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Corporate Communications Policy

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1. Objective

The purpose of the Corporate Communications Policy is to ensure that communication by and across the Township of Asphodel-Norwood is coordinated, effectively managed, accurate, accessible, timely, and responsive to the information needs of Council, Township staff, the public, community partners, businesses, and other stakeholders.

This Policy is intended to support transparent local government, consistent messaging, effective customer service, and the responsible use of all corporate communication channels.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to all official Township communications, including internal and external communications, website content, social media, mobile applications, media relations, advertising, public notices, community event promotion, corporate publications, signage, posters, digital displays, and other communication tools used for Township purposes.

This Policy applies to all Township employees, volunteers, and any individuals authorized to communicate or publish information on behalf of the Township.

This Policy does not apply to the personal social media accounts or personal communications of members of Council or employees, provided such communications do not represent, or reasonably appear to represent, the official position of the Township. Members of Council and employees remain responsible for complying with the Code of Conduct for Members of Council, confidentiality obligations, election-related restrictions, and all other applicable legislation and Township policies

3. Roles and Responsibilities

The following general responsibilities apply to the administration of this Policy:

Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)

Provides corporate oversight for Township communications and may approve or designate staff to issue communications on behalf of the Township.

Clerk (or designate)

Coordinates corporate communications, including Council-related communications, media releases, statutory notices, website updates, and social media content, in consultation with the CAO and department managers, as required.

Management Team

- Identifies communication needs within their respective departments and provides timely, accurate content for internal and external communications, including contributions to the Weekly Update to Council and staff;
- Reviews department-specific content for accuracy and ensures staff are aware of communication requirements relevant to their areas of responsibility.

Employees and Authorized Users

Shall use Township communication channels, including social media, only as authorized and in accordance with this Policy, applicable Township policies and procedures, and all relevant legislation. When access is no longer required, permissions shall be revoked and passwords updated as soon as practicable.

4. Internal Communications

Open, timely, and collaborative communication between Council, the Chief Administrative Officer, the Management Team, and staff supports effective municipal service delivery and a positive work environment. Where practicable, staff should be informed of matters affecting Township operations before information is released broadly to the public.

Internal communication tools may include:

- Regular staff, department, and Management Team meetings
- The Weekly Update, developed by the Management Team, and emailed to members of Council and all-staff
- Council and Committee agendas, minutes, reports, and resolutions
- Management Action Lists
- Internal email, memos, and notices
- Press or media releases, public notices, and service updates

5. External Communications

External communications are central to the success of the Township and the well-being of the community. As a function of good government, open, and proactive communications help ensure that the public receives clear, relevant, and timely information regarding:

- what must be known, such as by-laws, statutory notices, public meetings, emergency information, and regulatory requirements;
- what should be known, such as municipal contacts, service levels, programs, fees, service disruptions and project updates; and
- what is helpful to know, such as community events, public engagement opportunities, achievements, partnerships, and the annual Year in Review.

The Township uses a variety of communication channels to reach the public, including the Township website as its primary source of municipal information, as well as email, direct mail, print media, social media, the Township mobile app, public notices, signage, posters, and other appropriate tools.

6. Website and Digital Communications

The Township website, www.antownship.ca, shall remain the Township's primary online source for municipal information. Social media and other digital channels are intended to complement the website, broaden the reach of corporate messages, and direct the public to official information.

Departments are responsible for ensuring that website content within their areas of responsibility is accurate, current, and complete. The Clerk, or designate, coordinates website and mobile application updates with departments for consistency, accessibility, and overall content quality.

Electronic communications should use plain language where practicable and direct the public to

the appropriate Township webpage, staff contact, form, meeting material or service channel.

7. Social Media

Social media refers to online platforms and tools that allow organizations to publish, share, and distribute information to broad audiences. The Township uses social media to support public awareness, service delivery, emergency and service disruption messaging, community engagement, and promotion of Township programs, projects, meetings, events, and initiatives.

Official Accounts and Platform Use

The Township may maintain official corporate social media accounts, including Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and X (formerly Twitter), and may add, remove, suspend, or deactivate accounts at the discretion of the CAO or designate.

Facebook and Instagram shall be the Township's primary social media channels based on audience reach, staff capacity, and platform effectiveness. The Township may maintain additional accounts for purposes such as account preservation, name recognition, cross-posting, or urgent communications; however, it is not required to post identical content across platforms and may limit or discontinue use of any platform as resources and communication needs require.

All official Township social media accounts shall, where possible, clearly identify that they are maintained by the Township and shall include appropriate contact information or links to the Township website.

Authorized Use and Content Standards

Only authorized users may post to official Township social media accounts. Authorized users shall post only for official Township purposes and, where applicable, only within their area of responsibility or with approval from the appropriate department manager, Clerk, Chief Administrative Officer, or designate.

Social media posts should be concise, accurate, accessible, respectful, non-partisan, and consistent with the Township's brand and corporate voice. Posts should direct the public to the Township website or other official source where additional detail is required.

Comments, Direct Messages, and Public Engagement

The Township's social media channels are intended to share official information and direct the public to appropriate service channels. They do not replace formal correspondence, service requests, complaints, statutory submissions, participation in public meetings, emergency reporting, or direct contact with Township staff.

Comments will be disabled on Township social media posts and accounts wherever platform settings permit. This approach helps ensure that Township channels remain focused on sharing accurate and official information, while reducing the risk of misinformation, inappropriate content, and public interactions that cannot be consistently monitored. It also reflects the Township's limited capacity to monitor multiple platforms in real time.

Restricting comments is not intended to limit public engagement or access to the Township. Questions, service requests, concerns, feedback, and other correspondence may be submitted through appropriate Township channels, including:

- Email: info@antownship.ca
- Direct communication with members of Council, Township departments, or staff;
- Township online forms and digital engagement tools, including “Report an Issue” on the Township website and “Have Your Say” through the Township mobile application;
- Written correspondence to Council or staff;
- Attendance at public meetings, open houses, or other engagement opportunities; and
- Requests to appear as a delegation before Council, in accordance with the Township’s Procedural By-law.

Where public input is sought on a specific project or initiative, the Township will identify the appropriate method for providing comments or feedback. Social media posts may be used to promote these opportunities and direct the public to the applicable webpage, survey, form, meeting, or other engagement channel.

Direct messages to Township social media accounts may not be monitored and do not constitute official notice to the Township. Responses may be provided at staff discretion and will generally direct the sender to the appropriate Township contact, webpage, form, or service channel. The Township is not obligated to respond to all direct messages, tags, mentions, or other social media interactions.

Township social media channels are monitored primarily during regular office hours. Emergencies must be reported by calling 9-1-1. Urgent municipal matters should be reported through the appropriate Township contact or service channel.

Prohibited Content and Moderation

Although comments will be disabled wherever possible, certain platforms may continue to permit direct messages, tags, mentions, reviews, reactions, replies, or other forms of public interaction. The Township may remove, hide, restrict, block, report, or otherwise moderate content that:

- Is unrelated to the subject matter of the post or Township business;
- Contains profane, abusive, threatening, harassing, defamatory, discriminatory, or hateful language;
- Promotes or encourages discrimination or harassment contrary to the *Human Rights Code* or applicable Township policies;
- Contains personal attacks against individuals or groups, including members of Council, employees, volunteers, businesses, or organizations;
- Discloses personal, private, confidential, or sensitive information about any individual;
- Compromises, or may reasonably compromise, the safety or security of individuals, Township operations, facilities, infrastructure, or information systems;
- Encourages, promotes, or depicts illegal activity;
- Constitutes spam, repetitive content, unsolicited promotions, or contains malicious or deceptive links, including malware, phishing attempts, or scams;
- Promotes commercial advertising, sales, solicitations, or promotions without prior Township

authorization and a clear municipal or community purpose;

- Contains election campaign material, election advertising, partisan political content, or endorsements contrary to the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, the Township's Use of Corporate Resources for Elections Policy, or other applicable requirements;
- Infringes on copyright, trademark, or other intellectual property rights;
- Violates an applicable law, regulation, platform requirement, or Township policy; or
- Is otherwise inconsistent with the purpose of the Township's social media channels or the standards established by this Policy.

The Township may block or restrict users who repeatedly contravene this Policy or use Township social media channels in a manner that interferes with the Township's ability to provide accurate, respectful, and reliable public information.

The Township may document or retain social media content where required for administrative, legal, security, records management, or enforcement purposes.

Social Media Sharing

The Township may share, repost, or otherwise distribute content from community organizations, service groups, municipal partners, businesses, or other third parties where the information relates to an event, program, service, or initiative occurring within the Township or of broader community interest.

All sharing of third-party content is at the Township's discretion and subject to staff capacity, timing, relevance, community benefit, accuracy, accessibility, and alignment with this Policy. The Township is not obligated to share all requests received. Sharing content does not constitute endorsement, sponsorship, or approval of any event, organization, product, service, or viewpoint.

Where feasible, the Township will share content directly from the originating organization's official account or source rather than creating new Township-branded posts, graphics, or event listings. Township-created content for third-party initiatives may be considered where there is a clear municipal partnership, public service purpose, emergency or service-related need, Council direction, or significant community benefit.

The Township will not generally promote private or invitation-only events, partisan political or election-related content, or content that is discriminatory, unsafe, unlawful, or primarily commercial in nature, unless there is a clear municipal purpose and prior approval from the CAO or designate.

Records, Privacy, Accessibility, and Copyright

Information posted to or collected through Township social media and digital communication channels may constitute a municipal record and will be managed in accordance with applicable legislation and the Township's records retention policies.

Confidential information, closed session material, personal information, or any content not approved for public release must not be shared through Township communication channels.

All content must comply with applicable accessibility, privacy, copyright, and intellectual property

requirements.

8. Community and Third-Party Promotion

Posters and Community Notices

The Township may post, display, or circulate posters and community notices from community organizations, service groups, municipal partners, businesses, or other third parties where the information relates to an event, program, service, or initiative occurring within the Township or is otherwise of broader community interest. This may include placement on community notice boards and Township digital displays or facility screens. Content displayed through these channels is subject to the criteria and approval considerations outlined in this Policy.

Requests should be submitted to **info@antownship.ca** and will be directed to the appropriate department or staff member for review, as applicable. Requests should be submitted at least five (5) business days prior to the desired posting or event date. Additional lead time is encouraged for larger events, time-sensitive campaigns, or materials requiring review, formatting, or printing.

Submissions should include the event name, date, time, location, organizing group, contact information, a website or social media link, and a print-ready poster or graphic, together with any relevant accessibility or registration information.

Where appropriate, submitted events may also be considered for inclusion on the Township's online community events calendar. Event organizers may be required to submit information separately through the applicable website form or process.

All requests are subject to Township discretion and consideration of staff capacity, space availability, timing, relevance, community benefit, accessibility, safety, content quality, and alignment with this Policy. The Township is not obligated to post, display, circulate, or publish all requests received. The posting or circulation of third-party materials does not constitute Township endorsement, sponsorship, or approval of any event, organization, product, service, or viewpoint.

The Township may decline, remove, or request revisions to materials that are inaccurate, outdated, unclear, inappropriate, inconsistent with Township policy, primarily commercial in nature, partisan or election-related, discriminatory, unsafe, unlawful, or not of broad community interest.

Unless otherwise approved, the requesting organization is responsible for creating and supplying its materials. The Township is not responsible for the damage, loss, or removal of third-party materials.

Staff will make reasonable efforts to review and maintain Township community notice boards at regular intervals and to remove materials that are outdated, expired, damaged, illegible, or no longer relevant. Materials may also be removed when space is required for other community or Township communications. Where there are insufficient current community notices, the Township may use available space to display general information about municipal programs, services, facilities, and recurring community initiatives.

Community notice boards will include information on how individuals and organizations may

request the display of a poster or submit an event on the Township's online events calendar.

Township Letterboards

The Township maintains letterboards in the Village of Norwood and the Hamlet of Westwood. Due to limited space and staff capacity, letterboard content will be prioritized as follows:

- Township programs, services, projects, notices, and events;
- Communications from municipal partners or other levels of government of significance to the Township;
- Service clubs, non-profit, and community organization events, where space permits; and
- Other community events or notices, at staff discretion.

Requests should be submitted to **info@antownship.ca** at least four (4) weeks prior to the desired posting or event date. Messages may be edited for length, clarity, and available space. The Township is not obligated to display all submitted content and may limit or decline requests based on available space, timing, and alignment with this Policy.

The Township does not guarantee that all approved messages will be displayed or that multiple letterboards will display the same content concurrently.

9. Media Relations

The purpose of media relations is to ensure that communication with the media is consistent, accurate, timely, and coordinated, and that the Township speaks through authorized spokespersons on official matters.

Media relations practices are intended to:

- Provide accurate and timely information to the media;
- Support transparency and public awareness of Township activities, decisions, and services;
- Ensure media communications are coordinated through authorized spokespersons;
- Maintain professional relationships with media representatives;
- Ensure technical or department-specific information is reviewed prior to release; and
- Protect confidential, personal, closed session, and legally privileged information.

Reactive Media Relations

Media inquiries received by phone, email, letter, social media, or in person should be addressed as promptly as possible, taking into account media deadlines, operational requirements, and the need to verify information before release.

Employees who receive media inquiries shall refer them to the CAO, Clerk, or appropriate department manager, as applicable. Requests for interviews, technical information, or comments on sensitive or high-profile matters shall be directed to an authorized spokesperson.

Authorized Spokespersons

The Mayor and Chief Administrative Officer are the Township's primary spokespersons on corporate matters, unless another member of Council or staff is authorized to speak on a specific issue.

Members of Council may communicate with the media; however, unless authorized to speak on behalf of the Township, their comments are made in their individual capacity and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Township.

Media Representation at Council Meetings

Council meetings are open to the public and media, except for matters discussed in closed session in accordance with applicable legislation. Agendas and meeting materials are made publicly available in accordance with legislative and procedural requirements.

Where feasible, Council meetings may be recorded and made available through the Township's digital channels. The Township may also share meeting highlights or links to official materials to support public awareness and access to information.

Proactive Media Relations

Media releases, advisories, notices, and news items may be issued by the Clerk, or designate, in consultation with the Mayor, CAO, and appropriate department managers, as required.

The Clerk, in consultation with the CAO and relevant departments, will determine the appropriate communication method for disseminating information, including media releases, website updates, social media posts, or other tools.

Staff are encouraged to bring forward information about significant Township projects, service updates, public engagement opportunities, or other matters of community interest for consideration.

Emergency Communications

This Policy does not replace the Township's Emergency Management Plan or emergency communications protocols. During an emergency, communications shall be managed in accordance with the Emergency Management Plan and direction from designated emergency officials.

The Township may use a range of communication tools, including the website, social media, media relations, and other channels, to provide timely public information during emergencies or significant service disruptions.

10. Advertising, Branding, and Corporate Identity

The Township of Asphodel-Norwood's facilities, services, assets, and communications shall be

presented in a consistent and recognizable manner.

Corporate branding shall be applied consistently to support public recognition, professionalism, accessibility, and trust. Use of the Township's logo, colours, crest, or other identifying elements requires approval from the CAO, Clerk, or designate.

Township advertising shall be non-partisan, accurate, and appropriate for the intended audience, and must comply with approved budgets, procurement requirements, statutory obligations, and applicable Township policies. Advertising or promotion of third-party content is subject to this Policy.

11. References and Related Documents

This Policy should be read in conjunction with applicable legislation, by-laws, and Township policies, as amended from time to time, including:

- *Municipal Act, 2001*
- *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*
- *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*
- *Copyright Act*
- *Ontario Human Rights Code*
- *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*
- Township Records Retention By-law
- Township Procedural By-law
- Township Emergency Management Plan
- Township Code of Conduct for Members of Council
- Township Staff Policy Manual
- Township Use of Corporate Resources for Elections Policy
- Township Public Consultation Strategy
- Township Brand Identity Guideline

12. Review

This Policy shall be reviewed at least once per term of Council, or as needed to reflect legislative changes, operational requirements, evolving communication tools, or direction from Council or the CAO.