



CORPORATE POLICY

DEPARTMENT:	CAO
POLICY:	SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY
APPROVAL:	COUNCIL
EFFECTIVE DATE:	April 25, 2022

1. POLICY STATEMENT

Social media is rapidly changing the way we discover, communicate and share information. Interactive communication or social media refers to online services and tools used for publishing, sharing and discussing information in the form of text, photographs, video and audio.

The Town of Shelburne is committed to enhancing its communications using appropriate social media tools. The Town supports responsible use of social media for Town business purposes. The Town has established an official presence on several social media sites including Facebook, Instagram and Twitter and will continue to look at other social media sites as required.

The Town is using social media, in conjunction with traditional communications, to enhance and increase outreach and engagement with residents and stakeholders, while providing a consistent level of service and access to information. The use of social media also provides opportunities to build and maintain public trust, transparency and accountability in municipal government. It may be used to consult with the public, recruit employees, volunteers and public appointees.

While the Town recognizes the popularity of social media, certain guidelines must be observed to protect the municipality. Employees, Members of Council and or Town representatives using official Town social media outlets and personal social media accounts are expected to conduct themselves in a professional and ethical manner

2. PURPOSE

To identify responsibilities and standards for the establishment and administration of corporate social media sites.



To provide rules on the acceptable participation in social networks by Members of Council, and municipal employee and citizen appointees to boards and committees.

This policy serves to:

- Provide direction and guidelines to those managing and administering corporate and social media sites
- Protect the municipality's reputation
- Provide employees, Members of Council and citizen appointees to board and committees with clear usage guidelines
- Provide protocol around monitoring, administration and acceptable use and privacy

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all members of Council, board and committee appointees, employees, and volunteers of the Town of Shelburne.

4. DEFINITIONS

"Appointees" includes: individuals appointed to all Town Committees or Boards ("Appointees") by Council.

"Corporation" means The Corporation of the Town of Shelburne.

"Corporate Use" means management approved activity on any social media platform or account that is operated and maintained by the Town.

"Council" or **"Councillor"** means the elected municipal council of the Town of Shelburne.

"Employee" means any person that is employed by the Corporation of the Town of Shelburne. This includes all classifications of employees (e.g., Permanent Full Time, Permanent Part Time, Seasonal, Temporary Casual, Student, Contract)

"IT" means the Information Technology Department at the County of Dufferin.

"Municipality" means the Corporation of the Town of Shelburne.

"Personal Use" means an individuals use of social media accounts on any social medial platform at any time



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“Social Media” includes any forms of electronic communication through which users create online communities to interact with each other by sharing information, opinions, knowledge, ideas, personal messages and other content. These include web-based sites that include blogging, micro blogging, photo sharing, video sharing, webcasting and networking.

“Social Media Account Staff” means the employee(s) of the Town who have been designated to establish and administer social media channels, establish social media strategies and reporting, and serve as social media moderator.

“Town” means the Corporation of the Town of Shelburne.

“Volunteer” means any person who undertakes or is assigned responsibilities that are not paid on Town of Shelburne property, this does not include those persons appointed to boards and committees by council.

5. POLICY

The Town supports the use of social media to:

- Promote programs and services
- Educate the public
- Share information
- Gain public feedback and respond to queries
- Alert the community in emergency situations

The use of all social media sites by the municipality will adhere to:

- applicable provincial and federal laws, regulations;
- the terms of service of each social media site; and
- all applicable corporate policies, guidelines, and by-laws, including, but not limited to: applicable administrative, human resources policies, information technology policies and records management policies and by-laws

All those that fall under this policy are expected to conduct themselves professionally during work and personal time. Even when someone does not publicly associate themselves with the Town on social media, all materials associated with their page may be perceived to reflect upon the Town.



6. SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITY

The use of the Town's social media needs to be carefully coordinated to ensure consistent use, with messaging and monitoring.

Social media communications will be conducted through a "one window" approach meaning there will be only one municipal account per social media site. Department specific or any group specific accounts are not permitted without prior authorization.

Administration of all social media tools and sites by the Town will be centralized with Social Media Account Staff. Social Media Account Staff will also monitor and post to social media sites on behalf of the Town.

Town departments are encouraged to identify and provide content for the Town's social media and website and to provide information to the site administrator to approve.

As time permits, the Social Media Account Staff will update and monitor the social networking platforms during the Town's administrative regular office hours, 8:30 am – 4:30 pm, Monday to Friday. Social media platforms may occasionally be unavailable and the municipality accepts no responsibility for lack of service due to the downtime of any service.

Posting by the public on a social media site of the Town is not considered official notice or an official complaint submission to the Town of Shelburne. Unless otherwise noted in applicable policies, contact through a social media platform does not constitute formal feedback or consultation.

As time permits, the Social Media Account Staff will read the comments and private messages to:

- 1) any emerging themes or helpful suggestions are forwarded to the relevant departments,
- 2) any factual errors (misinformation) is corrected.
- 3) ensure they are appropriate and delete offensive content.

The Town reserves the right to edit or delete comments and posts that contain inappropriate language, commercial advertising, partisan messaging, discriminatory messages, sexual content, promotion of illegal activity, promotion of political candidates



or other material deemed inappropriate. Comments that constitute discrimination or harassment under the Ontario Human Rights Code are not permitted.

Social Media Account Staff will respond to private messages sent via social media in a fashion similar to that of general calls to the office. Timelines for response will align with the Town's customer service expectations. Social Media Account Staff will respond to simple information requests. Some issues will be escalated to the appropriate staff member as the issue requires. When a simple response is required to a question or comment posed through social media, the guideline is for staff to address within 24 business hours. Response time may be limited by staff availability and resources across the corporation; there will be instances when a response may take more time.

7. STRATEGY

Social media should be integrated with a variety of communication tools and tactics, as part of an overall communications strategy, to maximize outreach. The Town's website, www.shelburne.ca is the Town's primary source for information exchange with the community. The Town will have only one website and the Town's website will serve as the exclusive and central hub for all social media networks, with postings frequently directing users to relevant sections of the website.

Staff must ensure that the Town's official social media sites:

- Educate and inform the public
- Enhance the Town's reputation
- Provide a consistent and professional voice so that residents can be assured the information they are receiving is official information from the Town of Shelburne
- Are effectively managed to ensure that they provide timely and accurate information and responses
- Adhere to established records retention, privacy and accessibility requirements
- Have content monitored and updated by appointed site administrators
- Are not used to promote individual political opinions or campaigns
- Ensure AODA compliant



8. RISKS AND BENEFITS

Social media presents opportunities to engage citizens and residents.

Benefits:

- Increase resident's access to government
- Allow the Town to be more active in building relationships with residents, partners and stakeholders
- Increase speed and responsiveness of communications, especially in emergency situations
- Reach specific audiences on specific issues
- Increase the level of trust in municipal government
- Manage messages and information by creating content that stands alongside mass media
- Reduce dependence on traditional media channels and counter any inaccurate press coverage
- Promote services, initiatives and events

Risks:

- Defamatory comments
- Business solicitations by external parties
- Offensive emotional discussions
- Negative responses to municipal postings about programs, services and events.

9. CONDUCT

While the use of social media sites creates new opportunities for enhanced communication and collaboration with residents and other stakeholders, it also creates new responsibilities.

Communication on social media sites or accounts should always be considered public and permanent. Online communities are not private. Postings may be accessed by a wider audience than intended or copied by others and posted elsewhere without the author's permission or knowledge.

All those that this policy applies to should not expect confidentiality or privacy in relation to their online activities as they pertain to the Town of Shelburne. Posting content on social media sites about an employer is considered a publication and not a private



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activity. All those this policy applies to are personally responsible for the content they publish online as it relates to the Town.

Social Media Account Staff using social media on behalf of the Town will conduct themselves in a professional and ethical manner, including:

- Post accurate, credible, and consistent information and links that are consistent with the Town's information, messages, brand identity, and policies. Department Heads are responsible for the accuracy and relevancy of any information forwarded to the Social Media Account Staff for posting.
- Link corporate social media sites back to the official Town of Shelburne website for forms, documents, online services and other information whenever possible
- Strive for transparency and openness, including when deemed necessary, identifying their name and position within the Town.
- Publicly correct any information in a timely manner that has been communicated and found to be in error, using the same platform it was produced.
- Post content in a manner that is discreet, does not disclose confidential information or release personal or corporate information, without prior consent. Social Media content must take the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA) into consideration.
- Must not engage in offensive language, respond in a confrontational manner, or post content that is not professional or that contravenes Town policies and the Town of Shelburne Code of Conduct.
- Must not use corporate accounts to express personal opinions or further personal agendas.
- Ensure proper protocols and permissions are obtained for posting any copyrighted material (including documents, websites, logos, images).
- Ensure security of social media accounts is maintained, including password and login information.
- Maintain timely postings on corporate social media sites, updating information as often as possible.
- Share educational resources related to social media and use with staff and Council.

Users and visitors to the Town's social media accounts/pages should be notified that the intended purpose of the site is to serve as a communication platform and information-sharing tool between the Town and the public.



A hyperlink to the Town of Shelburne Social Media Policy will be posted on the respective social media account/page where possible. The Town reserves the right to remove inappropriate, inaccurate, irrelevant or unproductive content (i.e. posts and comments) from social media accounts. If the user continues to post inappropriate, irrelevant, inaccurate or unproductive content, the Town may ban/block the user from the site at the discretion of staff.

Comments, posts, or articles containing the following content will not be allowed:

- Comments not related to the topic and/or issue being commented upon;
- Account spamming, trolling or overposting;
- Posts that are meant to solicit sales, products, or goods and services;
- Profane, aggressive, hateful, defamatory, insulting, rude, abusive or violent language or content;
- Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity
- Information that may compromise the privacy, safety or security of the Town or public
- Comments or posts that includes inaccurate material or misrepresent facts as known by the Town
- Comments or posts that impersonate or misrepresent someone else, including public figures, municipal staff or municipal officials;
- Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party.

The Town of Shelburne is not responsible for any comments or use of material posted by users.

10. EXTERNAL PROMOTION

The Town of Shelburne may promote events on its website and/or social media sites if the Town is involved as a participant, host, partner or sponsor. Other area events may be posted on the Town's social media sites, administrators will be monitoring postings for appropriateness.

Members of the public have the option of sending event details to <https://calendar.shelburne.ca/Management/Account?ReturnUrl=%2fManagement%2fEvent%2fCreate> for review and publication consideration.

11. RECORDS



Comments and messages posted to the Town’s official social media sites are considered transitory records and will not be kept as a permanent record by the Town of Shelburne. Information specifically collected as part of an official public engagement exercise will be kept in accordance with the Town’s retention by-law.

12. PRIVACY AND DISCLAIMER

Privacy, unless obligated by applicable law, by-law, legislation, or to demonstrate negative behaviour from a user, the Town of Shelburne does not capture or record the contact details of parties interacting with its social media accounts.

Comments and messages solicited by the Town and collected for the public record using social media will be treated like any other form of communications received by the Town and will be subject to the provisions of the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Privacy Act*.

The Town does not collect information for commercial or marketing purposes, nor does it sell, exchange, or otherwise distribute information collected through its use of social networking sites for commercial or marketing purposes. The municipality will not, under any circumstances, use any information provided by users for any purpose that is inconsistent with the purpose for which the information was provided, as stated on the social networking site.

At the discretion of the Town, any information, photos or videos that are shared or posted to an official Town social media account may be reproduced by the Town for promotional and other purposes with the appropriate permissions and acknowledgement of the source.

Disclaimers

Where possible, each social media site shall contain a disclaimer clearly advising third party users or visitors to the site, that third-party comments are not the official communications of the Town of Shelburne.

The following disclaimer shall be added to each of the Town’s social media sites: “This is an official Town of Shelburne social media page. Comments made by members of the public are not official communications of the Town of Shelburne and are owned by the contributing commenter. These comments are not reflective of the Town’s views, opinions and/or policies.”



13. VIOLATION OF POLICY

A violation of this policy by an employee is a serious matter and may result in disciplinary action.

Attachments: Schedule A - Town of Shelburne Social Media Policy Guidelines

Schedule A – Town of Shelburne Social Media Policy Guidelines

Even if you don't explicitly identify yourself as a Town employee or councillor, others may identify you as an employee or councillor by your name, your place of work, a photograph, or by the content you post.

The following guidelines apply to staff, Members of Council, and Council appointees and are applicable to both corporate and personal use of social media.

- Make it clear that your personal position does not officially represent the Town's position. Use phrases such as "in my personal view" or "Personally..." to communicate that you are expressing personal views.
- Do not use visual cues that suggest you represent the Town. Do not post Town owned logos, photographs, graphics or other media without the Town's authorization.
- Do not circulate any organizational or confidential information, such as internal deliberations about how decisions are made, personal information, such as client or employee information, or negative comments about the Town of Shelburne, Councillors, Employees or residents.
- Do not disparage or embarrass the Town, individual Councillors, Employees, and others associated with the Town.
- Do not engage in workplace discrimination or harassment, or activity that includes inappropriate comments, photographs, links, etc.
- Monitor your language, never use threatening, offensive or harassing language or target any group, promote illegal or dangerous activities.
- Respect copyright laws. Do not reproduce or borrow content that violates trademark or copyright laws, you may provide links to interesting and relevant materials.

Employees of the Town of Shelburne

All municipal employees must ensure the following:



1. You are only permitted to access social networking sites on municipal computers and equipment during working hours as necessary to carry out your job duties.
2. Your participation in any social networking site must not conflict with your role at the Town and must in no way harm the Town's reputation.
3. The use of social media devices including personal cameras, cell phones, audio recording devices, etc. shall not be permitted to be used by Town staff at emergency scenes. Confidential sensitive information that is intended to be kept private shall not be posted to any website.
4. Employees must ensure that privacy, confidentiality, copyright and data protection laws are adhered to, and must not make comments that are considered defamatory or libelous. Employees will be held accountable for what they write or post on social media or Internet pages. Inflammatory comments, unprofessional remarks or disparaging remarks made about the municipality, its employees, ratepayers, or vendors may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Even though you are acting on your own time, you are still connected with the organization and can affect the Town of Shelburne's reputation.
5. The use of social media regardless of whether you are on or off duty or access social media at home or at work, any derogatory or offensive comments about your co-workers on social media may be considered a form of harassment.
6. Employees should always represent the municipality in a positive and professional manner so negative images are not posted on social media sites of ratepayers and suppliers. Employees who are photographed or recorded acting inappropriately or unprofessionally may be subject to disciplinary action.

Members of Council and Public Appointees

Members of Council are welcomed and encouraged to participate in social media, through their own accounts. All members of Council and Appointees must ensure the following:

1. The Council Code of Conduct is respected.
2. Privacy, confidentiality, copyright and data protection laws are adhered to, and must not make comments that are considered defamatory or libelous.
3. There is no use of municipal logos, slogans or intellectual property on personal or other accounts without prior written authorization.
4. When sharing issues and decisions of Council, there is an expectation that should social media be used during a council or committee meeting, the use will not interfere with active engagement and participation in the meeting.



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5. Any derogatory or offensive comments about others on social media may be considered a form of harassment, regardless of whether you are on or off duty or access social media at home or at work.
6. Always represent the municipality in a positive and professional manner so negative images are not posted on social media sites of ratepayers and or others. Those who are photographed or recorded acting inappropriately or unprofessionally may impact the reputation of the Town.

The Town of Shelburne will not intercede on behalf of Members of Council for items members post on their own social media accounts. In the case where a member shares erroneous information about municipal decisions, services, etc., the Clerk or their designate will bring their matter to the attention of the member directly, with the expectation the member will correct the error as soon as possible.

During nomination period of a municipal election candidates or people acting on their behalf, are not permitted to post on Town of Shelburne social media sites. In addition, incumbent members of municipal Council who may seek re-election in a forthcoming term, may not utilize the Town of Shelburne social media sites to post individual campaign related information.