

TOWN OF COALHURST POLICY & PROCEDURE MANUAL	SECTION: <i>ORGANIZATION</i>
POLICY: <i>COMMUNICATION/SOCIAL MEDIA</i>	POLICY NUMBER: <i>00-01-27</i>

PURPOSE

To define the Town's communication strategies in order to establish clear and accurate channels in disseminating information to Town Residents and Stakeholders. This policy will also define roles and responsibilities of Town Employees and Elected Officials regarding official Town Communications. It will also address social media's role in increasing awareness of the Town's activities, programs, and services.

COUNCIL POLICY

1. General Communication

a. It is the policy of the Town of Coalhurst to:

- Inform citizens about the Town's policies, programs, services, and initiatives through communication that is timely, accurate, and consistent.
- Consult and inform stakeholders when establishing or developing priorities, policies, programs, and services.
- Ensure that the Town is visible and responsive to the citizens it serves.
- Anticipate the needs of the community, Council, and Administration for timely and relevant information.
- Engage in a proactive communications program that uses a variety of formats to accommodate diverse needs and that reflects the diversity of the community.

2. Council Communication

a. Inquiries made to Council Members, whether by phone, email, letter, or in person, must be addressed as soon as reasonably possible according to the nature of the inquiry.

b. *Formal Inquiries:*

- A formal inquiry would be defined as any type of correspondence or communication where citizens are requesting action from the municipality or wish to ensure their communication is addressed formally by all of Council. Any communication in writing through mail or email, addressed to members of Council, will be considered a formal inquiry.

- Formal inquiries shall be managed by the office through the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), or designate. All formal inquiries requesting Council decision or policy formulation shall be forwarded to Council or the appropriate committee for recommendation to Council as an agenda item at the meeting following the date the request was received. Any response to formal inquiries must be directed to Council.

c. *Informal Inquiries:*

- An informal inquiry would be defined as citizens communicating verbally with any member of Council where the discussion is general in nature and does not require any action.
- Informal inquiries may be responded to by the Council member who receives the request. Where a response is provided to an informal inquiry that is expected to attract media attention or become part of a Council or a committee agenda in the future, the response shall be provided to all members of Council and the CAO.

d. When representing the Council in the community, Council members will:

- Provide a fair and accurate representation of Council decisions;
- Recognize that Council members have a duty to respect Council decisions and policy directions;
- Conduct themselves in a manner that will not reflect unfavorably on the Council;
- Maintain mature and constructive working relationships based on mutual trust and respect;
- Conduct the relationship with courtesy and respect.

3. Administration Communication

- a.** Information of the Town's policies, programs, services, and initiatives should be generally available to the public in a variety of formats, subject to available resources. These formats may include, but are not limited to: newsletters, billboards, posters/signs, newspaper advertisements, email, website, social media etc.
- b.** Administration shall adhere to the following guidelines:
- Information is provided to the public by trained and knowledgeable staff;
 - Service is timely, courteous, and efficient;

- When information is unavailable, a prompt and clear explanation is provided;
- Respect the authority and responsibility of Council, whose members are entitled to learn about proposed policy initiatives of major new programs, services, or initiatives before information about them is released to the public;
- Consult with the CAO when preparing campaigns/strategies that require participation by members of Council, or when preparing a response to an inquiry that could have implications for the members of Council.
- Employees are bound by the official Oath of Confidentiality, the Confidentiality Policy #99-01-17, and the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and must not disclose any Town information or content that they are not specifically authorized to disclose.

4. Media Communication

- a. The Media play an important role in providing information to the public on matters of civic interest.
- b. The Mayor is the official spokesperson on behalf of Council and the CAO is the official spokesperson for all operational matters.
- c. While it is recognized that Councillors are able to speak to the media in their capacity as individual Councillors, Council members will be honest and respectful of each other in their communication, and will communicate accurately with the media regarding municipal business.

5. Web/Social Media Communication

- a. Internet and electronic communications are important tools to disseminate information to a greater audience. It allows others 24-hour access to information and supports two-way communication with users and the Town.
- b. The Town's primary electronic source for official announcements and information is the Town website (www.coalhurst.ca). This will be updated regularly with current and accurate information regarding Town news, events, emergencies, etc. Other online tools that the Town may choose to utilize, (i.e. social media), will be used to compliment the Town's other forms of communication to increase reach and awareness to stakeholders. Wherever possible, these sites should include links back to the Town website for in-depth information, forms, documents, or online services necessary to conduct business with the Town of Coalhurst.
- c. Under the supervision of the CAO, designated employees will be responsible for updating all Internet and electronic information and will ensure that the information is consistent and accurate. All previous communication guidelines addressed in this policy to employees will continue to be followed.

d. Types of information to be posted/shared on social media would include things such as:

- PSA's and news releases sent to the media
- Reminders of programs, services, and safety information
- Promotion of other communication activities
- Upcoming Town events – public engagement activities, open houses, sponsored Town of Coalhurst events (Canada Day, Miner's Day, etc.)
- Online surveys about Town programs and services
- Changes in service levels (holiday garbage schedules, road closures, etc.)
- Posts for other organizations that relate to the Town
- Emergency information (power outages, floods, fires, snow storms, etc.)
- Pertinent information from RCMP/police that may affect the Town and its residents.

The Town will not post/share:

- Posts on behalf of organizations that are not affiliated with the Town
 - Political opinions of any member of Town Council
 - Comments speculating on Council decisions
 - Comments speculating on emergency situations
 - Advertisements on behalf of other organizations
 - Land Development sales
 - Town Council in-camera information (land, legal, labour)
 - Negative remarks directed at any group or individual
 - Any personal content that may be perceived for personal gain or may damage the reputation of the Town of Coalhurst (personal photos, posts, and/or videos)
- e.** The Town may respond to inquiries from the public via Social Media. Responses are not guaranteed and will only be made during regular Town of Coalhurst business office hours. The public are encouraged to call the Town Office with questions or concerns or make a formal inquiry through Council or the CAO. The Town will refrain from debating with residents or responding to negative comments in a defensive manner. We will not respond to anyone who uses inappropriate language, racial/sexual remarks, or derogatory comments.
- f.** Comments of the following nature will be removed:
- Graphic, obscene, or racial content
 - Offensive to an individual or an organization, rude in tone or abusive
 - Solicitation or advertisements of any non-government organization, product, or Service
 - Links to sexual content
- g.** The Town will not block users from following their social media pages, however, if an individual has repeatedly violated the terms of reference for posting information, that individual may be blocked. Where warranted, a warning may be posted first for that user.

- h.** In their capacity as private citizens, Elected Officials and Town Employees must use a private email address and make every reasonable effort to make it clear that their contribution to social media sites is as a private individual, not as a representative of the Town.

- i.** All Social Media sites that the Town chooses to create and operate will be clearly recognizable as such and will be accessible through a link on the Town's webpage. All other accounts that may appear to be affiliated with the Town of Coalhurst that private businesses or individuals have created should be treated as unofficial sources of information and are not associated with the Town in any way.