

Title: Corporate Communications and Community Engagement Policy		Policy No: 5.57 Supersedes: Corporate Communications and Community Engagement – Policy 5.57 (July 28, 2020)
Effective Date: July 28, 2020	Amended Date: 2025	Review Date: 2027
Policy Statement: The City of Maple Ridge recognizes the value and importance of communicating in a clear and transparent manner and aims to enhance public trust, encourage community participation, and consider diverse voices in decision-making processes.		
Purpose: The purpose of this Policy is to establish City guidelines for transparent, timely, and consistent communication and engagement with residents, community partners, and other interest holders.		
Scope: This Policy applies to Council members, City staff, contracted employees, and volunteers, and how the City communicates and engages with the media and the community.		
Definitions: City means the City of Maple Ridge. Communications Department means the City’s Strategic Development, Communications and Public Engagement Department. Media means representatives of broadcast, print, and digital media outlets. Social Media refers to digital platforms and tools that enable users to create, share, and engage with content, and is used by the City to enhance communication, promote transparency, and foster community participation.		

Procedure:**General Protocol**

1. City staff are expected to follow any standards and operational procedures set by the Communications Department that outline the process for communicating and engaging with the Media and the community through all City channels.

Principles of Communication and Engagement

2. The City is committed to the following principles in all its communication and engagement efforts:
 - **Be transparent and open:** The community has access to clear, accurate, and timely information that is openly shared.
 - **Be inclusive and accessible:** Ensure those who are interested and/or impacted by City business, projects or operations can access opportunities to participate in meaningful way
 - **Work Together:** Ongoing relationships and partnerships exist between the City and residents, businesses, and organizations.
 - **Be accountable:** Community input is incorporated into Council decision-making processes to reflect the needs and desires of the Maple Ridge community.
 - **Keep getting better:** Community engagement is continuously improving at the City.

Visual Identity and Brand Standards

3. City staff will ensure that all communication from the City, including but not limited to, signage, correspondence, and digital channels, has a professional and consistent visual identity that aligns with the City's Graphic Standards and Style Guidelines.
4. The City's image, logo, Coat of Arms, Crest and Flag is trademarked and can only be used for the purposes of City business; any requests to use these for purposes outside of City business may only be approved by the City's Communications Department.

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

5. The City will be proactive in how it communicates and engages using a variety of methods and providing information to accommodate diverse needs including traditional and online channels.
6. Online and print information provided by the City will have a clear and consistent visual identity to assist the community in recognizing and accessing the policies, programs, services and initiatives of the City.
7. The City acknowledges the importance of ensuring that information is publicly accessible for all users and will endeavour to implement tools that enhance accessibility when users are engaging with the City to obtain information or provide input.

8. Communications and engagement materials will be presented in plain language to increase accessibility of information.

Review of Information

9. The City will review any communication it receives, and where applicable, will process it in accordance with this Policy in a timely manner, having regard for the circumstances of the communication.

Timely and Transparent Communication and Engagement

10. Information regarding the City's programs, services, initiatives, emergency protocols, projects, and any other subject will be provided in a timely and transparent manner to media, Council, City staff and the community.
11. If information provided by the City has an inadvertent omission or is determined to be inaccurate, City staff will endeavour to correct the information as soon as possible and provide notification of the update through the appropriate City channels.

Forms of Communication and Engagement

Media Communication

12. The City acknowledges that the Media plays an important role in disseminating information to the public on matters of civic interest.
13. The Communications Department will respond promptly to Media inquiries and will make best efforts to accommodate publication or broadcast deadlines whenever possible, subject to the City's operational requirements and any related policies or bylaws.
14. All Media inquiries must go through the Communications Department. City staff will follow the Communications Department's Media Communications Operating Procedures when communicating with the Media.
15. The authorized Spokespeople for communicating with the Media and community about the City's initiatives, programs, and other related operational matters include the Chief Administrative Officer, the Director of Strategic Development, Communications and Public Engagement, the Senior Manager, Corporate Communications and Public Engagement, and their delegates. Any specific Spokesperson responsibilities are outlined in the Media Communications Operating Procedures.
16. The Mayor is the primary Spokesperson for dispersing information to the Media and the community on the strategic priorities, goals, and decisions of Council. Any delegation of this responsibility must align with the Council Procedure Bylaw and Council Code of Conduct Bylaw, as well as any applicable legislation.

17. The Mayor or their designate will be provided the opportunity to comment on governance or political topics on behalf of Council.

Community Engagement

18. The City acknowledges the importance of community engagement on City initiatives to ensure the community is involved in City programs, services and decision making.
19. The community will be provided with opportunities to provide input and feedback on City initiatives as detailed in the City's Community Engagement Framework through a variety of methods, both online and traditional, including tools available on the City's Engage Maple Ridge digital platform such as surveys, polls, and discussion forums. In-person methods may include open houses, workshops and other methods that support inclusive engagement.
20. Other opportunities for community engagement may include public information meetings and public hearings on initiatives that the City may be required to hold pursuant to legislative direction.
21. The level of community engagement will reflect the size and public impact of the project or proposal. For some decisions, the focus of engagement will be sharing information about a project decision with the community. For other decisions, the community and interest holders may engage in different ways based on the level of community engagement.
22. The community and interest holders will be advised by the City on what level of engagement will be undertaken and how their input contributes to the decision-making process.

Website Governance

23. The City's website (MapleRidge.ca) is the main channel through which the City provides and disseminates information to the community about City initiatives, Council meetings and decisions, and community events in Maple Ridge in accordance with the City Website Policy and Governance Manual.

Social Media and Engagement Channels

24. The City utilizes a variety of Social Media channels and digital engagement tools to distribute information about City initiatives and emergencies, seek engagement, monitor sentiment analysis and to quickly and efficiently respond to questions from the community.
25. User engagement or interactions with City staff must be respectful and align with applicable federal and provincial laws, and in compliance with the City's Social Media Policy.

26. City staff designated to monitor the City's Social Media and engagement channels have the discretion to restrict and remove both content and users who violate the City's Social Media Policy and terms of use.
27. City staff may ask users to move discussions off Social Media and engagement channels where privacy concerns are involved, or where City staff believe that such discussions may be more effectively addressed directly with the user.
28. City staff engaging on Social Media must maintain confidentiality of City business, whether posting on their personal or business account. Personal comments may be misinterpreted as official City comments, which must be avoided per the Social Media Policy.

Paid Advertising and Digital Marketing

29. Occasionally the City will engage in paid advertising on a variety of channels, including newspaper, outdoor spaces and social media content advertising to ensure a diverse audience is reached. Paid advertising in the local newspaper will be used for initiatives where appropriate and for matters where it is legislatively required under the *Community Charter* and/or *Local Government Act*. Paid Social Media content may be required to increase the reach of the City's programs and services.

Public Notices

30. The City will disseminate through the most appropriate channel for notification of emergencies, City projects, surveys, events, tenders and auctions, recruitment, program offerings, and any other information where notification is deemed to be required by legislation, City bylaws, or as directed by a delegated City authority.
31. Where public and statutory notices are required by legislation, the City will provide these notices through the most appropriate methods of distribution as determined by the Corporate Officer and the Communications Department.

Crisis Communication

32. The City will provide timely, effective communication before, during, and after an emergency that threatens the health, property, or environment in line with the City's Crisis Communications Plan or with other agencies when applicable.

Public Correspondence to Council

33. Public correspondence to Council that is received by the City will not be included in Council meeting agendas except where the correspondence has been solicited and pertains directly to a council agenda item.

34. Public correspondence will be addressed in accordance with the Mayor and Council Correspondence Policy.

Partnerships and Third-Party Promotion

35. The City regularly, as part of its day-to-day operation, enters into partnerships or sponsorships with other organizations, governments, societies, and businesses. The City will acknowledge these partnerships as part of the event, service or program communications as per City's Sponsorship Policy.

36. The City will not actively promote or advertise any third-party organization, society, entity or business over another similar organization, unless it is part of an officially recognized partnership or sponsorship relationship.

Administration:

37. This Policy will be administered and maintained by the Communications Department, in conjunction with the Corporate Officer and Chief Administrative Officer for matters involving Council.

Consequences:

38. Users of the City's communication and engagement channels must abide by the City's terms of use. Inappropriate content may be removed by Communications Department without prior notice to the user.

(Administration Only)

Signature

Date Signed

Resolution No.:
