

RM OF REYNOLDS POLICY

Title: Communication

Policy No. 30

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to establish internal and external communication guidelines for the Rural Municipality of Reynolds (RM of Reynolds). Communication is central to all Municipal work and is a function of good management. Communication is a shared responsibility and the manner in which information is exchanged is important. Proactive communication ensures that the views and the concerns of the public are taken into account in planning, management and evaluation of Municipal policies, programs, services and initiatives. All elements of communication should be well resourced as quality and timeliness helps ensure credibility.

POLICY:

1. 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 Act outlines access and privacy principles and legislated requirements for Manitoba municipalities.

2. VISUAL IDENTITY:

In compliance with the RM of Reynolds Branding Guidelines and Brand Use Policy, a clear and consistent visual identity assists the public in recognizing and accessing the policies, programs, services and initiatives of the Municipality. To present a strong, unified and consistent identity, departments must display the corporate logo in all applications, regardless of medium, for external and internal use.

3. INTERNAL COMMUNICATION:

Open communication, between Council and the CAO is vital to the effective operation of the Municipality. Communication is a shared responsibility that must be coordinated with all of management. Communications training should be available to help ensure employees can be effective communicators.

3.1 Council & Administration:

Requests for information are the formal means of communication between Administration and Council. Clear, concise, relevant reports provide Members of Council with the information they need to make decisions on municipal policies, programs, services and initiatives.

Public announcements must be distributed concurrently to Members of Council, except in urgent situations affecting public health, safety or danger to persons or property, where every attempt will be made to distribute as soon as possible after distribution to the Media.

Council should be briefed yearly on the communication policy and procedure to address any concerns immediately and ensures a transparent, consistent and up-to-date policy.

Council and the Administration must examine ways to increase efficiency in responding to communication issues and adjust or simplify processes when necessary.

3.2 Councillor Inquiries:

As the sole employee of Council, the Chief Administrative Officer shall be the primary contact for all Councillor Inquiries.

Formal inquiries to Council are directed to the attention of the Reeve. Councillor inquiries, whether by phone, e-mail, letter, or in person, must be addressed promptly.

Where an inquiry is expected to involve detailed research on information that is not generally available, the Councillor may be referred to the CAO.

At no time should a member of Council direct operations or employees of the RM of Reynolds.

3.3 Managers/Supervisors & Employees:

Effective internal communication is a shared management responsibility, led by the CAO and senior managers.

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

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

4. **INTERNET & ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION:**

4.1 **Internet:** The Internet and other electronic communication are important tools, which allow 24-hour access to information and support two-way communication.

Internet usage at work is limited to work related websites. The internet is not intended for personal use.

The information contained on office computers is property of the Municipality and may be examined at any time.

4.2 **Social Media:** The following social media websites are allowed for the sole purpose of distributing Municipal news:

- Facebook;
- Twitter; and
- Instagram.

4.3 **Emergency Services:** The Reynolds Fire Department is prohibited from posting any emergency or training activities on any social media or internet website. For example: posting an accident scene picture online.

5. **PUBLIC INQUIRIES:**

Information on the Municipality's policies, programs, services and initiatives should be generally available to the public in a variety of formats, subject to the available resources. Including: in-person, website, phone, email, and social media.

Guidelines include:

- 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) A record of any published information is maintained and the published information includes the publication date.
- f) Every effort shall be made to address requests for information at the front counter immediately. When this is not possible, details of the information request shall be made and the request forwarded to the appropriate department for response.

6. **EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS:**

External communication involves both providing information and listening to the public. The Municipality must communicate with the public and provide information services through various channels ensuring both more traditional methods and newer methods are available to

meet the needs of the whole Municipality. External communication must be fair, balanced and representative.

6.1. Media Inquiries:

The Media play an important role in providing information to the public on matters of civic interest. The Municipality must cultivate a proactive relationship with the media to promote public awareness. The Municipality should operate and respond effectively in a 24-hour media environment to ensure the right information is being released.

All Media inquiries shall be directed to the Reeve or CAO.

The CAO shall direct all inquiries regarding Council matters to the Reeve.

The Reeve is generally the Municipality's chief spokesperson explaining policies, priorities and decisions to the public, unless another member of Council is designated by the Mayor or Council.

The Chief Administrative Officer is the chief administrative and operational spokesperson.

Staff may provide service, program or background information that is publicly available. Any inquiry from the media should be directed to the CAO.

6.2. Legal, Personnel and Election

Inquiries regarding pending litigation, or involving a significant exposure to litigation, should be directed to the CAO or the Reeve.

Inquiries regarding personnel-related information should be directed to the CAO.

Inquiries regarding municipal election and campaign issues should be directed to the Senior Election Officer or the Reeve.

7. PUBLIC EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Public Events and Information campaigns are arranged to communicate about major developments or to release information that is new and important to municipal services, programs and initiatives and to public health, safety and essential services. Information should go through the CAO and meet Branding Guidelines.

For each proposed public event or announcement staff guidelines include:

- a) Determine who will arrange, or participate in an event, or announcement.

- b) Prepare a Communications Plan with the CAO to ensure well-managed communication. The plan should take into account appropriate recognition of partners and funders. Such recognition may include use of partner or funder corporate names and logos.
- c) Provide in advance an agenda or copy of the Public Event or News Conference Plan and Briefing Notes to the CAO and to any Council representative(s) taking part, together with an advance copy of any Media Advisory, Release or Backgrounder (who, what, when, where, why, how).
- d) Coordinate participation through the CAO when multiple departments, community partners, and/or other levels of government are involved, or as requested by the Mayor or Council.

8. **PUBLIC & STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS:**

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

Guidelines include:

- 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 Municipality's website, Council Updates, letters of invitation, posted notices, notices to the Media, advertising and other formats normally used by departments.
- b) Clearly identify public information materials as being from the Municipality.
- c) Inform participants, in summary form, of the results of the public consultation and outcomes. This may be done through the Municipality's website, Reports to Citizens, letters, posted notices, notices to the Media, advertising and other formats normally used by departments.
- d) Collaborate with the CAO who provides support, advice and approval to management staff who plan, implement and evaluate public consultation processes. The CAO helps to prepare and implement communication plans and strategies.
- e) Prepare Public Consultation plans for any significant changes in service levels, notify Council in advance of the Consultation plan and report back to Council on the results.
- f) Maintain open communication with the public and develop proactive strategies for assessing and addressing public concerns.

9. Values and Ethics:

The Municipality is responsible for informing Council and the public with policies, programs, services in an accountable, non-partisan fashion.

Communication must be in a manner that affirms Canadian values of freedom, openness, security and respect.

