



Section <b>Communications</b>	Policy No. <b>18-3</b>	Page <b>1 of 4</b>
Policy Title <b>Social Media</b>	Date: <b>November 24, 2020</b>	Motion No. <b>517/2020</b>

## **Purpose:**

Council recognizes the importance of public consultation with stakeholders, prominently our residents, through various communications tools, including social media. The purpose of this policy is to set out direction and requirements which must be followed.

## **Policy Guidelines:**

Kneehill County supports the use of social media as a communication tool for information sharing, and to achieve strategic communication goals. Social media can complement traditional communications and marketing mediums.

Social Media refers to freely accessible, interactive web-based technologies used to produce, post and interact through text, images, video and audio to inform, promote, and collaborate.

## **Policy Procedure:**

### **1. Establishing Kneehill County's Social Media Presence**

- All social media accounts will be created and removed through the Communications Officer or designate, as determined by the CAO.
- The accounts will adhere to organizational standards of municipal government professionalism in branding as well as simple, accurate information.
- Social media accounts will include an introductory statement confirming the purpose and scope of the site as well as posting guidelines for use, and a legal statement providing a legal disclaimer.
- Account access information will be housed with Communications as well as the Records Management. The CAO and designates must be able to access account information at all times.

### **2. Participation & Maintaining Social Media Accounts**

The scope of this policy encompasses all departments within Kneehill County including all employees, contractors, councillors, and community members.

The CAO will authorize certain employees to represent our organization on social media accounts, including Kneehill County's Communications Officer and Public Information Officer.

#### *Communications Officer, or Designate Responsibilities:*

- Implementing, monitoring and evaluating this policy and its use.
- Managing the organization's social media presence to ensure quality and effective efforts in supporting our organizations strategies and goals.
- Communications will work with departments to initiate social media as part of the projects communication plan (to complement the Public Consultation Policy).



Section <b>Communications</b>	Policy No. <b>18-3</b>	Page <b>2 of 4</b>
Policy Title <b>Social Media</b>	Date: <b>November 24, 2020</b>	Motion No. <b>517/2020</b>

- Will post information via the County's social media sites to ensure that messages are simple and engaging, and where appropriate, link users to the County's website for more information.
- Will ensure all content posted on County social media sites is consistent with the promotional or informative initiative and is approved for publication or dissemination by the Communications Officer or designate.

#### *Employee Responsibilities:*

- Only those authorized by the CAO or designate may represent our organization on social media sites, with a clear need and purpose outlined.
- County employees must not do anything to harm the reputation of Kneehill County, whether or not they are authorized users of our social media sites.
- Personal opinions will not be posted.
- In their capacity as private citizens, Kneehill County employees have the same rights of free speech as other citizens, however, they may not represent Kneehill County on their own personal social media sites, and they are reminded that they are bound by the Human Resources Policy in regards to professionalism and protection of privacy, and must not disclose any County information or content that they are not specifically authorized to disclose.
- Acting as a private citizen, a Kneehill County employee must use a private email address and make every reasonable effort to make it clear that their contribution to social media sites is as a private individual, not a representative of the County.

#### *Council Responsibilities:*

- Kneehill County Councillors should consider the following when discussing, sharing or commenting on municipal business on any social media accounts, including personal accounts:
  - The Reeve speaks on behalf of the organization as Public Information Officer, and any posts must comply with the guidelines outlined in this policy.
  - Unless otherwise authorized by Council motion, Councillors should not discuss municipal business within their posts to personal social media sites.

#### *Maintenance of Social Media Accounts:*

- Kneehill County's social media sites will be used mainly to promote and disseminate information.
- The County cannot commit to reply to every communication received via social media, however, the Communications Officer or designate will make every effort to respond to posted comments within 2 business days.
- County social media accounts will not be monitored outside regular business office hours.
- Comments and conversations on social media sites will not be deemed as official correspondence. They are deemed public inquiries, therefore will not be recorded or managed in a formal manner.



Section <b>Communications</b>	Policy No. <b>18-3</b>	Page <b>3 of 4</b>
Policy Title <b>Social Media</b>	Date: <b>November 24, 2020</b>	Motion No. <b>517/2020</b>

- Wherever possible, the Communications Officer will leave all user-created content unmodified, including those of complaints or criticism. Where user-created content is hateful, derogatory, abusive, inflammatory, offensive, or jeopardizes the privacy of others, the comment may be deleted or altered to fix the abuse.
  - Any post deemed inappropriate by the Communications Officer or designate will be printed, stored and then deleted or removed from the account (when possible). A response will be made identifying that the content was modified or deleted.
  - The Communications Officer or designate may block the offending user from the County's social media account(s) if possible. If a user is blocked, the reasons for the decision and any background information must be documented and stored with Records Management.

### 3. Information Dissemination

The Kneehill County website will remain as the primary web presence, social media is a tool to enhance the website usage through promotion and information dissemination.

- Content will be communicated in a simple, timely and accurate fashion, following key messaging guidelines where possible.
- Social media accounts may publicize the followings:
  - a. Council meeting notices and referrals to website for minutes
  - b. Upcoming Kneehill County events
  - c. Notifications such as road closures/openings and fire ban issuances
  - d. Regional or sponsored events, if deemed appropriate to post by Communications
  - e. Emergency notifications, in consultation with Emergency Management
- Messages from individuals and outside organizations directed to the County's social media accounts will be forwarded to Administration or Department Managers during regular business hours.
- Responses to messages, when deemed appropriate, will refer to the guiding principles in this policy and will refer the individual to the website for further information, if possible.
- Debating is not advisable or appropriate.

### 4. Guiding Principles for Social Media

These guiding principles express the qualities for social media use in Kneehill County.

**Transparency:** to present the County in an open, accountable manner.

**Customer Service:** information, promotion, engagement to improve public service.

**Quality:** information and knowledge offered in a timely, accurate and professional way.



# POLICY

Section <b>Communications</b>	Policy No. <b>18-3</b>	Page <b>4 of 4</b>
Policy Title <b>Social Media</b>	Date: <b>November 24, 2020</b>	Motion No. <b>517/2020</b>

**Respect:** the same professional and ethical conduct is required in social media interactions as in the workplace.

**Legislative:** to adhere to applicable regulations, policies and plans to ensure professional and ethical conduct, including the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

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