

Policy Number:	C-190
Policy Owner:	Communications & Engagement
Adopted By:	Council
Adoption Date:	2011 June 28
Effective Date:	2011 June 28
Date Last Amended:	2024 March 12
Date Last Reviewed:	2023 December 11

Purpose

- 1 The intent of this policy is to ensure that Rocky View County (“the County”) communications are accurate, co-ordinated, effective, and informative.



Policy Statement

- 2 The County recognizes communicating with residents and stakeholders is a key function of local government.
- 3 The County commits to providing accurate, relevant County information that is clearly presented, and accessible in a variety of formats.
- 4 Communications from the County will:
 - (1) be in plain language, using words appropriate for the intended audience and the communications medium; and
 - (2) comply with relevant federal and provincial legislation, and County bylaws and policies.



Policy

Communications Principles

- 5 Communications from the County are timely, courteous, fair, efficient, and take into consideration the privacy, safety, convenience, and needs of the public.

- 6 Up-to-date County information is published on the County website, where it is made available for a range of electronic devices, meets accessibility guidelines, and is compatible with assistive technologies used to interact with web pages.
- 7 During election and by-election periods, communications from the County may be adapted to avoid the perception of endorsement of any candidate seeking election to Council.
- 8 Communications from the County are subject to the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FOIP) and any other legislation pertaining to the collection, disclosure, and release of information by a public body.

Media

- 9 The County will work proactively with media to build public awareness and understanding of the County's policies, programs, and services.

Spokespeople

- 10 The Reeve is the official spokesperson for Rocky View County Council. The Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) or designate and the Communications & Engagement Manager are the official spokespeople for Rocky View County Administration. When actively responding to an emergency, the Director of Emergency Management will also be considered an official spokesperson.

Emergency Response

- 11 During emergencies or times of crisis:
 - (1) the County's priorities are to ensure that residents receive information that will protect their health, safety, security, and property; and
 - (2) residents will receive information that is accurate, timely, and relevant to prevention, mitigation, response to, or recovery from an emergency.

Advertising

- 12 The County advertises to inform residents about:
 - (1) policies, programs, and services;
 - (2) dangers or risks to public health, safety, or the environment; or

- (3) bylaws, resolutions, meetings, public hearings, and other matters in accordance with the County's *Public Notification Bylaw*, *Procedure Bylaw*, and provincial legislation.
- 13 Advertising may be directed at audiences outside the County, the province, and/or Canada to promote the County's interests.
- 14 Content may include third-party messages that are in the public interest or promote the County, and should not represent a conflict of interest or be perceived as a commercial endorsement.

Respectful Dialogue

- 15 The County encourages open communication and respectful dialogue and recognizes that everyone has the right to express their opinions, thoughts, and feelings. Constructive criticism, disagreements, or discussions, even if robust, are encouraged when they are respectful, focus on issues rather than individuals, and are supported by evidence where applicable. Communications & Engagement has the sole discretion and authority to remove content from Rocky View County channels that contains any of the following:
 - (1) confidential or personal information;
 - (2) discriminatory or hateful language;
 - (3) personal insults, threatening language, ad hominem attacks, or unfounded accusations on any individual person, whether an employee, elected official, or member of the public;
 - (4) profanity or abusive language;
 - (5) encouragement or demonstration of illegal behaviour;
 - (6) explicit language or links to explicit content;
 - (7) spam, or any other frequently recurring and/or repetitious material;
 - (8) misinformation and disinformation, which includes any false or misleading content presented as fact and likely to cause public harm. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - (a) false information regarding local election procedures, dates, or candidates;
 - (b) misleading or fabricated reports about the County's actions, policies, services, or public safety announcements;
 - (c) spreading rumours or unverified information about local emergencies;

- (9) unsolicited commercial advertising that appears to sell, promote, or advertise products or services; and
- (10) comments that:
 - (a) compromise the well-being, safety, or security of an individual, including the public, County employees, and Councillors;
 - (b) threaten the security of public systems, equipment, buildings, or other property;
 - (c) violate any federal or provincial laws, or County bylaws;
 - (d) promote individual religions, political parties, or election candidates; or
 - (e) are not relevant to the subject matter on the County channel.
- 16 To determine the validity of the content, Communications & Engagement may refer to established fact-checking organizations, peer-reviewed research, official government sources, and other reliable sources of information.
- 17 Individuals who have their comments removed will be notified when possible and provided with an explanation as to the reason their content was removed. Individuals who continue to breach respectful dialogue requirements may be prevented from sharing future comments on Rocky View County channels.



References

Legal Authorities

- *Municipal Government Act*, RSA 2000, c M-26
- *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, RSA 2000, c F-25

Related Plans, Bylaws, Policies, etc.

- *Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) Bylaw C-7350-2014*
- *Public Notification Bylaw C-7860-2019*
- *Procedure Bylaw C-8277-2022*
- *Policy A-190, Corporate Communications*
- *Policy C-191, Public Participation Policy*
- *CAO Delegation Order*

Related Procedures

- N/A

Other

- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2)



Policy History

Amendment Date(s) – Amendment Description

- 2024 March 12 – Cosmetic adjustments; name change from *External Communications* to *Corporate Communications*; increased role of social media and County website as sources of information; enhanced clarity around Spokespersons; inclusion of respectful dialogue guidelines; language pertinent of public engagement and participation moved to Policy C-191

Review Date(s) – Review Outcome Description

- 2023 December 11 – Updates required to align with current practices and policy format; divided into Administrative and Council policies



Definitions

18 In this policy:

- (1) “advertising” means any paid message conveyed by newspaper, radio, television, social media, or other print or digital media sources, including newsletters, magazines, and websites;
- (2) “Chief Administrative Officer” or “CAO” means the chief administrative officer of Rocky View County as defined in the *Municipal Government Act* or their authorized delegate;
- (3) “confidential” means matters that are not available for public disclosure;
- (4) “Council” means the duly elected Council of Rocky View County;
- (5) “Director of Emergency Management” means the County employee responsible for planning and leading the responses to natural disasters and other emergencies;
- (6) “Deputy Reeve” means the Deputy Chief Elected Official of Rocky View County pursuant to the *Municipal Government Act*;
- (7) “elected official” means the Reeve, Deputy Reeve, and members of Council;
- (8) “employee” means a person employed by the County;

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- (9) “*Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*” means the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, RSA 2000, c F-25, as amended from time to time;
 - (10) “County information” includes, but is not limited to: County decisions, plans, performance, policies, programs, services, public notices, events, initiatives, and issues;
 - (11) “media” means print and digital news reporters, journalists, and publishers;
 - (12) “*Municipal Government Act*” means the *Municipal Government Act*, RSA 2000, c M-26, as amended from time to time;
 - (13) “public” means residents, landowners, business owners, media representatives, and other stakeholders;
 - (14) “Reeve” means the Chief Elected Official of Rocky View County pursuant to the *Municipal Government Act*;
 - (15) “Rocky View County” or “the County” means Rocky View County as a municipal corporation and the geographical area within its jurisdictional boundaries, as the context requires; and
 - (16) “social media” means any facility for online publication and commentary, including but not limited to blogs, Wikis, and social networking sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter (X), YouTube, and Instagram.