



**Title** **Social Media Policy**

|                                   |                               |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Approved by Council</b>        | <b>Date:</b> January 31, 2024 |
| <b>Policy Review Notification</b> | <b>Date:</b> January 15, 2024 |
| <b>Policy Review</b>              | <b>Date:</b> November 6, 2023 |

I certify this to be a true copy of the **Social Media Policy** as adopted by the Municipal Council of Richmond County at a Public Meeting held on January 31, 2024.

Shelley David  
Municipal Clerk

**1. Purpose**

1.1. The purpose of this policy is to identify roles and responsibilities, establish guidelines and standards for the establishment, and administration of Municipal managed social media sites.

**2. Policy Statement**

2.1. The Municipality will use social media as a communication channel used to reach a broader audience as outlined in the Strategic Communications Plan.

**3. Scope**

3.1. This policy shall apply to all Municipal Staff who are authorized to post information in an official capacity on Municipal managed social media sites.

3.2. These guidelines apply to all municipal service areas and cover officially established, publicly available, and Municipality-managed social media accounts. These guidelines do not require the establishment of social media accounts, nor do they apply to the use of social media on a personal basis or cover use of social media for political or internal government purposes.

**4. Guiding Principles**

The following principles will guide the social media practices of the Municipality:

- 4.1. **Value** – to encourage the safe, creative, and effective use of social media by municipal staff by providing a framework for the application of the policies and guidelines that oversee social media use.
- 4.2. **Quality of Service** – to improve communication and public engagement through the presentation of information and knowledge that is timely, accurate, and relevant.
- 4.3. **Transparency** – to present information to the public in a way that is easily discoverable and readily accessible, and presents the Municipality in a fair and reasonable manner.
- 4.4. **Respect** – to ensure that social media interactions are conducted in a manner that conforms to the same professional and ethical standards required in the workplace.
- 4.5. **Integrity** – to ensure that municipal staff and Council conduct themselves honestly and appropriately on social media sites, respecting the laws of copyright infringement, software licensing, property rights, security, and privacy.
- 4.6. **Accountability** – to require that all municipal staff and Council are responsible for understanding and following the relevant policies and procedures affecting the use of social media.
- 4.7. **Legislative** – to adhere to applicable provincial, federal and municipal laws, regulations and policies.

## 5. Definitions

- 5.1. **Social media** includes all online technologies and practices used to share information, express opinions, and build relationships. It can involve a variety of formats, including text, pictures, video, audio, and real-time dialogues. It includes, but is not limited to, such things as social networks (e.g., Facebook, Twitter), media-sharing (e.g., YouTube, Flickr), webcasts (e.g., RSS, podcast), and collaborative media (e.g., wikis, blogs). Not all forms of social media may be appropriate for use by the Municipality.
- 5.2. **Contributor** refers to any staff of the Municipality (full and part-time, members of Council, and all other municipal advisors or consultants using corporate resources) who creates content that is posted to any of the Municipality's social media accounts.

5.3. **Subscriber** refers to members of the public who receive or access content from a social media account. Different forms of social media may have specific jargon for this concept (e.g., Facebook “Friends”, Twitter subscribers are known as “followers”). Subscribers may submit comments for posting in response to content. All comments are reviewed prior to being posted on Municipal social media sites.

5.4. **Moderator** refers to an authorized municipal staff person who reviews, authorizes, and posts content submitted by staff contributors and public subscribers on a Municipality-managed social media account.

## 6. Responsibilities

6.1. The Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) is responsible for:

- a) Administering and implementing the Social Media policy, and;
- b) the approval to create or initiate new municipal social media accounts based on the Strategic Communications Plan and on appropriate level of risk, particularly with respect to privacy and network security.

6.2. The Communications Officer is responsible for

- a) Managing municipal social media accounts and working with contributors and moderators to ensure content remains in compliance with the social media guidelines, as outlined in this policy, and;
- b) identifying necessary revisions to the Social Media Guidelines in consultation with the CAO and Department Heads.

6.3. Directors are responsible for:

- a) Ensuring that service area staff are advised of the approved Social Media Guidelines of the Municipality, and;
- b) acting or appointing another staff member, to act as the Moderator responsible for reviewing, authorizing, and posting content submitted by staff contributors and public subscribers to a Municipal-managed social media account, and review site activity and content daily for exploitation or misuse.

## 7. Monitoring

- a) Municipal social media accounts are monitored periodically Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Updates, postings, subscriber content approvals, and responses deemed necessary will typically occur during those hours.

- b) Information requests made through social media platforms is not considered official, and the public is directed to email or call the Municipal Office.

## 8. Terms of Use

8.1. The Municipality's website ([www.richmondcounty.ca](http://www.richmondcounty.ca)) will remain the primary source of online information exchange with the public and is the Municipality's official internet presence. Where possible, social media posts shall link back to the Municipal website for the purpose of downloading forms, documents, and providing specific or additional information.

8.2. Use of social media for municipal purposes falls under the same legal and ethical standards as any other means of communication with the public on behalf of the Municipality of the County of Richmond ("the Municipality").

8.3. Municipal representation

- a) Only staff who is given authorization to act as a designated representative by their service area managers may post content in the name of the Municipality of Richmond to any social media site. Contributors and moderators of the Municipality are required to identify themselves honestly, accurately, and completely when participating in social media.
- b) Other staff may participate in social media in the course of business when relevant to their duties, but they do so as individuals representing themselves through personal social media accounts, not representing the opinions of the Municipality.

8.4. Appropriate content

- a) Only information that is publicly available may be posted to social media sites. It is unacceptable to publish or report on conversations or information that is confidential, pre-decisional, or speculative.
- b) Content from contributors and public subscribers containing any of the following shall not be allowed for posting:
- i comments that are not topically related to the site or article being commented upon;
  - ii comments that are repetitive or spam;
  - iii posts that are meant to solicit sales, products, or goods and services;
  - iv profane language or inflammatory content;
  - v content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination

on the basis of race, creed, colour, age, religion, gender, marital status, physical or mental disability, or sex orientation;

- vi sexual content or links to sexual content;
- vii encouragement of illegal activity;
- viii information that may compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems.

- c) Content that is deemed by moderators to be unsuitable according to the above criteria shall be removed and retained along with a description of the reason that the specific content was deemed unsuitable for posting.
  - i. Any person who continues to post unsuitable content as outlined in 8.4 (b), will be permanently blocked from all Municipality of the County of Richmond social media channels.

## 9. Copyright, fair use, and privacy laws

- a) Communication through social media is subject to all relevant provincial, federal and municipal laws, regulations and policies.
- b) Any content posted to a third-party social media site is ultimately owned and controlled by the site operator according to its established terms of use.

## Policy Review/Amendment Schedule

| Date of Review  | Formally Advertised and Amended by Council |
|---|--|
| May 14, 2012  | Adopted                                    |
| July 26, November 6, December 4, 2023, and January 15, 2024 | Review                                     |
| January 31, 2024  | Adopted                                    |