

## Communications Policy

<b>Policy Number:</b>	<b>2024-03</b>
<b>Approved by:</b>	<b>Council Resolution 2021-05-06 dated March 11, 2024</b>
<b>Effective date:</b>	<b>March 11, 2024</b>
<b>Department:</b>	<b>Financial Services</b>

### **PURPOSE**

This policy is to establish guidelines for external communication for the City of Whitehorse.

### **POLICY STATEMENT**

Council is committed to supporting responsive, accountable, and transparent communications about the City of Whitehorse

### **SCOPE**

This policy applies to City Council, City staff, as well as contractors employed by the City.

### **OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of the Communications Policy are to provide a framework for communications which ensures the City will:

1. Be responsive, accountable and transparent;
2. Provide clear, accurate and timely information about the City's policies, programs, services and initiatives to residents, business owners and visitors;
3. Continually strive for high quality client-service by:
  - a. Working closely with departments to support and implement their communications needs.
  - b. Listening and being responsive to public feedback and concerns and incorporating it into our work whenever possible.
  - c. Showing respect for differences in race, skin colour, place of origin, religious viewpoint, immigrant or newcomer status, ethnic origin, language, ability, mobility, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, or income level.
  - d. Ensuring our communication is inclusive and accessible to residents and visitors across our various platforms and materials are in-line with best practices.
4. Work to advance reconciliation by supporting and promoting City-led reconciliation initiatives and programs;

5. Use plain language in all our public-facing materials. 'Plain language' can be broadly described as any writing designed to ensure the average reader understands the message as quickly, easily and completely as possible;
6. Promote public engagement and involvement in decision-making processes where appropriate when establishing or developing priorities, policies, programs and services including engaging with the public and stakeholders whenever possible;
7. Provide clear communication on how accomplishments, initiatives, and/or programs/projects fit within the City's vision, plans and strategic priorities;
8. Create clear links between accomplishments, initiatives, and/or programs/projects and the City's plans and guiding documents.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

The City is responsible for communicating a wide variety of information to all members of the public, across a variety of demographics, through a wide variety of mediums.

Working with the City Manager, the Strategic Communications Department is responsible for communicating the priorities set by Council along with information it deems in the public interest. While the priorities of Council may change, the Strategic Communications Department is responsible for providing a consistent, community-focused voice in line with this policy's objectives.

The City employs a wide variety of platforms for communicating to the public where it may provide information and education about City programs and services.

These platforms include, among other things:

- City website: [whitehorse.ca](http://whitehorse.ca);
- Public engagement site;
- Social media accounts;
- The City's emergency alert system;
- Public service announcements and news releases;
- Press conferences and technical briefings;
- Mail outs and inserts;
- Bulletin boards;
- Various newsletters; and
- Local media.

The City will strive to use appropriate visuals for its external communications, wherever possible, to further support the public in understanding the desired message.

## **MEDIA RELATIONS AND SPOKESPEOPLE**

All media releases and queries are managed by the Strategic Communications Department.

The department will work with media outlets to help ensure accuracy, ensure City-wide coordination and a timely response to meet media deadlines whenever possible; and maintain a respectful, professional working relationship with the media.

All news releases and public service announcements will receive final approval from the Strategic Communications Manager, the appropriate department Directors and Managers, as well as the City Manager when applicable.

The Strategic Communications Department will monitor media coverage and, in its discretion, may seek corrections if it deems content to be incorrect, misleading or a misrepresentation. The Strategic Communications Department reserves the right to stop accommodating media requests in cases where the respective media outlet continues to publish false or misleading information within their stories, or if their staff are abusive and/or uncooperative.

The City will maintain, on its website, an archive of our media releases, advisories and public service announcements to the extent possible related to:

- Newsworthy events involving the City;
- City initiatives and programs;
- Notifications that materially affect residents (excluding construction related updates and notices).

#### Spokespeople

Unless otherwise stated, and in accordance with the *Municipal Act* and the City' bylaws, the designated spokesperson for the City of Whitehorse will be the Mayor, the City Manager or, where delegated by the Mayor or the City Manager, the Manager of Strategic Communications.

The Mayor is the City Council spokesperson when discussing decisions of Council, unless the Mayor has expressly delegated this to another Council member or City staff.

When appropriate, and where approved by the City Manager and/or the Manager of Strategic Communications, program staff may speak to projects within their purview; however this is not an expectation.

#### Council Communication

Where an individual member of Council expresses an opinion, it should be made clear to the audience they are not speaking on behalf of the City or Council as a body. Unless they have been authorized to speak on behalf of the City or Council as a body, individual members of Council, including the Mayor, should state that their comments and opinions reflect their own personal opinion. City resources should not be used by members of Council for public communications or events where they are not acting or speaking on behalf of the City.

The decisions of Council shall be reflected as collective corporate decisions.

### Council Social Media

Social media pages created by Mayor or Councillors to represent themselves for political purposes will be self-administered, and do not belong to, or reflect the positions of, City of Whitehorse.

### **CORPORATE SOCIAL MEDIA**

Social media can be utilized as a two-way communication tool between the City and the public, providing valuable interaction in real-time and with important information.

At all times the City welcomes feedback and provides the following platforms to communicate with City administration and/or City Council:

- The 'Contact Us' page on whitehorse.ca, which may provide phone numbers and email addresses for all City departments;
- The 'City Council' page on whitehorse.ca, which lists the public phone numbers and email addresses of the Mayor and City Council;
- Through social media 'direct message' features; and
- Through project pages on the City's engagement platform under 'Who's Listening'.

The City's social media accounts also provide an opportunity to support community-based initiatives in line with the goals and strategic priorities of Council. While content is controlled solely by the Strategic Communications Department, the City strives to create a supportive, collaborative, and informative social media space that highlights all the City has to offer.

The City reserves the right to delete posts that contain, without limitation, any of the following:

- Violent, obscene, profane, hateful, racist, abusive, pornographic or sexual posts, links or images;
- Degrading or offensive posts targeting City of Whitehorse staff;
- Content that promotes, fosters or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, age, creed, gender or identity, marital status, socio-economic status, physical or mental disability, or sexual orientation;
- Comments that threaten or defame any person or organization;
- Solicitations, advertisements, or endorsements of any financial or commercial organizations;
- Comments promoting or opposing any person campaigning for election to a political office;
- Comments that suggest or encourage illegal activity or posting of material that violates copyrights or trademark rights of others;
- Content containing spam or posted by anonymous or robot accounts;
- Repetitive posts copied and pasted or duplicated by single or multiple users; and/or unintelligible messages.

## **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

An open and responsive engagement process with the community is vital for effective public policy development and for gaining public support for decisions.

When appropriate, the City will engage with residents and make reasonable efforts to:

- Inform the community of opportunities to participate in public consultation and resident engagement initiatives;
- Use communication methods that will reach key stakeholders, elicit their concerns, involve them in the decision-making process, and provide feedback on how their input was incorporated;
- Ensure communications or information materials prepared for engagement purposes are presented and identified as being from the City; and
- Provide public engagement training opportunities to staff.

Research and public surveys are used to gain a better understanding of the needs, expectations, and emerging concerns of the residents in our community.

Information and feedback collected through public engagement initiatives may be used to:

- Assess the public's response to proposals or to possible changes or initiatives;
- Assess the effectiveness of policies, programs and services;
- Measure progress in service improvement; and
- Evaluate the effectiveness of communications activities, such as advertising.

The City uses a number of tools to engage on civic matters. Input shared with the City will be forwarded to administration and City Council in their decision-making process.

Some tools used to solicit information and feedback include:

- Social media;
- The City's engagement platform;
- Targeted surveys;
- Open house-style information sessions;
- Town Hall-style sessions; and
- City staff booths at public events.

## **CITY BRANDING**

For its role and responsibilities to be clearly recognized, it must have a single and consistent visual identity.

The City logo reflects the organization's role as the accountable and authoritative body and distinguishes the City from other organizations and groups. The logo is protected by copyright and trademark, and cannot be used without the express written consent of the City.

City logo use by outside organizations must reflect the City's official role or partnership in a program, service, or event. Logo use requests by outside organizations must be directed to the Strategic Communications Department for consideration and written approval where deemed appropriate.

The City of Whitehorse Brand Identity Guide provides details on logo placement, colours, typography and other branding elements.

## **CRISIS AND EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION**

The City strives to provide timely, effective communication before, during, and after an emergency. An "emergency" is defined as any situation that may threaten the life, health, property or environment of members of the public.

### Emergencies

Responding to media inquiries at fires and other emergency and/or public safety situations is dependent on the nature and severity of the emergency.

It is always preferred that media reach out to the Strategic Communications Department on inquiries related to emergencies. In the event members of the Whitehorse Fire Department receive questions from the media or the public, they should direct those questions to the Platoon Chief, Fire Chief, and/or the Strategic Communications Department.

The Manager of Strategic Communications should be notified in all instances where there is media coverage in respect of an emergency, and the Manager of Strategic Communications will come to the scene of the emergency when able and appropriate to do so.

### Crisis Communications Team

When a state of emergency is declared, the City's Public Information Officer (PIO) will work with the City's Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) to alert residents and detail the safety measures being enacted.

During or following an emergency, the spokesperson on behalf of the City may be the PIO, the City Manager, or a designate.

### Emergency Materials

The City should make reasonable efforts to provide prepared materials (brochures, fact sheets, etc.) to members of the media, City Council and the public in the event of an emergency. The materials would detail, among other things, the nature of the emergency and the safety measures being enacted.

The City may use the following platforms to communicate information related to an emergency:

- Local radio stations;
- The City's emergency alert system;
  - *Requires citizens to register in advance to receive these alerts*

- City website ([whitehorse.ca/emergency](http://whitehorse.ca/emergency));
- An EOC Public Information Telephone Line;
- City social media platforms;
- Canada Games Centre exterior pylon sign;
- City employee email distribution;
- Transit bus digital display messages;
- Northwestel Community TV; and/or
- By any other means deemed necessary.

In the event of a larger emergency and the need to partner with the territorial government's Emergency Measures Organization (EMO), additional messaging may be communicated via:

- Electronic highway signs;
- Alert Ready;
- [Yukon.ca/emergencies](http://Yukon.ca/emergencies);
- The Government of Yukon's social media platforms; and/or
- by any other means deemed necessary.

The City's emergency plans and strategies can be found at [whitehorse.ca/emergency](http://whitehorse.ca/emergency).

## **REPEAL OF EXISTING POLICY**

The Communications Policy adopted by Council resolution 2010-04-07, including all amendments thereto, is hereby repealed.

## **SUPPORTING REFERENCES**

Please note that some of the items below may not be publicly available.

*City of Whitehorse - Brand Identity Guide*

### **History of Amendments**

<u>Date of Council Decision</u>	<u>Reference (Resolution #)</u>	<u>Description</u>
March 11, 2024	2024-05-06	Initial adoption.

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