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Policy Title <b>Communications</b>	Date: <b>March 13, 2018</b>	Resolution No. <b>83/18</b>

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that communications at Kneehill County are well coordinated, effectively managed and responsive to the information needs of our citizens. Communicating with citizens, co-workers, government partners, agencies and other interested parties is a key function of municipal government. This policy is designed to ensure all officials and employees of the County understand the guidelines for external communication on behalf of the County.

It is the policy of Kneehill County to:

- Provide the public with timely, accurate, clear, objective and complete information about the County's priorities, policies, programs, services and initiatives.
- Employ a variety of ways and means to communicate, and provide information in the most appropriate format to accommodate diverse needs.
- Ensure Kneehill County is identified in a clear and consistent way in all communications ranging from signage, voice, mail, print, advertising and the Internet.
- Where possible, collaborate communication activities with other government partners, agencies, and industry, in an effort to provide more effective, timely and efficient information to the public.

**Guidelines:**

1. Informing and Serving Citizens – The County is committed to providing the public with information about priorities, policies, programs, services and initiatives. In doing this, the County will strive to ensure trained and knowledgeable staff provide information to the public, in a timely, courteous, fair and efficient manner, respecting privacy and individual rights. Information requests or inquiries from the public will be responded to promptly within the parameters of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.
2. Listening to Citizens – Effective citizen communications must address the needs and interests of our community. The County is committed to consultation and ensures opportunities for citizens to provide feedback and input. All communication will include information on how to access or who to contact for further assistance. With the guidance of the Communications Department, Kneehill County Departments will be encouraged to explore ways to collect public input such as informal meetings, information sessions, surveys, and regular interactions with stakeholders.
3. Communicating Clearly – Kneehill County is committed to ensuring the public has ease of access and understanding of information. Information will be clear, relevant, accurate, easy to understand and useful.
4. Meeting Diverse Audience Needs – Kneehill County will ensure equitable access to information intended for the general public in its publications and public meetings, and be sensitive to those who require other means of communication.

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5. Clearly Identifying Kneehill County – Clear and consistent corporate identity will help the public in recognizing and accessing programs and services. The Kneehill County logo will appear on all publications and information presented from the organization, with the support of the Communications Department.
6. Delivering Collaborative and Coordinated Communications – Kneehill County supports that communication is a shared responsibility that is often coordinated within and across various departments. Departments are expected to integrate communication priorities into their annual planning processes. Communication plans will be a key component included in the development of all proposals for major projects and initiatives recommended by a department. Departments will work collaboratively to develop communication plans in areas or projects of mutual and overlapping interests, with the support of the Communications Department. Departments will share materials and information on key programs, decisions and events with other departments to maintain awareness and support corporate messages.
7. Communicating with County Employees – As part of keeping County employees current on programs and services, when new information is communicated to the public, every attempt will be made to inform employees before or at the same time as the information is shared with the public. Directors are expected to communicate with their employees openly and frequently. The Communications Department will work collaboratively with all Directors to support internal communications and will strive to develop mechanisms and tools to enhance this interaction.
8. Making Information Available Electronically – Kneehill County supports the use of electronic communications, and views the various tools as a means to build and sustain effective communication internally and externally. To ensure alignment with all communication activities, website content will be provided to the Communications Department for review before being published. This will ensure standardization and a common look and feel throughout the website.
9. Communicating Through the Media - Kneehill County will work in a proactive manner with media to promote public awareness and understanding of news events. The CAO or designate will work with the Communications Department to coordinate announcements utilizing tools such as interviews, news conferences, background or technical briefings, and news releases.
10. Spokespeople – The Reeve or, in his absence, the Deputy Reeve be appointed as the official spokesperson for Kneehill County. Upon authority of Council, the CAO may also be appointed official spokesperson for Kneehill County. Spokespeople will be supported in this role by the Communications Department and the CAO or designate. At all times, spokespersons will respect privacy rights, security needs, matters before the courts, administrative policy and Council confidentiality.
11. Advertising – Kneehill County will advertise to inform the public about policies, program, services, dangers or risks to public health, safety or the environment, as well as an individual’s rights or responsibilities. Departments wishing to advertise will consult with the Communications Department to coordinate the approved message to certain outlets.

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12. Communicating Emergencies – Kneehill County recognizes that effective communication is key in time of crisis or emergency. Kneehill County is committed to communicating information that will protect the health, safety and security and property of their citizens. In the confines of the Kneehill Emergency Management Plan, the Information Officer, will strive to ensure citizens receive accurate, timely and relevant information to prevent, mitigate, respond to or recover from an emergency.
13. Coordinating Communications – The County shall coordinate communications activities with neighbouring jurisdictions, industry and other partners, where possible, in an effort to communicate more effectively and efficiency with the public.
14. Comply with Legislation – The County will ensure all strategic communications plans and activities comply with existing municipal, provincial and federal laws and regulations.

  
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Jerry Wittstock  
Reeve

  
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Al Hoggan  
CAO

Approved:      October 8, 2013      461/13  
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