



POLICY

TITLE: Social Media Policy
NUMBER: ADM-012
CATEGORY: Administration
DATE: August 6th, 2020
REFERENCES: By-Law 2020-45

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish a uniform set of standards for the usage of Municipal Social Media. Social Media offers new ways to update residents, businesses and community members on municipal services. By embracing Social Media, the Municipality of Centre Hastings is showing its commitment to the public by providing them with timely, accurate, accessible, transparent and accountable information.

The Municipality of Centre Hastings will promote the use of their Social Media channels as a tool for fast, two-way communications about our programs, services and news affecting our community as well as to foster and maintain a good public image.

DEFINITIONS

Social Media – A catch-all term for the tools and platforms people use to publish, converse and share content online. It is about a dialogue, rather than a one-sided stream of information.

Facebook - A popular free social networking website that allows registered users to create profiles, upload photos and videos, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues.

RATIONALE

The Municipality of Centre Hastings promotes the use of Social Media outlets as a tool for fast, two-way communication about programs, services and news affecting our community.

This policy is intended to provide a basic framework for employees, volunteers and elected officials governing the use of municipal Social Media outlets and, as such, cannot contain procedures governing every situation that might arise.

This policy aims to:

- Protect the Municipality of Centre Hastings' reputation and ensure consistency and professionalism in communications about the Municipality of Centre Hastings business with public stakeholders.
- Provide employees and members of Council with clear usage guidelines and acceptable corporate and personal use of Social Media sites and/or personal websites as they relate to discussing the business of the Municipality of Centre Hastings.
- Provide protocol around monitoring, administration, acceptable use and privacy.

The Municipality of Centre Hastings provides a single, comprehensive corporate Facebook page that is monitored and maintained by the Communications Coordinator on regular basis, and to which is used to inform and educate residents and other stakeholders, as well as engage them in conversation about municipal business.

OUTLINE

This policy establishes guidelines for the use of Social Media outlets specifically so that the disbursement of timely and accurate information is balanced with the Municipality of Centre Hastings' need to assure that:

1. Social networking relies on regular, timely postings of new and relevant content.
2. The use of Social Media tools does not compromise safety, or the image of the Municipality.
3. The information provided through Social Media is in line with our vision and guiding principles.
4. Social Media content does not violate individual privacy, or conflict with existing municipal policies and by-laws or other regulations as applicable.
5. Social Media content posted on behalf of the Municipality of Centre Hastings is accurate, accessible, transparent, accountable and appropriate.

Some examples of **inappropriate** content include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Comments that are profane, abusive, threatening, harassing, intimidating, hateful or intended to defame any person or organization.
- Comments that suggest or encourage illegal activity.
- Sexual content or links to sexual content.
- Solicitations or advertisements, including promotion and endorsement of any financial, commercial or non-governmental agency.
- Information that may compromise the safety or security of the public or public system.
- Messages not supported in the Municipality of Centre Hastings' current advertising protocol.
- Public disclosure of personal and confidential information.
- Religious and political messages, including promoting a candidate for any elected or appointed office.
- Promotional messages for personal gain or personal solicitation.
- Content that violates intellectual property rights of any other party.

The Communications Coordinator (or designate), under the CAO will lead the management and operations of the Municipality of Centre Hastings Social Media presence. This ensures that the content is managed and the tone is clear and consistent for followers.

During emergency situations, communication resources will be made available so that information can be transmitted through Social Media channels in accordance with corporate emergency management protocols.

GUIDELINES FOR MEMBERS OF COUNCIL, COMMITTEES, VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF

Staff, Members of Council, Volunteers and Committees may participate in Social Media of their own accord. Staff, Council, Volunteers and Committees are welcome to like/follow the official Municipality of Centre Hastings Facebook page and are encouraged to share content that has already been officially posted to www.centrehastings.com. The Municipality of Centre Hastings official sites will not share political content. The Mayor is the official spokesperson for the municipality and this will also apply to Social Media. Staff, Committee Members, Volunteers and Members of Council should clearly identify where they are expressing personal views, and not necessarily the views of the Municipality. Employees, Committee Members, Volunteers and Members of Council who post, discuss, share or comment on Municipal business via corporate or personal Social Media sites, networks or websites should reflect the Municipality of Centre Hastings values and follow these guidelines:

- Make sure communications are in good taste.
- Be careful about linking to other websites/Social Media pages. Despite our disclaimers, redirecting to another site may be interpreted as an endorsement of its content.
- Do not publish or report on conversations or information that is confidential, pre-decisional or speculative.
- Be respectful. Never engage in personal attacks or divulge personal information about others, posts containing inappropriate content as defined above will not be tolerated.
- Do not defame or speak negatively about the Municipality of Centre Hastings, its personnel, other companies or other people when conversing on Social Media.

Employees, Committees, Council and Volunteers must obtain approval from the CAO/Communication Coordinator prior to establishing a Social Media site or a page within an existing Social Media service, on behalf of the Municipality of Centre Hastings.

GUIDELINES FOR THE COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

The Municipality of Centre Hastings is committed to operating its social networking site as an effective method of communication. The Communications Coordinator (or designate) will:

- Monitor the site during regular business hours.
- Correct misinformation and ensure that content is up to date.
- Ensure responses to wall posts and in-box messages and discussion comments are made within 48 business hours of when they are posted or received.
- Deny access to users who post inappropriate or offensive comments.
- Remove posts that are considered to be inappropriate.
- Respond to any concerns or questions posted.

While every effort will be made to respond to concerns and questions directed to our Social Media accounts, at our discretion we may request that the discussion be redirected to either our phone or email support channels. The reason(s) for this request would include, but is not limited to, privacy concerns (yours, a fellow resident(s), or employee(s)), character limitations for messages, and amount of detail required to resolve a situation.

GUIDELINES FOR THE PUBLIC

While the Municipality of Centre Hastings is committed to the concept of free speech, that speech must, at all times, be responsible, free of insults, and respectful of others. Participants in discussions must be respectful and never engage in personal attacks or divulge personal information about others, posts containing inappropriate content as defined above will not be tolerated.

For the most part, user comments and messages posted to the Municipality of Centre Hastings' official social networking sites are considered transitory records and will not be kept as a permanent record.

By using The Municipality of Centre Hastings' Facebook page, users acknowledge and consent that their comments or messages may become part of the public record and used in official Municipality of Centre Hastings documentation. It is at the Municipality of Centre Hastings sole discretion as to which comments will be saved to form part of official business records.

Images and comments posted by third parties do not necessarily represent the views of the Municipality of Centre Hastings. The Municipality of Centre Hastings cannot and does not guarantee users privacy on third party social networking websites, as users are subject to the terms and conditions of the specific application on that website. Users should review and agree to the third-party terms and conditions prior to participating.

The Municipality of Centre Hastings will not be responsible for any losses or damages suffered as a result of using third party Social Media sites. Those using Social Media participate at their own risk and for their own benefit, and in so doing accept that they have no right of action against the Municipality of Centre Hastings related to such use.

A link between the Municipality of Centre Hastings Social Media sites and any other website does not imply an endorsement or sponsorship of that website, or the creator of that website.

PRIVACY

Facebook is a third-party service provider that may collect, store, and manage your personal information whenever you access and use this site. Please refer to their terms of service and/or privacy statements for particulars. Note that the Municipality of Centre Hastings has no control over what is done with your personal information.

Your personal information may also be collected for the purpose of engaging in an interactive dialogue and does so under the authority of the Municipal Act, 2001 (Ontario) subject to compliance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

We reserve the right to reveal identity information in the event of a complaint or legal action arising from any posts. If you have any questions about the Municipality of Centre Hastings' collection of personal information through this page please contact us.