



**THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF WASAGA BEACH**  
**POLICY MANUAL**

<b>SECTION NAME:</b> General Administration	<b>POLICY NUMBER:</b> 2-17
<b>POLICY:</b> Social Media Policy	<b>REVIEW DATE:</b> 2027
<b>EFFECTIVE DATE:</b> June 8, 2023	<b>REVISIONS:</b>
	<b>ADMINISTERED BY:</b> Director of Communications

**1. PURPOSE**

The Town of Wasaga Beach is committed to using social media to enhance awareness and information-sharing and increase outreach and engagement with residents, visitors, and stakeholders, in a respectful and inclusive manner, while providing a consistent level of service and reliable access to Town information. The policy serves to protect and promote the brand and image of the municipality.

The Town's Social Media sites are not a platform for individuals to share their personal agendas or spread mis- or disinformation. Social Media sites (including direct messaging) owned by the Town of Wasaga Beach, are an extension of the workplace for Town of Wasaga Beach employees and representatives. Consistent with the Town of Wasaga Beach's commitment to a respectful workplace, violent, abusive, or aggressive behaviour will not be tolerated. The Town of Wasaga Beach is committed to providing a safe, secure, and respectful environment for our staff, residents and visitors by:

- Providing a violence free workplace.
- Providing a friendly and safe place.
- Ensuring the use of respectful language.
- Behaving in a safe manner.

The Social Media Policy clearly defines what is and is not acceptable in terms of the use of

Corporate Social Media pages.

## 2. POLICY

This Policy is intended to:

Provide Members of Council, staff, appointed board and committee members and the public (commenters on the Town's social media channels) with clear guidance and rules for the allowed use of social media.

Support staff in managing the Town's Social Media channels and achieving our objectives to use these channels to:

- Share timely and accurate information.
- Provide better customer service.
- Improve transparency, accountability and public engagement.
- Better support our business community and tourism marketing initiatives.

## 3. DEFINITIONS

- **Council Member** means individuals elected or appointed to the Council for the Town of Wasaga Beach who have taken the declaration of office for the current term.
- **Follow** means to subscribe to a social media account of another user and receive their posts as updates.
- **Political Material** means comments or posts made by politicians, supporters or otherwise, for the purpose of political gain.
- **Social Media** means the web-based technologies and sites (often called Web 2.0) and includes blogging, microblogging (Twitter), photo sharing (Flickr), video sharing and livestreaming (YouTube), and networking (LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, wikis, blogs, discussion boards) which allow users to interact with each other by sharing information, opinions, knowledge, photographs, videos, and interests.
- **Social Media Contributor** means authorized Town of Wasaga Beach staff and representatives empowered with posting and reviewing content and responding to comments and direct messages on Corporate Social Media sites.
- **Town of Wasaga Beach Social Media sites** means Social Media sites created and managed by Town staff and representatives.

## 1. SCOPE

- 1.1. This Social Media Policy applies to all Town of Wasaga Beach staff members, Council and Committee/Board members. Its scope covers posting, sharing, or commenting on Town of Wasaga Beach owned Social Media sites, the use of Town Social Media

accounts, representing the Town online (or to appear to be representing the Town online, as determined by the Director of Communications). It applies to participation on non-municipal Social Media sites.

The participation in Social Media by employees and Committee/Board members acting in an official municipal capacity should be viewed in the same way as participating in traditional media or public forums.

The Town of Wasaga Beach owned Social Media Pages are managed and administered by the Director of Communications to ensure consistent use, messaging, and monitoring (exceptions include Wasaga Beach Public Library which is managed by designated staff, as it is a separate, independent entity).

Departments are encouraged to proactively identify relevant programs and services as content for the Town's social media pages in advance, using approved processes/procedure, for formatting, messaging, and branding prior to posting.

This Social Media Policy also applies to any member of the public commenting on Town of Wasaga Beach owned Social Media sites.

## **2. GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

**2.1.** The following guiding principles should be applied with respect to this Policy:

- Employees, Members of Council and appointed members of Boards and Committees are stewards of Town's brand and reputation, both online and offline.
- The terms of acceptable use of Social Media reflect a desire by the Town to provide:
  - Enhanced customer service.
  - Timely and accurate information to residents.
  - Increased public engagement.
  - Better support the business community including tourism marketing
  - Promote and protect the Town's brand and online reputation.
  - Deliver on Council's priorities, including greater transparency and accountability and public engagement.

## **3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **3.1. Employee Use of Social Media**

- Employees are welcomed and encouraged to participate in Social Media, through their own accounts, while respecting the Staff Code of Conduct and applicable Town

Policies. Employees are encouraged to follow the official Town sites and to share its content.

- Employees posting or commenting on Town owned Social Media pages must ensure compliance with all Town Policies, and that privacy, confidentiality, copyright and data protection laws are adhered to, and must not make comments that are considered defamatory or libelous or in any way detrimental to the municipality.
- As a representative of the Town of Wasaga Beach, it is expected that any time a public statement is made regarding the Town (including on personal social media accounts), that the individual making the statement would be held to the same standards of professionalism that they would on Town owned/operated social media accounts.
- Employees may not make disparaging remarks or express opinions, which could be viewed as disparaging of the Town.
- If employees share content about the Town on their personal Social Media pages and their friends/followers make negative comments about the Town on their page, employees are encouraged to remove such comments.
- Employees posting on their personal Social Media channels should be mindful not to:
  - Reveal confidential/private or personal information gained through work
  - Use visuals (images, logos, etc.) that suggest the account represents the Town of Wasaga Beach.
  - Undertake any action, which could compromise or appear to compromise the integrity of the public service.
- Employees duty of confidentiality continues to apply while using Social Media for personal use.
- Employees are not permitted to act on behalf of the Town as spokespeople using their personal accounts on any Social Media site, website, forum, or other online communication channel.
- No employee may use the Town's Social Media accounts without the permission of the Director of Communications. Employees who post content through the Town's Social Media accounts without permission may be subject to discipline.
- Town corporate logos, crests and images are the unique property of the Town. Employees are prohibited from using such Town property on their personal Social Media accounts without written authorization from the Town.
- Employees must not use their personal Social Media accounts to comment on behalf of the Town unless authorized by the Director of Communications. Employees who use their personal Social media accounts to comment on behalf of the Town may be subject to discipline.

- Employees who associate their personal Social Media accounts with the Town (with or without authorization from the Officer) should avoid posting comments that can potentially harm the Town's reputation.
- Employees who act in violation of this Policy may be subject to discipline up to and including dismissal.
- The TikTok application is not to be installed or used on Town owned devices, including smartphones, tablets, laptops and PC's.

### **3.2. Council / Committee / Board Members and Social Media**

- Members of Council and Committee/Board members are welcomed and encouraged to participate in Social Media, through their own accounts, while respecting the Council Code of Conduct and applicable Town Policies. Members of Council and Committee/Board members are encouraged to follow the official Town sites and to share its content.
- Members will be responsible for creating, monitoring, and updating their personal Social Media accounts.
- If members share content about the Town on their personal Social Media pages and their friends/followers make negative comments about the Town on their page, members are encouraged to remove such comments.
- Members are not permitted to use the Town logo.
- Members should not mislead the public to believe their pages are the official voice of the Municipality, or the voice of other Council or Committee Members.
- Town of Wasaga Beach Social Media accounts will not post or share content posted by or about Members of Council unless the content depicts Council actioning their role as a member of Council, or on behalf of Council.
- As an elected representative of the Town of Wasaga Beach, it is expected that any time a public statement is made regarding the Town (including on personal social media accounts), that the individual making the statement would be held to the same standards of professionalism as Town owned/operated Social Media accounts.

### **3.3. Internal / External Content and Commenting Standards**

To help ensure a respectful dialogue for the public and Town employees and representatives any comment, posts, and messages that contain any of the following may be hidden or deleted:

- Profane, obscene, racist, or otherwise discriminatory content.
- Personal attacks, insults, or threatening language.
- Plagiarized material or copyrighted material.
- Solicitation of commerce or for personal gain.

- Violations of municipal by-law, provincial or federal law, or encouragement of illegal activity.
- Confidential information published without prior consent.
- Promotion of political candidates or other political material.
- Content considered inappropriate by the Town.
- Comments not germane to the original post.
- Comments that are inaccurate, misleading, off-topic, spreading misinformation or disinformation regarding Town Services, programs, operations, staff, or Council.
- Information that may compromise the safety or security of the public, municipal property or staff.

The Town may block or ban anyone from Town of Wasaga Beach Social Media pages who continues to post comments as described above.

All municipal Social Media pages must contain a link to the Town's Social Media Policy which will contain the following terms and conditions:

- All posts are monitored by municipal staff who may delete any message that is in violation of the Social Media Policy.
- If a submission violates guidelines, or is in any other way disrespectful or inappropriate, the submission will be removed in its entirety from the site.
- If a user continues to post messages that violate the guidelines, the user may be blocked from using the site.
- If you believe a submission to any municipal social media site violates the guidelines, please report it immediately to the municipality by emailing [communications@wasagabeach.com](mailto:communications@wasagabeach.com)
- The Town will make a reasonable effort to respond to concerns and questions directed to its social media accounts. It is not guaranteed that all comments or messages will receive a response. At its discretion, Social Media Contributors may also request the discussion be redirected to a more appropriate channel - either phone or email (for customer service). The reason(s) for this request may include but are not limited to – privacy concerns (resident or employee), character limitations for messaging, and amount of information required to resolve an inquiry.

#### **4. AUTHORITY OF THE DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS**

- The Director of Communications will oversee the Town's Social Media activities.
- The Town's Social Media accounts will be established and approved by the Director of Communications.
- The authority to contribute content to the Town's Social Media accounts will only be granted to individuals specifically authorized to do so ("Social Media Contributors") by recommendation of the Director of Communications in consultation with the applicable

Department Head.

- The Director of Communications will work collaboratively with staff to ensure that information published on the Town's Social Media accounts is accurate and acceptable.
- The Director of Communications reserves the right to edit or remove content from the Town's Social Media accounts that they deem unacceptable or in violation of this Policy. Any content removed from the Town's social media accounts will be retained or destroyed in accordance with the Town's Record Management Program and its associated policies and procedures.
- The Director of Communications is responsible for establishing and/or changing usernames and passwords for all of the Town's Social Media accounts. They will be responsible for safeguarding all usernames and passwords for the Town's Social Media accounts. A copy of the usernames and password are to be submitted to IT for backup purposes.
- A master list of all of the Town's Social Media accounts, including usernames and passwords, will be maintained by the Director of Communications.
- The Director of Communications will ensure that content posted to the Town's Social Media accounts is updated weekly. They will ensure that departmental social media accounts are monitored regularly, excluding weekends and holidays, to ensure content is compliant with this Policy.
- In the case of an emergency in which the Emergency Operations Centre is activated, the Office of the CAO or Director of Communications may ask departmental Social Media accounts to cease operation and direct users to the main Town Social Media accounts for information until the Emergency Operations Centre is deactivated.

## **5. RESPONSIBILITY OF SOCIAL MEDIA CONTRIBUTORS**

- As representatives of the Town, Contributors must act with honesty and integrity in all matters. Designated contributors must abide by all Town policies and applicable legislation. It is not acceptable to use aliases or otherwise deceive the public.
- When representing the Town online, it is important that Contributors follow the Town's brand and style guidelines, and convey the same positive and respectful tone that the Town strives for in all communications.
- Contributors shall only post within their area of expertise and ensure that posts are accurate and not misleading. Even if accurate, content posted by a Contributor may still be misinterpreted. Contributors must keep this in mind when posting content or participating in online conversations. When in doubt, DO NOT POST. Contributors are responsible for correcting misinformation.
- Contributors must do their best to respond to public queries received through Social Media. Contributors who are uncertain as to how to respond to a query from a member of the public should discuss the matter with the Director of Communications before any action is taken.
- Contributors must not claim authorship of content they did not create. If Contributors use content from another party, they must ensure that the other party consents to the use and is credited for the content. Contributors must not use copyrights, trademarks, publicity rights, or other rights of others without the necessary permissions of the rights-holder.

- Contributors shall keep records of all social media content posted to the Town's Social Media accounts as well as online dialogue in which they engage pertaining to the Town.
- Contributors who are provided with usernames and/or passwords for the Town's Social Media accounts must safeguard this information and maintain this information in strict confidence. Contributors are not permitted to share this information with anyone unless authorized to do so in writing by the Director of Communications
- Access to Town Social Media accounts may be revoked for Contributors who act in violation of this Policy.

## **6. CONSEQUENCES OF NON-COMPLIANCE**

Any violations of the Social Media Policy by Council/Committee/Board Members will be investigated.

## **7. POLICY ADMINISTRATION AND REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed as needed, but in any case no later than every four (4) years from the date of the most recent review.

The Director of Communications will be responsible for initiating the review of this Policy.