

POLICY No. 386

E-mail and Social Media Best Practices

APPROVAL DATE: February 19, 2019

DATE OF REVIEW:

Policy: The posting of content and engagement on behalf of the Village of Midway will be the responsibility of the Village's Chief Administrative Officer or designate.

Purpose: The Village of Midway strives to convey a professional image of the organization at all times and will work to ensure that all forms of communication from the Village meet specific standards of professionalism, accuracy, graphic standards, plain language, consistency and other best practices in organizational communication.

Procedure:

- 1. Social Media** - The Village Chief Administrative Officer or designate will authorize specific individuals to utilize social media in an official capacity to ensure that, as with all communications activities, communications through social media channels are accurate, consistent and professional.
 - 1.1. When representing the Village on social media, employees are expected to communicate in a respectful and professional manner and in accordance with all Village policies. Employees are not permitted to discuss personal or confidential information on social media sites, whether through public posts or private messages.
 - 1.2. The Village's social media followers and engagers must abide by the following principles of appropriate use or may be subject to removal. The Village of Midway reserves the right to remove posted online content, comments or links which contain any of the following from the Village's social networking sites:
 - Comments not relevant to the particular posting by the Village;
 - Slanderous or derogatory remarks, obscenities, profane language or sexual content;
 - Content that endorses, promotes, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, colour, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation;

- Promotion of commercial services or products other than sponsors, affiliations, or business partnerships;
 - Promotion of political candidates;
 - Promotion of illegal activity;
 - Spam or irrelevant external links;
 - Information that may compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems;
 - Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party.
- 1.3. All Village of Midway social networking sites shall adhere to applicable Provincial, Federal and local laws, regulations and policies including all Information Technology and Records Management policies and other applicable Village of Midway's policies.
- 1.4. *The Freedom of Information & Protection of Privacy Act* applies to social media content, e-mails and therefore content must be able to be managed, stored and retrieved to comply with the Act.
- 2. E-mail** - All Village of Midway staff and elected officials will use e-mail best practices as set out in this document when communicating with customers, clients or any third party on behalf of the Village of Midway.
- 2.1. Proof read e-mails before sending. Use a spell-checker and grammar-checker to ensure that the message is free of mechanical and grammatical errors. In the case of very important e-mails, consider having a colleague proofread a draft before the e-mail is sent. Poor writing can tarnish the Village's reputation and credibility.
- 2.2. Ensure the accuracy of e-mail content. Consult the appropriate authoritative source to verify that what you are writing is correct before you hit "send."
- 2.3. Use appropriate language and a professional tone in e-mail messages. It is often very difficult to determine when a person is using humour, sarcasm, or irony in an e-mail. Please note that e-mails that include humour, sarcasm or irony may be misunderstood and should be avoided.
- 2.4. Avoid using all capital letters. Messages typed in ALL CAPITALS are the e-mail equivalent of yelling, and may be taken as offensive.
- 2.5. Keep messages short, simple, clear and concise.
- 2.6. Remember that when you send an e-mail, that e-mail becomes part of a permanent electronic record. Whatever is written in your e-mail, including content and form, will be on the record until deleted.
- 2.7. While it's common to use short-hand for personal notes, it is unacceptable for business communication. Standard abbreviations (including: e.g., Mrs., Mr., etc.) will continue to be acceptable, however, the use of excessive or colloquial abbreviations (LOL, ROFL, TTYL, BRB, etc.) is unacceptable.

- 2.8. Ensure that all messages are sent only to the intended recipients. Avoid sending messages to parties that are not directly affected by the contents of the message.
- 2.9. Ensure that all messages include a completed, appropriate and accurate Subject line and a signature.
- 2.10. E-mails that contain financial information (Quotes, costs, etc.) must be checked for accuracy.
- 2.11. Under no circumstances should Village of Midway confidential business information be sent out to any third party using e-mail, without prior written authorization from the Village Chief Administrative Officer or designate.
- 2.12. Archive all messages that are older than 3 months.
- 2.13. Outgoing e-mails shall include a signature block indicating the sender's name, title and contact information. The sender shall be responsible for ensuring that paper copies of e-mail strings are kept where circumstances warrant.