



Staff Report

Administration

Report To: Committee of The Whole
Meeting Date: November 18, 2019
Report Number: FAF.19.237
Subject: Update to Corporate Media Relations Policy POL.COR.12.11
Prepared by: Tim Hendry, Communications and Economic Development Coordinator

A. Recommendations

THAT Council receive Staff Report FAF.19.237, entitled "Update to Corporate Media Relations Policy POL.COR.12.11";

AND THAT Council approve the updated Corporate Media Relations Policy POL.COR.12.11 provided as Attachment 1 to report FAF.19.237.

B. Overview

This staff report requests Council approval of the updated Corporate Media Relations Policy POL.COR.12.11.

C. Background

The Community Communications Advisory Committee, at its September 16, 2019 meeting, reviewed the draft Corporate Media Relations Policy and passed the following:

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, with identified revisions, for Council consideration, Carried.

The identified revisions from the Committee were as follows:

- Break out the definition of traditional media versus social media;
- State if a matter is discussed in Closed Session, members shall maintain the confidentiality of the matter discussed;
- Confirm if the Committee Spokesperson needs to have messaging vetted;

- Integrity Commissioner opinion should be added to Closed Session portion of the policy.

D. Analysis

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.

The updated Corporate Media Relations Policy as endorsed by the Community Communications Advisory Committee has been revised to include a variety of communication 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 #3 To Consistently Deliver Excellent Customer Service

Objective #5 Constantly Identify Opportunities to Improve Efficiencies and Effectiveness

F. Environmental Impacts

No environmental impacts are anticipated as a result of this report.

G. Financial Impact

No financial impacts are anticipated as a result of this report.

H. In consultation with

Shawn Everitt, Chief Administrative Officer

Community Communications Advisory Committee

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 and Economic Development Coordinator at communications@thebluemountains.ca

J. Attached

1. Draft Corporate Media Relations Policy
2. Current 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:
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Policy

POL.COR.12.11 Corporate Media Relations Policy

Policy Type:	Corporate Policy
Date Approved:	Month, 00, 2019
Department:	Administration
Staff Report:	FAF.19.237 Update to Corporate Media Relations Policy POL.COR.12.11
By-Law No.:	2019-

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), and online news websites.

Social Media: Social Media includes 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 Administrative 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 Administrative Officer and/or the Mayor.
- In the event that the Chief Administrative Officer is not available, the designated Acting Chief Administrative 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 Administrative 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. The spokesperson must report to the Committee in regard to the formal response or communication provided.

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.

Members of Council may state the reason why they did not support a decision of Council, however Members of Council are required to refrain from making disparaging comments about Council members, the process and decisions.

Closed Session

For matters related to closed session meetings, both Members of Council, staff and Committee Members shall maintain the confidentiality of the matter discussed within the closed session meeting.

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.

DRAFT

TOWN OF THE BLUE MOUNTAINS

POLICY & PROCEDURES

Subject Title: Corporate Media Relations Policy

Corporate Policy (Approved by Council)

Policy Ref. No.: POL.COR.12.11

Administrative Policy (Approved by CAO)

By-law No.:

Department Policy: (Approved by Mgr.)

Name of Dept.: Administration

Date Approved: May 14, 2012

Staff Report: CEDC.12.4

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.

Purpose

The Town of The Blue Mountains recognizes that the media is one of the most effective ways of publicizing information on municipal issues, programs and events to residents.

Newspaper, radio, television and the Internet are, in many cases, the key sources of information for our residents on municipal issues and events.

Media calls are important. Every call is an opportunity to convey information to residents and other stakeholders about the actions, programs and services of local government.

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

- provides timely and accurate responses to media inquiries;
- conducts media relations in a manner that is objective, understandable, open and transparent within the law.

Application

This policy applies to all Town of The Blue Mountains employees and members of Council.

Definitions

Media: Accredited journalists whose electronic and print media are members of the Ontario Press Council, the Canadian Circulation Auditing Board and other relevant organizations including:

- Local, regional and national publications, such as daily and weekly newspapers, professional and commercial magazines and trade publications
- Radio, broadcast television and cable television
- Internet based news sites
- Wire services
- Freelance writers- often working for news services, magazines or book publishers

Procedures

Proactive Media Relations

Media releases, media advisories and news conferences are issued and arranged by the Communications and Economic Development Coordinator (CEDC) in conjunction with the Mayor, the Chief Administrative Officer and/or the appropriate department.

The CEDC is responsible for issuing media releases about Council's activities, decisions and plans. All employees will pass on important information to the CEDC which could be used as a basis for a media release, advisory or news conference.

Reactive Media Relations

News media enquiries, whether by phone, email, letter, or in person, 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.

News Cycles

In the case of some media channels such as newspapers, print deadlines play a role in when news will be 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 in order to achieve timely and maximum coverage of news released by the Corporation.

Spokespersons

A spokesperson may be any Town of The Blue Mountains employee or member of Council.

Potential Town spokespersons who are not members of Council or Senior Management Team will speak to their Supervisor or Director prior to the media interview to confirm they are the designated spokesperson for the topic, speak consistent with the formal corporate message and present clear and concise information.

Town of The Blue Mountains Councillors may be spokespersons on events or issues of personal interest to them.

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

All Town spokespersons will protect the good name and image of the Town of The Blue Mountains in communication with the media.

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)

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 bi-annually by the Senior Management Team for report to Council in open session.