



## ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

*Policy Number: P-HR-8*

*Originating Department: Human Resources*

*Approved By: City Council*

*Date of Approval: March 13, 2017*

---

### **1.0 Policy Statement:**

This policy sets forth the City of Charlottetown's regulations with respect to the use of the City's computers, internet, fax, telephone and other electronic communications systems, including but not limited to email, voicemail, and social media accounts. The policy further addresses corporate management of the City's social media and appropriate corporate social media content as well as appropriate personal social media activity when a person may be identified as being affiliated with the City of Charlottetown. Access to the Internet and with electronics through the City of Charlottetown is a privilege and adherence to this policy concerning appropriate usage is mandatory. Violation of these policies could result in disciplinary and/or legal action up to and including termination of employment. Those representing the City may also be held personally liable for damages caused by any violations of this policy.

- 1.1 Electronic communication and social media can be a useful tool for the City of Charlottetown to better communicate internally and with the external community. For the City, there are three overarching reasons for using electronic communication and social media platforms for City business:
- 1) As a means to share information, collaborate between parties, and connect employees, members of Council, and any other person representing the City in the course of regular City business;
  - 2) As a platform for delivering time-sensitive information to the public (ie: road closures or emergency information);
  - 3) As a marketing or promotional tool to communicate a message (ie: event information) to a wider audience than traditional media coverage.
- 1.2 For electronic communications and social media to be effective mediums, the protocol within this policy must be followed to ensure messages are engaging, accurate and clear, strengthening and improving the overall efficiency and effectiveness of communication and transparency between the City, its employees and the general public.

## **2.0 Scope:**

- 2.1 This policy is applicable to all employees regardless of status, members of Council, and any other person representing the City of Charlottetown. For the remainder of this policy these individuals will be referred to as 'Users' as defined in section 3.0.

## **3.0 Definitions:**

**Electronic Communication** - Any communication by use of computer, fax, telephone, cell phone, tablet, camera, camcorder, and other electronic communications systems, including communications using social media platforms.

**Social Media** – Any Internet-based technology or platform used to communicate and interact in a social environment with content that is created by users for users. Social Media exists in various formats for discussion and information sharing online such as blogs, video sharing, podcasts, wikis, message boards, and online forums. Examples of social media applications – also known as platforms– include, but are not limited to, Flickr, Snapchat, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, Tumblr, Pinterest, Instagram, WhatsApp, Vine, and Periscope.

**Social Media Account** – A single user profile on a social media application created with a login and password.

**Inappropriate Content** – This includes, but is not limited to: profane language or content; personal attacks on individuals or specific groups; conduct or encouragement of illegal activity; content related to non-City related sales, advertising or promotions; content for the purposes of promoting a candidate for municipal, provincial or federal election; content that may be considered defamatory, malicious, or libelous; and content that promotes, fosters or perpetuates discrimination.

**User**- any person given access to the City's electronic devices or systems

## **4.0 Guidelines for Using Electronic Communications and Social Media:**

- 4.1 All communications must be polite, professional and maintain appropriate tone and language throughout. Communications that include humour, sarcasm, or irony may be misunderstood and the communications could be negatively interpreted. Avoid sending messages using all capital letters as this is the written version of shouting, and may be taken as offensive;

- 4.2 Electronic communications create a permanent electronic record; nothing should be electronically communicated that would not otherwise be said at a workplace meeting, disclosed to a third party, or be put in writing. All communications must be proofread and the accuracy of the content must be confirmed;
- 4.3 Communications should be sent only to those that require the information and sending unnecessary communications or mass emails must be avoided;
- 4.4 The use of popular abbreviations (e.g. LOL, ROFL, BRB) and emoticons is unacceptable in external communications and on Corporate social media platforms;
- 4.5 Sending confidential information via email should be avoided and any emails containing highly sensitive information must be appropriately encrypted;
- 4.6 Avoid using email to send large attachments and only open attachments from known senders. If a virus warning message is received, Management and the City's Systems Administrator must be immediately advised so that appropriate action can be taken.

## **5.0 Corporate Social Media Account Management:**

- 5.1 The City Corporation shall have only one official Social Media account on the various social media platforms unless approved by the CAO (or designate).
- 5.2 Users do not have the authority to create social media accounts on behalf of the City of Charlottetown or any department, personnel, initiative or event pertaining to the City unless given written consent to do so by the designated City personnel identified in this policy.
- 5.3 Personal social media accounts are those which exist outside of the City and are therefore regarded as under the discretion of the individual, so long as they are in no way affiliated with, or act on behalf of, the City of Charlottetown. For information regarding the use of personal social media accounts please see Section 9.
- 5.4 The Communications Officer or designate is responsible for posting content, keeping the social media channels up-to-date, engaging citizens and moderating content.
- 5.5 The City's social media accounts should not be affiliated with controversial accounts (through follows, likes, shares, etc.).

## **6.0 Corporate Social Media Content:**

- 6.1 Prepared Corporate communication items are to be posted automatically on all relevant Corporate Social Media channels.
- 6.2 Content should provide timely information of general interest to the public and reflect the City's programs, services, initiatives or areas of responsibility. Content posted by the Corporation must relate directly to messaging issued by the Corporation and/or be directly tied to City business. This includes joint events, announcements or joint promotional efforts.
- 6.3 Individuals who have been given permission to post on behalf of the City Corporation must always abide by all City policies (including the Employee Code of Conduct, Employee Code of Ethics and Confidentiality, Respectful Workplace Policy, etc.) and ensure that posts are accurate, objective, spelled correctly, and in language that is simple, clear and straightforward.
- 6.4 Content from City departments for consideration and potential inclusion on Corporate social media sites should be sent to the Communications Officer. Departments are encouraged to send information to be posted on the City's channels for consideration in an effort to be more transparent and engaging. The Departments submitting the information are responsible for ensuring that their information is accurate.
- 6.5 Corporate Facebook content updates should be limited to four postings per day, where possible, to avoid flooding the newsfeeds of the City's followers. Twitter postings can be made more frequently throughout the day but unrelated topics should be spaced out by at least a half hour, where possible.
- 6.6 Public comments are encouraged, but comments that are not directed to the Corporation are to be removed. Content deemed inappropriate by the Communications Officer or CAO should be removed immediately. Content that generates negative feedback from the public or feedback that is sensitive or controversial in nature will be reviewed by the Communications Officer. Those within the Corporation directly affected by the posting are to be notified before an appropriate course of action is determined.
- 6.7 Where possible, content posted to the City's social media channels should contain links directing users back to the City of Charlottetown's website for more in-depth information, forms, documents or online services necessary to conduct business with the City of Charlottetown.

## **7.0 Social Media Branding:**

- 7.1 The City's social media identity should tie into the City's brand and adhere to the City of Charlottetown Visual Identity Policy and Graphic Standards Guide. Any changes, including those made to the boiler plate, banner or profile photos must be approved by the Communications Officer.
- 7.2 Corporate social media profiles or channels shall clearly indicate that they are maintained by the City.

## **8.0 External Requests for Social Media Promotion:**

- 8.1 Requests for promotion from external groups, organizations or individuals can be submitted through the Communications office or to the Events Development Officer. The details and draft content are to be provided by the individual, group or organization making the request using the Event Promotion Request Form (Appendix A).
- 8.2 The City's social media accounts will only be used for external promotions if the event, initiative or announcement relates directly to the Corporation through City involvement or a partnership. It will be promoted as City resources and time allow. City-led initiatives, announcements and events must always take first priority.
- 8.3 Requests for promotion must be received at least one week prior to the date that the promotions are to begin.
- 8.4 The City's Communication office and/or Events Development Officer reserve the right to alter content to fit the City's templates or refuse a submission without explanation.

## **9.0 Personal Electronic Communications and Social Media Accounts**

- 9.1 In social media, the lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred. By identifying oneself as being associated with the City of Charlottetown, perceptions about the City are created. Social media communications are a reflection of the individual and of the City, even on a personal page or non-City site. Social media content associated with a City employee must be consistent with the City's mission, vision, values and expectations. Personal content must comply with all City policies including but not limited to the Employee Code of Conduct, the Employee Code of Ethics and Confidentiality, the Respectful Workplace Policy, and the Harassment in the workplace policy.

9.2 Users are prohibited from the following:

- a) Using Internet-enabled City computers or devices intended for work purposes (i.e. smartphone, laptops) to engage in personal electronic and/or social media communications (without permission from the department Manager);
- b) Attributing personal statements, opinions or beliefs to the City of Charlottetown;
- c) The disclosure of confidential information or information that could breach the security of the City's computer system in any way;
- d) Using the City logo and trademarks;
- e) Posting inappropriate content of any kind as defined in section 3;
- f) Referencing the City of Charlottetown and/or Colleagues, Staff, Management, Mayor and/or Council of the City in a malicious, negative, antagonistic, libelous or defamatory fashion.

9.3 Users assume any and all risks associated with their electronic communications both during the course of employment and outside of it. The City may require immediate removal of, and may impose discipline for, material that is disruptive to the workplace, impairs the mission of the City or contravenes any part of this policy.

9.4 A very limited amount of personal use of social media on a personal internet-enabled device is permissible during working hours if it does not adversely affect the daily duties and responsibilities of the employee. Users should be as conservative as possible in such personal use. This time must be kept short in duration in terms of time accessed. Short is defined as less time than would typically be taken as a personal break during the workday and an amount that would be deemed acceptable by a direct supervisor. This time is in lieu of taking regularly scheduled/approved breaks.

## **10.0 General Regulations:**

### **10.1 No User is permitted to:**

- post or transmit chain letters, virus warnings, petitions for signatures, personal requests for charitable donations or sales or promotional information related to personal business without express written permission from the CAO;
- use the City's Computer System for the purpose of accessing the files or communications of other employees within the City;

- open, download or transmit any attachment containing a program from an outside source without permission;
- transmit any message, data, image or program that would violate the copyright, patent, trade secrets, confidence, trade-mark or other property rights of others;
- use a web site providing anonymity to search the web or send communications;
- stream video from the Internet for non-city business-related activities. This may include, but is not limited to, watching music videos, youtube, movie clips, etc. Unwarranted Internet usage can cause the city's network system to become congested resulting in the interruption of Internet access for users who are conducting online city business.
- otherwise alter or compromise the integrity of the City's technology except with authority of Senior Management or as permitted under this policy.

## **11.0 Disclosure:**

The City may authorize the monitoring of internet use, e-mail or voice mail messages or data files on a periodic basis, check for breaches of confidentiality, system security, violations of law, or infringement of City rules or policies. The City reserves the right to access the computer network to read and/or delete any communication or document in the computer network. Such monitoring may occur electronically or manually without notice to or the knowledge of the affected Personnel. It is important to recognize that any communication or data of any kind stored in or processed through the City's computer system or with the use of City property belongs to the City of Charlottetown and cannot be considered private in any way.