

# One Size Doesn't Fit All



Adapting Public Engagement in Rural Municipalities

# From 2020 to Today

- Municipal-wide Land Use Planning began in 2020
- COVID-19 pandemic limited robust, meaningful engagement
- Coastal issues emerged as urgent priority
- Council directed staff to focus on coastal protection
- 18 months spent developing and passing new Coastal by-laws

MODL2040



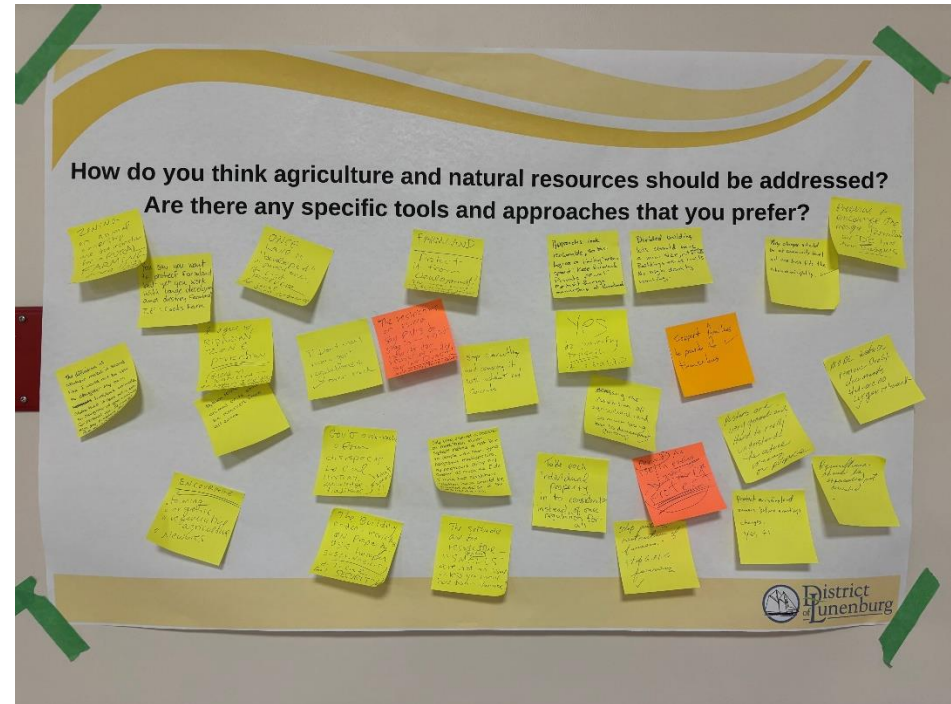
# Commitment to Engagement

- As part of our new Municipal-wide Land Use Planning Strategy, we committed to **meaningful, accessible public engagement**
- We understood **no single approach works for all residents**
- Our model was **flexible and adaptable**, shaped by attendance and public input
- We knew this would be an **emotion charged series** of meetings



# Five Ways to Participate

1. Dedicated phone line – with a guaranteed call back
2. Thursday round table weekly at the municipal office
3. Engagement website – videos, background documents, and surveys
4. Evening public meetings – formats adapted to audience size and energy
5. Booth at community expo – reaching residents who don't attend municipal meetings



# Adapting in Real Time

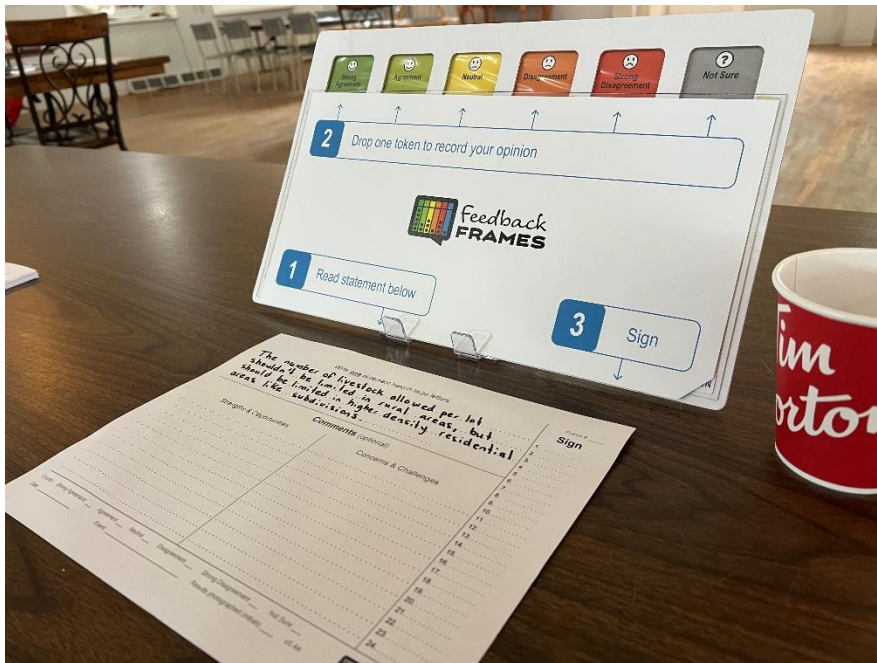


- Traditional processes avoid open-mic sessions—but we embraced them when needed
- For **large, passionate audiences** → pivoted to presentations with moderated Q&A
- For **smaller or quieter groups** → offered open-house, drop-in style conversations
- This responsiveness created **space for all voices** and defused tension



# Anonymous Feedback Collection

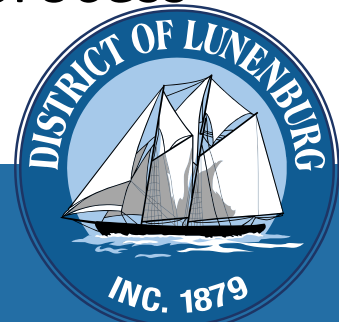
Feedback Frames offered a way for attendees to provide feedback without speaking up in the larger group



# Results



- **19 public meetings** across the municipality
- **850+ residents engaged** directly (in a rural community of 27,000)
- **Hundreds more** reached at a three-day home expo
- Rebuilding **trust and credibility** in the process



# Lessons Learned

- **Never assume that the public understands the issue** – we needed to add a “Planning 101 tutorial” at the beginning of meetings
- **Flexibility is essential** – no one-size-fits-all model, topic and public response dictated what worked
- **Responsiveness matters** – especially on emotional topics like land use
- The approach is **adaptable, low-cost, and replicable** for other municipalities
- **Don't be afraid to adapt** – listen to what residents are saying and asking for and make the necessary adjustments.

Listening well strengthens trust between residents  
and Council

