

# TOWN OF ANNAPOLIS ROYAL

## POLICY

Title: Communications Policy

Policy No.: 2019- 04

Supersedes: N/A

Effective Date: October 28, 2019

Approval by Council Motion No. **C2019-OCT-28-05**

### **POLICY STATEMENT**

It is the policy of the Town of Annapolis Royal to:

1. Inform citizens about the Town's policies, programs, services and initiatives through communication that is timely, accurate and consistent.
2. Consult and inform stakeholders when establishing or developing priorities, policies, programs and services.
3. Ensure the Town and its departments are transparent and responsible to the citizens it serves.
4. Anticipate the needs of the community, Council and Administration for timely and relevant information.
5. Engage in a proactive communications program that uses a variety of formats to accommodate diverse needs and that reflects the diversity of the community.
6. Provide timely, accurate and relevant information to staff and Council on key issues prior to release to public.

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines to facilitate communication that is coordinated and consistent as well as open and responsive.

### **DEFINITIONS**

Consultation: To seek advice or information. This may, where warranted, involve a formal consultation process designed to seek the views of citizens and community stakeholders or the public at large, including collecting and analyzing public input and feedback.

Crisis: A situation, present or future, or major issue that may disrupt service or impact on public trust in the Town.

Departmental Communicator: Staff assigned by the Chief Administrative Officer to facilitate departmental communications such as media liaison, communication planning and implementation.

Emergency: An unusual situation that requires prompt action to limit damage to persons, property or the environment.

Media: Representative of the print and electronic media (newspapers, newsletters and digital published documentation), and social media (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter).

Media Advisory: A notice to the media to announce an upcoming Media event such as a news conference, a special meeting of Town Council, or a photo opportunity.

Media Liaison: A communicator who facilitates Media relations and communication between the News Media and the appropriate spokesperson.

Media Release: A factual written summary of information issued to the Media for the purpose of making a statement or announcement or replying to questions from the Media.

Outside Boards and Agencies: Organizations recognized by the Town through the budget process, or other means, as an outside board or agency.

Plain Language: Effective communication that is clear, concise, relevant and easy to understand.

Public Events: An event arranged by the Town directly, or in partnership, to release information, raise awareness, or to celebrate a civic milestone. Common Public Events include award presentations, dinners, conference greetings, dedication ceremony, groundbreaking, official opening, program launch, ribbon cutting, sod turning, major announcements.

Public Service Announcement: A brief, factual written summary to draw attention to an event, program or resources offered to the public.

Public Statement: A statement made verbally or in writing by a spokesperson to the Media.

Stakeholder: Any individual, group of individuals, elected representative or organization with a specific stake or interest in the outcome of a decision.

#### **WHEN REPRESENTING THE COUNCIL IN THE COMMUNITY, COUNCIL WILL:**

1. Provide an accurate and fair representation of Council decisions.
2. Recognize that Council Members have a duty to respect Council decisions and policy directions.
3. Conduct themselves in a manner that will not reflect unfavorably on the Council.
4. Maintain mature and constructive working relationships based on mutual trust and respect.
5. Conduct the relationship with courtesy and respect.
6. Accept and respect their different but complementary roles.
7. Every member of Council shall display the reserve inherent in *their* position with the Town when publicly expressing his/her personal opinions on matters of political controversy or on existing or proposed municipal policy or administration. This policy is not intended to restrict the legitimate public comment of spokespersons of Council, nor the public comment of Council Members on matters of essentially a personal interest related to *their* position as a Council Member with the Town of Annapolis

Royal. In cases where comments are made prior to an issue being discussed with the full Council, Councilors or the Mayor are to ensure they clearly indicate they are speaking for themselves and not on behalf of the Council. All members of Council should exercise caution when speaking publicly on issues not yet before Council as not to compromise their objectivity prior to information being presented for their consideration.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

In all communications, spokespersons and departments must comply with all legislated requirements regarding access and disclosure of information. The freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIPOP) Act extends access and privacy principles to Nova Scotia Municipalities.

### **GUIDELINES TO INFORMING CITIZENS**

Information about the Town's policies, programs, services and initiatives should be generally available to the public in a variety of formats, subject to the available resources.

#### **Guidelines for Departments are as follows:**

- a) Information is provided to the public by trained and knowledgeable staff.
- b) Service is timely, courteous and efficient.
- c) When information is unavailable, a prompt and clear explanation is provided.
- d) Published information is provided in Plain Language.
- e) Information is available on the standard of service a department provides, including timelines for response to inquiries, mail and complaints.
- f) Information is available for review or posted on the website where it is needed by a citizen to use a service for which they are eligible, to inform citizens of risk(s) to health and safety, or to explain a major new policy, program, service or initiative.

### **MEDIA/ SOCIAL MEDIA RELATIONS**

The Media plays an important role in providing information to the public on matters of civic interest.

Media inquiries, whether by phone, email, letter, or in person, should be addressed promptly to accommodate publication or broadcast deadlines, wherever possible, subject to the policies and guidelines established by Town Council.

Town Communications ensure that Social Media requests for information, are directed to knowledgeable staff designated as spokesperson(s) by the Chief Administrative Officer for their department or division.

#### **Guidelines for Departments:**

- a) Respect the authority and responsibility of Town Council, whose Members are entitled to learn about proposed policy initiatives or major new programs, services or initiatives before information about them is released to the Media.

- b) Consult with the Chief Administrative Officer when preparing campaigns or strategies that require participation by the Mayor or Members of Council, or when preparing a response to a Media inquiry that could have implications for the Mayor or Members of Council.
- c) Keep confidential information that is related to matters before the courts, or under the jurisdiction of another authority such as the Police Services Board (Board of Police Commissioners).
- d) Incorporate mechanisms for receiving and acknowledging public inquiries and feedback.

#### **Links to Third Party Sites**

This type of link, which will generally open a new browser, is provided for the convenience of the visitor. Inclusion of the link does not imply endorsement by the Town, and it accepts no responsibility for the content found on any third-party website. Links are subject to the approval of the Chief Administrative Officer and may be removed without notice at the discretion of the Chief Administrative Officer. Factors affecting approval or removal may include business case considerations, an assessment of the needs of the intended audience, the relevance to the Town or appropriate department and technical or legal considerations.

#### **Crisis Communications**

In a crisis, coordinated communication must be used to maintain or restore confidence. Departments must advise the Chief Administrative Officer as soon as they identify an event or situation occurring in or affecting their department that may attract widespread interest to the media. Chief Administrative Officer and Council will coordinate a response including designating a spokesperson.

#### **Emergency Communications**

The Town of Annapolis Royal's Regional Emergency Measures Bylaw outlines the protocol for emergency communications.

All emergency communication will be directed by the Chief Administrative Officer.

### **CONSULTATIONS**

Open and effective communication is the key to successful public consultations.

#### **Departments must:**

- a) Inform citizens and stakeholders about opportunities to participate in public consultation and citizen engagement processes (such as surveys, town hall meetings and committees). This may be done through the Town's website, newsletters, letters of invitation, posted notices, notices to the Media, advertising and other formats normally used.
- b) Clearly identify public information materials as being from the Town.
- c) Inform participants, in summary form, of the results of the public consultation and outcomes. This may be done through the Town's website, reports to citizens, letters, posted notices, notices to the Media, advertising, newsletter and other formats normally used.
- d) Consult with the Chief Administrative Officer as appropriate.

## **ADVERTISING**

The Town's logo shall appear on all public notices and Town sponsored events in the local media, social media and website.

## **INTERNAL COMMUNICATION**

Open, two-way communication, between Council and Administration and among, Chief Administrative Officer, Department Director/Manager/Supervisors and Employees is vital to the effective operation of the Town.

### **Council Member Inquiries**

Council Member inquiries, whether by phone, email, letter, or in person, must be addressed promptly. Formal inquiries are managed by the Chief Administrative Officer and the particular Department Directors.

Where a response is provided to an inquiry that is expected to attract media attention or become part of a Council or Committee agenda, the response shall be provided to all Members of Council, Chief Administrative Officer and Department Directors.

### **Managers/Supervisors & Employees**

Effective internal communication is a shared management responsibility, led by the Chief Administrative Officer and senior staff with support from the Administrative Assistant.

Department Directors, Managers and Supervisors must communicate with employees openly, often and, wherever possible, before information is made public.

To inform and engage employees, a variety of formats can be used, as appropriate and as resources permit, to reach all staff across the Town. This may include a mix of published materials including but not limited to newsletters, notices, electronic bulletins, oral presentations and staff meetings.

The needs of all employees should be considered including outside workers who do not have access to electronic information and employees who work remotely.

To ensure consistency and effective use of Town communication channels and formats, departments may consult with the Chief Administrative Officer for support and advice on communication initiatives.

### **Mayor and Council:**

The Mayor is normally the Town's chief spokesperson, explaining policies, priorities and decisions to the public, unless otherwise designated to another member of Council or the Chief Administrative Officer.

The Mayor is normally the chief spokesperson for decisions approved by Town Council unless another Member of Council is designated.

Committee Chairs are normally the chief spokesperson for matters dealt with under the jurisdiction of their particular committee unless another Member of Council is designated.

On occasion, Council may designate an individual Member of Council as spokesperson on a particular issue.

Once Council has rendered a decision, all members of Council have a duty to support that decision whether they voted for or against the particular motion. They can express their views when asked, however, it is incumbent upon them as a member of Council to support the decision of the majority.

In cases where a member of Council speaks with the media on a Town related issue, they should notify the Chief Administrative Officer and other members of Council as soon as practical. This notification will ensure that everyone is aware of the interview prior to it being made public.

#### **Administration:**

Chief Administrative Officer, Department Directors: The Chief Administrative Officer is the primary administrative spokesperson. Department Directors are normally the spokespersons for programs, services and initiatives they administer unless otherwise directed by the Chief Administrative Officer.

Legal, Personnel and Election: Inquiries regarding pending litigation, or involving a significant exposure to litigation, or personnel-related information should be directed to the Chief Administrative Officer or designate. Inquiries regarding municipal election and campaign issues should be directed to the Chief Administrative Officer with the exception of election sign issues, which should be directed to Bylaw Enforcement.

Designated Spokesperson: Chief Administrative Officer may designate departmental spokespersons to communicate about policies, programs, services and initiatives they are familiar with and for which they have responsibility.

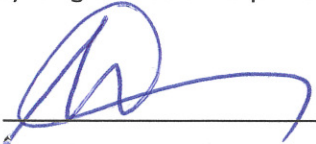
Departmental staff: Staff may provide background information that is publicly available. Requests for interviews should be referred to the Chief Administrative Officer.

#### **Coordination:**

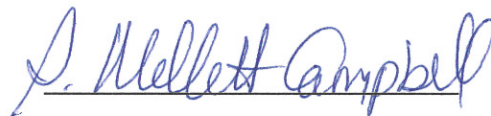
The Chief Administrative Officer is responsible for strategic communication and coordination of the flow of information to the Media and the public, with the exception of public safety issues and information publicly available. The Administrative Assistant, with input from departments, manages the overall look and feel of the Town's website and social media.

Departments are responsible for the release and disbursement of program, service-specific and event information and for providing a copy of Media Releases and PSAs to the Administrative Assistant.

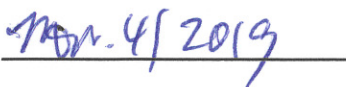
Municipal Services Boards, Outside Boards and Agencies are not subject to this policy; and they may use the policy for guidance as required.



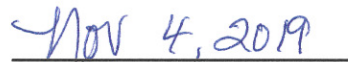
**Mayor**



**Interim Chief Administrative Officer**



**Date**



**Date**