

Title: Social Media
Policy No: 1210
Approval: County Council
Effective Date: 4 June 2013
Supersedes Policy: Nil



Policy Statement: The use of social networking sites (SNS) and other information technology is a valuable tool by which information may be distributed to and collected from ratepayers, other groups and the public at large. To this end, the County is committed to assessing the use of SNS and other information technology for promotional and communication purposes, and utilizing the same where deemed appropriate.

The County is committed to the responsible use of SNS by employees in the promotion of the County as well as in its communication with the public.

Purpose: To define the rules for creation, use, and maintenance of social networking sites (SNS) including, but not limited to, Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, Flickr, Instagram, Twitter, blogs and chatrooms, on behalf of Woodlands County (the "County"), and the associated roles and responsibilities of employees of the County.

1. SNS Postings

- 1.1 A "posting" includes any written comment, content or image, including but not limited to photographs, video, clip art, scanned images, documents and emoticons.
- 1.2 A posting may be considered "inappropriate" if it:
 - (a) Is harassing, hateful, insulting, threatening or defamatory to employees of the County, Councillors of the County, or any other person;
 - (b) Advertises, markets or promotes a third party, or a product or event associated with a third party;
 - (c) Is vulgar, lewd, profane, or of a sexual nature;
 - (d) Promotes, fosters or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of a prohibited ground as defined in the *Alberta Human Rights Act*;
 - (e) Is or contains "spam";
 - (f) Discloses information or provides comments that directly or indirectly harm or jeopardize the reputation of the County, or bring the reputation of the County into disrepute;
 - (g) Is in breach of the *Criminal Code of Canada* and therefore injures the reputation of the County;
 - (h) Expressly or impliedly discloses information or personal information in contravention of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* ("FOIPP"), its regulations thereunder, or any other applicable legislation;

- (i) Expressly or impliedly discloses confidential information, including but not limited to, matters discussed *in camera* during a County Council meeting; and
 - (j) Any other circumstances determined to be inappropriate by the County.
- 1.3 For the purposes of determining whether a posting is inappropriate, the County shall act reasonably and in good faith.

2. Promotion and Communication

- 2.1 No employee or department of the County will create, operate or manage any website or SNS profile on behalf of the County without prior written authorization by the Chief Administrative Officer or his delegate. For clarity, no website or SNS profile of the County shall be created, operated or managed through an employee's personal website or SNS profile.
- 2.2 The County will select and designate employees to act as administrators for the County's SNS sites (the "Responsible Employee"). Responsible Employees with administrative rights shall be responsible for monitoring and maintaining the site, including posting, approving content, and managing posts by site users. Only designated administrators may post on the County's SNS sites on the County's behalf.
- 2.3 The County may disclose and post employees' job titles and business contact information on its website or any SNS operated by the County, acting reasonably, without the employee's prior consent when doing so is in furtherance of the County's operation and management.
- 2.4 The County may post photographs of employees and/or employees' names with the subject employee's advance consent when such photographs are taken in the context of employment and for the purpose of furthering the County's operation and management, including but not limited to promotion of the County.
- 2.5 If an employee has questions or concerns regarding a posting by the County, the employee must contact the Chief Administrative Officer or his delegate to advise of his or her concerns.
- 2.6 All postings, whether or not related to the County's employees, shall be assessed in light of the County's obligations pursuant to FOIPP and other applicable legislation.
- 2.7 All websites or SNS created or operated by or on behalf of the County shall link to the County's main website.
- 2.8 To ensure consistency and accuracy throughout the County's websites and SNS, prior to posting information to a website or SNS on behalf of the County, the Responsible Employee shall confirm the accuracy of the information and compliance with applicable policies and legislation (including but not limited to FOIPP), and shall advise any other Department Head to which the posting may be relevant or whose department may be also be affected by the posting.

- 2.9 Each website or SNS profile created or operated on behalf of the County shall clearly:
- (a) Identify that the site is operated on behalf of the County, as well as identify the Responsible Employee and his/her position title with the County;
 - (b) Identify contact information and business hours of the County or relevant department, as the case may be;
 - (c) Advise users that:
 - (i) The purpose of the site is to promote the County and provide ratepayers with information, which may include constructive discussion and feedback;
 - (ii) The County reserves the right to make editorial decisions regarding postings to the site, including the removal of postings. Any postings that are considered inappropriate as defined by section 1.2 of this Policy, including postings that are baseless, hateful, unduly critical or defamatory shall be removed by the County;
 - (iii) The County makes its utmost effort to respond to questions or concerns in a timely manner; and
 - (iv) In addition to the site, individuals may alternatively contact the County in person or in writing, and shall post on the site any relevant contact information.
- 2.10 Any collection, use or disclosure of personal information on SNS by the County shall be in accordance with FOIPP, any other applicable legislation, and the County's Privacy Policy
- 2.11 Responsible Employees managing a website or SNS on behalf of the County shall regularly and consistently monitor such website or SNS profile in accordance with the approval granted by the Chief Administrative Officer or his delegate pursuant to Article 3.2 of this Policy.
- 2.12 If a third party posts factually incorrect comments (eg. the incorrect date of a County event) to SNS operated by or on behalf of the County, a Responsible Employee may post the correct information.
- 2.13 In the case of a factually incorrect comment as described in Article 2.12 above, the Responsible Employee is encouraged not to remove or request the removal of the factually incorrect comment on the basis that the County does not wish to convey censorship of its SNS or website to its users. However, if the factually incorrect comment will likely lead to confusion, the Responsible Employee may remove the said comment.
- 2.14 On occasion, third parties may post negative comments to SNS operated by or on behalf of the County. In assessing and responding to such comments, the following guidelines shall apply:
- (a) When a negative comment is posted to the County's SNS, the responsible employee shall assess whether the negative comment is constructive:

- (i) If constructive, the Responsible Employee may engage the third party in a discussion on the topic. The Responsible Employee should obtain any necessary information and make any necessary inquiries to provide an informed response to the comment;
 - (ii) If not constructive, the Responsible Employee may remove or request the removal of the posting.
- (b) In determining whether a negative comment should be removed from the County's SNS, the Responsible Employee should consider whether the comment is inappropriate as described in Article 1.2 above;
- (c) The Responsible Employee is encouraged to seek input from his/her Department Head or the Chief Administrative Officer or his delegate regarding any concerns in this regard; and
- (d) If a comment is removed from the County's website or SNS, the Responsible Employee must record the details of the comment (including, but not limited to, the posting itself, the date posted and removed, and any information identifying the individual responsible for the posting), and the reason for its removal. This information shall be kept on file in accordance with the County's Records Retention Policy.

3. Network Security and Legal Compliance

- 3.1 The Chief Administrative Officer or his delegate shall be responsible for the overall management of the County's website, SNS profiles and other information technology. Nonetheless, when a website or SNS is established for a particular department or project, responsibility for the daily management of the same may be delegated to another Responsible Employee.
- 3.2 If an employee wishes to create a SNS profile on behalf of the County (or a department of the County), the following guidelines shall apply:
- (a) The employee shall submit a written proposal to the Department Head (or, in the case of a request by a Department, to the Chief Administrative Officer or his delegate directly) outlining:
 - (i) the purposes of the website or SNS;
 - (ii) projected time and financial costs required to maintain the site;
 - (iii) proposed employee(s) charged with responsibility for and maintenance of the site and approval of content;
 - (iv) proposed strategy for responding to comments posted to the site, including but not limited to negative commentary and requests for information; and

- (iv) any other information requested by the Department Head or Chief Administrative Officer or his delegate, as the case may be.
 - (b) When a proposal has been submitted to a Department Head, the Department Head shall either deny the request or recommend the proposal by forwarding the same to the Chief Administrative Officer or his delegate;
 - (c) The Chief Administrative Officer or his delegate shall have final authority to approve or deny any such requests, at his or her discretion.
- 3.3 When a department or employee is authorized pursuant to this Policy to establish and manage a website or SNS profile on behalf of the County, the IT Administrator shall be advised in writing of the SNS host, username and password, and any other information necessary to manage the website or SNS profile, as the case may be, in the absence of the Responsible Employees. Such information shall be kept in a secure location. Responsible Employees shall not change the password or user name without prior notification to the IT Administrator.
- 3.4 As a safeguard, the IT Administrator shall ensure that a copy of all usernames, passwords and SNS hosts are provided to the Chief Administrative Officer or his delegate, to be kept in a secure location. In addition, the Chief Administrative Officer or his delegate shall be provided with express instructions regarding the procedure to remove content or disable profiles should the same be necessary in an emergency or the absence of the IT Administrator or other Responsible Employee for the management of the website or SNS on behalf of the County.
- 3.5 Prior to utilizing an SNS host for promotional or business purposes, including but not limited to using the SNS host's logo or link on the County's website, the IT Administrator shall contact the SNS host to confirm compliance with any copyright, trademark or other legal obligations.

4. Amendment and Review of Policy

- 4.1 The very nature of information technology (including SNS) is that it is fluid, flexible and quickly changing. As a result, the County may issue written clarification or amendment to this Policy from time to time.
- 4.2 The County will engage in periodic reviews and evaluation of this SNS Policy to monitor the effectiveness of the Policy, and any amendments shall be approved accordingly.