



# Municipality of the District of St. Mary's

## Municipal Social Media Policy

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### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Outline responsibility and authority for creation, management and deletion of official social media accounts for the Municipality.
- Provide guidance around the use of social media for all staff and elected officials.
- Outline expectations in terms of account monitoring, moderation and response to postings considered to be problematic.
- Outline expectations of staff and elected official behaviour in the use of personal social media accounts.

### **Scope:**

This policy applies to Municipality of the District of St. Mary's staff and elected officials including, but not limited to Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), Directors, Clerk, Council, Administration, Public Works, & other staff. Full and part time, contract or otherwise.

### **Definitions:**

**Social Media Account** – Blogs, wikis, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Flickr, Snapchat, YouTube, etc. including any online, electronic communication used for publication or comment.

**Content** – Text, images, video, real-time & audio that is published via social media accounts.

**Contributor** – Person or persons who have been authorized by a moderator as a user of municipal social media accounts.

**Moderator** – Person or persons appointed by CAO to review and authorize content submitted by contributors and public users of any municipal managed social media accounts.

### **Administration of Social Media Accounts:**

- The CAO will appoint a Moderator(s) for all official municipal social media accounts.
- Official municipal social media endeavors require approval of the CAO to ensure monitoring measures are in place so that slanderous or questionable posts and comments are removed in a timely manner.
- Municipal account passwords and other access information shall be centrally stored for all accounts by the Moderators and made known to the CAO.
- Municipal account passwords will be changed by the Moderators or the CAO when there are personnel changes in any position having access to an account.
- The CAO and Moderators will be the only personnel who may have full administrator authority to an account, i.e. to change passwords, add users, etc.
- Posting on official municipal social media accounts may only be done from municipal logins set up for that purpose or from an individual's personal account if prior authorization has been given by the CAO.
- The CAO may authorize the deletion of a municipal social media account if the account is deemed to be no longer required or where content is not being properly maintained.

## **Social Media Account Content**

- Where appropriate, content on one official municipal social media account shall be cross-posted on other accounts.
- Content/information should not be published, posted or released if it is considered confidential or not for public consumption. If there are questions about what is considered confidential contact the CAO or a Moderator.
- Moderators and Contributors are expected to be polite and courteous even if they disagree with social media comments/posts.
- If a situation arises in which information posted to an official account is deemed problematic requiring a Moderator to take action, refer to the Monitoring Standards and Incident Response sections of this policy.
- Contributors and Moderators must ensure appropriate permission was granted by the relevant parties before referring to or posting images of current or former employees, the public, vendors or suppliers. Additionally, appropriate permission must be granted to use all third party copyrighted material, trademarks, service marks or other intellectual property.
- Customer service inquiries of a personal nature should be acknowledged, taken offline for further communication and referred to the appropriate Municipal staff member for response.
- The Moderator, in consultation with the CAO, is responsible for providing an official response on behalf of the Municipality when required.

## **Personal Social Media Accounts**

- Municipal Staff and Elected Officials need to be aware of and adhere to the Municipality of St. Mary's Code of Conduct policy, and other related policies, when using social media in reference to the Municipality and ensure that all usage is within the law.
- Municipal Staff and Elected Officials must be aware of the effect their actions may have on their image, as well as the image of the Municipality. Information that is posted or published remains public information forever.
- Municipal Staff and Elected Officials should use their best judgement to ensure the material they post is neither inappropriate nor harmful to the Municipality, its employees or its stakeholders.
- Although not an exclusive list, some specific examples of prohibited social media conduct include posting commentary, content or images that are defamatory, pornographic, proprietary, harassing, libelous or that can create a hostile work environment.
- Subject to applicable law, online activity (including after-hours activity) that violates the Municipal Code of Conduct Policy or any other municipal policy may subject the individual to disciplinary action or termination.
- While common disclaimers such as "retweets don't imply endorsement" or "all views are my own" may help clarify the context of personal social media messages, they do not absolve the responsibility of the individual to uphold the Municipality's Code of Conduct Policy. Elected officials and Municipal Staff should not voice personal opinions in public forums regarding Council decisions, fellow employees or elected officials, your workplace or Municipal projects and programs, if such opinions could cause harm to the image or reputation of the Municipality, or damage the Municipality's relationship with its citizens or other stakeholders in the community.

- Municipal Staff and Elected Officials must not use personal social media accounts to post municipal decisions prior to that information being approved and made public by Council.

## **Monitoring Standards**

The Municipality of St. Mary's reserves the right to remove any posts or content on official municipal social media accounts for reasons including but not limited to:

- Providing the personal information of individuals.
- Promoting, perpetuating or fostering discrimination on the basis of race, creed, colour, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, nationality, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation.
- A personal attack on an individual or specific group.
- Profanity or abusive language.
- Content or links to content that is sexually explicit.
- Conducting or encouraging illegal activity.
- Attempting to advertise, promote or sell products or services of an individual or business with the exception of economic development/retention activities or the official role of elected officials as per the Nova Scotia Municipal Government Act.
- Promoting a candidate for municipal, provincial or federal election.
- Tending to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems.
- Violating a legal ownership interest of another party.
- Not complying with municipal, provincial or federal legislation.
- Violating privacy legislation, including discussion of items in closed session meetings.
- Promoting an individual religion or religious service.

Violation of these standards is deemed to be an incident and the procedure outlined in the incident response section of this policy shall be followed.

## **Incident Response**

In the event that information posted to an official municipal social media account is deemed an "incident", the following immediate steps must be undertaken:

1. The account Moderator will take corrective action immediately which may include the removal of the offending content or posting corrective information.
2. The Moderator will notify the CAO of the incident and response. If the incident occurs after hours, it should be reported the next business day.
3. The Moderator must document relevant details of the incident (i.e. screenshots, user information, social media name and URL, date, time, etc.).
4. Social media networks, blogs and other types of online content sometimes generate media attention or legal questions. All media and legal inquiries should be referred to the CAO.

In the event that information posted to a personal social media account is deemed an "incident", the following immediate steps must be undertaken for Staff:

1. The CAO or Department Head will take corrective action immediately which may include requesting the removal of the offending content or posting corrective information.
2. The CAO or Department Head must document relevant details of the incident (i.e. screenshots, user information, social media name and URL, date, time, etc.).
3. Social media networks, blogs and other types of online content sometimes generate media attention or legal questions. All media and legal inquiries should be referred to the CAO.

In the event that information posted to a personal social media account is deemed an "incident", the following immediate steps must be undertaken for elected officials:

1. The Warden or Council will take corrective action immediately which may include requesting the removal of the offending content or posting corrective information.
2. The Warden or Council must document relevant details of the incident (i.e. screenshots, user information, social media name and URL, date, time, etc.).
3. Social media networks, blogs and other types of online content sometimes generate media attention or legal questions. All media and legal inquiries should be referred to the Warden.

M Jordan  
Municipal Clerk

June 10, 2019  
Date

