

May 6, 2014

**OFFICE OF THE CAO - CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS  
AND CORPORATE POLICY COMMITTEE JOINT REPORT 2014-01**

TO: Committee of the Whole

SUBJECT: New Corporate Policy – Staff Social Media Policy COMM.3-01

ORIGIN: Corporate Communications and Corporate Policy Committee

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**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**THAT Corporate Communications and Corporate Policy Committee Joint Report 2014-01 dated May 6, 2014 regarding new Corporate Policy – Staff Social Media Policy be received and the following recommendation be adopted:**

**THAT Council approves the attached Staff Social Media Policy COMM.3-01**

**COMMENTS**

The emergence of social media has fundamentally changed the way that organizations communicate with their stakeholders, both internally and externally.

The objective of the social media policy is to provide direction to staff in the appropriate use of social media. The policy and accompanying guidelines provide clarity around staff use of social media and distinguishes between corporate and personal use. As social media continues to evolve and gain popularity, the Town will course correct and adjust as necessary.

Please note that the policy and accompanying procedures are directed towards staff only. If Council wishes to create guidelines that apply to Council use of social media, this could be considered as part of the Council Code of Conduct.

The Corporate Policy Committee and Operational Leadership Team (OLT) recommend approval of this new corporate policy.

**BACKGROUND**

Since 2010, the number of Ontario municipalities participating in social media has increased by 860%. According to a recent survey by Redbrick Communications, more than half of all Ontario municipalities are using social media, including 91% of large municipalities with a population of 75,000 or more. The social media usage amongst municipalities is highest in Central Ontario with 79% of towns and cities using social media. Currently, only 20% of municipalities in Ontario that are active in social media have policies in place to outline the appropriate use of social media within the organization. (Statistics courtesy of Redbrick Communications).

In the summer of 2010, the Town of Newmarket began a pilot project in social media. The Town developed its first social media account on Twitter and has since created a presence on Youtube, Flickr and Instagram. Newmarket continues to use a centralized approach to social media (i.e. Newmarket will continue to focus efforts on one Town of Newmarket Twitter account, rather than a separate account for each department and/or initiative). All inquiries and interactions received via social media are filtered through approved corporate accounts. Designated social media moderators are responsible for monitoring and responding to these inquiries.

All corporate social media activities are overseen by the Corporate Communications department. Guidelines for social media moderators are attached to the corporate policy.

## Overview of Newmarket's social media activity

**TWITTER** - An online social networking and microblogging service that enables users to send and read short 140-character messages, called "tweets." Registered users can read and post tweets, but unregistered users can only read them.

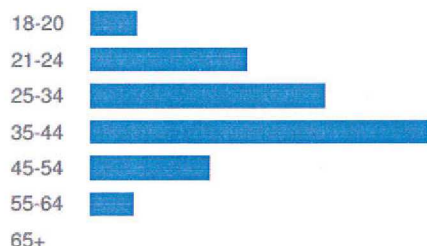
- To date, the Town has approximately 5,000 followers on Twitter
- On average, there are 40 – 60 new followers per week @townofnewmarket
- The fastest growing demographic following the Town is age 35-44

### Three-month Twitter highlights (February 5 – May 5, 2014)

#### TWITTER STATS

across all Twitter accounts

##### FOLLOWER DEMOGRAPHICS



##### TWITTER STATS



##### DAILY INTERACTIONS



##### OUTBOUND TWEET CONTENT

T 191 Plain Text

198 Links to Pages

12 Photo Links

Incoming Messages 1,628

Sent Messages 401

New Twitter Followers 660

New Facebook Fans 0

2,534 INTERACTIONS

BY 881 UNIQUE USERS

2,561,896 IMPRESSIONS

**Interactions:** The number of Twitter mentions and retweets connected to this Group.

**Unique Users:** The number of people who interacted with the Twitter profile in this Group.

**Impressions:** Combined number of potential users that saw any content associated with the Twitter profile connected to this Group.



**YOUTUBE** - a video sharing website that allows users to upload, view and share videos.

- **Currently there are 30 videos posted on the Town's YouTube channel**
- **There are more than 15,000 views on the channel**
- **The most watched video is the GLOW employment branding video with almost 9,000 views**

**Resident comment (on GLOW video):** "Very nice, I think this video is a good use of taxpayer's money. It makes you feel good to be a resident, puts a nice face on the great people who work for the town, and hopefully turns out to be an effective medium for the Town to connect with people."

**FLICKR** – An image hosting website that allows users to embed photographs in their websites or on the Flickr website through albums that are searchable with keywords in Flickr's built in search engine.

- **To date, the Town had 19 Flickr albums**
- **Albums with the most views include: Newmarket Ice Lounge (678 views), Trail Marker Unveiling (400 views) and Newmarket Earth Hour 2014 (251 views)**

**INSTAGRAM** - is an online photo-sharing, video-sharing and social networking service that enables its users to take pictures and videos, apply digital filters to them, and share them on a variety of social networking services, such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr and Flickr.

- **The Town has 78 instagram posts and 178 followers**

## **CONSULTATION**

A Corporate Social Media Committee was created to participate in the creation of the corporate social media policy and provide content for social media updates. The committee consists of a cross-section of representatives from throughout the organization including, but not limited to, the Legal department, Recreation and Culture, Engineering, Legislative Services and Customer Service. The Town has worked closely with Brian Lambie of Redbrick Communications on the policy development, whose extensive background research in the area of social media has helped to shape the proposed policy.

The draft Policy was reviewed by the Corporate Policy Committee and presented and approved by the Operational Leadership Team.

The attached policy incorporates the feedback and comments from all of the stakeholders noted above.

## **BUSINESS PLAN AND STRATEGIC PLAN LINKAGES**

This policy is consistent with the Town's vision of being 'well-planned and connected' by providing telecommunications infrastructure and policies for an increasingly wired world. It represents Newmarket's commitment to be 'well respected' by being forward looking and promoting engagement in civic affairs.

This also aligns with Council's Strategic Focus Area of Community Engagement and Transparency and reflects our core values by demonstrating accountability and accessibility.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Once the policy is adopted, there will be workshop-style training sessions for all staff.

### **HUMAN RESOURCE CONSIDERATIONS**

There is a pilot in place for after-hours twitter monitoring from 5 – 9 p.m. Monday to Friday and 9 a.m. – 9 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. The Town's Twitter account notes that the account is not monitored 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

### **BUDGET IMPACT**

The adoption of the Social Media Policy has no direct impact on the operating budget. Subsequent decisions that affect the Town's participation and service level in social media (i.e. the amount of social media posts, correspondence and monitoring), could impact future requirements and resources.

### **CONTACT**

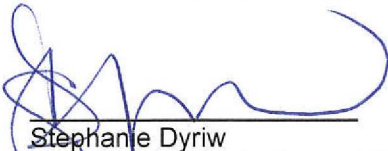
For more information on this report, contact Wanda Bennett at 905-895-5193 ext. 2041 or [wbennett@newmarket.ca](mailto:wbennett@newmarket.ca)



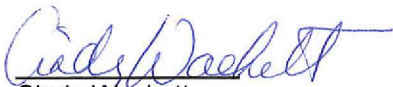
Wanda Bennett  
Director, Corporate Communications



Amber Harrison  
Senior Communications Officer,  
Co-Chair of the Social Media Committee



Stephanie Dyriw  
Supervisor of Marketing and Sponsorship,  
Co-Chair of the Social Media Committee



Cindy Wackett  
Corporate Policy Committee

## CORPORATE POLICY

Sub Topic:	Acceptable Use of Social Media	Policy No. COMM.3-01
Topic:	Social Media	Employees Covered: All Employees
Section:	Communications	Council Adoption Date:
Effective Date:	Revision No:	Date:

### Policy Statement & Strategic Plan Linkages

The Town of Newmarket (the Town) recognizes the value and public interest in social media, and the need to provide guidance to Town employees on the use of social media.

This policy is consistent with the Town's Strategic Plan and defines conduct that demonstrates the Town's core values: courage & creativity, accountability & accessibility, and integrity & excellence.

### Purpose

This policy guides Town employees in the acceptable use of social media and serves to distinguish between corporate use and personal use as it relates to Town business.

### Definitions

Corporate Use: refers to management approved activity on any social media platform or account that is operated and maintained by the Town.

Designated Social Media Moderator: a Town employee who is designated by the Director of Corporate Communications, in consultation with their Director, and is responsible for creating and approving content, posting to and monitoring a social media account on behalf of the Town, or one of its departments, programs or services.

Personal Use: refers to an employee's personal use of social media accounts on any social media platform at any time.

Social Media: web-based applications and on-line forums that allow users to interact, share and publish content such as text, links, photos, audio and video.

Social Media Platform: includes social networking (i.e. Facebook and LinkedIn), micro-blogging (i.e. Twitter and Tumblr), video sharing and podcasts (i.e. YouTube), photo sharing (i.e. Flickr), web-hosting (i.e. wikis and blogs).



Social Media/Networking Account: interactions and conversations among people in which they create, share, and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities, networks and internet/on-line forums. The interactions take place online and are two way in nature.

### **Responsibilities of Employees**

- access personal social media accounts using a personal e-mail address
- limit access to personal, social media accounts during working hours to designated breaks
- exclude links or post to Town email addresses to personal social media accounts
- exclude the use of Town corporate logos, crests or images from personal, social media accounts
- use caution, professional discretion and conduct when engaging in social media accounts
- refrain from posting information or engaging in conversations related to the Town that are controversial or contentious - particularly when discussing any product, cause, political party, or political candidate
- be aware that social media posting activities can appear transitory, however they are considered publications, and are subject to laws governing publications
- not generate or respond to content on social media that relates to Town business, programs or services unless identified as a Designated Social Media Moderator
- be aware of the consequences of unacceptable actions, which may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.
- be aware that they will be personally subject to fines and penalties when in violation of the law with respect to the acceptable use of social media

### **Responsibilities of Employer**

- communicate expectations to all employees
- inform employees on acceptable personal use of social media as it relates to Town business
- apply progressive disciplinary action as outlined in the attached guidelines as appropriate
- designate social media moderators to create and approve content, post to and monitor social media accounts and respond on behalf of the Town

### **Cross-References**

Acceptable Use of Information Technology (under development)

Administration Bylaw

Email Service Standards Policy –CI. 1-02

Employee Code of Conduct Policy –CAO. 3-01

Harassment & Discrimination Free Workplace Policy - HR.13-04

Internet & Email Acceptable Use Policy – IT.1-01

Media Relations Policy – COMM.5-01

Records Retention Policy - CORP.1-06

Use of Corporate Logo Policy – COMM 5

Violence Free Workplace - HR13-03

**Appendices** (which may be amended from time to time)

Appendix 'A' – Employee Guidelines for Acceptable Social Media Use

Appendix 'B' – Protocols for Corporate Social Media Use by a Designated Social Media Moderator

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**Appendix 'A'**  
**Employee Guidelines for Acceptable Social Media Use**  
**to**  
**Town of Newmarket**  
**Social Media Policy COMM.3-01**

Town of Newmarket (Town) employees who engage in personal use of social media should be aware that there are professional risks. Employees cannot control the fact that an audience may perceive that their posts are being made within the context of their employment with the Town. As such, caution should always be exercised. Furthermore, while social media activity can seem transitory, posts on social media are considered publications and are subject to laws governing publications.

Employees shall be guided by a traffic light model to help inform their judgement about their personal use of social media as those employees engaging in social media are unable to control that they may be perceived to be representing the Town. These guidelines are meant to provide employees with a sense of what types of activity could have the potential to affect the Town's corporate image and harm the Town, fellow employees, or personal interests.

**Green Light** – Activity that is low-risk. Employees should feel comfortable posting content that falls within this category without hesitation. This includes content or activity that:

- ✓ Is non-controversial, and positive in tone;
- ✓ Is unrelated to the Town ;
- ✓ Adheres to the terms of service of the applicable social media platform; and,
- ✓ Respects Town policies, procedures, standards and guidelines.

**Yellow Light** – Activity that may involve risk. Social media content or activity that meets any of the following criteria should be considered carefully before posting:

- Content that promotes a particular product, opinion or cause;
- Content that refers to a political party, political candidate or elected official;
- Content that refers to an individual or an identifiable group;
- Content that refers to media coverage;
- Content that shares or re-posts information that was produced by someone else;
- Content that posts photographs of events or individuals; or,
- Content that relates to the Town and its business.

**What are the risks?**

There are plenty of examples of the above content that can be shared by employees on their personal accounts without causing harm to the Town, their fellow employees, or their own interests. However, employees should use their best judgment and think carefully before posting. Here are some questions you may want to ask before you post:

- Am I respecting others' privacy?
- Am I confident that this could not be viewed as an attack on an individual or group?



- Have I made it clear that my views are my own, and not the views of the Town?
- *If sharing something created by a third-party or media outlet:* Have I read it through in its entirety? Do I know what I am sharing?
- Am I confident that this post does not have the potential to harm the Town or anyone employed by the Town?
- *If it relates to Town business:* Am I making it clear that I am an employee of the Town?
- Am I comfortable with the possibility that I could be misinterpreted, by some audiences, as speaking on behalf of the Town?
- Would I say the same thing in a public meeting? Would I post the comment under my own name?

If the answer to any of the above questions is not a confident “yes”, employees are encouraged to exercise caution. If they feel strongly that their information should be posted, employees would be wise to consult with their immediate supervisor or a Designated Social Media Moderator before posting the information.

**Red Light** – Activity that is high-risk. It is very likely to be considered unprofessional, and may affect the Town’s corporate image and/or cause harm to the Town, Town employees, the person posting, or others. As such, employees should refrain from posting content that:

- Provides personal information of individuals without their consent.
- Promotes, perpetuates and/or fosters discrimination based on any a prohibited ground(s) in accordance with Human Rights legislation.
- Is a personal attack on an individual or specific group.
- Is profane or abusive.
- Is sexually explicit or links to content that is sexually explicit.
- Conducts or encourages illegal activity.
- May compromise the safety and/or security of the public or public systems.
- Violates a legal ownership interest of another party.
- Responds to online inquiries or comments addressed to any of the Town's corporate social media accounts or other official communications channel (only Designated Social Media Moderators shall respond to inquiries on behalf of the Town).
- Is posted to a personal account during the employee’s hours of work, with the exception of designated breaks or lunch periods.

For further information or clarification, employees are encouraged to contact or consult with a Designated Social Media Moderator or Corporate Communications at extension 2040.

Appendix 'B'  
Protocols for Corporate Social Media Use  
by a Designated Social Media Moderator  
Town of Newmarket  
Social Media Policy COMM.3-01

## **Introduction**

These protocols are meant to guide the Town of Newmarket's corporate social media use.

Employees that serve as Designated Social Media Moderators will be entrusted with the responsibility of using social media to support objectives that may include, but may not be limited to:

- Disseminating information to the public quickly;
- Increasing access to information for targeted audiences;
- Sharing information and public notification during emergencies;
- Promoting Town events, programs and services;
- Driving traffic to the Town website ([www.newmarket.ca](http://www.newmarket.ca));
- Encouraging discussion, civic engagement and comment;
- Extending the reach of communications campaigns;
- Humanizing our connections with constituents and enhancing transparency;
- Recruiting employees and volunteers; and,
- Monitoring trends, issues and reactions to Town news.

## **Purpose of Protocols**

The Town recognizes that there is both value and public interest in its participation in social media. Furthermore, the Town should support staff by stating clear expectations about corporate use, standards and guiding principles.

Designated Social Media Moderators should refer to these protocols as a guide to:

- Protect the Town's reputation and ensure consistency and professionalism in how the corporation communicates via all online forums and social media platforms;
- Establish, monitor and maintain approved, corporate social media accounts;
- Provide timely, effective and accurate information and responses;
- Address controversial or sensitive matters relating to online content about the Town, its business, or its employees; and,
- Protect the privacy of municipal staff and the public who engage with the Town via social media platforms.

## **Protocols: Corporate Use of Social Media by Designated Social Media Moderators**

### New Accounts:

- The Town's corporate social media accounts will be approved, established and maintained by the Corporate Communications department.



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- Where possible, all corporate social media accounts will clearly indicate that they are maintained by the Town.
- Where possible, all corporate social media accounts will display:
  - The Town logo;
  - Applicable contact information;
  - A link to the official Town of Newmarket website; and,
  - Terms of use that clearly indicate what content is unacceptable and will be subject to removal without notification.

Account Management:

- The use of all social media accounts administered by the Town will adhere to:
  - All applicable provincial, federal laws, policies and regulations;
  - The terms of service of the applicable social media platform; and,
  - All existing Town policies, procedures and guidelines.
- The Town's corporate social media accounts will be administered and monitored by Designated Social Media Moderators.
- Designated Social Media Moderators will be appointed by the Corporate Communications department and will be trained regarding the terms of the Town's Social Media Policy.
- Designated Social Media Moderators are trusted to have access to login and password information that is owned by the Town. All user names and passwords will be set and/or changed with the permission of the Director of Communications. This information will be shared with both the Corporate Communications department and the Director of Human Resources.
- Updates to all corporate social media accounts will only be posted by a Designated Social Media Moderator and will adhere to this Social Media Policy, training that they have received and/or current best practice guidelines provided by the Corporate Communications department.
- Town generated content that requests feedback or input from the public will be reviewed and approved by the Corporate Communications department.
- Designated Social Media Moderators will review their assigned corporate social media accounts a minimum of three times daily (morning, mid-day and end of business day) to:
  - Ensure that all content is appropriate (See *Removal of Inappropriate Content* for further detail);
  - Review posted comments and inquiries to determine whether a response is appropriate; and,



Appendix 'B'  
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- Identify opportunities to engage in social media use that would benefit Town programs and/or service delivery.

Inquiries and Comments:

- Comments or inquiries directed to any corporate social media account should be reviewed by a Designated Social Media Moderator to determine whether a response is appropriate.
- If a Designated Social Media Moderator determines that a comment and/or inquiry require a response, it should be made within 48 hours, in accordance with the Town's Customer Service Policy.
- Negative, sensitive or controversial comments or feedback directed to any of the Town's corporate social media accounts will be reviewed by the Director of Corporate Communications to determine the best course of action.
- Responses to comments or inquiries must be approved by either a Designated Social Media Moderator, or if the matter is potentially contentious, the Director of Communications. Consultation with appropriate program staff is expected. For further clarification, see *Town of Newmarket Approval Guidelines for Designated Social Media Moderators*.

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Removal of Inappropriate Content:

- Inappropriate content will be removed. Examples include material that:
  - Provides the personal information of individuals;
  - Promotes, perpetuates or fosters discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, nationality, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation;
  - Is a personal attack on an individual or specific group;
  - Is profane or abusive;
  - Is sexually explicit or links to content that is sexually explicit;
  - Conducts or encourages illegal activity;
  - Is commercial in nature and is attempting to advertise, promote or sell products or services of an individual or an individual business;
  - Is for the purposes of promoting a candidate for municipal, provincial or federal election;
  - May tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems;
  - Violates a legal ownership interest of another party;
  - Does not comply with municipal, provincial or federal legislation;
  - Promotes an individual religion or religious service; or
  - Is deemed inappropriate in the opinion of the Town of Newmarket's Director of Communications.
- Inappropriate content identified by a Designated Social Media Moderator will be brought to the attention of the Director of Corporate Communications immediately to determine the best course of action.

Criteria for Promoting Community Events:

Social media moderators may choose to share information about community events through the Town's corporate social media accounts, provided that the event is open to the general public, occurs within the boundaries of the Town and meets one of the following criteria:

- Organized or funded by another order of government;
- Organized by a government-funded agency or board; or is,
- Organized by a group that is:
  - affiliated with the Town ;
  - organized by a charitable organization that has a registered charitable number and operates within the Town ;
  - organized by a service club that operates within the Town and performs work that benefits the Town's residents;

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- Organized by a local business improvement area for general promotional purposes; or is,
- Located in a facility owned or leased by the Town.

Notwithstanding the criteria listed above, the Town reserves the right to refuse or remove any event related information at any time, without notice.

Accessibility:

The Town is committed to the principle of accessibility and is required to comply with communications and information provisions within the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). As such, Designated Social Media Moderators must be able to facilitate delivery of material that the Town communicates through social media.

Privacy and Records Management:

*Social media platforms are third-party service providers and they are not private. The Town of Newmarket cannot guarantee that information will be recorded and we cannot assure confidentiality.*

These facts should be clearly stated on all Town corporate social media accounts.



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### **Approval Guidelines for Designated Social Media Moderators**

All social media content must be approved in advance of posting to ensure accuracy and professionalism. To promote responsive and effective two-way communication, a three-tiered approach to approvals is used, following a simple traffic light model to guide decision-making.

**Green Light** – Social media content or activity that meets the following criteria can be posted without hesitation:

- ✓ Sharing previously published information about Town events, programs and services.
- ✓ Emergency related announcements or information.
- ✓ Providing links to the Town's published and approved communications materials, such as web pages, news releases, newsletters etc.
- ✓ Links to positive media coverage about the Town.
- ✓ Responses to complimentary posts about the Town.
- ✓ Thanking people for following or connecting with the Town.

**Yellow Light** – Social media content or activity that meets any of the following criteria should be considered carefully before posting. The approval process should include discussions with related program staff and managers. Final approval from the Director of Corporate Communications is required. Examples would include:

- Responses to negative comments or inquiries directed to any of the Town's corporate social media accounts.
- Content that requests feedback or input from the public.
- Links to potentially controversial issues.
- Anything that makes reference to other governments or jurisdictions.
- References to any elected officials, political parties or political movements.
- References to religious events, holidays or beliefs.

**Red Light** – Designated Social Media Moderators should refrain from creating or sharing content that:

- Promotes a candidate for municipal, provincial or federal election;
- Makes negative references about any elected officials, political parties or members of political parties;
- Promotes a business, campaign, product or service that is not connected to or endorsed by the Town;
- Criticizes a business, campaign, product or service;
- Promotes an individual religion or religious service;
- Is a personal attack on an individual or specific group;
- Promotes, perpetuates or fosters discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, nationality, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation;

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- Is profane or abusive;
- Is sexually explicit or link to content that is sexually explicit;
- Conducts or encourages illegal activity;
- May tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems;
- Provides the personal information of individuals;
- Violates a legal ownership interest of another party; or
- Does not comply with municipal, provincial or federal legislation.