



Council Social Media Use

Effective Date: September 29, 2015
Revised Date: September 6, 2016
Revised Date: June 2, 2020

Policy Statement

1. The City of Pitt Meadows recognizes that the principles of open government and transparency rely on the engagement of constituents, including through the use of social media. The City further recognizes that City Council members may wish to use social media to engage their constituents on matters relating to the City or issues affecting the community-at-large.

Purpose

2. To provide City Council a framework for use of social media following the same principles and guidelines as engaging in traditional forms of communication - by using sound judgment, and by adhering to relevant policies and legislation. This policy is not intended to discourage or unduly limit personal expression or online activities.

Scope

3. This Policy applies to all members of Pitt Meadows City Council.

Policy

4. **Definitions**

Personal capacity refers to online identity, use, and posting as an individual or citizen, not necessarily in Council role with the City of Pitt Meadows.

Personal information means information about an identifiable individual, including, but not limited to: name; personal email address; username if it includes the

individual's name, a portion of their name, or is a pseudonym that is attributable to an identifiable individual by using other readily available information; contact information; home address; appearance and image; educational and employment history; and personal opinions.

Post means any online content, including comments, links, documents and images, which may include photographs, graphics, videos, and emoticons.

Professional capacity refers to online identity, use, or posting under a Council role with the City of Pitt Meadows and as a representative of the City.

Social Media or Social Networking Sites (SNS) refers to the use of third-party hosted, web-based, and mobile technologies that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content to share opinions, information, promote discussion and build relationships. These include, but are not limited to, blogging, digital applications (apps), document sharing, forums and discussion boards, photo sharing, social networking, and video sharing.

Social Media User means the people who use, view, and/or post comments or questions on social media sites.

Social Media Profile or ID refers to the username, profile name, ID or other title or name used by users to identify themselves on social media networking sites.

Terms of Service means rules which one must agree to abide by in order to use a service, such as a social networking site or service.

5. Use of Social Media

- (a) The conduct of City Council members engaging in social media discussions will be consistent with their obligations as an elected official, including any relevant legislation and City policies.
- (b) City Council members are personally responsible for the content they publish online, whether in a blog, social media site or any other form of user-generated media.



- (c) Social media profiles representing members of City Council do not act as official information or representation of the City of Pitt Meadows. The City's official social media accounts are managed by Corporate Communications under the direction of the Chief Administrative Officer.
- (d) City Council members may use their social media profiles as a secondary information source once information has been officially released by the City. This includes sharing or amplifying information released via the City's official social media accounts.
- (e) If City Council members publish content online relevant to City business, they will use the following disclaimer: "All opinions and posts are my own and do not necessarily represent the opinions, views, or strategies of the City's administration or other council members".
- (f) All City-related information posted to personal or elected official profiles will direct users to the City's website or social media accounts for official information, where available.
- (g) In commenting on matters pertaining to City business, City Council members must be particularly aware of their commentary surrounding issues currently before them in Council so as not to prejudice the public process.
- (h) If Council members choose to create a politician/elected official social media profile or account, this role will be indicated in the username or profile description.
- (i) Council Members may use City logos or trademarks only if given the authority to do so. The City of Pitt Meadows name will not be used in any screen name or social media ID or profile name other than the official City social media accounts and profiles.
- (j) Council members will familiarize themselves with the 'Understanding Risks of Social Media Use' guidelines as provided in Appendix A.



6. Related Policies and Legislation

- (a) BC Human Rights Code
- (b) BC Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and Regulations
- (c) Council Code of Conduct, C100
- (d) Respectful Workplace, C101
- (e) Media and Public Relations Communications Policy, C063
- (f) Local Elections Campaign Financing Act
- (g) City Committees Policy, C102

ATTACHMENT A

Understanding Risks of Social Media Use

- Council members are personally responsible for the content they publish online, whether in a blog, social media site or any other form of user-generated media. Council members are advised to be mindful that what they publish will be public for a long time and they should protect the privacy of Council members and Staff and take care to understand the Terms of Service for the social media sites they use.
- Council members are advised to be aware of their association with the City in online social networks, and should be aware that the public may still associate them with their professional role with the City, even while posting in their personal capacity or on a personal social media profile.
- Council members should be aware that when using social media/networking sites online, there is no expectation of privacy and therefore should conduct themselves in such a manner. Anything posted online should also be deemed appropriate for public distribution via traditional media or otherwise, and content can exist online in perpetuity or in individual computers even if the original post is removed or edited.
- Council members have a legal duty to act in the best interests of the municipality, and should always be alert to the fact that their comments and opinions might be used as evidence against themselves or the City in legal proceedings. The legal risk is amplified in the case of social media, where an off-hand comment or opinion instantly becomes part of the permanent public record, and available for use against the local government.
- Council members should be aware that the City retains ownership of all computer systems and data given to them to perform work as a City representative. Social media usage on the City's network, computers or electronic devices is neither private nor confidential and may be monitored or recorded without any further notice by the City as per the City's Information Technology Usage Policy.
- The City, through resolution of Council, reserves the right, at any time and without any further notice, to revoke, limit or alter a user's rights to access the internet, including the use of social media, on City computers or electronic devices.



- Council members are accountable for on- and off-duty conduct on social media sites including any communication which exposes or creates legal or other liability for the City. Council members may be individually liable if they act contrary to advice and engage in the disclosure of personal, confidential or privileged information or advice.