reconsider this practice and to leave no less than one Council meeting between readings and approval, ideally having by-laws read in their first, second, and third readings completed over successive meetings. This would allow community members to provide feedback to their Councilor, Council as a whole, and staff, and allow time for the Township to respond and/or to integrate that feedback and revise the by-laws before approval. We strongly believe that reconsidering the way in which by-laws are processed by the Township would foster stronger civic participation by the community, reduce frustration on the part of councilors, and, importantly, lead to better policy and outcomes from the by-laws themselves. It would also allow for more fulsome participation by community members impacted by disabilities should they wish to participate.



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We continue to welcome opportunities to support meaningful engagement and collaboration between Council, the Township, and the entire South Algonquin Community and look forward to future opportunities to participate in our shared effort to create a vibrant, inclusive, and prosperous South Algonquin.

Thank you, in advance, for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Angela Pollak". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Angela Pollak, PhD

Chair, South Algonquin Business Alliance