



Staff Report

Administration

Report To: Community Communications Advisory Committee
Meeting Date: September 16, 2019
Report Number: FAF.19.157
Subject: Corporate Media Relations Policy Information Report
Prepared by: Tim Hendry, Communications and Economic Development Coordinator

A. Recommendations

THAT the Community Communications Advisory Committee receive Staff Report FAF.19.157, entitled "Corporate Media Relations Policy Information Report" for information purposes.

AND THAT the Community Communications Advisory Committee endorse the Corporate Media Relations Policy Report as presented for Council consideration.

B. Overview

This report provides information to the Community Communications Advisory Committee ("Committee") regarding the updated draft of the Corporate Media Relations Policy for the Town of The Blue Mountains.

C. Background

To ensure that corporate policies are up-to-date, Town staff initiated a review and update of the Corporate Media Relations Policy. The current policy was adopted by Council on April 24, 2012.

D. Analysis

The updated draft of the Corporate Media Relations Policy has been updated to include communications best practices and enhanced guidelines for responding to media inquiries. The updated draft policy clearly outlines the definition and protocol of the Town Spokesperson, Designated Spokesperson and Committee of Council Spokesperson.

In addition, a policy review cycle of two years has been added.

E. The Blue Mountains Strategic Plan

Goal #2: Engage Our Communities & Partners
Objective #1 Improve External Communication with our Constituents

Goal #4: Promote a Culture of Organizational & Operational Excellence
Objective #2 Improve Internal Communications Across our Organization
Objective #3 To Consistently Deliver Excellent Customer Service

F. Environmental Impacts

N/A

G. Financial Impact

N/A

H. In consultation with

Senior Management Team, Town of The Blue Mountains

Shawn Everitt, Chief Administration Officer

I. Public Engagement

The topic of this Staff Report has not been subject to a Public Meeting and/or a Public Information Centre as neither a Public Meeting nor a Public Information Centre are required. However, any comments regarding this report should be submitted to Tim Hendry, communications@thebluemountains.ca.

J. Attached

1. DRAFT Corporate Media Relations Policy, POL.COR.12.11

Respectfully Submitted,

Tim Hendry
Communications and Economic Development Coordinator

Shawn Everitt
Chief Administrative Officer

For more information, please contact:
Tim Hendry, Communications and Economic Development Coordinator
communications@thebluemountains.ca
519-599-3131 extension 282



Policy

POL.COR.12.11 Corporate Media Relations Policy

Policy Type: Corporate Policy (Approved by Council)

Date Approved: Month, 00, 2018

Department: Administration

Staff Report:

By-Law No.: 2018-

Policy Statement

The Town of The Blue Mountains recognizes the importance of providing a corporate media relations policy for Town of The Blue Mountains employees and members of Council to inform and guide Corporate Media Relations within the organization

Purpose

As an open and accountable organization, The Town of The Blue Mountains recognizes that a strategic approach to media relations is important to foster a mutually beneficial and professional relationship with media representatives and news outlets.

Through well-defined guidelines, the strategic relationships will help encourage accurate, balanced and fair media reporting. Collaborative relationships with media partners will help the Town communicate with residents, businesses, tourists and stakeholders through a wide range of media channels.

The purpose of this policy and accompanying procedures is to ensure that the Town of The Blue Mountains:

- provides timely, accurate, and thorough responses to media inquiries;
- maintains open and transparent access to the designated Town media spokespeople;
- conducts media relations in a manner that is objective, understandable, open and transparent within the allowable limits as directed by legal counsel / legal advice;
- demonstrates an organizational commitment to corporate communications practices, including public and stakeholder engagement.

Application

This policy applies to all Town of The Blue Mountains employees, members of council and committee members.

Definitions

Media: Media includes traditional news media (print, radio and television), online (websites) and social media (blogs, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Twitter and other sites where content is generated by users).

Spokesperson: A Spokesperson is a Town employee or member of Council who has the authority to make statements to the media on behalf and representative of the organization.

Procedures

Proactive Media Relations

- The Town of The Blue Mountains recognizes the importance of proactive media relations and proactive public engagement. The Town utilizes a variety of both traditional and non-traditional communications tools to proactively communicate with media partners and the public.
- All Town employees and members of Council are encouraged to be aware and mindful of Town activities, functions, and processes that may be considered newsworthy and of public interest. Any recognized items should be brought to the attention of the Communications Economic Development Coordinator (CEDC) for review and communication action if deemed necessary and appropriate.
- Communication matters or subjects deemed of important nature by the Mayor and/or Chief Administrative Officer are arranged and issued by the CEDC in conjunction with the Mayor, the Chief Administrative Officer and/or the appropriate department Director.
- General communication matters, subjects or projects are arranged and issued by the Communications and Economic Development Coordinator (CEDC) in conjunction with the Mayor, appointed member of Council, Chief Administration Officer, appropriate department Director and/or appropriate department manager.
- During public discussions and media interviews, employees and/or Council members acting as Town Spokesperson(s) are expected to convey the official position of the Town of The Blue Mountains rather than personal points of view.

Reactive Media Relations

Media inquiries should be addressed promptly to accommodate publication, posting or broadcast deadlines, wherever possible.

Employees should ensure that news media requests, particularly for interviews or technical information, are directed to the appropriate employee to ensure accuracy and consistency of information in consultation with, and under the direction of the CAO, Mayor, and/or Communications and Economic Development Coordinator.

News Cycles

In the case of some media channels such as newspapers, print deadlines play a role in when news is released to the public. In such cases, it is recommended that Senior Management Team and members of Council liaise with the Communications and Economic Development Officer for more information on news cycles and print deadlines to achieve timely and maximum coverage of news released by the Corporation.

Spokesperson

- Unless otherwise designated, the official Town Spokesperson(s) are the Chief Administration Officer and/or the Mayor.
- In the event that the Chief Administration Officer is not available, the designated Acting Chief Administration Officer can act as a Spokesperson.
- In the event that the Mayor is not available, the Deputy Mayor can act as a Spokesperson.

The Communications and Economic Development Coordinator will provide support to the Spokesperson upon request with respect to media interviews.

Designated Spokesperson

- When deemed necessary and reasonable, the Chief Administration Officer may grant privileges to department directors to act as a Spokesperson for a specific topic.
- For special projects, Council may vote to appoint a member of Council as the project lead. In that case, the appointed member of Council can serve as a Spokesperson for matters related to the specific topic of the appointment.

Committee of Council Spokesperson

The elected committee Chair can act as a Spokesperson for subject matter related to the ongoing work and efforts of the committee. This applies to all boards and committees of Council.

Members of Council

Unless acting as a Spokesperson, Member of Council shall preface any remarks made to the media with a statement that they are not acting as a Spokesperson for the Town, but expressing their own view and opinion as an individual Member of Council.

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Non-Spokesperson

Town employees who are not a designated Spokesperson are not authorized to make statements to the media and/or in public discussion on behalf of the Town. Media inquiries should be referred to the Communications and Economic Development Coordinator.

Town employees should refer to POL.COR.18.10 Social Media Policy regarding the maintenance or use of personal social media accounts as they relate to Town matters

Anonymous Media Requests

The Town reserves the right to refuse anonymous media requests.

Exclusions

The corporate media relations policy does not apply to crisis communication during emergency situations. In such cases, the Town of The Blue Mountains Emergency Management Plan details the protocol for emergency media relations.

References and Related Policies

Town of The Blue Mountains Emergency Management Plan

Code of Conduct for Members of Council (POL.COR.07.07)

Social Media Policy (POL.COR.18.10)

Consequences of Non-Compliance

Non-compliant Town employees or members of Council will be referred to this Policy (POL.COR.12.11).

Review Cycle

This policy will be reviewed every two years by the Senior Management Team for a report back to Council in open session.