

Title: Social Media Use		Number: 0147
Reference: Administrative Committee July 27, 2011 Administrative Committee February 14, 2024	Adopted by City Council: March 18, 2024	
	Acting City Clerk	Chief Administrative Officer
Supersedes: August 15, 2011		
Prepared by: COMMUNICATIONS, ENGAGEMENT AND MARKETING		

STATEMENT:

USING A VARIETY OF ACCEPTED AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION TOOLS, INCLUDING SOCIAL MEDIA, IT IS THE CITY OF MEDICINE HAT'S OBJECTIVE TO PROVIDE TIMELY, TRANSPARENT, PROACTIVE AND TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE CITY AND THE PEOPLE IT SERVES.

THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA MUST, LIKE ALL OTHER FORMS OF COMMUNICATION, FURTHER THE BUSINESS GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE CITY OF MEDICINE HAT AND ITS DEPARTMENTS, WHERE APPROPRIATE.

PRINCIPLES:

1. Encourage the safe and effective use of social media to further City business goals and objectives.
2. Ensure the use of social media, on behalf of the City of Medicine Hat, complies with all applicable laws and ethical standards and is used in accordance with all City policies and procedures.
3. Establish a standard of conduct for all City Employees concerning the use of social media for business reasons.
4. Establish an understanding of the expectations of personal social media use with Employees.
5. Ensure Employees protect confidential and propriety information regarding the City, its Employees and related business activities.
6. Educate designated City Social Media Administrators about their roles and responsibilities when using social media on behalf of the City.

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7. Ensure Employees use appropriate discretion when referencing the City of Medicine Hat through personal social media accounts, so they do not discredit or damage the City's reputation.

BENEFITS OF SOCIAL MEDIA:

The use of social media can help the City better understand, respond to and attract the attention of specific and diverse audiences that it would not with traditional communication channels. It enables efficient, effective, and interactive (two-way) communication among multiple audiences in places where those conversations are already taking place.

Social media can be used strategically to:

- Increase awareness/understanding of City services and topics through timely information sharing;
- Enhance the reputation and image of the City through engaging content that celebrates the community and supports resident engagement;
- Support strategic marketing objectives of the organization;
- Support Employee recruitment and retention;
- Increase the speed of public feedback and input;
- Drive traffic to the City of Medicine Hat website to increase community awareness of a key information source;
- Provide timely and trustworthy communications during incidents and emergencies; and
- Provide additional communications methods and channels beyond traditional media.

ROLE OF COUNCIL

To receive, review and adopt this policy and any recommended amendments thereto.

1. DEFINITIONS

- 1.01 Employees – means any permanent, temporary, full time, part time, or casual employee on the City payroll, and includes volunteers utilized by the City, and, for greater certainty, also includes all City employees under any union or association jurisdiction as well as City employees who are out of the scope of any union or association, as well as residents who serve on committees in a volunteer capacity, but does not include Members of Council.
- 1.02 Social Media – interactive technologies that facilitate the creation and sharing of information, ideas, interests, and other forms of expression through virtual communities and networks. The most common examples of social media include social networks such as Facebook, X, LinkedIn, Instagram, and YouTube, as well as blogs, wikis, podcasts, and more.

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- 1.03 Social Media Administrators – Employees designated to publish content and provide commentary on City social media accounts.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES

2.01 City Council

- (a) Receive, review and adopt this policy and any recommended amendments thereto.

2.02 Administrative Committee

- (a) Review and adopt procedures which are developed for implementation of this policy.
- (b) Monitor the application, interpretation and administration of this policy.

2.03 Managing Directors

- (a) Ensure Directors, Managers, Superintendents and Supervisors in their divisions are aware of this policy and manage the ongoing use of social media to ensure guideline adherence.
- (b) Ensure all of their Employees are aware and have the opportunity to read this policy and obtain any clarification about Employee's responsibilities.

2.04 Directors and Department Heads

- (a) Determine if access to social media is necessary for the department.
- (b) If access to social media is provided, ensure all Employees have the opportunity to read this policy and obtain any clarification about Employee's responsibilities and ensure managers, supervisors, etc. monitor the use of social media in the department.
- (c) In the case of violations to this policy, pursue the appropriate disciplinary action.

2.05 Employees

- (a) Are required to read and ask for clarification on this policy, procedures and their responsibilities.
- (b) Be expected to use social media in accordance with this policy.

3. PROCEDURES

3.01 City of Medicine Hat social media oversight and security

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- (a) The City of Medicine Hat’s corporate social media accounts and all City-related accounts managed by City staff are owned by the City of Medicine Hat. The Communications, Engagement and Marketing department must have administrator access to all City social media accounts, even if another department is responsible for the day-to-day management of the account.
- (b) City social media accounts will be monitored during business hours (8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) Monday through Friday as well as during emergency situations.
- (c) Departments that want to create social media accounts for their business unit must consult with Communications, Engagement and Marketing to gain a full understanding of the purpose for its use and the resource implications that maintaining and monitoring will entail for the department. All social media initiatives undertaken by departments are the responsibility of that department and must adhere to this policy.
- (d) Social media presents a cybersecurity risk to the corporation, particularly from a reputational standpoint. All administrators on any City social media account must work with Communications, Engagement and Marketing to ensure their accounts are set up and managed in accordance with appropriate security standards.
- (e) City social media accounts should be updated often – either daily, weekly, or biweekly to be kept current and relevant. This includes ensuring any banner images, account bios and about sections are kept up to date. If a City social media account is inactive for a long period of time, the value of the account should be revisited. Communications, Engagement and Marketing may take authority over inactive accounts and archive and/or delete as deemed necessary.

3.02 Content development and standards

- (a) Departments can make requests to Communications, Engagement and Marketing to post information about projects, programs or initiatives on the official City social media accounts, or departments may be contacted to provide Communications, Engagement and Marketing with information on projects, programs, or initiatives – both proactively and in response to community interest/inquiries/posts.
- (b) Anything posted online becomes public information. Confidential or proprietary information in regards to the City of Medicine Hat, Employees, or related activity must not be posted.
- (c) All content should be developed in accordance with best practices. Communications, Engagement and Marketing can offer guidance in this area.
- (d) Personal projects, products or businesses are not to be promoted on City social media websites. Other brands, causes or opinions that are not affiliated with the City are not to be endorsed. Third party copyrights must be respected.
- (e) Communications, Engagement and Marketing may engage with social media posts of other organizations or potentially share their content if it meets one or more of the following criteria:

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- a. there is adequate capacity to do so (both from a staffing and scheduling perspective);
 - b. the City of Medicine Hat is directly involved or affiliated with the requesting party;
 - c. The external organization’s values and objectives align with those of the City of Medicine Hat; and
 - d. the requesting organization’s content aligns with a current City activity or priority and complements current messaging.
- (f) The decision to engage with or accommodate external content is at the sole discretion of Communications, Engagement and Marketing or departmental social media administrators.
- (g) No person shall publish, issue or display or cause to be published, issued or displayed before the public any statement, publication, notice, sign, symbol, emblem, or other representation that indicates discrimination or an intention to discriminate against a person or class of persons; or is likely to expose a person or class of persons to hatred or contempt because of the race, religious beliefs, color, gender, sexual orientation, physical disability, mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income or family status of that person or class of persons.
- (h) No person shall post submissions or link to any materials that contain:
- a. Vulgar language
 - b. Spam, advertising
 - c. Disruptive or off topic information
 - d. Promotions of unrelated organizations
 - e. Copyright or trademark infringement
 - f. Support for or encouragement of illegal activity
- (i) The City reserves the right to delete submissions from its social media platforms that do not adhere to this policy.

3.04 Employee’s personal use of social media

- (a) Recognizing that Employees have a right to use their personal social media accounts at their discretion, all Employees should be mindful that their online conduct can impact their employment and ensure they are not in breach of any City of Medicine Hat Policy.
- (b) Employment or personnel concerns shall be discussed directly with supervisors or People Services and not posted on social media.
- (c) Employees shall not attempt to resolve debates on City matters on social media unless identified as the authorized spokesperson. Authorized spokespersons are encouraged to work with Communications, Engagement and Marketing before

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responding. When responding, the authorized spokesperson should declare themselves as a City Employee.

- a. It is acceptable to for an Employee to use a personal social media account to deliver or point to official City information (without declaring as a City Employee), but content must accurately reflect the decisions of Council and Administration and not weigh in on the opinions or political positions of elected officials, which could undermine the City’s reputation or relationships with stakeholders.
- b. Social media engagement with members of the public that encourages respectful dialogue on relevant municipal issues is not a breach of the Conflict of Interest policy provided it is factual, appropriate, and does not conflict with Council direction and the City’s other obligations, such as protecting privacy, maintaining confidentiality and supporting a respectful workplace.
- (d) Personal content/comments should not unlawfully discriminate, harass or demonstrate disrespect toward any person or entity. Inappropriate content posted on personal social media may impact employment with the City, whether or not it was posted from a City device or during work hours.
- (e) Comments and posts from the personal accounts of Employees should not undermine City Council or Administration’s objectives, the City’s reputation, or relationships with its stakeholders.
- (f) Consequence of non-compliance with this policy may result in disciplinary action against the Employee up to and including dismissal from employment.

3.05 Social media Terms of Engagement for followers

- (a) The City’s Social Media Terms of Engagement are outlined on the City of Medicine Hat website and are linked from each platform’s profile. The Terms of Engagement may be modified as the general social media environment evolves.

DISCLAIMER

While the City of Medicine Hat endeavors to maintain the currency and accuracy of information published on its social media sites, the information is subject to change. It is advisable that users ascertain the currency of information immediately prior to use. The City of Medicine Hat disclaims all responsibility for any loss or damage which may arise from the use of social media. Links to external websites and social media user accounts are provided as a convenience to users and such sites and associated content are not under the control of the City of Medicine Hat. The inclusion of any link does not imply endorsement of that website, service or person by the City of Medicine Hat. The City of Medicine Hat is not responsible for the content or reliability of links, or for any loss or inconvenience arising from their use.