

## Social Media Policy

Applies to: All Town Staff, Town Committee Members, Town Volunteers, Town Council and the Public

Effective Date: April 27, 2021

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### **Section 1: Policy Introduction:**

In our digital society, social media is a rapidly evolving means of communication and engagement. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter allow government agencies and elected officials to communicate directly with the communities we serve, exchanging news and information in real-time.

Social media is a necessary and vital tool for engaging and communicating with residents. Through social media, people and groups can create, organize, edit, discuss, combine and share content. It is critical for the Town of Greater Napanee to engage with people through the platforms used by the community we serve.

By engaging on the same social media platforms as the Town of Greater Napanee's constituents, government agencies and elected officials can make sure they hear constituents' feedback, guide the conversation and help shape the public perception of official Municipal activities, policies and priorities.

### **Section 2: Policy Purpose:**

For the Town of Greater Napanee (herein referred to as "the Town") to continue to provide accurate, timely information to residents, visitors, partners, media and other stakeholders, it is imperative that social media be integrated into the Town's overarching communications strategy.

The Town's official accessible website, [www.greaternapanee.com](http://www.greaternapanee.com), will remain the Town's primary means of digital communication. Corporate social media accounts will compliment and enhance the Town's long-established web presence.

For these purposes, this policy serves to:

- A.** Protect the Town's reputation and ensure consistency and professionalism with how the Town communicates with the public via social media;
- B.** To establish protocols, criteria and courses of action for:
  - Appropriate monitoring and administration of the Town's social media pages;
  - Determining/adopting new social media accounts for the Town;
  - Providing timely, effective and accurate information and responses;

- Establishing a mechanism to address controversial or sensitive matters relating to online content about the Town;
  - Warranting appropriate protection of privacy of the public who engage or interact with the Town via social media;
- C.** Provide Town employees, Council committee members, volunteers and the public with an understanding of the policies and procedures surrounding the acceptable corporate and personal use of social media accounts as they relate to discussing the business of the Town.

This policy, which will be updated to reflect current conditions and best practices, establishes guidelines for the creation, oversight, maintenance and documentation of social media accounts used by the Town.

### **Section 3: Policy Applicability & Scope:**

The standards outline in this policy apply to all Town employees (including Committee members and volunteers) and elected Town officials, who may contribute to social media conversations on behalf of the Town. All Town staff and Council are therefore bound by the terms of the Town of Greater Napanee's Social Media Policy.

All other Town policies, provisions and ordinances, as well as provincial and federal laws, apply to social media, even if not specifically mentioned in this policy.

### **Section 4: Definitions:**

**Town of Greater Napanee Social Media:** Official corporate social media pages/accounts created and managed by the designated Town staff. This refers to digital platforms and tools used to engage with residents and other stakeholders to share timely information, gather public feedback and share the Town's story and brand.

**Official Corporate Social Media Pages/Accounts:** Online audiences should only associate posts published on the official corporate social media pages/accounts as authentic Town posts. Corporate social media pages/accounts shall be branded with the corporate logo for identification. Other social media pages/accounts that have "Greater Napanee" in its page name or reference the Town that are not deemed one of the Town's corporate social media platforms are NOT official Town-administered pages. The posts and/or discussions on these pages do not reflect the views or corporate identity of the Town of Greater Napanee. **Please see Appendix A for the list of the official corporate social media accounts that are managed by the Town.**

**Brand Standards:** Refers to the Town of Greater Napanee Corporate Logo Guidelines and Manual that govern the use of the Town logo, nameplate, colour scheme, accessible font and visual identity.

**Social Media Content:** Content that is planned and developed by the Town's departments and posted or intended to be posted on the Town's social media pages. This

refers to any posts, notices/media releases, documents, photographs/graphics, videos, links or other information that is created, posted, distributed or transmitted via social media.

**Social Media Moderator(s) and Contributor(s) (Designated Employee(s)):** Town staff whose position duties are required and designated to post, update, monitor and review content on corporate social media pages. Social Media Moderator(s) and Contributor(s) is/are responsible for social media governance, implementation and strategy and working directly with all municipal departments to lead social media initiatives. **Please see Appendix B for the staff designated at the Social Media Moderators/Contributors.**

**Social Media Action Plan (SMAP):** Refers to the official document that departments are required to complete when proposing a new corporate social media account. **Please see Appendix C for the SMAP.**

**Online Communications:** Refers to the communications of information through the internet for any purpose (i.e. information sharing, marketing, engagement).

**Public Statement:** A declaration made by a Town employee, official or representative in any public forum, which relates to the Town of Greater Napanee, its employees and/or its business. This includes statements made on personal social media accounts which the public can view, public online forums or discussions, social networking pages, and elsewhere in the public record.

**Public Record:** Anything which is created in the regular course of conducting Town business and which documents the business of the Town, regardless of format. Public records document decisions, policies, procedures, transactions, activities, commitments, obligations, ownership, entitlement, legal rights, etc. of the Town and are relied upon by the Town of proof of such to support Town business.

## **Section 5: Site Goals:**

The primary goals for the Town's official corporate social media accounts are as follows:

- A. Increase awareness of municipal services;
- B. Enhance existing corporate communications methods;
- C. Promote and market the municipal brand;
- D. Engage with residents and other stakeholders;
- E. Distribute time-sensitive information quickly and accurately;
- F. Correct misinformation;
- G. Utilize social media tracking/analytical tools to better evaluate the Town's communications, engagement and marketing efforts;
- H. Ensure that posts remain professional, have a consistent tone of voice and are pertinent to the Town's corporate identity and brand;
- I. Ensure responses to messages and comments (when necessary) are made in a timely manner;
- J. Use social media to lead online traffic to the Town website for more information

## **Section 6: Site Content:**

**6.1.** Where possible, all social media accounts shall:

- A.** Have the Town's logo as its account image and supply contact information;
- B.** Refer to the Town's website as the platform that has the most accurate, up-to-date information;
- C.** Be in compliance of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Requirements of Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA.

**6.2.** The Town invites the public to engage with Town posts, while treating others with respect, including the municipality.

**6.3. i)** The Town understands that members of the public may express their concerns, feelings or opinions that may not always agree with municipal decisions. Community engagement, both positive and constructive, are welcome in discussions on the Town's corporate social media; however; the Town will not tolerate inappropriate posts or comments that include, but are not limited to:

- A.** Profane or inappropriate language or content; sarcastic or disrespectful comments;
- B.** Content that includes personal attacks on an individual, whether it be staff or a member of the public, or a specific group or organization;
- C.** Discriminatory content;
- D.** Content considered to be in oversight with municipal Human Resources, Health & Safety and other policies, disrespectful or insulting to Town staff or representatives or content that discusses politically charged issues and/or statements, political rants or attacks on the Town of Greater Napanee;
- E.** Sexual content or links to sexual content;
- F.** Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity;
- G.** Content related to any industries or businesses or related to sales, advertising or promotions falling outside the boundaries of Greater Napanee;
- H.** Promotion or opposition to a candidate for municipal, provincial or federal election;
- I.** Information that may compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems;
- J.** Information that discloses personal information as protected in the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA). Please refer to the MFIPPA for more information: <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90m56>
- K.** Information about any identifiable individual, unless the identifiable individual has provided written consent to the Town in advance;
- L.** Plagiarized or copyrighted material;
- M.** Accusations or messages that impersonate or misrepresent someone else;
- N.** Any other content that is believed to be inappropriate in the opinion of the Town of Greater Napanee staff

ii) The Town reserves the right to remove any content that is posted for any reason at any time. If a member of the public believes a submission on any Town social media violates the Town of Greater Napanee Social Media Policy, they must report it immediately to the social media moderator(s). Any content that is deemed inappropriate will immediately be dealt with and, if an issue arises, will be brought to the attention of the Town's Chief Administrative Officer.

### **Section 7: Use of Photos and Videos:**

The Town reserves the right to use photos and/or videos from any of the Town's public functions on its social media pages that does not reveal the identify of the person(s) directly or indirectly. In a case where the person(s) is/are identifiable, the Town shall obtain written consent before posting images or videos on its social media. Any videos or photos from the public may be posted on the Town's social media so long as permission was obtained for the Town to use the content.

### **Section 8: Site Administration:**

- A. The Town has appointed designated employee(s) whom will serve as a centralized resource (social media moderators and contributors) for the oversight of the Town's social media. **Please see Appendix B for the Town's social media moderators/contributors;**
- B. The Town's official corporate social media pages are monitored regularly by the social media moderators during business hours: Monday – Friday, 8:30 am – 4:30 pm
- C. The Town's social media moderators will make every effort to respond to concerns and questions on the corporate social media pages. The Town's social media moderators shall refer to the Social Media Response Chart to determine whether a comment justifies a response. If a response is required, Town staff shall aim to address the comment within 3 business days (excluding holidays and weekends). This turnaround time may be impacted by staff availability and resources. **Please see Appendix D for the Social Media Response Chart.**
- D. Corporate account login credentials and passwords are confidential and will be stored with the Town's social media moderators. Passwords will not be changed without the approval of the social media moderators.
- E. It is the responsibility of all Town departments to provide content to the social media moderators on services, events, resources, responses to comments or updates pertaining to their department for online posting.

### **Section 9: Use of Social Media by Town Employees, Volunteers, Committee Members and Council:**

#### **9.1 Professional Use:**

Only the Town's social media moderators shall post information about the Town on corporate social media accounts.

**Staff and Council personal accounts shall not be used for work purposes, including the promotion or marketing of Town events, property or services. This is to facilitate compliance with public records law, to prevent false or misrepresented information, and to ensure that communications from the Town is streamlined through its corporate social media channels.**

Town employees, volunteers, committee members and Council are all representatives of The Corporation of the Town of Greater Napanee and must uphold the standards of the municipal brand and image when engaging in anything related to the Town, its services, operations, policies and/or procedures. Any Town employee, volunteer, committee member or Council member engaged in online interaction on the Town's corporate social media pages, or any online conversation that involves information about the Town on a public page, is required to meet a social media standard that mandates:

**9.2 Designated Town Social Media Moderators/Contributors shall:**

- A. Coordinate a process for reviewing all social media accounts, projects and plans;
- B. Coordinate a process for reviewing, approving and maintaining a list of content from each department for regular posting;
- C. The social media moderators will respond directly to online comments and inquiries that are generated by the public. If the social media moderators do not know the answer, he/she will consult with his/her Manager or relevant coworkers to confirm the information for a response;
- D. Ensure that there is clear direction to all Town staff and Council on social media best practices, strategies and authorized social media accounts;
- E. Maintain a publicly available list of all Town social media accounts;
- F. Review potential new types of social media platforms and tools for effectiveness, efficiencies and security;
- G. Work directly with all departments to coordinate social media strategies and tactics, including digital communications geared towards communication and engagement;
- H. Provide staff with social media training so that they're aware of changing trends, best practices and social media strategies;
- I. Reach out to staff for a response when a comment or question needs addressing and the social media moderator does not have the information to respond;
- J. Manage social media accounts, active accounts, passwords and logins for the purpose of emergency management;
- K. Set standards for measuring effectiveness of social media, working with all departments to establish reporting techniques and success metrics;
- L. Report and post information that is open, accurate and transparent;

- M.** Uphold corporate brand standards, values and image when conducting online communications;
- N.** Ensure content is accessible and meets the Level AA standards;
- O.** Only the social media moderators will have administrative access to any Town committee social media pages, which are considered corporate accounts.

### **9.3 Municipal Staff Using Official Town Accounts Shall:**

- A.** Provide the social media moderator(s) with content for corporate social media. This includes, but is not limited to:
  - Public notices pertaining to departmental services, operations etc.
  - Changes or alterations to departmental services or operations that have not been communicated but the public should know about
  - Good news stories highlighting the great work departments do and the positive projects they're working on
  - Responses to questions or comments that the public have
  - "Did You Know" or "For Your Information" notices on services or operations that staff feel that the public needs to be informed on
  - Any other information that departments are finding that they are getting questions about that a social media post could help limited phone calls, emails etc. by communicating
  - Content or subjects for educational videos or posts
- B.** Vet Communications through the social media moderators who will determine the use Town's corporate social media accounts.
- C.** Respond to questions raised on social media by utilizing the services of the social media moderator(s). Staff shall email responses to online questions or comments to the social media moderators who shall then respond through the corporate account. The social media moderators shall reach out to appropriate staff for a worded response if the social media moderators do not have the answer to an online comment or question that they justified as needing a response.
- D.** Raise concerns about comments on sites not administrated by the Town, by bringing it to the attention of their supervisor. Senior Management will strategize the best way to address this comment through the Town's corporate accounts.
- E.** Ignore comments on social media as best as possible. Not all comments need to be addressed or responded to; sometime people like to share their opinion without needing a response. It is up to the discretion of the social media moderators if a comment should/needs to be addressed on the Town's corporate accounts.
- F.** Consider the urgency of a post if there is an instance (i.e. a holiday or weekend) where a member of Staff feels that they must address a comment or question online and cannot wait for the social media moderator to address it on the Town's corporate pages. The communication on the Town's behalf must be current, accurate and relevant. The member of Staff must notify the social media

moderators that they have responded to a comment or question, provide the subject of the conversation and their response.

- Staff must identify themselves as a member of Town staff when commenting on a public page. If members of Council are responding to a public comment, they must do so through their official Council account or identify themselves as a member of Town Council.
- G.** Weigh the legal questions and negative public perception of social media content. These inquiries should be brought to the attention of Community and Corporate Services or CAO. Staff should not become a Town spokesperson;
- H.** Avoid hostility that is sometimes encountered the Town social media. Staff should disengage from the conversation and notify the CAO;
- I.** Ensure that privacy, confidentiality, copyright and data protection laws are adhered to, and must not make comments that are considered defamatory or libelous;
- J.** Respect other Town policies, i.e. Human Resources and Harassment in the Workplace, shall be followed while communicating online. Staff/Committee Members shall not discuss the Town or any of its Staff/Committee Members in a negative way through personal social media pages;

#### **9.4 Municipal Staff Using Personal Accounts:**

- A.** Town staff are free to express themselves as private citizens on social media sites to the degree that their speech does not impair or impede the performance of their duties, impair discipline and harmony among coworkers, or negatively affect the public perception of the Town.
- B.** No Staff, while speaking as a private citizen on a matter of public concern, shall speak in such a way as to cause actual harm or disruption to the mission and functions of the Town.
- C.** While using social media as a private citizen, staff may identify themselves as a town employee but may not use their job title in any form.
- D.** Online postings done by Staff on their personal accounts cannot reveal any confidential information about the Town. If there are questions about what is considered confidential, employees should check with their supervisor, social media moderator, or the CAO.
- E.** Town Staff shall not use their personal social media pages during work time, unless they do so during their break or lunch hour.

#### **9.5 Mayor and Council:**

In accordance with the Municipal Act, 2001, Section 224, Council's social media profile(s) considers the following:



- A. The Mayor is often the main spokesperson for the municipality when expressing the municipality's position to the public or the media, and when attending community events.
- B. Council represents the public and considers the well-being and interests of the municipality.
- C. Council develops and evaluates the policies and programs of the municipality.
- D. Council ensures the accountability and transparency of the operations of the municipality.
- E. Council are free to express themselves as private citizens on social media sites to the degree that their speech does not impair or impede the performance of their duties, impair discipline and harmony among Council and Staff, or negatively affect the public perception of the Town.
- F. No member of Council, while speaking as a private citizen on a matter of public concern, shall speak in such a way as to cause actual harm or disruption to the mission and functions of the Town.
- G. Social media and other types of online content sometimes generate media attention or legal questions. These inquiries should be brought to the attention of Community and Corporate Services or CAO;
- H. If Council members encounter a situation while using Town social media that threaten to become hostile, employees should disengage from the conversation and notify the CAO;
- I. If members of Council are responding to a public comment about a Town matter, they must identify themselves as a member of Town Council.

#### **Section 10: Public Posts on Corporate Social Media Accounts:**

Members of the public wishing to have content posted to the Town's social media must send a request via email to the social media moderators. For the request to be approved for posting, the submission must:

- A. Normally occur within the boundaries of the Town of Greater Napanee and/or the County of Lennox & Addington;
- B. Be open to the public and receive special approval;
- C. And follows one of the following characteristics:
  - Funded in full, in part or sponsored by the Town of Greater Napanee;
  - Organized or funded by another level of government;
  - Organized by a government-funded agency or board;
  - Organized by a Town advisory committee;
  - Organized by a registered charitable organization operating within the Town of Greater Napanee;
  - Organized by a service club operating within the Town of Greater Napanee;

- Organized by one of the Town's Stakeholders. Please see appendix C for a list of the Town's Stakeholders;
- Not a commercial or for-profit business.

## **Section 11: Removing Public Comments / Turning Public Comments Off Corporate Posts:**

As a general public relations rule for transparency and engagement, the social media moderators shall not turn comments off corporate posts and shall not prevent the public from interacting with the Town.

If a comment is deemed inappropriate based on the criteria in the Town's Social Media Policy, the comment may be removed at the discretion of the social media moderator. Other actions taken could be responding to the comment to clarify false or misunderstood information. Sometime ignoring a comment is the best approach, as rants are not normally justified reasons for engagement.

If a comment is removed, documentation must be kept by the social media moderator, such as a screenshot of the content that prompted the removal and the reason for deleting the comment.

## **Section 12: Corporate Social Media Accounts:**

### **12.1 Approved Platforms:**

The social media world is constantly changing, with frequent additions of features and changes to the platforms and which platforms take priority over others. Over time, the list of social media platforms appropriate for the Town's communication and engagement may change due to shifts in audience, accessibility regulations and/or a platforms popularity, professionalism and usage.

**See Appendix A for a list of the approved corporate social media platforms that are currently in use.**

### **12.2 Creating a New Social Media Page/Account**

Town employees wishing to create additional social media pages/accounts shall suggest the idea to the social media moderator while justifying that the platform meets the necessary criteria in the SMAP. See Appendix E for the SMAP.

Criteria considered for adopting new social media pages will include, but not be limited to, research that:

- Demonstrates the need for the specific page;
- Demonstrates the originality of the specific page;
- Identifies appropriate staff resources that would be required to establish and maintain the new page;

If the social media moderator thinks there is a need for a new social media page, the social media moderator will present the proposal to the Senior Management Team. The

Senior Management team shall make a final decision or refer the proposal onto Council for further decision; Only social media platforms with final approval from the Senior Management team or Council may be used on behalf of the Town. Only the social media moderators shall be granted access to the new account to monitor and manage. Login and password information of new accounts will be created by the social media moderators.

### **12.3 Corporate Social Media Passwords**

Only the Town's social media moderators shall have access to all corporate social media logins and passwords. These passwords shall not be shared with any other member of staff.

Passwords shall be changed by social media moderators if the password or pertaining social media account is suspected of being compromised. If a social media moderator changes positions within the Town or leaves the organization, the remaining social media moderators may change the corporate social media passwords.

A list shall be updated and renewed after a password has been changed on social media accounts. The list of passwords shall be held by the social media moderators.

### **12. 4 Privacy Policy**

As a government entity, the Town conducts public business and its records are generally available for public review in accessible formats. For more information, please see the Town's Privacy Policy.

### **Section 13: Social Media Disclaimer:**

- A.** A link between the Town's social media pages and any other website does not imply an endorsement or sponsorship by the Town of that website, or the creator of that website;
- B.** The Town does not guarantee users' privacy on third party social networking websites, as users are subject to the terms and conditions of the specific application on that website;
- C.** The Town will not be responsible for losses or damages suffered from using third party social media or websites. Users participate at their own risk, and in doing so accept that they have no right of action against the Town related to such use;
- D.** The Town may monitor online content for factuality and appropriateness and will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that the content posted is accurate at the time of posting. However, accuracy and timeliness are not guaranteed and may not be reliable; as such, users acknowledge that the Town makes no such guarantees;
- E.** The Town is not responsible for the authenticity or suitability of content posted to its social media by members of the public. A comment posted by a member of the public on any Town social media is the opinion of the poster only, and does not imply endorsement of, or agreement by the Town of Greater

Napanee, nor do such comments necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of the Town of Greater Napanee;

- F. By using the Town's social media pages, users acknowledge and consent that their comments or messages may become part of the public record and used in official Town of Greater Napanee documentation. It is at the Town's sole discretion which comments will be archived or used;
- G. In the event of a discrepancy between the information contained on the Town's social media or corporate website, the information contained on the Town's corporate website shall be deemed accurate.

**Section 14: Policy References:**

This Social Media Policy references the following additional Corporate Policies:

- A. Cell Phone Policy
- B. Discipline Policy
- C. Respect in the Workplace
- D. Workplace Harassment
- E. Public Notice Policy
- F. Internal Website Policy
- G. External Website Policy
- H. Privacy Policy

**Creation Date:**

**Revision Date:** (3 years)

**APPENDICES ON THE NEXT PAGE**

## **Appendix A:**

The Town's official corporate social media accounts/pages in use are as follows:

- "Town of Greater Napanee" Facebook Account
- "Greater Napanee Hometown Market" Facebook Page
- "Greater Napanee" Twitter Account
- "Town of Greater Napanee" Instagram Account
- "Town of Greater Napanee" YouTube Channel
- "Arts & Culture Advisory Committee of Greater Napanee" Facebook Page
- "Greater Napanee Emergency Services" Twitter Account

## **Appendix B**

Corporate Communications is a function of Community and Corporate Services under the supervision of the Manager of Community Economic Development. The Social Media Designate is the Community Engagement Clerk. The Town's designated employee(s) shall serve as the social media moderator(s) and contributor(s) and is responsible for monitoring and maintaining all corporate social media accounts.

Greater Napanee Emergency Services has a Twitter account for the purposes of providing the community with emergency information regarding:

- Fire incidences of immediate concern;
- Road closures as the result of a first responder emergency, and/or
- Weather emergencies.

The Fire Chief or Designate is the social media contributor for GNES. The role of monitoring remains with the Corporate and Community Services Designate.

## **Appendix C**

### **Social Media Action Plan (SMAP)**

For all new social media accounts, staff must submit a Social Media Action Plan (SMAP) to the social media moderators.

Please use the SMAP as a conversation starter to help your department determine audiences, choose a platform, set goals and success metrics, etc. for social media engagement.

When proposing to launch new social media accounts, departments will work with the social media moderators to address key questions, including:

- What is your vision for digital engagement?

- Who is your target audience?
- Why is the proposed social media platform the right fit and how does it provide something different than the platforms already in use?
- Do you have the resources to maintain the account in accordance with Town and industry best practices?
- How would the proposed account benefit all departments equally?

Submit your SMAP two to four weeks before you intend to launch the account to allow time for adjustments.

If approved, new accounts must be set up by the social media moderators and only these staff will have access to the password and login of the account to manage it.

The SMAP shall help the social media moderators to determine, at a minimum:

- How, or in what respect, there is a clear benefit of specific stakeholder outreach that is not already met by other corporate social media accounts; and
- The long-term sustained ability of the social media moderators to create high-quality content, and manage the day-to-day engagement as outlined in these procedures; and
- How the department has developed an effective strategy to maintain the account, including what content they expect to be posted, removal of inappropriate content, ability to provide data for data requests, retention, and destruction of data.

The social media moderators are the decision-making authority for approval or denial of any request for new County-sponsored social media accounts and will then forward the request onto Senior Management for the final decision.

A proposal for a new account does not guarantee that creation of the account will be granted.

## **Appendix D**

### **Social Media Response Chart from Redbrick Communications (Next page)**

