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## POL.COR.18.10 Social Media Policy

<b>Policy Type:</b>	Corporate Policy (Approved by Council)
<b>Date Approved:</b>	December 17, 2018
<b>Department:</b>	Administration
<b>Staff Report:</b>	FAF.18.155
<b>By-Law No.:</b>	2018-69

### Policy Statement

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The Corporation of the Town of The Blue Mountains (The Blue Mountains or Town) encourages the use of online social media tools where the tool is part of a disciplined and thoughtful communications strategy designed to reach its target audience being residents, agencies and stakeholders, the business community, and visitors.

This policy reflects The Blue Mountains' interest and willingness to initiate appropriate social media opportunities with the goal of building strong relationships with key audiences and enhancing The Blue Mountains' brand with residents, agencies and stakeholders, the business community, and visitors.

### Purpose

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The purpose of this policy is to set guidelines applicable to the creation, use and maintenance of social media communications tools, and outline social media governance. Further, this policy establishes criteria which outlines the acceptable guidelines for the personal and professional use of social media as it pertains to The Blue Mountains.

This policy is required to ensure that:

- The use of social media tools does not compromise public safety or The Blue Mountains' image;
- The information provided through social media aligns with The Blue Mountains' vision and guiding principles;
- Social media content does not violate individual privacy or conflict with existing municipal policies and by-laws or other regulations as applicable; and,
- Social media content posted on behalf of the municipality is as accurate, accessible, transparent and accountable as possible.

The primary goals of the Town's use of social media are as follows:

- Increase awareness of municipal services;
- Augment existing corporate communication methods and processes;
- Provide an additional mechanism through which the Town keeps abreast of customer comments and perceptions regarding the Town;
- Disseminate time-sensitive information quickly;
- Provide communication through the use of social media's cost-effective tools;
- Correct misinformation, remedy mistakes, or alter services to build stronger relationships;
- Develop citizens' trust;
- Utilize social media's analytical tools to monitor, track and evaluate the Town's communications and marketing efforts;
- Provide another method by which stakeholders can engage with the Town; and,
- Utilize social media as an additional way to collaborate with the public and other municipalities on mutually beneficial programs and initiatives.

## Application

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This policy applies to all Town employees who are authorized to post to the Town's various social media accounts. This policy also applies to individuals contracted by The Blue Mountains in a 'purchased services' arrangement who may be using social media sites on behalf of the Town. This policy applies to usage during and outside regular hours of work.

This policy applies to all Town employees who have and maintain personal social media accounts.

## Definitions

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**Corporate Social Media Accounts** means any social media networks bearing official corporate branding and identified as representing the Town of The Blue Mountains.

**MFIPPA** means the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

**Personal Social Media Accounts** means any social media networks created and maintained by individual employees or elected officials, which can be identified as such through personal profile pictures, bios (which mention Corporate affiliation) or implicit association (i.e. an employee who is known to the public, but does not have his/her Town affiliation noted on profile).

**Political Content** means comments or posts made by politicians, supporters or otherwise, for the purpose of political gain.

**Social Media** means third-party, online communication channels in which the objective is to publicly share information and create dynamic interaction between two parties (ie, the Town and a citizen) including, but not limited to: Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube.

**Social Media Content Approver** means the Chief Administrative Officer or designate.

**Social Media Moderators** are employees of the Town of The Blue Mountains who have been appointed to speak on behalf of the Town by updating content on the Town's social media sites and pages. Moderators include, the Town's Economic Development and Communications Coordinator or designate, and members of the Website Committee (through the use of a software that allow for draft posts for approval by the Town's Economic Development and Communications Coordinator or designate).

**User** means a visitor to a Town social media site.

## Procedures

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### General Guidelines for Use

The Blue Mountains' municipal website ([www.thebluemountains.ca](http://www.thebluemountains.ca)) will remain the predominant internet presence for in-depth service information, news updates, forms, and documents. All social media sites used will supplement the website by providing interactive, two-way communication, and will direct visitors back to the appropriate webpage. The various social media accounts managed by The Blue Mountains will be administrated by one of the identified Social Media Moderators. In the case of department-specific content, the Department Head is responsible for ensuring clarity, accuracy and relevance of posted content on the social media channels.

Departments wishing to create new social media sites on behalf of the Town require approval from the Social Media Approver, specifically the Chief Administrative Officer or designate, before establishing a social media presence on behalf of the Town of The Blue Mountains. Accounts must be set up using an official, town-provided email address. Personal email addresses are not permitted in the set-up of corporate social media accounts, with the exception of Facebook, in which case there will be multiple account owners.

Any login and passwords for the Town's social media sites are considered confidential information and will be stored under the supervision of the Information Technology Division. Where possible, the Information Technology Division will be provided administrator access to each social media site.

The Town may promote events on its website and/or social media sites if the Town is involved as a participant, partner, host, or if the event is located in the Town and aligns with the Town's corporate values. The Social Media Moderators, upon agreement, or direction by the Chief Administrative Officer, reserve the right to remove content from the Town's social media sites

that is deemed unsuitable, inappropriate or in violation of the Social Media Policy. Inappropriate content may include:

- Commercial endorsement or solicitation of one product or service over another;
- Personal political content including statements in support of, or opposition to, matters before The Blue Mountains Council, or personal comments about staff or elected officials;
- Content considered to be defamatory, profane, disrespectful or insulting to Town staff or elected officials;
- Confidential information, including information about members of the public, municipal staff and elected officials;
- Objectionable material which may include material of a profane or sexually explicit nature, content that encourages illegal activity, or information that may compromise the safety and security of the public; and,
- Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, colour, age, religion, gender, gender identity, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation.

Should the Town discover or receive a complaint regarding the posting of objectionable content on the Town's social media sites, an investigation will be conducted by the Social Media Approver in conjunction with Human Resources. If the material is deemed objectionable after the investigation has been completed, it will be removed from the social networking site.

The Town reserves the right to review, edit, modify, or delete any comment submitted to a Town social media site by a user. Comments on topics not within the jurisdictional purview of the Town may be removed.

The Town reserves the right to deny access to Town of The Blue Mountains social media sites for any individual who violates the Town's Social Media Policy and Terms of Use.

### **Providing Responses**

Typically, the Town will respond to online inquiries or comments made through social media sites during regular business hours, Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Questions or comments will be acknowledged within **three (3) business days**.

The Town may request users to refrain from posting inappropriate comments, or may mute, hide, block, or ban users violating these social media commenting guides.

The Town may choose not to reply to online inquiries or comments if:

- The post includes respectful statements of opinion – people are welcome to express their views even if they disagree with municipal policies, programs, or decisions; and/or,
- The post is respectful, and directed at other participants in the conversation.

### **Personal Social Media Accounts**

Identifiable Town of The Blue Mountains employees should make it clear that, if posting from personal social media accounts and commenting upon Town-related matters, they are clearly voicing only their personal opinion, and not an official, Town position. Avoid the appearance of officially representing the Town by not posting Town logos, photographs, graphics or other visual insignia without the Town's permission.

Employees posting comments on personal social media accounts are prohibited from disseminating any private Town organizational information therein, such as internal deliberations regarding how policies and decisions are made, or negative, inflammatory comments regarding the Town of The Blue Mountains. Posts involving, but not limited to the following, will not be tolerated and will subject the individual to discipline in accordance with POL.COR.13.24, Progressive Discipline Policy:

- Content which violates the *Criminal Code of Canada* or the *Ontario Human Rights Code*;
- Proprietary and/or confidential Town information;
- Harassing, discriminatory or sexual innuendos directed at Town of The Blue Mountains or any of its employees;
- Identify or make commentary on behalf of Town employees without the consent of that other Town employee; and,
- Content which violates any of the Town's policies.

Due to the possible sensitive nature, it is generally advised that employees refrain from commenting and/or interacting with Town related information posted on social media.

### **Expectation of Privacy**

Town employees and members of the public commenting on Town-related posts can have no expectation of confidentiality or privacy in relation to their online activities as they pertain to, and are associated with, the legitimate interests of the Town. Posting content on social media sites regarding the Town, and Town matters, is considered a publication, not a private activity. Under no circumstances will Town Staff publish personal information, pertaining to either themselves or to others, on Town social media sites. Personal Information, within the meaning of MFIPPA, does not include the names and business contact particulars of the Town's elected officials. All records or other personal information collected through social media are protected under the *Municipal Act* and *MFIPPA*.

### **Copyright and Use of Photos**

All material, including photos and videos, that contain identifiable individuals must receive appropriate permissions from those individuals. Further, all material posted must conform to the *Copyright Act of Canada*.

## **Disclaimer and Social Media Terms of Use**

Where possible, each Town social media site will contain a disclaimer clearly advising third party users or visitors to the site that third-party comments are not official communications of The Corporation of the Town of The Blue Mountains. To this end, the following disclaimer shall be added to each of the Town's social media sites:

*Comments made by members of the public are not official communications of The Corporation of the Town of The Blue Mountains and are not reflective of the Corporation's views, opinions and/or policies. Because this site is only periodically monitored, offensive materials or commentary may be present for which The Corporation of the Town of The Blue Mountains denies all responsibility. Further, all comments or other content posted to this site may be considered public records and be subject to public disclosure under MFIPPA.*

In addition, each Town social media site will post a Terms of Use reference document that will be accessible where possible by site visitors and the Social Media Moderators, outlining the expectations of use and the timeframe for response (included as Appendix 1).

## **Exclusions**

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Social media sites representing the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and Councillors are exempt from this policy, as are sites representing Committees of Council, as these activities are covered under the POL.COR.07.07, Code of Conduct for Members of Council and Local Boards.

## **References and Related Policies**

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POL.COR.07.07 Code of Conduct for Members of Council and Local Boards

POL.COR.12.13 Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy

POL.COR.13.24 Progressive Discipline Policy

POL.ADM.18.01 Website Management and Governance Policy

POL.COR.18.08 Workplace Violence and Harassment Policy

Town of The Blue Mountains' Strategic Plan, Mission and Vision Statements

## **Consequences of Non-Compliance**

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Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment, per POL.COR.13.24 Progressive Discipline Policy.

## **Review Cycle**

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This policy will be reviewed once per term of Council at minimum, or more frequently as required.

### **Appendix 1 – Town Social Media Terms of Use**

1. Comments made by members of the public are not official communications of The Corporation of the Town of The Blue Mountains and are not reflective of the Corporation's views, opinions and/or policies. Because this site is only periodically monitored, offensive materials or commentary may be present for which The Corporation of the Town of The Blue Mountains denies all responsibility. Further, all comments or other content posted to this site may be considered public records and be subject to public disclosure under MFIPPA.
2. Town social media sites will be monitored during regular business hours, Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Efforts will be made to respond to online comments and inquiries within three business days.
3. The Town will attempt to respond to inquiries and comments on the Town's social media sites but at the Town's discretion, Staff may request the discussion be redirected to either telephone or email support channels. The reasons for this request may include, but are not limited to:
  - a. Private concerns;
  - b. Character limits for messages; and/or,
  - c. Amount of detail required to respond to or resolve a given situation.
4. The Town may choose not to reply to online inquiries or comments if:
  - a. The post includes respectful statements of opinion – people are welcome to express their views even if they disagree with municipal policies, programs, or decisions; and/or,
  - b. The post is respectful, and directed at other participants in the conversation.
5. The Town is not responsible for the authenticity or suitability of content posted to its social media site by other users;
6. The Town will adhere to applicable legislation regarding privacy and freedom of information;
7. By using the Town's social media sites, the user acknowledges and consents that comments, content, or messages may become part of the Town's public record and used in official Town documentation.
8. The Town reserves the right to remove content from the Town's social media sites that is deemed unsuitable, inappropriate or in violation of the Social Media Policy.  
Inappropriate content may include:
  - a. Commercial endorsement or solicitation of one product or service over another;
  - b. Personal political content including statements in support of, or opposition to, matters before The Blue Mountains Council, or personal comments about staff or elected officials;
  - c. Content considered to be defamatory, profane, disrespectful or insulting to Town staff or elected officials;
  - d. Confidential information, including information about members of the public, municipal staff and elected officials;

- e. Objectionable material which may include material of a profane or sexually explicit nature, content that encourages illegal activity, or information that may compromise the safety and security of the public; and,
  - f. Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, colour, age, religion, gender, gender identity, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation.
9. Comments and images posted by third party users do not necessarily represent the views of The Corporation of the Town of The Blue Mountains;
  10. The Town 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,
  11. A link between the Town's social media sites and any other website does not imply endorsement or sponsorship by the Town of that website, the creator of the website, or the products therein.