



Social Media

Communications Policy S1

Policy:	S1 – Social Media
Policy Department(s):	Communications
Adoption Date:	April 11, 2011
Adoption Reference:	04-275-11
Effective Date:	April 11, 2011
Last Amended:	June 27, 2022

Policy Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out direction and requirements which must be followed to maintain the County's presence on social media.

Policy Statement

This policy will ensure the County of Grande Prairie presence on social media is a consistent and accurate source of information that residents view as a trustworthy and transparent means of communication about the organization.

Definitions

"County" means the municipality of the County of Grande Prairie No. 1 having jurisdiction under the Municipal Government Act and other applicable legislation.

"Emergency Coordination Centre" (ECC) means the location that functions as a point of coordination, addressing the needs of the municipality or the Grande Prairie Regional Emergency Partnership (GPREP) Region as a whole, exercising the authority of the local officials, as well as anticipating and supporting the needs of one (1) or more incident sites.

"Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act" means the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, RSA 2000, Chapter F-25, as amended thereto, also known as FOIP.

"Information Officer (IO)" means a member of the Command Staff within the Incident Command System (ICS) or Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC) structure. The IO is responsible for communicating information to the public, media, other agencies, and stakeholders to provide incident-related information and updates based on changes in incident status.

"Official Presence" means a dedicated page or channel on a social media site that has the official County of Grande Prairie logo and is used for the purpose of informing or communicating with citizens or visitors concerning programs, facilities or other County business.

"Personal Information" means recorded information about an identifiable individual, including



- the individual's name, home or business address or home or business telephone number,
- the individual's race, national or ethnic origin, colour or religious or political beliefs or associations,
- the individual's age, sex, marital status or family status, (iv) an identifying number, symbol or other particular assigned to the individual,
- the individual's fingerprints, other biometric information, blood type, genetic information or inheritable characteristics,
- information about the individual's health and health care history, including information about a physical or mental disability,
- information about the individual's educational, financial, employment or criminal history, including criminal records where a pardon has been given,
- anyone else's opinions about the individual, and

the individual's personal views or opinions, except if they are about someone else; "Posting" includes any written comment, content or image, including but not limited to photographs, video, clipart, scanned images, documents and emoticons.

"Published Information" means personal commentary or content that is accessible to a wide community of followers or the public. "User-Created Content (UCC)" means comments, ratings, reviews, tags, opinions, or responses provided by an individual or a group on a social media site concerning content posted on the site, or a topical issue, or the individual's original non-professional creative or modified content that has been posted or published to a site. This type of content is also known as user-generated content (UGC) or consumer-generated media.

"Social Media Sites" means any facility for online publication and commentary, including, but not limited to, blogs, wikis, and social networking sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and YouTube.

"Visual Identity Guide" The visual identity guide provides the rules and guidelines on the County's visual identity. The visual identity covers many areas, from the logo and colour scheme, to the design of the letterhead and advertising. The County's Visual Identity Guide can be found by staff on the County's intranet and by the public by contacting Communications.

Policy Guidelines

1. The scope of this policy includes all departments within the County including all employees, contractors, and authorized community members. It also includes any agencies affiliated with the County that Council deems to be subject to this policy. It also includes members of the public who engage with the County on its social media channels.



Use of Social Media

2. The County supports the use of social media for informational and promotional purposes. The County is permitted to have an official presence on third party social media sites provided they adequately consider how their program and communications plan objectives will be met, understand the broader implications and risks in using social media generally and the identified social media site specifically, and the Chief Administrative Officer and Communications Manager have approved the initiative or plan.
3. The Communications department is the sole department that manages and monitors the County's social media accounts.
4. Employees should reference the Employee Handbook for social media use.

Issues and Risks to Consider

Some issues that need to be taken into account include public relations and operational risks, emergency communications, records management and security, FOIP, privacy and legal (copyright, intellectual property rights, liability and others).

Public Relations and Operational Risks

5. When planning to use a social media site to communicate, the following must be considered:
 - 5.1. The communications plan or marketing objectives and alignment with the County's policies, Strategic Plan, Vision and Values;
 - 5.2. The reputation and ability of the social media channel site(s) to reach the target or intended audience;
 - 5.3. Whether the terms of use of the social media site(s) will achieve the County's goals (e.g. to establish a legitimate organizational presence);
 - 5.4. The appropriateness of posting the intended content to the site;
 - 5.5. The approach to be used in content moderation and the moderator tools provided by the social media platform;
 - 5.6. The date or criteria (e.g. after a certain period of inactivity) upon which the content and use of the site will be reviewed or discontinued/removed;
 - 5.7. That County images, videos and other content posted to social media sites can, and likely will be, downloaded and reused in other ways on other sites, altered or re-posted to the same or other sites;
 - 5.8. That residents and visitors have the means to readily and easily access necessary and important information regarding County programs, sites, facilities,



Social Media

Communications Policy S1

services and policies, without a need to register as user of a social media site. For example, County information is directly accessible to unregistered users of a social media site and/or this information is also available on a County site, or via other channels; and

- 5.9. That all County social media sites adhere to the County Visual Identity Guide.
6. The County will post, monitor, respond, contribute to or seek to influence social media conversations, in a manner that is identifiable as being made by or on behalf of the County by the Communications Department in the following manner:
 - 6.1. The Communications Department must ensure all content posted on County social media sites is consistent with the image of the County as approved by the Communications Manager and is either content available to the public or has been approved for publication by the Chief Administrative Officer, or Communications Manager.
 - 6.2. When posting to social media sites, efforts should be made to treat all businesses, organizations and individuals equally and refrain from endorsing or showing favouritism unless there is a formal agreement in place that includes promotion through County social media sites.
 - 6.3. Monitor the County's social media sites.
 - 6.4. Review all UCC posted to public-facing social media sites.
 - 6.5. Wherever possible, leave all UCC unmodified, including those of complaints and criticism. Where a UCC is
 - Graphic, obscene, abusive, discriminatory, or racial.
 - Offensive to an individual or an organization.
 - Contain inappropriate language.
 - Create unnecessary fear, panic or affect public safety negatively.
 - Misinformation and false information that could be misinterpreted as fact. Particularly misinformation related to public health and safety, or democratic processes.
 - Discloses confidential or personal information.
 - Irrelevant to the post.
 - Commercial advertising or self-promotion.
 - Potentially violates any existing legislation or rights of a third party.

the comment will be deleted or altered to fix the inappropriate content and, commenting may also be turned off to stop new inappropriate content being added. A response should always be made identifying the complaint, criticism, or comment beneath the inappropriate content and respond accordingly.



Social Media

Communications Policy S1

7. The Communications department will ensure responses are consistent with messaging approved by the Communications Manager, with actual wording being consistent with the audience or objectives of the site when responding to content on a County social media sites or contributing on behalf of the County to other pages or sites

Emergency Communication

8. In the event of an emergency that requires communications support, emergency social media communications shall take priority over all other County social media content. Once the Emergency Coordination Centre is activated, the designated County Information Officer(s) shall manage all emergency social media communications across all County accounts for the duration of the emergency.
9. Any images, video and/or audio taken in relation to an emergency by County employees as a result of their employment with the County are the property of the County and shall be provided to the Communications Department. Any images, video and/or audio taken in relation to an emergency by a County employee, even if the employee is off duty, is still subject to the confidentiality and professionalism requirements described in this policy.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act

10. Given privacy risks, the County has to consider a number of issues when participating on social media sites and comply with the FOIP Act.
11. The County will use available web tools or services to obtain non-identifying anonymous, aggregate or statistical information concerning its programs, services or marketing efforts from social media sites.
12. While the County may scan or monitor Published Information available on social media sites, it will not seek to obtain or collect an identifiable individual's personal views, actions, or comments or take steps to identify the specific author or contributor of unpublished information or content unless authorized and permitted by law to do so.
13. The County will only advertise its programs and services on social media sites in a responsible manner in accordance with the County's other policies. If any official County content includes Personal Information, the use and disclosure of that Personal Information must be permitted under the FOIP Act. The County will not collect Personal Information about individuals who are registered with these sites unless it is authorized under the FOIP Act.
14. The County should not use social media as a means of collecting Personal Information.
15. All records concerning County content posted to, or obtained from, any social media site are subject to the access and privacy provisions of the FOIP Act. Third party sites hosting County content and comments, however, are not subject to the FOIP Act in any way.



Legal Liability, Copyright, and Intellectual Property

16. Any content placed on social media sites should be County-owned or, if licensed to the County, should contain provisions which would allow the County to provide worldwide, fee-free, non-exclusive licenses to third parties in perpetuity.
17. Content must comply with the Copyright Act to ensure the ownership rights associated with works subject to copyright (e.g. photos) are fully expected in all communications. Departments must maintain a record of authorization to use copyrighted material.

Best Practices for Using Social Media

18. Never disclose information, including textual or visual material that is confidential or has been disclosed to the County by a third party.
19. The County's consent form has to be signed before posting photos.
20. Think of what you say in a post in the same way as statements you might make to the media, if you wouldn't say it to a journalist, don't post it.
21. Don't cite or reference County personnel without their approval.
22. Be the first to correct your own mistakes.
23. Don't alter previous posts without indicating that you have done so.
24. Post about timely events, relevance is important.
25. Know that people will have negative things to say, determine how you will react to the criticisms.

References

Legal Authorities	Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act – R.S. 2000, C F-25 Copyright Act, RSC 1985, c C-42
Related Plans, Bylaws, Policies, Etc.	Policy B1 – Policy Development Policy L7 – Personnel Policy R1 – Electronic Devices, Messaging Tools and Internet Use
Other	County Visual Identity Guide Employee Handbook

Revision History

Review Date	Description
June 27, 2022	Reviewed and Amended CM20220627.034
February 27, 2017	Reviewed and Amended CM20170227.1020



Social Media

Communications Policy S1

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