

CORPORATE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

Policy Title:	Complaint & Service Request Handling Policy	Policy No:	GOV-006
Section:	Communications	Resolution:	2021-256
Policy Lead:	Chief Administrative Officer	Effective Date:	9/14/2021
Application:	All Staff	Last Review Date:	-
Approved by:	Council	Previous Resolution:	-

1.0 PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to support the Municipality of East Ferris' dedication to serving the community. The Municipality recognizes the importance of public input and welcomes complaints and requests for service as valuable forms of feedback. This policy provides the public with an avenue for submitting complaints and requests for service and provides employees with consistent practices for handling complaints and requests for service. The policy will assist the Municipality in continuing to provide excellent service to the public and will contribute to the continuous improvement of operations.

2.0 DEFINITIONS

Complainant: The person who is submitting a complaint. Anyone who uses or is affected by municipal services can make a complaint including residents or property owners, visitors, businesses, and community groups.

Complaint: An expression of dissatisfaction or concern about the action or lack of action taken by the municipality related to programs, facilities, services or staff; or failure to meet a standard of service.

Compliment: An expression of approval or satisfaction for a municipal service, staff member, program, facility or process.

Feedback: An opinion or comment about a program, facility, service or staff member.

Frivolous Complaint: A complaint that has no serious purpose or value, which may have little merit and be trivial; investigating would be out of proportion to the issues of the complaint.

Inquiry: A request for information that is resolved at the point of service delivery.

Personal Information: Recorded information about an identifiable individual as outlined in Section 2 of the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (MFIPPA).

Request for Service: A request made to the municipality for a specific service or to notify the municipality that a service was not provided on time. Examples include:

- Requesting that the municipality repair a street surface;
- Reporting a malfunctioning streetlight;
- Notifying the Municipality of a missed garbage collection; and
- Reporting a by-law infraction.

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Suggestion: An idea submitted to the municipality with the aim of improving a service, program, or process.

Vexatious Complaint: A complaint without merit, which intends to cause inconvenience, harassment, or expense to the municipality.

3.0 SCOPE

This policy applies to all municipal staff.

This policy does not apply to or does not address:

- A decision by Council or a Board/Committee
- Complaints about Members of Council or a Board/Committee
- Internal employee complaints
- Compliments
- Inquiries or requests for information
- Issues addressed by an existing municipal by-law, policy, or procedure
- Issues addressed by legislation that have statutory review and appeal processes including but not limited to: Freedom of Information Requests; land use planning; by-law notices; orders; appeals; and matters that are handled by tribunals, courts of law, quasi-judicial boards, etc.
- Criticisms or anonymous complaints
- Outside boards and agencies
- Requests to change a by-law
- Suggestions
- Civil matters (e.g. disputes between neighbours)

4.0 PRINCIPLES

Customer focused: The Municipality will deal with complaints and requests for service promptly and respond in a format that meets the needs of the customer.

Continuous improvement: The Municipality will consider complaints and requests for service as opportunities to evaluate programs and services for possible improvement.

Fair and Impartial: The Municipality will deal with complaints in an open-minded and impartial way. Making a complaint will not negatively affect future dealings with the Municipality.

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Customers will not be discriminated against during the investigation or because of a complaint. Staff about whom a complaint is launched will be treated fairly.

Accountable: The Municipality will provide honest explanations and give reasons for decisions. Information will be provided in a clear and open way. When requested, and if appropriate, the Municipality will inform the complainant about the corrective actions taken.

Confidentiality: Protecting the privacy of all parties is of utmost importance. Information will be collected, used and disclosed in accordance with the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA)*.

5.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Staff are responsible for directing complaints and requests for service to the appropriate Manager. The appropriate department will monitor status of complaints and requests and ensure response by the departments in accordance with the service standards.

Customers are to recognize the difference between a complaint and a request for service. Customers are also requested to acknowledge that the Municipality must consider the needs of the whole community. They are to provide honest and respectful communication with a goal to improving services.

Staff are to have knowledge and understanding of the purpose of receiving complaints and requests, the process through which a complaint and request can be made and the service standards that apply to complaints.

Managers and Directors are responsible for investigating and responding to complaints about services they are responsible for. Complaints about staff are to be processed by the Chief Administrative Officer.

6.0 PROCESS

6.1 Complaints Resolution Attempt

Informal Complaints

It is encouraged that individuals and municipal staff work to resolve issues or concerns before they become formal complaints. Informal complaints may be made in person, by phone, letter, email, or fax. It is the responsibility of municipal staff to attempt to resolve issues or concerns before they become formal complaints and identify opportunities to improve municipal services.

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Whenever possible, complainants are encouraged to work with staff at the first point of contact to have issues addressed. Staff will listen with an open mind and make efforts to resolve concerns in a timely manner.

Formal Complaints

A formal complaint is generated when an informal resolution cannot be successfully achieved. This will result in a file generated, investigation, and decision. Appendix A of this policy is the Formal Complaint Form.

6.2 Submitting a Formal Complaint

Should a resolution not be made at the first point of contact, a **formal complaint** can be submitted to the Municipality. All formal complaints shall be addressed to the Clerk in writing using one of the following methods.

- By email to kari.hanselman@eastferris.ca
- By mail to Municipality of East Ferris, 25 Taillefer Road, Corbeil, ON P0H 1K0
- By fax to 705-752-2452
- In person at the Municipal Office, 25 Taillefer Road, Corbeil, ON P0H 1K0

In order to submit a formal complaint to the Municipality, the complainant is required to provide as much information as possible, in writing, including:

- Contact Information (name, address, phone number, email address)
- Details of the occurrence or issue
- Location
- Date and time
- Names of any individuals or staff involved
- Explanation of what was or was not said or done
- Resolution being sought

Anonymous complaints will not be accepted.

6.3 Submitting a Request for Service

Requests for Service can be submitted through the following channels:

- Online at <https://eastferris.ca/en/municipal-services/service-requests> (preferable)

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- By email to municipality@eastferris.ca
- By telephone at 705-752-2740
- By mail to Municipality of East Ferris, 390 Highway 94, Corbeil, ON P0H 1K0
- By fax to 705-752-2452
- In person at the Municipal Office, 390 Highway 94, Corbeil, ON P0H 1K0

In order to submit a Request for Service to the Municipality, the requester is required to provide as much information as possible including:

- Contact Information (name, address, telephone number, email address)
- Details of the request
- Location
- Date
- Resolution being sought

6.4 Handling of Complaints

Acknowledgement

Formal complaints shall be submitted to the Clerk's Office. Upon receipt, the complaint will be acknowledged in writing within seven (7) calendar days. The Clerk's Office will assess if the complaint falls within this policy as per the scope of this policy.

Investigation

All complaints are investigated by the appropriate Department Manager. Complaints made against Department Managers shall be investigated by the Chief Administrative Officer. As part of the investigation, all involved parties (complainant, employee, etc.) may be interviewed.

Decision

A decision will be made within thirty (30) calendar days upon acknowledgement of the complaint. If the Clerk, or Chief Administrative Officer, is unable to provide a response within thirty (30) calendar days, they shall notify the complainant of the delay and provide an estimate of when a response will be provided. The Clerk, or Chief Administrative Officer, shall provide a written response outlining the results of the investigation into the complaint. The response shall note whether the complaint was substantiated and include any actions the Municipality may take as a result of the complaint. Should the investigation result in staff disciplinary action, the Municipality will inform the complainant that the matter has been addressed with the staff member and has been resolved, but details of the disciplinary action will not be disclosed.

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Appeal

Once the Municipality has communicated the decision, there is no appeal process at the municipal level.

In the event complaints cannot be resolved through the Municipality's complaint process, they may be submitted to the Provincial Ombudsman's office in accordance with the provisions of Bill 8 Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act, 2014.

All records relating to the complaint shall be maintained in accordance with the Municipality's record retention by-law. During the complaints process, all Municipal employees shall adhere to all applicable legislation regarding privacy in accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA). Complainants should be aware that certain circumstances may identify them during an investigation.

6.5 Handling of Requests for Service

Acknowledgement

Upon receipt, the request for service will be acknowledged by email if the request is made by email, fax, and mail.

Processing

Requests for service will be forwarded to the appropriate Department Manager for processing. Requests are processed based on priority at the discretion of the Municipality. Staff may need to follow up by telephone or email should they have any questions or need additional information.

It is the intent of the Municipality to respond to requests for service within ten (10) business days. Staff will advise the person requesting service of the reason for a delay and when they can expect to receive a response should they not be able to process the request for service within ten (10) business days. Once a request for service has been processed, the person requesting service will be notified by email or telephone that their request has been fulfilled.

6.6 Frivolous and Vexatious Complaints

Frivolous, vexatious, and unreasonably persistent complaints or requests that consume a disproportionate amount of municipal time and resources and impede staff from attending to other essential issues and operations will not be entertained. Staff who believe that a complaint is frivolous or vexatious shall forward the complaint to the Chief Administrative Officer. If the

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complaint is deemed frivolous or vexatious by the Chief Administrative Officer, the municipality shall provide the complainant with written notification of why the complaint was deemed as such.

7.0 REPORTING

Annually in January, the Chief Administrative Officer will provide a report to Council. The report will provide a high-level summary of the complaints and requests for service received by the municipality in the previous calendar year. The information contained in the report may be used to evaluate services being provided and may be considered for future planning by the municipality.

8.0 REVIEW

This Policy will be reviewed once per term of Council or as requested by the CAO or Council.