



POLICY

Policy No. 12 235 25/11/17
Department: Administration

Communications, Correspondence and Social Media

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

A cohesive framework for communications, public relations and correspondence in a small organization.

This policy provides a comprehensive framework for the Town of Nanton's internal and external communications, including correspondence, electronic communications, media relations, social media, livestreaming of Council meetings, and branding.

POLICY OBJECTIVE(S)

1. To guide the conduct and use of electronic communications.
2. Establish procedures for the receipt and response to Town correspondence. To ensure proper use of Social Media and onlin platforms to promote/ advertise the Town of Nanton and further enhance communications.
3. To establish guidelines for internal communications between Council, staff and contractors.
4. To provide guidelines for the live streaming and management of video recordings of Council meetings.
5. To enhance community trust, accessibility, and transparency in municipal operations.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Role	Responsibility
Mayor	Official spokesperson for the Town, approves key messages and statements.
Council Members	Follow this policy in all communications; use disclaimers on personal accounts.
CAO	Operational spokesperson; oversees implementation of communications protocols.
Administration	Manages communications platforms, issues notices, monitors engagement.

DEFINITIONS

For this policy “**electronic communication**” must be defined as: “any communication via electronic means that involves a text or printable message”.

Chair means the Mayor or chair of the meeting.

Chief Administrative Officer means the CAO of the Town or his/her designate.



REFERENCE NUMBER: 12-235-25/11/17
REPLACES POLICIES: 12 – 127 - 22/04/04

Correspondence includes any request for information, request for clarification, conveyance of

Council means the Council of the Town of Nanton and in this policy includes all Committees as established by Bylaw.

Council Chambers means the Town of Nanton council chamber.

Open Meeting means any meeting of Council open to the public in accordance with section 197 of the Municipal Government Act.

Posts include content posted to Social Media accounts managed by the Town and or any Contracted Service Provider retained on behalf of the Town for the purpose of marketing and communications services such as: comments, information, articles, pictures, videos, or any other form of communicative content.

Social Media means content created by individuals, using publishing technologies, through and on the internet including, but not limited to Facebook, blogs and Twitter.

Town means the Town of Nanton.

Town's Website means the websites administered and controlled by the Town of Nanton, which may include, but is not limited to www.nanton.ca, web-based video management applications, and social media.

PROCEDURE:

1. CORRESPONDENCE AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

1.1 General Principles

- 1.1.1 All Town business-related correspondence, including electronic communications, is the property of the Town of Nanton and is subject to the Access to Information Act and the Protection of Privacy Act.
- 1.1.2 Correspondence deemed by the Mayor and Council or the CAO to be defamatory, threatening, deliberately repetitious, vexatious or grossly inappropriate does not require a response, broader circulation or acknowledgement, but must be retained in accordance with records retention requirements.
- 1.1.3 All personal information, other than telephone numbers and email addresses, will be published with correspondence submissions unless the author requests in writing that their personal information be severed, pursuant to Section 13 of the Protection of Privacy Act.

1.2 Receipt and Acknowledgement

- 1.2.1 All incoming correspondence received by staff must be acknowledged within two (2) business days.

- 1.2.2 Full responses should be issued within ten (10) business days where possible.
- 1.2.3 High-profile correspondence (e.g., media, legal, emergency) must be escalated to the CAO immediately.
- 1.2.4 Operational or routine matters will be routed directly to the appropriate department for handling.
- 1.2.5 Information or privacy-sensitive and defamatory correspondence will be retained but not circulated.

1.3 Submissions to Council

- 1.3.1 Incoming correspondence received by a majority of Council from external sources must be forwarded to Administration for appropriate handling and consideration for inclusion in the Council agenda package.
- 1.3.2 All emails addressed to and received by a majority of Council must be forwarded by the Mayor to the CAO and Legislative Services. If not received by the Mayor, Councillors who received the correspondence must forward it as above.
- 1.3.3 The Mayor may respond to such emails before the next Council meeting if circumstances warrant. These responses must:
 - 1.3.3.1 Be copied to all of Council and the CAO;
 - 1.3.3.2 Not conflict with existing Council policy; and
 - 1.3.3.3 Clearly state that they are subject to Council approval, amendment or clarification.
 - 1.3.3.4 Responses will be attached to the next Council agenda package, subject to cut-off dates and confidentiality considerations.
 - 1.3.3.5 Members of the public who correspond with Council should understand that their messages may be placed on a public agenda as formal correspondence. If a correspondent withdraws consent before the deadline, the record must still be retained for information purposes. Administration may seek alternate reporting methods if no Council action is required.
- 1.3.4 Members of the public who send and address correspondence to Council, particularly where Council approval is required, should expect that their full message will likely appear on a public agenda and that the Town will respond
- 1.3.5 When correspondence is submitted for Council consideration, Administration will inform the sender that their submission may be published in a public

agenda package. This notice will reaffirm the sender's understanding and consent before publication wherever possible after a Regular Meeting.

1.4 Agenda Inclusion

Correspondence to be included in a Council agenda package must:

- 1.4.1 Be reviewed by the CAO or designate in consultation with the Mayor prior to the meeting;
- 1.4.2 Pertain to matters within the jurisdiction of the Town of Nanton;
- 1.4.3 Be received prior to the agenda submission deadline established by the Procedure Bylaw; and
- 1.4.4 Be included on the agenda for information or action, as appropriate. Individuals wishing to speak to Council must submit a Delegation Request Form in accordance with the Procedure Bylaw.

1.5 Outgoing Correspondence

1.5.1 From Council:

1.5.1.1 Correspondence directed by Council will be sent by the designated person and may be included in the Regular Council Agenda package with CAO approval.

1.5.1.2 The Mayor may respond to emails sent to a majority of Council prior to the next meeting to ensure timely communication. Responses must be copied to all of Council and the CAO, must not conflict with Council policy, and must state they are subject to Council approval or amendment.

1.5.2 From Staff:

1.5.2.1 Responses to operational or bylaw/policy-related matters must be signed by the CAO or the appropriate staff member.

1.5.2.2 Such responses may be included in the Regular Council Agenda package, subject to CAO approval.

1.5.3 Public Notifications may be issued by conventional posting, advertising, website updates or social media.

1.6 Use of Electronic Communications

1.6.1 All Town business must be conducted using official Town email addresses. Personal accounts may only be used in exceptional circumstances, with the official address copied (cc/bcc).

- 1.6.2 Electronic correspondence from a Councillor concerning Council decisions or future agenda items must be copied to all of Council and the CAO.
- 1.6.3 Informational communications between Council members should be copied to all of Council but do not need to be shared with Administration unless agreed upon by the sender or a majority of Council.
- 1.6.4 All communication between Council and staff must be copied to all of Council and the CAO.
- 1.6.5 Direction to consultants or contracted service providers must be issued only by, or at the direction of, Department Managers.
- 1.6.6 The CAO's email account is not a default public contact for general inquiries or invoice submissions. Overuse may result in missed messages or delays.
- 1.6.7 The staff directory shall be prominently accessible on the Town website and other media. The CAO shall implement a consistent policy of forwarding misdirected correspondence to the appropriate staff member or contractor for review and action.

2. SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEBSITE

2.1 The Town shall use social media platforms as time and resources permit to:

- 2.1.1 Communicate with residents via a modern medium;
- 2.1.2 Provide up-to-date and accurate information;
- 2.1.3 Promote and encourage participation in Town programs and activities;
- 2.1.4 Provide additional general community information as considered useful by Administration, Mayor and Council or the Marketing and Communications Service Provider.

2.2 Ownership and Management:

- 2.2.1 Only one central account shall be used for each platform by the Town of Nanton and they must follow this policy.
- 2.2.2 Management of these accounts shall lie primarily with Administration directing the marketing and communications.
- 2.2.3 Content shall be monitored by Administration for policy adherence and alignment with the interests and goals of the Town.

2.3 Guidelines and Limitations of Use:



REFERENCE NUMBER: 12-235-25/11/17
REPLACES POLICIES: 12 – 127 - 22/04/04

- 2.3.1 Only the official Town account will be used to provide information to the public.
- 2.3.2 Employees and Elected Officials may request that authorized staff or contracted service providers post information on behalf of the Town on any social media platform.
- 2.3.3 Elected Officials may not post as "The Town of Nanton" and are not permitted to discuss campaigns, issues, or other political matters on Town accounts unless done in collaboration with Administration.
- 2.3.4 All Town social media accounts shall adhere to Town policies and bylaws.
- 2.3.5 www.nanton.ca remains the Town's primary and predominant internet presence, providing access to detailed information on services, contacts, notices, bylaws, policies, and reports that cannot be replicated within social media platform accounts.
- 2.3.6 Wherever possible, Town social media accounts shall link back directly to the official Town website for forms, documents, and other information.
- 2.3.7 Administration controls all website structure and content and provides authorizations, when required, to relevant contracted service providers that additionally edit and/or host the site.
- 2.3.8 The website shall provide links to third-party sites where appropriate at the discretion of Administration.
- 2.3.9 The Town is not responsible for any information regarding the municipality or its services that is solicited via an individual queries to Artificial Intelligence (AI) platforms (e.g. Chat GPT, Google).

2.4 Intended Use and Participation from the Public:

- 2.4.1 The Town will strive to share information honestly and openly with the public via social media platforms and cross-post, where able, to higher-traffic local social media platforms.
- 2.4.2 The Town will not post untruthful or purposefully inaccurate information. If an inadvertent inaccuracy is posted, the Town will correct it as soon as possible.
- 2.4.3 All posts and conversations shall remain civil and respectful.
- 2.4.4 The Town will not address individual complaints, concerns, or service requests via social media platforms.
- 2.4.5 Administration, in consultation with employees or a contracted service provider, will determine when an issue raised via social media reaches a

“critical mass” that merits a Town response or information submission on the account.

- 2.4.6 The Town reserves the right to restrict and remove any content that is deemed by Administration to be in violation of this or other policies, bylaws, or laws.
- 2.4.7 All posts on behalf of the Town and all posts by members of the public are deemed public content and are subject to all applicable laws and policies, including Alberta’s Access to Information Act and the Protection of Privacy Act.

2.5 Elected Officials and their own Social Media Accounts:

- 2.5.1 Personal social media accounts of Council and Committees are exempt from this policy but are not official Town platforms.
- 2.5.2 Official Town information will only be shared through designated staff or contractors.
- 2.5.3 Council may share official posts but must use an “in my opinion” disclaimer for personal commentary.
- 2.5.4 Personal messaging apps must not be used for Town business.
- 2.5.5 Members of the public contacting Council through personal accounts must be directed to official channels.
- 2.5.6 Council members must transfer any Town-related records from personal accounts to official systems.
- 2.5.7 Personal livestreams must clearly state they are not official Town broadcasts.

3. INTERNAL/EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

- 3.1 Report recommendations, information briefs and Council Requests for Motions are the formal means of communication between Administration and Council. Clear, concise, and relevant reports provide members of Council with the information they need to make decisions on municipal policies, programs, services, and initiatives.
- 3.2 Public announcements must be distributed concurrently to Council, except in urgent situations affecting public health, safety or danger to persons and property.
- 3.3 The Chief Administrative Officer is the sole employee of Council and is the primary contact for all inquiries by members of Council.
- 3.4 The Mayor is generally the Town’s primary spokesperson, unless another member of Council is designated by the Mayor or Council.



A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized first letter and a surname.

- 3.5 Committee Chairs are normally the chief spokespersons for matters dealt with under their Terms of Reference.
- 3.6 The CAO is the operational and administrative spokesperson.
- 3.7 Inquiries regarding matters typically reserved for closed meetings are always referred to the Chief Administrative Officer without comment or reference to confidential matters.
- 3.8 Responses to media inquiries for interviews or other official responses are coordinated between Administration and the Mayor on a case-by-case basis, with reasonable opportunity for Elected Officials or the CAO to respond accurately to questions, in line with existing policies and public information.
- 3.9 In emergency situations, the CAO and Mayor are the designated spokespeople under the direction of the Director of Emergency Operations.

4. BRANDING, LOGOS AND IMAGERY

Branding, logos, coats of arms and other related imagery are used in communications in line with the Logo and Coat of Arms (Branding) Policy, as amended.

5. VIDEO RECORDING AND LIVESTREAMING OF COUNCIL MEETINGS

- 5.1 Open Meetings of Council held in Council Chambers or other venues may be broadcast and video recorded to promote transparency, public participation and access to municipal decision-making.
- 5.2 Council meetings may be livestreamed and archived online for a period of one (1) year subsequent to the meeting.
- 5.3 Any Council meetings or portions of Council meetings closed to the public in accordance with Section 197 of the Municipal Government Act will not be broadcast or recorded.
- 5.4 The official record of Council meetings shall be the written minutes. Video recordings shall not supersede approved minutes as the official record of Council decisions.
- 5.5 The Town will make reasonable efforts to ensure livestreams and recordings are available to the public. Meetings will not be cancelled, postponed, or delayed due to technical issues.
- 5.6 Signage shall be posted to ensure presenters and members of the public are aware that all Open Meetings of Council are being broadcast, recorded, and made available online.
- 5.7 Standard camera positions will only capture Council members, administration, and public presenters.
- 5.8 Recordings may be accessible to the public on the Town's website or social media page until replaced by the next meeting's recording.
- 5.9 Original unmodified recordings will be stored on a secure server based in Canada and retained for the period stated in this policy, unless superseded by the Record Retention Bylaw.

- 5.9.1 The Town may make minor edits to meeting recordings for the sole purpose of improving accessibility, clarity, or compliance with applicable privacy or legislative requirements. Such edits shall not alter the substance, sequence, or context of any discussion or decision of Council. Where edits are made for privacy or legal reasons, the unedited original shall remain securely retained in accordance with this policy and the Records Retention Bylaw.
- 5.10 Council meetings are a public forum. Statements made during meetings are those of the individuals and not of Council unless contained in a Council resolution.
- 5.11 The Chair may:
- 5.11.1 Direct the CAO to terminate or interrupt the recording of a Council meeting if they consider it advisable due to inappropriate content; or
 - 5.11.2 Direct the CAO to remove recordings or portions of recordings from the Town's website where they consider the content inappropriate to publish.
- 5.12 Inappropriate material may include, but is not limited to:
- 5.12.1 False or misleading communication that damages the reputation of another individual or organization;
 - 5.12.2 Infringement of copyright;
 - 5.12.3 Breach of privacy or unauthorized disclosure of personal information;
 - 5.12.4 Offensive, discriminatory, or hateful material directed at individuals or groups;
 - 5.12.5 Confidential or privileged information;
- 5.13 The CAO or designate, may permanently or temporarily remove recorded or posted meeting material deemed inappropriate.
- 5.14 The rationale for any removal of content shall be explained to Council at a subsequent Closed Meeting.
- 5.15 Copyright to meeting recordings posted on the Town's website is owned by the Town of Nanton. Permission is granted to reproduce recordings for personal, non-commercial, educational, and news reporting purposes only, provided the material is not modified and is attributed to the Town.
- 5.16 Recordings may not be used for commercial activity, political party advertising, election campaigns, or politically partisan activity.
- 5.17 Contracted service providers must terminate or suspend broadcasts and leave Council Chambers once Council recesses to Closed Meeting.
- 5.18 Physical attendance by the public for the reconvening of the Open Meeting after a Closed Meeting will not be impacted.
- 5.19 Regular Meetings and standalone Committee of the Whole meetings are the priority for livestreaming. Livestreaming of other committees or the Municipal Planning Commission requires at least one (1) weeks' notice to Administration.

RELEVANT DOCUMENTS AND AUTHORITIES



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REPLACES POLICIES: 12 - 127 - 22/04/04



*Logo and Coats of Arms (Branding) Policy
Town of Nanton Records Retention Bylaw
Council Procedures Bylaw
Municipal Government Act
Access to Information Act and Protection of Privacy Act*

REVIEW:

This policy should be reviewed at least once during every term of Council for prospective update, revision or renewal.

THIS POLICY WAS CONSIDERED AND ADOPTED BY COUNCIL ON _____

SUPERCEDES: Policy 12 – 127 – 22/04/04 Communications, Correspondence & Social Media
Policy No. 11 - 250 - 20/10/05; Video Recording and Livestreaming of Council Meetings
Policy No. 12 – 50 – 19/02/04; Communications, Correspondence & Social Media



MAYOR

Date



CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Date

