

Request for Decision United Townships of Head, Clara & Maria Council

Type of Decision									
Meeting Date	Friday, October 14, 2016				Report Date	Tuesday, October 11, 2016			
Decision Required	X	Yes		No	Priority	X	High		Low
Direction	X	Information Only			Type of Meeting	X	Open		Closed
Social Media Policy - Report #14/10/16/1202									

Subject:

Request for consideration of a policy on social media use for employees, and Council while on and/or off duty.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council adopt the following resolution.

WHEREAS By-Law 2008-02, its schedules, appendices and policies were created to govern the creation, content and maintenance of the municipal website;

AND WHEREAS various other forms of social media are now being utilized by municipal staff for similar purposes;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Council of the United Townships of Head, Clara & Maria does hereby authorize staff to amend By-Law 2008-02 to include after the word “website” the words “and other forms of social media” so that all guidelines created for the safe, prudent and responsible use of the municipal website shall be applied to all other forms of social media;

AND FURTHER THAT a guideline document which provides some guidance on how and when to post or react to posts on municipal sites is created for Council review at a future meeting to be appended to the By-law.

BACKGROUND/EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The resolution is pretty self-explanatory. As for creating any type of guidelines for responsible use of social media outside of work; there are questions of privacy, control and interference.

As the article Mayor Gibson referred to, it would be prudent for senior staff and members of council to think about what they are posting on social media however; it is ultimately a personal choice.

Even though the municipality is a public entity and we are public servants and/or members of Council, a municipality does not have the right to legislate activities outside of work. It should be noted however; that some activities outside of the workplace have resulted in dismissal. So long as people are aware that what they do outside of the workplace may have consequences in the workplace staff do not feel that anything further should be done. Ultimately a policy is council's decision. It will be difficult to effectively and efficiently enforce.

Because social media offers the opportunity for members of the public to post and respond, some guidelines should be created to direct responses, when to engage or not and how. Upon direction of Council, the guidelines below will be modified to reflect HCM's situation.

Options/Discussion:

Policy Impact:

As per policy.

Others Consulted:

As per request by Mayor Gibson.

Article in Municipal World.

Sample policy from Strathroy-Caradoc below or at <http://www.strathroy-caradoc.ca/en/resourcesGeneral/WEBSITEANDSOCIALMEDIAPOLICY.pdf>.

Approved and Recommended by the Clerk

Melinda Reith,

Municipal Clerk



ONLINE SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Background

Every day, people discuss and debate municipal services and issues in online conversations. The Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc recognizes the vital importance of engaging in these online conversations and is committed to engage in online social media the right way. Our policy will be comprehensive and will take the following approach:

1. Start small. Do things well. Grow from there. 2. Centralize responsibility and accountability for site technical maintenance. 3. Reallocate existing resources to monitor content and respond appropriately. 4. Support staff with a policy, guidelines and rules of conduct.

This document serves as a framework for the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc Social Media Policy. The policy is categorized into the following sections:

☐ Recommended Social Media Tools ☐ Guiding Principles for Online Social Media ☐ Online Social Media Contributors ☐ Monitoring

This policy is being developed to help empower the corporation to participate in this widely-used communications channel.

Social Media Channels The corporation will make use of three highly visible, popular, and readily accessible social media tools: Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Each municipal social networking site will include an introductory statement to clearly specify the purpose. Where possible, the social networking site should link back to the official Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc website for more in-depth information. In addition to the introductory statement, the social networking site must clearly define the rules of conduct on the site or link back to the municipal site for a detailed explanation of these rules.

Proposed Facebook Introductory Statement We welcome your Facebook postings! Before posting to this Facebook page, please note the information on this page is for the purpose of sharing municipal-related information only. The Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc is not responsible for the comments made by fans or members of this page and reserves the right to remove any content that is inappropriate, as outlined in our rules of conduct. Posting on this Facebook page by fans or members is not considered “official” notice to the Municipality.

Proposed Facebook Rules of Conduct Content, posts, photographs, and comments containing any of the following content will not be allowed and will be removed at the discretion of the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc:

- Profane language or content;
- Content that is defamatory, abusive, or harassing;
- Sexual content;
- Content encouraging illegal activities;
- Content that is in violation of legal ownership or intellectual property rights;
- Content for the purpose of promoting a candidate for municipal, provincial, or federal election;
- Content that is believed to be inappropriate in the opinion of the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc's Website Management Team.

Twitter Introductory Statement and Rules of Conduct Our goal is to provide a service that allows you to discover and receive content from Municipal sources that interest you. We respect the ownership of the content we share. The Municipality, in addition to the bulleted items listed in the Proposed Facebook Rules of Conduct above, will follow "The Twitter Rules" which can be reviewed at: <http://support.twitter.com/entries/18311-the-twitter-rules>.

YouTube Introductory Statement The Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc will create a corporate YouTube channel for posting all videos showcasing Strathroy-Caradoc. This channel will be managed by the Website Management Team. Content will be published only at the discretion of the Municipality.

The Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc will develop and implement a full communications and marketing plan focused on encouraging staff, citizens, and other stakeholders to create and submit video material for posting on the Municipality's YouTube channel.

Guiding Principles for Online Social Media for Municipal Staff These online social media principles are intended to outline how Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc values should be demonstrated in the social media space and to guide staff participation in this area, both when staff are acting on behalf of the Corporation or participating personally.

Principles and Values Specific to the Online Social Media Community

□ **Transparency in social media engagement:** The Municipality does not condone manipulating the social media conversation by creating "fake" posts designed to mislead followers and control a conversation. Every website, "fan page," or other online destination that is ultimately controlled by the Municipality must make that fact known to users and must be authorized according to applicable internal protocols in order to track and monitor the Municipality's online presence.

□ **Protection of our citizens' privacy:** We should be conscientious regarding any personally identifiable information that we collect, including how we collect, store, use, or share that information, all of which should be done pursuant to applicable municipal freedom of information acts and privacy policies.

□ **Respect of copyrights, trademarks, rights of publicity, and other third-party rights in the online social media space, including user-generated content:** In our situation, we will control this area by defining the Municipality's online social media contributors whose responsibility will lie in speaking/responding on the Municipality's behalf. They will work with other departments to make informed and sound responses.

□ **Utilization of best practices:** We will listen to the online community, and comply with applicable regulations to ensure that the Online Social Media Policy remains current and reflects the most up-to-date and appropriate standards of behaviour.

Online Social Media Contributors Just as with traditional media, we have an opportunity – and a responsibility – to effectively manage the Corporation's reputation online and to selectively engage and participate in the hundreds of online conversations that mention us every day.

The recommendation is to begin with a single corporate account for each of the approved social media channels. (Note: Museum Strathroy-Caradoc is an exception) The primary benefits are:

- ☐ Allows for efficient use of time and money to build followers to a single account;
- ☐ Minimizes credibility risk;
- ☐ Provides customers with a one-stop shop for Municipal information;
- ☐ Minimizes legal risk;
- ☐ dedicated oversight of content;
- ☐ Allows a dedicated media contributor;
- ☐ Provides transparent coverage to the account.

It is important to emphasize the difference in speaking “on behalf of the Municipality” and speaking “about” the Municipality. The individual(s) speaking “on behalf” are ultimately responsible for online social media content and policy enforcement on approved social media channels as outlined below:

On Behalf of the Municipality

- ☐ All corporate communications (e.g., press releases, front page news approvals, etc., for website and social media sites);
- ☐ Specific projects (e.g., special events, etc.);
- representatives from departments across the corporation must work with the designated social media contributor.

The following principles guide how our online social media contributors must represent the Municipality in an online, official capacity when they are speaking “on behalf” of the Municipality:

- ☐ Be recognized as an official social media contributor: All employees who wish to officially represent the Municipality must be recognized by senior management prior to beginning or continuing these activities.
- ☐ Follow our corporation's policies: As a representative of Municipality, you must act with honesty and integrity in all matters. This commitment is true for all forms of social media.
- ☐ Be mindful that you are representing the Corporation. As a Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc representative, it is important that your posts convey the same positive, informative spirit and tone that the Municipality instills in all of its communications. Be respectful of all individuals, races, religions and cultures; how you conduct yourself in the online social media space not only reflects on you – it is a direct reflection on the Corporation.
- ☐ Fully disclose your affiliation with the Municipality: All employees who are communicating on behalf of the Municipality should always disclose their name and their affiliation. It is never acceptable to use aliases or otherwise deceive people. Your relationship with the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc must be stated from the outset.
- ☐ Keep records: It is critical that we keep records of our interactions in the online social media space and monitor the activities of those with whom we engage. Because online conversations are often fleeting and immediate, it is important for you to keep track of them when you're officially representing the Municipality. Remember that online statements can be held to the same legal standards as traditional media communications. Keep records of any online dialogue pertaining to the Municipality.
- ☐ When in doubt, do not post: Employees are personally responsible for their words and actions, wherever they are. As an online contributor, you must ensure that your posts are completely

accurate and not misleading, and that they do not reveal non-public information about the Corporation. Exercise sound judgment and common sense, and if there is any doubt, DO NOT POST IT. In any circumstance in which you are uncertain about how to respond to a post, discuss with senior management.

- Give credit where credit is due and don't violate others' rights: DO NOT claim authorship of something that is not yours. If you are using another party's content, make certain that they are credited for it in your post and that they approve of you utilizing their content. Do not use the copyrights, trademarks, publicity rights, or other rights of others without the necessary permissions of the rights-holder.
- Remember that even the smallest posts can have large ramifications: The way that you answer an online question might be accurate but can be misinterpreted or misconstrued. Keep that "comprehensive view" in mind when you are participating in online conversations.
- Know that the Internet is permanent: Once information is published online, it is essentially part of a permanent record, even if you "remove/delete" it later or attempt to make it anonymous. If your complete thought, along with its context, cannot be squeezed into a character-restricted space (such as Twitter), provide a link to an online space where the message can be expressed completely and accurately.

About the Municipality

The following principles guide how our employees (including the Mayor and Council) must represent the Municipality in an online, official capacity when they are speaking "about" of the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc:

- Follow our corporation's policies: As an employee and a representative of the Municipality, you must act with honesty and integrity in all matters. This commitment is true for all forms of social media. These principles are to guide your actions at work and are also applicable to your personal activities online.
- You are responsible for your actions: Anything you post that can potentially tarnish the Municipality's image will ultimately be your responsibility. We do encourage you to participate in the online social media space, but urge you to do so properly, exercising sound judgment and common sense.
- Be a "scout" for compliments and criticism: Even if you are not an official online spokesperson for the Municipality, you are one of our most vital assets for monitoring the social media landscape. If you come across positive or negative remarks about the Municipality or its brands online that you believe are important, consider sharing them by forwarding them to our official online social media contributors.
- Let the subject matter experts respond to negative posts. You may come across negative or disparaging posts about the Municipality or its activities, or see third parties trying to spark negative conversations. Unless you are an official online social media contributor, avoid the temptation to react yourself. Pass the post(s) along to our official online contributors who are trained to address such comments
- Be conscious when mixing your work and personal lives. Online, your personal and business personas are likely to intersect. The Corporation respects the free speech rights of all of its employees, but you must remember that citizens, colleagues, and supervisors often have access to the online content you post. Keep this in mind when publishing information online that can be seen by more than friends and family, and be aware that information originally intended just for friends and family can be forwarded on. Remember: NEVER to disclose non-public information

about the Corporation (including confidential information), and be aware that taking public positions online that are counter to the Corporation or political interests might cause conflict.

□ For Individuals who hold elected positions or who work in politically sensitive areas, a policy of this nature does not by itself exempt them from special responsibility when posting online. By virtue of their position, these individuals should consider whether personal thoughts they publish may be misunderstood as expressing the positions or opinions of the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc, and/or its staff. For individuals in positions like this, caution is advisable, and it is best to check with the Municipality's communications specialist when in doubt.