	<h1>TOWN OF COCHRANE POLICY</h1>
<b>Policy No.:</b> <b>Policy Title:</b> <b>Approval Date:</b> <b>Revision Date:</b> <b>Department:</b>	<b>1107-01</b> <b>Social Media Policy</b> <b>June 11, 2012</b>  <b>Communications</b>

## Policy Statement

Social media is part of the larger concept of digital engagement which, in its most basic form, is the use of information and communications technology to enhance the relationship between an organization and its stakeholders.

Digital engagement creates meaningful two-way conversation. This interactive capacity, at both the strategic and tactical levels, affords the Town of Cochrane an unprecedented opportunity to facilitate and participate in community dialogue and to reinforce our goals for public service and civic engagement.

The Town of Cochrane's approach to digital engagement through social media is values-based: the Town engages online to empower all those with an interest in matters of local importance, thereby advancing the common good of the community.

By digitally engaging through the proactive and responsible use of social media, the Town signals its willingness as an organization to listen, to be open, and to invest in reciprocal relationships with those who care about, and choose to live and do business in Cochrane.

### 1. Reason for Policy

- 1.1 This policy embodies best practices of digital engagement, honours Town of Cochrane values, and helps the organization and its internal stakeholders adapt and succeed in the digital environment.
- 1.2 This policy ensures a healthy continuity between personal and professional roles by outlining guidelines for productive and safe online engagement.

## 2. Related Information

- 2.1 *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, Province of Alberta
- 2.2 *Public Input Toolkit for Municipalities*, Alberta Municipal Affairs
- 2.3 *Community Consultation Policy* (Policy No. 1106-01)
- 2.4 *Code of Conduct for Members of Council and Council Committees* (Policy No. 1302-01)
- 2.5 *Employee Code of Conduct* (Administrative Directive D900)
- 2.6 *Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources* (Administrative Directive D906)
- 2.7 *Municipal Emergency Plan*, Emergency Operations Procedures, Public Information Officer/Communications

## 3. Definitions

- 3.1 Social media means any facility for online publication and commentary, including, but not limited to, blogs, wikis, and social networking sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Flickr and YouTube.
- 3.2 Digital engagement is the use of information and communications technology (ICT) to enhance the relationship between an organization and its stakeholders.
- 3.3 A communication plan documents communication strategies, goals, objectives, audiences, timelines, tactics and success measures for a project, program, service or issue.

## 4. Responsibilities


- 4.1 Town Council to:
  - 4.1.1 Approve by resolution this policy and any amendments.
  - 4.1.2 Approve resources in the annual budget process for successful implementation of this policy.
  - 4.1.3 Include digital interactions as part of the responsibilities outlined in the *Code of Conduct – Council ~ 1302*.
- 4.2 Chief Administrative Officer to:
  - 4.2.1 Implement this policy and approve procedures.
  - 4.2.2 Ensure policy and procedure reviews occur and verify the implementation of policies and procedures.

- 4.2.3 Provide guidance for Town employees and members of Council engaging in social media communications.
- 4.3 Senior Management Team to:
  - 4.3.1 Ensure implementation of this policy and procedure, including budget allocations.
  - 4.3.2 Ensure that this policy and procedure is reviewed every year.
  - 4.3.3 Make recommendations to the Chief Administrative Officer of necessary policy or procedure amendments.
- 4.4 Communications Manager to:
  - 4.4.1 Provide leadership in the implementation of this policy and procedure, including drafting budget allocations and ensuring alignment with Town Communications plans and strategies.
  - 4.4.2 Ensure that this policy and procedure is reviewed every year.
  - 4.4.3 Make recommendations to the Senior Management Team of necessary policy or procedure amendments.
- 4.5 Communications Staff to:
  - 4.5.1 Understand and adhere to this policy and procedure.
  - 4.5.2 Ensure employees are aware of this policy and procedure.
  - 4.5.3 Ensure the implementation of this policy and procedure.
  - 4.5.4 Ensure social media activity is part of a strategic communications planning process.
  - 4.5.5 Provide guidance as employees adapt to the use of interactive communication channels.
- 4.6 All Employees to:
  - 4.6.1 Understand, agree to, and comply with this policy and procedure.

## **Special Situations**

- 5.1 This Social Media Policy may be overridden by the Municipal Emergency Plan, Emergency Operations Procedures, Public Information Officer/Communications in emergency or issues related situations. Best practices in communications and public engagement will always apply.

## **5 End of Policy**

	<h1>TOWN OF COCHRANE PROCEDURE</h1>
<b>Policy No.:</b> <b>Policy Title:</b> <b>Department:</b>	<b>1107-01</b> <b>Social Media Policy</b> <b>Communications</b>

This procedure governs the publication of and participation in social media by employees of Town of Cochrane (hereafter known as “the Town”). For the purposes of this procedure, social media means any facility for online publication and commentary, including but not limited to blogs, wikis, and social networking sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Flickr and YouTube. This procedure is in addition to and complements any existing or future policies and procedures regarding the use of technology, computers, email and the internet.

## SECTION 1: SCOPE

1. This procedure applies to publication of and participation in social media by Town employees speaking on behalf of the Town as an organization or any part of the Town.
2. This procedure applies to publication of and participation in social media by Town employees speaking for themselves as individuals.

## SECTION 2: SETUP AND MANAGEMENT

- 1 As with all corporate communications activities, social media activity works best as part of a comprehensive Communication Plan in which it meets clearly outlined communication strategies, goals, objectives, audiences, timelines, tactics and success measures. Departments wishing to employ social media should have their manager connect with Town Communications to determine the social media platform and usage that can best serve the department’s overall business objectives and to assess the impact on workflow that social media use may entail.
- 2 Once a plan for using social media is laid out with the individual department, Town Communications will liaise with IT to ensure that departmental team members who will be using social media have secure access to identified websites and that the potential impact on the Town network (e.g. bandwidth and security) has been appropriately assessed and determined to be manageable.

- 3 Individual staff may not initiate social media activity without a comprehensive communications strategy and the involvement of Communications and IT. Communications shall work with IT to maintain a list of all Town digital communication channels.
- 4 All profiles on social media sites will be consistent with Town identity standards. Departmental staff will inform the Communications team of major changes to existing sites.
- 5 Social media profiles must display official Town photographs and brand materials.
- 6 Any record (e.g. text, images, video and documents) that records approvals, recommendations, opinions, decisions or transactions of the Town of Cochrane must be maintained in the Town's Records Management System, which is capable of handling all social media formats. The department managing the social media site is responsible for ensuring this occurs when such a record is used in social media.
- 7 Any social media initiative that requires the collection of personal information (e.g. public engagement efforts) must adhere to the FOIP requirements. In social media, personal information includes an individual's name, email address or username if it includes the individual's name, a portion of their name, or otherwise identifies them.

### **SECTION 3: GUIDELINES FOR PROFESSIONAL USE**

#### **1 Code of Conduct**

- Employees shall exercise caution and discretion when commenting publicly on issues, programs and policies related to Town activities, and shall not use their position to lend weight to the public expression of any personal views (as per the Employee Code of Conduct).

#### **2 Town Assets**

- Employees may use Town assets for the performance of their duties. Town computers and other devices should not be used for personal social media activity during work hours (as per Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources).

#### **3. Your Social Media "Persona"**

- As part of the development of a Communications Plan, the Communications Team will help develop a social media "persona" for each area of social media activity; i.e. a guideline for tone, language, attitude, writing style and other specifications for interacting with the community. Since staff comments in social

media appear as the "Town of Cochrane" (or specific department under the "Town of Cochrane" umbrella), following persona guidelines will ensure comments are consistent regardless of author.

## 8 **Disclaimers**

- Town social media profiles will all contain a disclaimer with information about the hours when responses can be expected and the kind of dialogue permitted on the site. The Communications team will set up disclaimers when the social media account is set up.

## 1 **Protect Confidential Information**

- Do not publish confidential information such as unpublished details about current projects, future plans, financial information, research, and/or private contact information.

## 2 **Remember Copyright**

- Copyright of the Town logo and photographs is owned by the Town and can be used in representations of the Town online, including social media. The Town may not have the right to use materials owned by other individuals and organizations. If you are unsure, confirm the copyright status before you post online. If you are quoting excerpts of someone else's work or ideas, always attribute your quotations to the original author/source.

## 3 **Redirect Through Traditional Channels**

- Simple questions and concerns can easily be addressed through social media; others in the community will appreciate your good customer service and also benefit from your answer. Exchanges that require private information or that cannot be answered easily online should be taken out of social media and into more traditional channels such as email, phone calls or in person meetings when appropriate. Communications can advise.
- If you see misrepresentations of the Town on other social media, contact the Communications department for assistance.
- Matters regarding an identified risk to privacy should be referred to Legislative Services. A privacy impact assessment may be needed to meet privacy requirements.

## 4 **Protect Town Partners**

- Partners, such as other local organizations, other levels of government or government agencies, should not be cited or referenced without their approval.
- Never identify a partner without permission.
- Never discuss confidential details of a partnership. This includes making disparaging comments about other parties such as, "We would have started this project long ago if they had done their part sooner."

### **Community First**

- The Cochrane community espouses a diverse set of customs, values and perspectives. As a representative of the Town, be yourself online, but do so respectfully. This includes the obvious (i.e. no ethnic slurs, offensive comments, defamatory comments, personal insults, obscenities, etc.) as well as proper consideration of privacy and of topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory. The Town of Cochrane must be unbiased and not appear to be applying pressure or influence, or give the appearance that a decision has been made if one has not.

### **5 Be Clear, Be Honest**

- Do not say anything that is dishonest, untrue or misleading.
- Maintain a neutral stance, particularly regarding issues, and especially when a final decision has not been made.

### **11. Be the First to Respond to Your Own Mistakes**

- If you make an error, admit your mistake and correct it quickly. If you modify an earlier post, be clear that you have done so.
- If there are accusations of improper posting (such as copyrighted material or a defamatory comment), respond quickly — better to remove the item immediately to reduce the possibility of legal action or ongoing argument.
- In social media, a quick response is vital. This is especially important when responding to negative feedback. Do not let a negative question or comment sit unanswered for longer than a few hours during work hours. If you do not know how to respond, seek help from Communications or your manager.

### **12. Do Not Forget Your Day Job**

- Departments should ensure that social media activity can be included with current workloads and commitments. During the communications planning process, Communications can advise on the best possible method for reaching your intended audience – which may or may not include social media (social media may be used instead of another method and not add to workload).
- Individuals who feel overwhelmed or unable to perform all job duties should discuss workload with their supervisor and, if necessary, consult with Communications.

### **13. Consider the Consequences**

- Remember that you are personally responsible for the content you publish. For example, consider the consequences if a Town employee met with a resident who brought a print out from a Town social media profile with statements contradicting your position in the meeting. Vet your online postings with the proper authorities as necessary. Always use your good judgment and follow the Employee Code of Conduct.



#### 14. **Enforcement**

- The Town of Cochrane takes social media use seriously. This procedure is aligned with other policies and ethical standards. Violations will be subject to disciplinary action, including but not limited to lock-out from social media and up to and including termination. If you are unclear about any aspect of this procedure, contact Communications to clarify.

### **SECTION 4: GUIDELINES FOR PERSONAL USE**

1. Remember your role. Use professional judgement even when on personal social media profiles: you are still a representative of the Town, as you are in face to face interactions.
2. Use a disclaimer. Let people know that your views are your own, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Town of Cochrane.

### **SECTION 5: SOCIAL MEDIA BEST PRACTICES**

The following tips are not mandatory, but will contribute to the successful use of social media:

#### 1. **Write About What You Know**

The best way to be interesting, stay out of trouble, and have fun is to write about what you know. There is a good chance of being embarrassed by a real expert, or of being boring if you write about topics outside of your area of expertise.

#### 2. **Quality Matters**

Use a spell checker. Follow your persona, style guide and other guidelines.

#### 3. **Take Time to Reflect before You Publish**

The speed at which you can publish your thoughts online is both a great feature and a great downfall of social media. The time to edit or reflect must be self imposed. Listen to your gut: If in doubt over a post, or if something does not feel right, either let it sit and look at it again before publishing it, or ask someone else to look at it.

#### 4. **You Do Not Have To Be Perfect**

Social media is a grand social experiment. While the methodology and characteristics of communication differ on each social media platform, your contribution is valuable wherever you engage so long as you endeavour to be transparent, creative and collaborative.

#### 5. **Content**

Ensure your content is useful, interesting, timely and sensitive to user needs.

**End of Procedure**

**Approval**

A handwritten signature consisting of two overlapping loops, written in black ink.

**Julian deCocq, CAO**

June 14 2012  
**Date**