

Wheatland County
COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS POLICIES

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COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS SECTION 1.1	COMMUNITY RECOGNITION Page 1/2
Effective Date: Aug. 5, 2008 (Res. 08-417)	Revised: May 5/20 CM – Res. 2020-05-27 (Policy Restructure) Revised: Dec. 1/20 CM – Res. CM-2020-12-17

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is for Council to recognize birthdays, anniversaries, and other special milestones and achievements.

POLICY

Upon request, Wheatland County will order and present plaques or certificates to recognize the following milestones:

- 75th birthdays and every 5 years thereafter.
- 50th wedding anniversaries and every 5 years thereafter.
- 100th and 125th Family Farm anniversaries.
- Grand openings, other anniversaries, or other appropriate milestones and achievements of local organizations and persons in the municipality, as approved by Council resolution.

Plaques incorporating photographs may be requested so long as the person(s) requesting the plaque can provide a high-resolution image.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Communications is responsible for ordering and arranging delivery of plaques in a timely manner.

Communications is responsible for directing invoices associated to plaque orders, including shipping/delivery costs, to accounts payable for processing.

A record of requests for plaques must be kept as per the Records Retention Schedule by Communications.

DEFINITIONS

“**Communications**” means employee(s) within the Communications division and designates.

REFERENCES

Policies:

- Corporate and Financial Services Policy Section 2.1 - Procurement Policy
- Human Resources Policy Section 6.1.2 - County Assets and Resources

PROCEDURE

1. To qualify, a person must be a resident of Wheatland County. Special consideration will be given to former residents.
2. Immediate relatives or other interested parties may request this recognition plaque from Wheatland County Communications on behalf of the resident or their family.
3. Family members may make arrangements with the local Councillor or other elected officials to present the recognition plaque; otherwise, arrangements must be made with Communications for pickup and/or mail.
4. Wheatland County may present a plaque in recognition of other achievements by local organizations, other municipalities, or persons, as approved by Council Resolution or by the Chief Administrative Officer.

DOCUMENT OWNER

Communications

COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS SECTION 1.2	MARKETING AND PROMOTIONAL ITEMS Page 1/4
Effective Date: Feb. 5, 2013 (Res. 13-02-56)	Revised: Oct. 1/13 CM – Res. 13-10-10 Revised: May 5/20 CM – Res. 2020-05-27 (Policy Restructure) Revised: Dec. 1/20 CM – Res. CM-2020-12-17

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to authorize the purchase and dispensing of corporate marketing and promotional items to partners, organizations, community groups, and others, as indication of appreciation and support for their partnership and service.

POLICY

Wheatland County will use this policy to guide its response to requests for marketing and promotional items by Council, external organizations, the general public, and employees, in a manner that promotes accountability, transparency, and fairness while enhancing Wheatland County’s image and community pride.

General Marketing and Promotional Item Selection and Inventory

- Marketing and Promotional Items should promote a positive corporate image.
- Quality goods shall be purchased at a cost that provides the best value while adhering to the Procurement Policy.
- The selection of new Marketing and Promotional Items shall be approved by Communications on an annual or as-needed basis depending on stock levels, budget availability, and custom requests.
- Communications may work with other departments to select, order, and purchase specific Marketing and Promotional Items.
- Marketing and Promotional Items inventories will be reviewed periodically to determine which products should be purchased during the year.
- Inventory tracking will be maintained for all promotional products exceeding \$50 per item.

Distribution of General Marketing and Promotional Items

- For inventory and budget management, requests for Marketing and Promotional Items (internal and external) will be processed by Communications if the total value of materials does not exceed \$200 for a single event. The Chief Administrative Officer must approve requests if the total value of materials exceeds \$200 per event.

- Requests for Wheatland County Marketing and Promotional Items may be fulfilled at the discretion of Communications, provided that one or more of the following conditions are met:
 - The group requesting the item is a non-profit group.
 - The item is being used as a prize or silent auction item for a fundraising event open to the general public.
 - Any proceeds generated from the item will be used to support the operations of the requesting group.
 - The item is being given in recognition or thanks for a presenter or instructor who has performed a service for Wheatland County.
 - Marketing materials are used to share information about Wheatland County's programs and services.
- Departments requiring Marketing and Promotional Items totaling over the \$200 threshold, will be required to contribute to the costs of these products.
- Distribution should reflect a level of fairness amongst external organizations.
- Marketing and Promotional Items should be purchased with the intent of distribution to external agencies and persons. Communications and/or the Chief Administrative Officer must be advised and approve requests to distribute promotional items/gifts given directly to employees. All staff must have equal opportunity to obtain items used internally as door prizes or gifts during training sessions or to recognize their service as per the Social Events and Long Service Recognition Policy.
- Any donation of Wheatland County Marketing and Promotional Items not meeting the criteria outlined herein shall be at the discretion of the Chief Administrative Officer.
- All Marketing and Promotional Items are available for purchase at cost as per the Master Fee Schedule.

Dignitary Gifts

- Dignitary gifts shall be presented by the Reeve, except:
 - In the Reeve's absence, the Deputy Reeve or a designated Councillor, Chief Administrative Officer, or designated members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), may present a dignitary gift.
 - In extraordinary situations when the Chief Administrative Officer or members of the SLT meet with a dignitary in the absence of the Reeve, Deputy Reeve or a Councillor, and a gift exchange occurs, senior employees may present a dignitary gift from the Marketing and Promotional Items inventory.

Unique Marketing and Promotional Items for Individual Departments

- Specific or uniquely branded Marketing and Promotional Items requested and used exclusively by individual departments, must be approved by Communications, and the cost of which will be accounted for under the department's budget.
- Departments that have purchased Marketing and Promotional Items with the consent of Communications, are responsible to maintain their own inventory.

Use of Wheatland County Identifiers

- Only representatives of the County are permitted to apply Wheatland County Identifiers onto Marketing and Promotional Items. External agencies are not permitted to utilize Wheatland County Identifiers.
- Wheatland County Identifiers must be clearly and permanently applied to Marketing and Promotional Items.

DEFINITIONS

“Communications” means employee(s) within the Communications division and designates.

“Dignitary” means high-ranking representative(s) of a Canadian and/or foreign business, government, non-government organization, and/or cultural institution visiting the County; or that may be visited by representatives of the County in an official capacity, such as: an outbound delegation, special ceremonies of local business and community organizations (e.g., grand opening, milestones, and other similar events), or other related County events and activities.

“Marketing and Promotional Items” include, but are not limited to, pens, blankets, tote bags, water bottles, tumblers, golf balls, stress balls, notebooks, pins, USB sticks, etc., as well as marketing materials such as brochures, flyers, display posters, banners, etc.

“Wheatland County Identifiers” are a form of permanent identification with one or a combination of the following identifiers: Wheatland County, Wheatland County Logo, and any other logos developed for the identification and use of Wheatland County or its individual departments.

REFERENCES

Policies:

- Corporate and Financial Services Policy Section 2.7 - Master Fee Schedule
- Corporate and Financial Services Policy Section 2.1 - Procurement Policy
- Human Resources Policy Section 6.1.1 - Code of Conduct
- Human Resources Policy Section 6.1.2 - County Assets and Resources

PROCEDURE

Existing Marketing and Promotional Items

- When possible, requests should be submitted six weeks in advance of an event to ensure there is a sufficient inventory of Marketing and Promotional Items. Requests submitted on short notice will be fulfilled depending on the current inventory and specifically requested items may not be guaranteed.
- Requests for Marketing and Promotional Items must be submitted to Communications and include the following:

- Date and type of event
- Intended use items (i.e., door prize, gift to speaker, etc.)
- Quantity of Marketing and Promotional Items required
- Preferred items
- If Communications is unable to approve the request due to the restrictions or guidelines outlined in this policy, the request will be forwarded to the Chief Administrative Officer.
- If the request is approved, the Marketing and Promotional Items will be removed from inventory and provided to the person(s) requesting such items. If the preferred/requested items are not available, Communications will work with the person(s) requesting the items to reach a compromise.
- When requested, Wheatland County will provide up to 50 County pins at no charge. A fee of cost, plus GST, will be charged for each pin thereafter.

New Marketing and Promotional Items

- Requests for new Marketing and Promotional items must be submitted, at minimum, six weeks in advance of an event to ensure there is sufficient time to order and receive the items.
- When applicable, employees should prepare a listing of preferred items from various vendors to compare pricing in accordance with the Procurement Policy.
- Staff requesting specific or uniquely branded items to be used exclusively by their department, must account for the costs associated with the purchase of said items.
- If Communications is unable to approve the request due to the restrictions or guidelines outlined in this policy, the request will be forwarded to the Chief Administrative Officer, or delegate.
- If the request is approved, the Marketing and Promotional Items will be ordered and provided to the person(s) requesting such items.
- If the preferred/requested items are not available, Communications will work with the employee(s) submitting the request for new items to find comparable items.

DOCUMENT OWNER

Communications

COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS SECTION 1.3	BULLETIN BOARD AND DISPLAY SPACES Page 1/2
Effective Date: February 19, 2013 (Res. 13-02-112)	Revised: May 5/20 CM – Res. 2020-05-27 (Policy Restructure) Revised: Dec. 1/20 CM – Res. CM-2020-12-17

PURPOSE

To advertise materials for external agencies, Wheatland County, and Wheatland Family and Community Support Services (WFCSS) services and programs.

POLICY

The purpose of the Bulletin Board, mounted adjacent to the main entrance doors on the Administration Office, as well as the other display spaces located within the front lobby, are to provide a space for local non-profit and non-commercial organizations involved in educational, civic, cultural, or charitable activities to display notices and flyers that promote awareness of services and events of interest to the community.

Promotional materials for Wheatland County and WFCSS are given priority for use of these display spaces over materials from the general community. Due to space limitations, Wheatland County prefers letter sized posters. Larger materials will be posted only if space permits.

Display spaces may advertise information including, but not limited to:

- Information from non-profit organizations, events, or bodies
- Library or library co-sponsored events and programs
- Materials of an educational, cultural, recreational, or philanthropic nature
- Government or municipal information
- Information that is relevant to the community
- All materials must be of good quality, well written, accurate, and easily understood by the public

Display spaces may not advertise:

- Any material that is religious, political, offensive, or commercial in nature
- Advertising for a product, rental property, or service
- External job postings
- Petitions or sign-up sheets
- Promotion of political candidates or agendas
- Lost and found notices
- Information that violates confidentiality of a person, business, etc.
- Information that is of a violent or harassing nature

Wheatland County reserves the right to remove any information posted on the bulletin board for any reason, at any time.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Wheatland County front office employees will ensure the information placed in display spaces is current and meets policy guidelines.

Wheatland County is not responsible for the preservation or protection of displayed items and employees are not available to answer questions about any material displayed that are not directly related to Wheatland County services or material.

REFERENCES

Policies:

- Human Resources Policy Section 6.1.1 - Code of Conduct
- Human Resources Policy Section 6.1.2 - County Assets and Resources
- Human Resources Policy Section 6.1.4 - Confidential Information
- Human Resources Policy Section 6.1.7 - Respectful Workplace and Harassment Protection

PROCEDURE

- Materials must be delivered or sent to the administrative office for approval.
- Materials will be posted on a first come, first served basis.
- Approved materials will be posted by front office employees.
- Materials that do not meet the policy guidelines will be discarded without notice.

DOCUMENT OWNER

Communications

COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS SECTION 1.4	RESIDENT COMMUNICATIONS Page 1/6
Effective Date: July 15, 2014 (Res. 14-07-64)	Revised: May 5/20 CM – Res. 2020-05-27 (Policy Restructure) Revised: July 7/20 CM – Correction (CAO Approved) Revised: Dec. 1/20 CM – Res. CM-2020-12-17

PURPOSE

Wheatland County exists to serve its residents with services to maintain, enhance, and promote community. Our employees strive to provide the general public with a high level of service in the act of carrying out our mission.

The purpose of this policy is to provide a procedure for Wheatland County residents who wish to submit a question, comment, service request, or concern with respect to a Wheatland County program, service, facility, or employee, and how employees will respond to such submissions.

POLICY

Wheatland County employees will receive and respond to all questions, comments, and concerns promptly, respectfully, transparently, and fairly in accordance with Wheatland County’s high standards.

- Any member of the public can file a Submission.
- The County will make every effort to resolve Submissions received in a fair and timely manner, using the established procedure.
- The County will ensure that all employees are aware of the policy and procedures and provide training if required.
- Wheatland County will regularly monitor and review Submissions to identify issues, trends, areas of concern, and opportunities for improvement.
- Unreasonable Requests will be addressed in accordance with the procedures of this policy.
- For concerns related to employees, Management, and/or the Chief Administrative Officer shall ensure that appropriate disciplinary measures are taken if necessary.

This policy is not meant to address:

- Issues addressed by legislation, an existing bylaw, policy, or procedure.
- A decision of Council or a decision of a Committee of Council.
- Complaints from Wheatland County employees.

All Submissions will be treated in a confidential manner in order to protect the complainant's privacy in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, subject to the need to disclose information as may reasonable be necessary in order to properly investigate the matter. The municipality will also protect the privacy of any employee who is the subject of a complaint except when required in order to address the immediate complaint or address any labour relation issue(s) that may arise out of the complaint.

DEFINITIONS

“Comment” means general feedback regarding the services provided by or within Wheatland County without an expression of required action.

“Compliment” is an expression of approval or appreciation or satisfaction of a Wheatland County service, employee, program, product, or process.

“Concern” is an expression of dissatisfaction related to the service, actions, or lack of actions by Wheatland County in connection with the delivery of services to the public. Concerns may relate to the actions of a policy, process, or procedure. Anonymous allegations or allegations made on behalf of an unidentified third party will not be entertained or investigated.

“County” means Wheatland County.

“Service Request” is a request made to the County from or on behalf of a resident for a specific service, or to notify the County that a scheduled service was not provided on time (i.e., snow plowing, tree trimming, blocked culvert, grading, etc.).

“Submission” in this policy means any question, suggestion, comment, compliment, concern, or service request submitted to Wheatland County by any member of the public. All submissions warrant a response; only some submissions require action or escalation from employee, to department head, to Chief Administrative Officer and Council, in accordance with this policy.

“Suggestion” is an idea submitted to Wheatland County by a customer with the aim of improving services, programs, products, or processes.

“Question” is an inquiry submitted to the County where information is being sought.

“Unreasonable Requests” are requests that consume a disproportionate amount of time and resources, not within Wheatland County's jurisdiction, and they may be discriminating, harassing, or violent in nature.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Public Responsibilities

1. If a member of the public wishes to file a Submission, they can do so by speaking with the appropriate contact at Wheatland County or by submitting a “Contact Us” form on Wheatland County’s website.
2. After submission, Wheatland County employees will direct members of the public in accordance with this policy and may require a written request if not already completed.

Written Submissions must contain the following information:

- Nature of the Submission: compliment, concern, general comment/feedback, suggestion, or question
- Department or business area it is regarding
- Address, intersection, or location if applicable
- Description explaining the reasoning behind the Submission
- Photos, if applicable
- Full name
- Phone number
- Email address

Employee Responsibilities

1. Administrative employees will receive Submissions from the public through the Wheatland County website, by email, by phone, or in person.
2. Upon receiving any Submission, a County employee will be in contact with the client to confirm receipt even if no action is required.
3. Many Submissions can be resolved easily and quickly, often at the time they arise. If the issue is resolved, employees will notify the client and no further action or escalation is required.
4. When necessary, Submissions will be referred by the receiving employee to the appropriate department for their review and/or completion.
5. In the case of serious concerns that cannot be resolved by an employee, the concern should be forwarded to a department head.
6. Employees must use professional judgement and department specific procedures when determining when a concern must be escalated to department heads.
7. Concerns, certain service requests, or anything requiring follow-up must be put in writing. Employees must use professional judgement as to when written statements are required and guide members of the public to use the “Contact Us Form” on the Wheatland County website when possible. Verbal concerns and certain service requests should be recorded and will warrant the same treatment as written requests.
8. Comments and concerns related to bylaw infractions shall be carried out in accordance with the bylaw procedure below.

Department Head Responsibilities

- The department head shall investigate concerns brought to them and respond to the complainant clearly outlining any decisions.
- Additionally, the department head may provide a report to the Chief Administrative Officer outlining any decisions with respect to the concern and reasons for how the decision was determined.
- The review of a concern shall be impartial and respectful to the parties involved.

Chief Administrative Officer Responsibilities

- Any matters that cannot be resolved by department heads shall be forwarded to the Chief Administrative Officer to be resolved at their discretion.
- Concerns related to department heads shall be handled by the Chief Administrative Officer.

REFERENCES

Policies:

- Human Resources Policy Section 6.1.1 - Code of Conduct
- Human Resources Policy Section 6.1.4 - Confidential Information
- Human Resources Policy Section 6.1.7 - Respectful Workplace and Harassment Protection
- Human Resources Policy Section 6.1.8 - Workplace Violence
- Human Resources Policy Section 6.6.3 - Progressive Discipline
- Human Resources Policy Section 6.8.1 - Employer-Initiated Termination

Bylaws

- Bylaw 2018-03 Code of Conduct
- Bylaw 2020-09 Nuisance and Unsightly Properties

Legislation

- *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, RSA 2000, c F-25

PROCEDURE

Bylaw Violations

Bylaw violations are generally not immediate in nature, however, should the issue be an urgent matter and contact with the County beyond regular business hours cannot be obtained, the local RCMP detachment should be contacted.

All concerns relating to bylaw violations will be forwarded to Wheatland County Protective Services or the appropriate officer, such as in the case of Land Use Bylaw violations.

All concerns related to potential violations of Bylaw(s), will be carried out in accordance with the provisions set out in the Enforcement Section of the applicable Bylaw, and shall be submitted in writing specifying:

- The complainant's contact information including name, address, and phone number.
- Detail and description if possible, of the violation including:
 - the name(s) of all person(s) involved,
 - the legal description of all property(s) involved or location of the claimed violation(s),
 - date(s) and time(s) of the claimed violation(s), and
 - description of the vehicle(s) and/or person(s) involved including license plate information where possible.

If appropriate contact information and/or details are not provided, or if a concern is made anonymously, the issue(s) may not be effectively resolved.

Unreasonable Requests

This procedure establishes a framework for handling such Unreasonable Requests and is intended to protect employees and volunteers representing the County from discrimination, harassment, and violence.

1. Employees are responsible for documenting interactions and maintaining records with persons making Unreasonable Requests. Records must be retained in accordance with the records retention schedule.
2. Employees shall provide any supporting materials (i.e., emails, letters, and notes documenting a conversation or incident) and advise their manager / supervisor of the steps that have been taken to resolve Unreasonable Requests, including:
 - The length of time that employees have been in contact with the requestor and time spent addressing the Unreasonable Requests.
 - The correspondence that has been exchanged with the requestor.
 - The number of Unreasonable Requests that the requestor has made on the same matter or substantially similar facts and the status of each.
 - A description of the nature of the requestor's behaviour and/or demeanour.
3. Managers / supervisors are responsible for investigating any Unreasonable Requests brought forward. Managers / supervisors will contact other department heads to determine if the Requestor has contacted multiple departments with respect to the same or similar issue.
4. If, after reviewing the circumstances, the manager / supervisor may determine that action should be initiated in accordance with procedures outlined in this policy, and/or they will advise the Chief Administrative Officer that a Warning Letter is to be issued to the requestor specifying the actions and behaviour that have led to issuance of the Warning Letter. Additionally, the Warning Letter may outline restrictions that will take effect should the requestor not cease to submit Unreasonable Requests. Restrictions include, but are not limited to:

- Requesting that the requestor's correspondence with employees to be a particular format (i.e., email only), time (i.e., telephone calls only at specific times and days of the week) or duration (i.e., conversations may not be longer than 10 minutes).
 - Restricting the requestor to a particular point of contact at the County and other employees will be advised to refer the requestor to that point of contact.
 - Attempting to ensure that any face-to-face interaction between the requestor and employees take place in the presence of an appropriate witness and the assigned point of contact, during a time that is agreed upon by all parties.
 - Indicating that employees may not be able to respond to further written correspondence regarding future Requests or a substantially similar issue.
5. If a requestor disregards the warning letter and continues to submit Unreasonable Requests, the actions outlined in the warning letter will take effect immediately.

DOCUMENT OWNER

Chief Administrative Officer

COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS SECTION 1.5	PUBLIC PARTICIPATION Page 1/7
Effective Date: June 16, 2015 (Res. 15-06-38)	Revised: March 6/18 CM – Res. 18-03-25 Revised: May 5/20 CM – Res. 2020-05-27 (Policy Restructure) Revised: Dec. 1/20 CM – Res. CM-2020-12-17

PURPOSE

In accordance with Section 216.1 of the *Municipal Government Act*, this policy has been developed to recognize the value of public participation and create opportunities for meaningful public participation in decisions that directly impact the public.

This policy is in addition to and does not modify or replace the statutory public hearing requirements in the *Municipal Government Act*, or any other statutory requirement

POLICY

Council recognizes that good governance includes engaging Municipal stakeholders in Public Participation by:

- Creating opportunities for Municipal Stakeholders who are affected by a decision to influence the decision.
- Promoting sustainable decisions by recognizing various Municipal Stakeholder interests.
- Providing Municipal Stakeholders with the appropriate information and tools to engage in meaningful participation.
- Recognizing that although Councillors are elected to consider and promote the welfare and interest of the Municipality as a whole and are generally required to vote on matters brought before Council, facilitating Public Participation for matters beyond those where public input is statutorily required can enrich the decision-making process.

The policy applies when engaging Municipal Stakeholders on County-led projects, policies, or initiatives to ensure there is a consistent and effective approach to public engagement.

Circumstances Requiring Public Participation

The County endeavours to undertake Public Participation activities in the following circumstances:

- When new programs or services are being established.
- When existing programs and services are being reviewed or changed in significant ways.
- When the County examines services and service standards as part of budgeting, capital, or financial plans.

- When gathering input or formulating recommendations with respect to the County's strategic or business plans.
- When required by legislation.
- When deemed necessary by the Chief Administrative Officer, Communications, or department heads.
- When directed by Council.

Approaches Used for Public Participation

The County's Public Participation approach includes five strategies related to reaching and involving Stakeholders in any given initiative. The nature of the decision, the time available, the resources available, and the ability of Stakeholders to influence the decision all determine which strategy is used. The range of strategies is listed below in descending order, from the most broadly applicable (Inform) to the least (Empower, which may be prohibited by legislation for many decisions). The five available strategies are:

1. Inform: Communicate decisions and actions to Stakeholders.
 - a. The County makes information available that is timely, accurate, easily understood, and accessible so that Stakeholders are aware of the activities of their municipal government.
2. Listen and Learn: Gather and understand stakeholder feedback.
 - a. The County listens to Stakeholders, records their input, and reports their input to decisions makers and back to Stakeholders.
3. Consult: Work with Stakeholders to ensure their input is directly reflected in the alternatives developed.
 - a. The County consults with Stakeholders to obtain feedback, uses their feedback to develop alternatives for decision makers, and reports to Stakeholders and decision makers how stakeholder input contributed to the recommendations made.
4. Collaborate: Consider Stakeholders to be partners in the decision-making process.
 - a. The County collaborates with Stakeholders on analyzing issues, building alternatives, identifying a preferred solution, and making joint recommendations to decision makers, and advises Stakeholders on how collaboration affected outcome.
5. Empower: Aspects of the decision-making process are delegated to Stakeholders.
 - a. The County abides with the decisions made under delegated authority.

For every County Public Participation initiative, the purpose of the engagement must be clarified for all participants at the beginning of the process. The roles and responsibilities of all parties should be clearly communicated and understood.

Planning Public Participation Activities

Public Participation activities must be designed in a manner that encourages inclusive participation to gain all perspectives. All participants in Public Participation activities engage each other in a respectful, safe, and non-confrontational manner.

The County will use the Public Participation Strategy and Toolkit to design, execute and report back from custom-designed public participation projects whose outreach and participation activities are properly matched to issues that arise, to questions or choices that Council and employees require input on, and/or to program and service revisions.

All County employees will follow the design process described in this policy and the Public Participation Strategy and Toolkit to ensure the appropriate selection of both the level of participation and associated tools.

All departments must ensure early and inclusive identification of audiences who need to be informed and offered opportunities to participate in worthwhile initiatives where public input is needed; formats and tools spanning in-person and online communication and participation activities will be selected based on audience need.

Reporting and Use of Public Participation Results

The County commits to reporting out broadly and to participants specifically on the input received and on how it was used.

Council and Administration strive for the best understanding of stakeholder views and perspectives on topics and issues, however the input received through Public Participation is one factor in the decision-making process, and its influence varies relative to other factors (such as budgets or time frames) in any specific decision.

Legislative and Policy implications

- All Public Participation will be undertaken in accordance with the *Municipal Government Act*, the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, County policies and bylaws, and any other applicable legislation.
- All Public Participation will be undertaken in accordance with all existing municipal policies.
- This policy will be reviewed at least once every four years.
- Nothing in this policy affects any right or obligation that the County or any person has under any other provision of the *Municipal Government Act*, as per section 216.1(4) of the Act.
- No resolution or bylaw of Council may be challenged on the grounds it was made without complying with this policy, as per section 216.1(5) of the *Municipal Government Act*.
- Where appropriate and feasible, the County encourages its Boards and Committees to create meaningful opportunities for Public Participation in their activities.

DEFINITIONS

“Administration” are administrative employees of Wheatland County.

“County / Municipality” means Wheatland County.

“Communications” means employee(s) within the Communications division and designates.

“Stakeholders” are residents of Wheatland County, as well as individuals, organizations or persons that may have an interest in, or are affected by, a decision made by the Municipality.

“Participation Tools” are tools that may be used, alone or in combination, to create public participation opportunities including, but not limited to:

- In-person participation methods which may include at-the-counter interactions, door knocking, interviews, meetings, roundtables, town halls, open houses, and workshops
- Digital participation tools which may include online workbooks, chat groups, webinars, message boards/discussion forums, online polls, or surveys
- Written participation which may include written submissions, email, and mail in surveys, polls, workbooks
- Advertising and media tools include newspaper / magazine ads and inserts, radio ads, social media ads and posts, addressed and unaddressed ad-mail, posters, tax, and utility bill inserts
- Representative participation which may include being appointed to an advisory committee, ad hoc committee, or resident board

“Public Participation” is an opportunity to understand all perspectives on a decision, whether those perspectives are held by one or many Stakeholders. Public participation is not a vote or plebiscite.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Council Responsibilities

Members of Wheatland County Council will:

- Identify any opportunities for Public Participation as early as possible in the decision-making process.
- Work with Administration to identify areas where public engagement can and will make a meaningful difference to Council decisions.
- Consider public input obtained through Public Participation activities as part of their decision-making process.
- Promote public participation opportunities and encouraging participation of identified audiences.
- When appropriate, Council will attend and observe public participation events and communicate positively to residents, stakeholders, and media about the importance of such events and activities to the County.
- Ensure resources are available to allow for the implementation of appropriate Public Participation programs and services.
- Review this policy to ensure the policy complies with all relevant legislation, municipal policies, and the spirit and intent of Public Participation.

Administration Responsibilities

Administration will:

1. Identify any opportunities for Public Participation as early as possible in the planning process.
2. With assistance from Communications, assess whether the County needs to execute a public participation initiative that falls into either the “Input Zone,” or “Engagement Zone,” considering whether the issue is linked to corporate / Council directed initiatives and making recommendations accordingly.
3. Assess both the County’s capacity for running these initiatives, and community capacity for participation, clarifying the rationale for which initiatives to proceed with.
4. Identify audiences to engage with, while thoughtfully considering the need to engage “harder-to-reach” audiences for some initiatives.
5. Strategically develop a Public Participation and Communications Strategy that lays out the WHAT of the issue to be discussed, the WHO to engage (and WHY them), and the WHEN and HOW to engage effectively (using a time-limited and phased process to ensure completion).
6. Review the Public Participation and Communications Strategy with Communications and/or the Chief Administrative Officer before proceeding and making modifications as needed to ensure a diversity of opinion and ideas is gathered. Confirming both the importance of the issue/question and the resources needed to make participation valuable and successful.
7. Execute the participation initiative as effectively and transparently as possible, using Communications and the Public Participation and Communications Strategy as key resources.
8. Continuously build skills and tools for effective participation that suit the needs and capacities of the local government and the broader community.
9. Follow a co-ordinated approach to Public Participation across the organization.
10. Ensure that the resources invested in Public Participation activities are reasonable and appropriate for the impact the decision will have on Stakeholders.
11. Determine the appropriate timing, location, and format that should be considered for effective participation.
12. Develop and maintain all necessary processes and tools that support the implementation of this policy.
13. Maintain County communication channels with up-to-date information and opportunities for Public Participation.
14. Ensure information is provided to municipal stakeholders in the simplest form possible – in plain language or understandable graphic formats.
15. Notify Council prior to any public engagement activities.
16. Ensure the location and physical accessibility of in-person events are considered.
17. Ensure information is readily available so the public may participate in an informed discussion. Utilize multiple Participation Tools.
18. Collaborate with Communications to ensure all projects follow County policies for communications, social media, media, FOIP, etc.

19. Document and report the activities at several stages, keeping participants up to date on activities and results, and encouraging further and broader participation over time.
20. Evaluate the findings of the participation activities to influence the evolving policy, plan, or decision; communicating how the input gathered has influenced progress to date. Administration will communicate to Council, and the community where appropriate, how public input was gathered and used in administrative recommendations to Council.

REFERENCES

Policies

- Communications and Public Relations Policy Section 1.6 - Social Media Roles and Responsibilities
- Human Resources Policy Section 6.1.1 - Code of Conduct
- Human Resources Policy Section 6.1.2 - County Assets and Resources
- Human Resources Policy Section 6.1.4 - Confidential Information
- Human Resources Policy Section 6.9.8 - Social Media

Legislation

- *Municipal Government Act*, RSA 2000, c M-26
- *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, RSA 2000, c F-25
- *Public Participation Policy Regulation*, AR 193/2017

PROCEDURE

Prior to creating a Public Participation and Communications Strategy, employees must consider the following items and how they affect the participation process:

- Organizational Capacity
- Council Priorities
- Ongoing Communications
- Role Clarity
- Community Limitations
- Available Participation Tools

Public Participation and Communications Strategy

Part 1: Design the Public Participation and Communications Strategy by utilizing the Public Participation Strategy and Toolkit, and following the steps outlined below:

1. Clarify the issue and purpose of public participation
2. Identify key audiences
3. Determine the level of participation
4. Design and scope the process
5. Select tools and tactics
6. Develop strong messaging
7. Develop evaluation criteria

Part 2: Implement the Public Participation and Communications Strategy by utilizing the Public Participation Strategy and Toolkit, and following the steps outlined below:

1. Raising awareness and inviting participation
2. In person and online participation
3. Data collection and reporting back
4. Evaluating

Establishing an Advisory Committee

Council may choose to establish a consultative body to provide advice and recommendations to County Council regarding a specific topic. Setting up an Advisory Committee should be set up prior to public participation. Generally, Advisory Committees last for the project or a 1-3 year term (with the option to renew and/or accept new members). To create an Advisory Committee:

1. Clearly define the committee's purpose and level of authority up front in the call for membership, the terms of reference, and during the process.
2. Utilize a consistently credible process to create, operate, and close the committee.
3. When selecting members:
 - a. Encourage a cross-section of representation and balance between divisions, interests, origins, and aspects of social identity (i.e., gender, race, ethnicity, age, etc.).
 - b. Establish committee through a formal Council motion.
 - c. Depending on the type of Advisory Committee, Council may specify that committee member have certain expertise.
 - d. Members should not have any conflict of interest.
 - e. Establish guidelines for membership (i.e., must be a resident, eligible to vote, a Canadian citizen, not employed by the municipality, over the age of 18, etc.)

DOCUMENT OWNER

Communications

COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS SECTION 1.6	SOCIAL MEDIA ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
Effective Date: September 15, 2015 (Res. 15-09-64)	<div style="text-align: right;">Page 1/7</div> Revised: May 5/20 CM – Res. 2020-05-27 (Policy Restructure) Revised: Dec. 1/20 CM – Res. CM-2020-12-17

PURPOSE

With increased public access to the internet and the rise of social media, the public is now able to stay informed and engage with Wheatland County online. This creates a dynamic communications opportunity that is constantly developing and changing. Social media contributes to the overall communications goals for the County which include having a global progressive image and keeping stakeholders informed and engaged. The unique benefits of social media include:

- Increasing residents’ access to government.
- Building relationships with residents, partners, and stakeholders.
- Providing better customer service.
- Increasing the level of trust in government.
- Enhancing the reputation and image of the County.
- Creating a dialogue with the public.

Wheatland County recognizes that social media platforms are important tools for communicating and engaging with the public. It is also understood that there are risks involved in engaging in any communications activities, including social media, as misunderstandings and misinterpretations may occur between people. It is important to mitigate such risks as much as possible.

This policy is intended to encourage a positive approach to the use of social media and support appropriate, professional use of social media for County business purposes.

POLICY

Wheatland County will use social media to:

- Manage messages by creating content that stands alongside mass media.
- Clarify stories in mass media that are inaccurate or need supplemental information.
- Promote media releases, public service announcements and media advisories, and break stories to the media.
- Provide additional communication channels in times of emergency.
- Provide greater scope to adjust communications quickly when necessary.
- Share and create reliable and valuable information.
- Reach specific audiences on specific issues.
- Promote an event or activity the public is invited to participate in.
- Make an announcement that does not warrant a media release.

- Seek public feedback.
- Outline a change to a service or operation.
- Share public safety messaging linked to an annual campaign.
- Support and share community contests.
- Support an external organization's initiative that the County is sponsoring or is directly involved in.
- Respond to questions the public may have about services, operations, or events
- Create and invite people to events.
- Share a project, program or initiative that portrays Wheatland County as an innovative and desirable place to live.
- Provide a more personal perspective than a media release.
- Provide information on the history of Wheatland County and how we are always connected to the heritage of the region.

Wheatland County has several official media accounts. Unless directly administered by Wheatland County employees or elected members of Council, other social media pages/accounts that have "Wheatland" or "Wheatland County" in the page/group name or reference Wheatland County in some way, are NOT official County pages. The posts and/or discussions on these pages do not reflect the views or corporate identity of Wheatland County. Audiences should only associate posts published on the verified Wheatland County Social Media Accounts / Channels as authentic Wheatland County posts.

DEFINITIONS

"County" means Wheatland County.

"Communications" means employee(s) within the Communications division and designates.

"Content" is any information that is posted on social media including words, pictures, videos, links, and anything else displayed on a social media account. Content is what drives social media. Content is what attracts followers, promotes engagement, creates controversy, and helps people in an emergency. Content can take many forms, but the best content is engaging, exciting, informative, and accurate. Every piece of content means something to viewers.

"Social Media Accounts/Channels" include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, etc.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Communications is responsible for the coordination and management of the County's main Social Media Accounts/Channels. Any employees authorized to use any of the County's social media accounts, must acknowledge they are effectively acting as the "voice" of the County and must conduct themselves accordingly by following the Code of Conduct Policy and the Procedures outlined in this policy.

Communications

- While the conduct of every employee has an influence on the image of the County, Communications is responsible for managing the overall image and brand of Wheatland County.
- Communications handles media requests, media monitoring, media training, crisis communications, and issues management.
- Communications also manages and monitors the main Wheatland County Social Media Accounts/Channels, provides advice and strategy for social media campaigns, and training for County employees who are required to use social media in the workplace.

Administration

- Develop social media content to highlight their departmental activities to be posted on the main County social media accounts.
- Collaborate with Communications to create and implement public participation and communications strategies when social media is identified as a key participation tool.

Access to Social Media Sites

Wheatland County employees must obtain approval to use social media for all County business purposes. This includes using social media to gather information, represent the County in online interactions, and manage a site/account to support a County initiative. To obtain authorization, an application must be approved by the employee's Manager/Supervisor, Communications, and the Chief Administrative Officer. The three levels of access to social media sites are as follows:

- *Read*: this level of access is used by employees to gather information or conduct research. Employees can access content on social media sites but do not have permission to contribute to them.
- *Contribute*: Employees with approval for this level of access are able, with supervision and support, to act as a County representative on an external site. In addition to gathering information and conducting research, employees will use social media to reply to public inquiries, communicate with the public or to comment on social media sites (i.e., on a discussion forum or blog).
- *Create/Maintain*: A limited number of employees will have permission to create and/or maintain an account for County business. This level of access may include, for example, the creation of a Facebook page or Twitter account for project-specific communication or a public consultation. Employees authorized to use social media also ensure that related County policies are followed including:

- Communications: When using social media to communicate with the public, County employees will coordinate with Communications to get advice about effective social media use, and to ensure communications are coordinated and aligned with related County priorities.
- Privacy and Personal Information: County social media sites will avoid collecting personal information or posting the personal information of users.

Monitoring of Social Media Sites

Wheatland County will ensure that County-maintained social media sites are monitored by authorized users, and/or designated back-ups, during regular office hours. When possible, filters will be applied so that any contributions/comments coming from the public require approval before being posted. Additionally, when possible, all Social Media Channels will deploy a profanity filter to prevent unfavourable language.

The County reserves the right to monitor content posted on its social media sites or accounts and to modify or remove any postings that it deems, in its sole discretion, to be in contravention of County policies or guidelines or relevant provincial and federal legislation. The County also reserves the right to remove and further ban any users that it deems, in its sole discretion, to be inappropriate, abusive, or otherwise in contravention of County policies or guidelines or relevant provincial and federal legislation.

Dealing with Sensitive Matters

Occasionally, an individual or organization that is engaging with the County may do so in a disrespectful manner. If this user is trying to engage with the County, follow the processes outlined in this policy to determine if their comments warrant a response.

Social Media Administrators can hide and delete posts or block users. It is preferred that comments are hidden before they are deleted or blocking a user is considered. Communications should be contacted if there are any comments or messages posted to the County's Social Media Accounts that are disrespectful, discriminatory, sexual, illegal, or profane in nature that required removal.

It is not the County's preference to ban or block users on social media, but if an individual violates this policy repeatedly, then there is recourse for denying them access to that social media account. Keeping a record of these violations is suggested, if the individual or group in question contacts media or tries to take legal action.

Using Social Media for Personal Use

As residents, employees are encouraged to use social media to be informed about the County and to share County initiatives. However, employees are reminded to use social media in accordance with the employee Code of Conduct and Social Media Policies under the Human Resources Policies.

Employee Conduct in using Social Media

All posts to County social media sites will be made by authorized users and in accordance with Wheatland County's Social Media Roles and Responsibilities and Code of Conduct. All content will be in alignment with goals, priorities, and procedures specifically developed for each topic, event, or area of interest with approval of Communications and/or the Chief Administrative Officer.

Consequences for Abuse of Social Media

In the event a County employee uses social media in a manner that violates Wheatland County's Code of Conduct or Social Media Guidelines and Policies, the user may lose access to that social media account and may face disciplinary action up to and including termination as per the Progressive Discipline and Employer-Initiated Termination Policies under the Human Resources Policies.

Social Media Use Must Comply with Legislative Requirements

The *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FOIP) applies to the collection, use and disclosure of any personal information by the County, including personal information that is collected, used, or disclosed on social media. Personal information means information about an identifiable individual such as the person's name, address, and age. It also includes the person's opinion and photographic image. Subject to a few exceptions, the individual's personal information cannot be disclosed by the County, including through social media, without the individual's written consent. FOIP also requires that the County give notice of the intended use of any personal information it collects from individuals.

Keep in mind that the creator of any original work, including any piece of artwork, music, photograph, video, written work, or trademark, owns the rights to that original work under Intellectual Property Legislation. Unless a County employee has created the work in the course of their employment duties, (and subject to a few exceptions), the County cannot use or share an image of that original work without the written consent of its creator.

REFERENCES

Policies

- Communications and Public Relations Policy Section 1.4 – Resident Communications
- Human Resources Policy Section 6.1.1 - Code of Conduct
- Human Resources Policy Section 6.1.2 - County Assets and Resources
- Human Resources Policy Section 6.1.3 - Conflict of Interest
- Human Resources Policy Section 6.1.4 - Confidential Information
- Human Resources Policy Section 6.1.7 - Respectful Workplace and Harassment Protection
- Human Resources Policy Section 6.1.8 - Workplace Violence
- Human Resources Policy Section 6.6.3 - Progressive Discipline
- Human Resources Policy Section 6.8.1 - Employer-Initiated Termination

- Human Resources Policy Section 6.9.6 - County-Issued Mobile Phone Use
- Human Resources Policy Section 6.9.7 - Personal Mobile Phone Use
- Human Resources Policy Section 6.9.8 - Social Media

Legislation

- *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, RSA 2000, c F-25
- *Alberta Human Rights Act*

PROCEDURE

The main County social media accounts are an excellent way to get a message across to the public because of the level of engagement and number of followers these accounts have. This procedure outlines best practices for creating social media posts:

1. **Social media should be engaging:**
Content needs to be interesting otherwise the public will not be engaged. Engaging the public leads to conversations, creates relationships and makes people feel like their opinion is worth something. Asking questions is a good way to increase engagement and generate interest.
2. **Social media should educate or inform:**
Content should educate the public on new programs, initiatives, and policies. When appropriate, the County will share posts from community groups and agencies to aid in their public engagement.
3. **Social media should be varied:**
Try to create social media posts that sound unique and exciting. Changing the wording or adding multimedia content keeps the messaging fresh and keeps engagement high.
4. **Social media should catch the eye:**
The County's social media posts compete with millions of others every day. Including media (graphics, videos) in the post, especially something unique, will likely get attention and improve the County's engagement rate.
5. **Social media should respect the follower:**
Respect the audience. Even if the County's followers may not be familiar with a specific program or initiative, they are the people that the County serves, and we need to treat them respectfully. Posts and imagery should also represent a broad representation of genders, racial equality, etc.
6. **Social media should be part of a larger communications strategy:**
It is great to promote on social media, but it works even better when it is a part of a larger whole like a communications strategy. Social media is just one part of Wheatland County's toolkit, but an important one.

Responding to Comments and Messages

A member of the public may choose to report a concern, request a service, as a question, or provide general feedback, by utilizing Wheatland County's social media channels either by posting a comment or sending a private message.

Comments and messages made by a member of the public are to be treated as a submission in accordance with the Resident Communications Policy. However, members of the public filing a Submission may be asked to file a written request or be directed to the Wheatland County website to file the request through the “Contact Us” form for better tracking.

When responding to comments and messages, authorized users of Wheatland County’s Social Media Channels will:

- Respond in a kind tone.
- Provide information and provide links to resources when possible.
- Not argue with members of the public.
- Limit replies and direct the commentor to contact the office for more information.
- Use professional, but easy to understand language that cannot be easily misunderstood.
- Use proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
- Acknowledge when an error is made and correct the issue promptly.

DOCUMENT OWNER

Communications

Notification to Wheatland County

Written correspondence must be submitted to the Wheatland County's Chief Administrative Officer no less than five (5) business days in advance of filming activity. Filming that involves the use of facilities and/or parks, roadways or sidewalks, dedicated parking arrangements, special effects, firearms, and alteration to street signage requires a submission of not less than ten (10) business days in advance of filming activity. Upon receipt, approval will be issued within three (3) business days. Notifications that are 'emergent' and time sensitive in nature may be dealt with on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the Chief Administrative Officer.

Notification to Residents and Businesses

Affected residents and/or businesses must be notified in writing, of filming not less than five (5) business days in advance for approvals prior to the commencement of filming activity. Information such as location and duration of filming, planned special effects, road and land closures, sidewalk obstruction, and street parking restrictions must be communicated by means of the signed letter. The letter must be printed on company letterhead and must include the name and telephone number of the Location Manager.

In situations where filming activity impedes access to a business or businesses, it is the responsibility of the Production Company to approach affected owners in order to identify means of limiting disruption and/or to determine appropriate levels of compensation for lost business. If a mutually acceptable agreement cannot be made, Wheatland County will attempt to determine a solution directly or through the alternative dispute resolution process.

The Location Filming approval letter may be revoked if it is discovered that affected residents and/or businesses have not been adequately notified of filming activities.

Consideration of Residents and Businesses

It is the Production Company's responsibility to ensure that there is a minimum of disruption to residents and businesses resulting from filming activity. This includes ensuring uninhibited access to property and freedom from environmental conditions that include, but limited to spill over lighting, exhaust fumes or excessive noise.

- Lighting should be oriented away from neighboring residences and businesses.
- All generators used on streets or in public areas must be equipped with silencing attachments.
- Every attempt must be made to limit excessive vehicle idling.

In the event of long-term filming activities, measures taken to limit disruption must be deemed satisfactory to all affected residents and businesses.

Traffic and Traffic Stoppages

Wheatland County is prepared to close streets, alleys, lanes, and sidewalks for filming activity. Requests for closures must be stated clearly in writing and must receive signed approval from the Chief Administrative Officer.

It is the Production Company's responsibility to arrange for all required traffic control and to make arrangement with the Chief Administrative Officer or representative to cover, alter, remove and/or reinstall traffic or street signs as may be necessary. All costs associated with these arrangements are the responsibility of the Production Company.

Parking

Wheatland County will attempt to provide dedicated space within County owned lots for all essential film unit vehicles.

In all circumstances, production vehicles must not block fire hydrants, pedestrian crosswalks, road intersections, driveways, ramps, and priority parking stalls.

Development and Building Permits

Development or building permits issued by Wheatland County, pursuant to the Land Use Bylaw may be required on a case-by-case basis upon review of the Chief Administrative Officer.

Special Effects/Firearms

Use of firearms, explosives, flash powder, detonators, flammable liquids, and the filming of dangerous stunts must be stated clearly in writing and have the signed approval of the Chief Administrative Officer. All dangerous/hazardous materials must be stored and used in accordance with all applicable Federal and Provincial Laws, Regulations and Guidelines.

The attendance of the Fire/Rescue Departments may be required for the use of fire or pyrotechnic effects. All costs associated with these requirements and related clean up are the responsibility of the Production Company.

Clean Up

Upon completion of filming activity, the Production Company must ensure that the site is returned to its original condition. An inspection of the project site by Wheatland County employees will be conducted to ensure compliance.

Conduct

It is the responsibility of the Production Company to ensure that their staff and all individuals associated with the production operate in a safe and professional manner in the course of their duties.

Fees/Expenses

The Production Company is responsible for all administrative fees and out-of-pocket expenses related to the use of Wheatland County roads, properties, parks, equipment, or employees if required.

A deposit in the form of a letter of credit or certified cheque made payable to Wheatland County, may be required in advance of filming work and shall not be returned until all conditions, including cleanup of filming location, and full payment of expenses incurred by Wheatland County have been fulfilled. The deposit amount is to be determined by the Chief Administrative Officer.

Indemnification/Save Harmless

The Production Company shall indemnify and save harmless Wheatland County from and against all claims, actions, damages, injuries, costs, expenses or losses whatsoever, which may arise or be brought against Wheatland County as a result of, or in connection with the said use of the location(s) by the Production Company, its employees, contractors, agents, or representatives; and specifically, Wheatland County will not be responsible for any liability arising from these activities with respect to advertising or any copyright or trademark infringements.

Insurance

The Production Company shall, at its own expense, including the cost of deductibles, provide and maintain:

- Commercial General Liability Insurance insuring against claims, providing coverage in an amount of not less than Five Million (\$5,000,000) dollars per occurrence naming Wheatland County as additional insured.
- Automobile Third-Party Liability Insurance in an amount of not less than One Million (\$1,000,000) dollars covering all owned/leased vehicles used.
- Any other form of insurance (aircraft liability, pyrotechnics liability, fire legal liability) as may be applicable. Proof of coverage must be submitted to the Chief Administrative Officer as part of the approval process.

REFERENCES**Policies:**

- Human Resources Policy Section 6.1.2 - County Assets and Resources

Bylaws:

- Bylaw 2020-09 Nuisance and Unsightly Properties

PROCEDURE

All location filming and commercial photography requests within the boundaries of Wheatland County, must include the required information as outlined in the responsibilities section of this policy, and be coordinated through the Chief Administrative Officer:

Chief Administrative Officer
Wheatland County
Hwy 1, RR1, Strathmore, AB, T1P 1J6
Telephone: (403) 934-3321 Fax: (403) 934-4889
Email: admin@wheatlandcounty.ca

DOCUMENT OWNER

Chief Administrative Officer