

PURPOSE

Communication is central to all municipal work and is a function of good management. Communication is a shared responsibility and the manner in which information is exchanged is important. All elements of communication are expected to have quality, be accurate, respectful and responsive.

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines to facilitate communication practices that are coordinated and consistent.

OBJECTIVES

1. To guide the conduct and use of electronic communications for council and administrative staff
2. To establish guidelines for media relations and district communications for council members

SCOPE

A framework for communication between CAO and Council members; council members and the media and to provide guidelines for councillors utilizing district communications.

POLICY

As stated in the Nova Scotia Municipal Government Act (Section 30):

(1) the chief administrative officer is the head of the administrative branch of the government of the municipality and is responsible to the council for the proper administration of the affairs of the municipality in accordance with the by-laws of the municipality and the policies adopted by the council.

(2) The council shall communicate with the employees of the municipality solely through the chief administrative officer, except that the council may communicate directly with employees of the municipality to obtain or provide information.

Council

Administrative

1.1 Council and Administration:

(a) Any matter regarding the following items will be distributed concurrently to all members of council, as soon as possible:

- Risk to the municipality
- Financial matters requiring council input or decision
- Service disruptions

(a) Public announcements (i.e. any information that is disseminated to the public, for the general public and not to a specific person, organization or entity) other than those stated above in section (a) and issued by the municipality will be distributed concurrently to all members of council.

(b) Timing and distribution of all other electronic communication to council members and or staff will be at the discretion of the CAO.

As the Warden and/or CAO is the official voice of the municipality, both must be notified immediately of any issue that has the potential to negatively impact the public, the council, the municipality or its stakeholders.

1.2 Electronic Communications

(a) All municipal business-related email correspondence is the property of the Municipality of the County of Victoria and is subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPOP) and must not be deleted. Under the Municipal Government Act (MGA), the Chief Administrative Officer is responsible for ensuring that the municipality complies with Nova Scotia's access and privacy rules.

(b) Correspondence or emails that are deemed by the CAO, the Warden or the Council to be or to include parts that are or may be defamatory, threatening, deliberately repetitious, vexatious or grossly inappropriate do not necessitate a response, broader circulation or acknowledgement, but must be retained.

(c) Email addressed to a majority of Council may be responded to by the CAO prior to the next council meeting if circumstances warrant. Such email responses will follow the protocol in Appendix A and may be included in the CAO's report which is presented to council prior to council meetings.

(d) Personal email addresses must not be used for municipal business. In serious or technical situations where a municipal email address is not available, a personal address can be used if the user's municipal address is in the cc or bcc fields.

Council Administrative

-
- (e) Electronic correspondence of a formal nature (where formal nature is defined as letters sent via email, text or on social media regarding a municipal issue) and written on behalf of the municipality to a resident or business and where the councillor is representing themselves in the capacity of a councillor for the municipality, shall be copied to all of Council as well as the CAO. Any formal correspondence written on behalf of the municipality to media or for publication is to be vetted prior to release by the CAO and/or the Communications Officer.
- (f) Electronic communication from any member of staff to any member of Council is to be copied to the CAO.

1.3 Council and the Media:

The municipality will ensure open, honest and clear channels of communication with members of the media. The key objectives are to engage the community through two-way communication, increase the awareness of the municipality's services and to improve accountability through accurate and timely information shared with members of the media. The CAO may designate spokespersons who may speak to members of the media on the behalf of the municipality.

Wherever possible, council and staff shall work to be proactive in providing information related to the public good to the media, via prepared media releases or statements, public notices issued via social media or message communicated directly by official municipal spokespersons. The Communications Officer is responsible for working with other staff/council to develop accurate media releases, for vetting media release content with the CAO & Warden, either of whom will provide final approval before dissemination to media and the public.

(a) All media inquiries shall be directed to the CAO and or the Warden and the Communications Officer.

(b) Media releases issued by the municipality will be sent to all council members in advance of their public release. Also, all members of Council shall be informed of any media interviews as soon as possible.

1.4 District Communications:

Councillors may use communication platforms to connect with constituents, to promote municipal activities, events and meetings in their own districts. This is separate from official

Council

Administrative

municipal platforms, but can be used to direct users to official municipal platforms (i.e.: official website, social media accounts and others).

Only information that is publicly available may be shared. It is unacceptable to publish or report on conversations or information that is confidential, pre-decisional or speculative. Platforms are to be separate from councillor’s personal accounts and clearly identified as such.

Any materials produced by the councillor for the purpose of communicating with constituents (other than councillor social media postings) must be vetted by the CAO and the Communications Officer and both shall be notified prior to release.

- (a) A councillor must not claim to speak on behalf of the Municipality unless authorized to do so. Should a councillor express a personal opinion in these or other communications for the public, it shall be clearly stated it is as an individual and not as an official statement of the municipality or of the council.
- (b) The CAO and the Communications Officer must be notified and consulted should an issue arise regarding posting or responding.
- (c) Sharing of non-municipal information on social media platforms is permitted, provided the information is accurate and conversations are civil and respectful.
- (d) Victoria County logos and branding shall be used consistently and not altered.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Title	Role	Responsibilities
Policy Editor	Communications Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure policies in their care and control are always up-to-date, reviewed according to defined review frequency, or sooner (if necessary) ▪ Draft new or edit existing policy content ▪ Be able to interpret and explain policy content ▪ Ensure policy documents are branded and any supporting documents (i.e. applications forms) are also branded and content consistent with the policy ▪ Ensure policy content is relevant and accurate ▪ Provide the final approved policy document to the Administrative Assistant
Policy Owner Policy Approver	Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Be able to interpret and explain policy content ▪ Provide oversight to ensure policy documents are branded and any supporting documents (i.e. application forms) are also branded and content consistent with the policy ▪ Provide oversight to ensure policy content is relevant and accurate

Council

Administrative

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the policy and make recommendation for approval; and, Ensure that the final approved policy document has been provided to the Administrative Assistant
Policy Administrator	Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide oversight to ensure policies in their care and control are always up-to-date, reviewed according to defined review frequency, or sooner (if necessary) Facilitate an annual Policy Review; and, Ensure final approved policies are maintained, stored and posted where appropriate
Target Audience	Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notify the Policy Editor of changes to be considered Notify the Policy Administrator when the policy becomes out of date or obsolete Follow the Policy

REVIEW FREQUENCY

Review Frequency	Review Month
Every 4 years	January and Election years

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Document Name
Social Media Policy
FOIPOP
Municipal Government Act NS

VERSION LOG

Change Date	Description	Editor	Approver	Approval Date
August 22, 2019	Policy created	Jocelyn Bethune		
August 26, 2019	Policy brought to council for review (first reading)	Jocelyn Bethune		
Nov 4, 2019	Second Council reading	Jocelyn Bethune		Nov 4, 2019

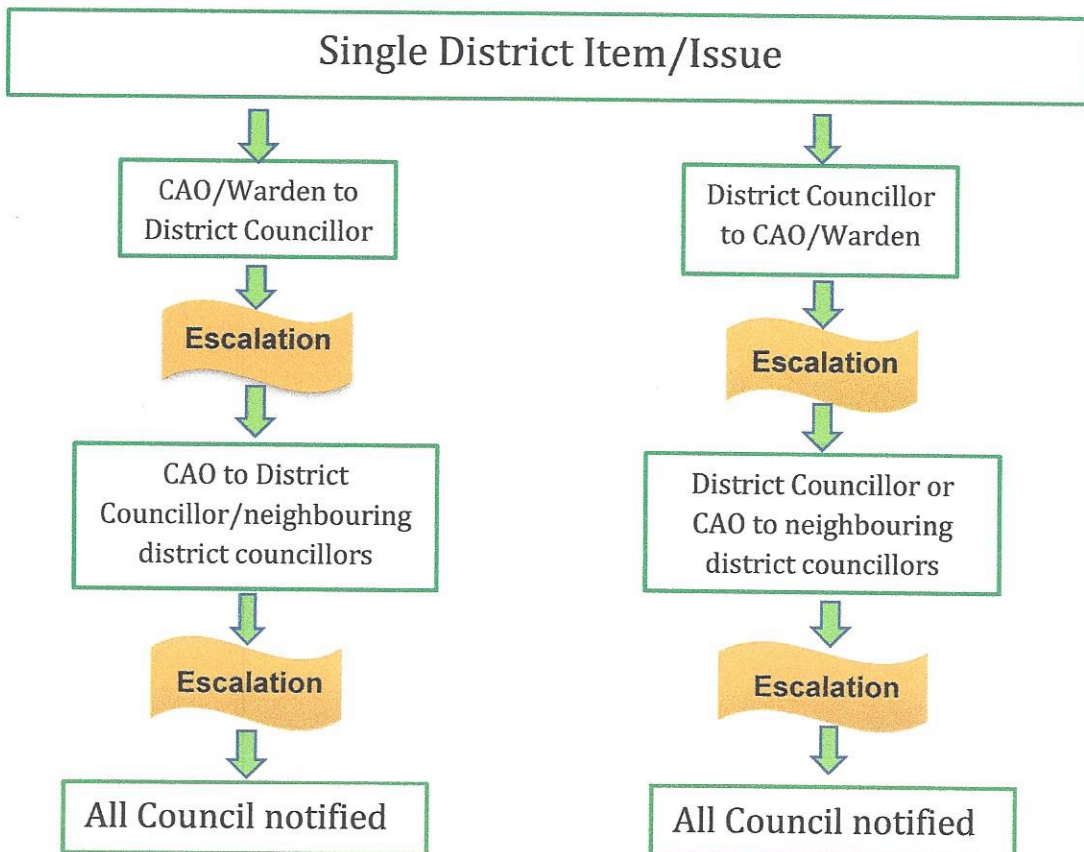
APPENDIX A

Process: CAO/Council Communication

(a)



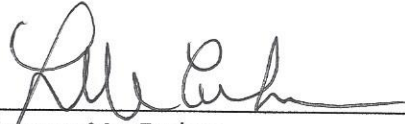
(b)



Council

Administrative

I **CERTIFY** this to be a true copy of the *Council Communication Policy* as adopted by the Municipal Council of the Municipality of the County of Victoria at a meeting held on the 4th day of November, 2019.



Leanne MacEachen
Chief Administrative Officer