

<b>Title: Corporate Communications and Community Engagement</b>	<b>Policy No: 5.57</b>  <b>Supersedes: New (5.41 repealed)</b>
<b>Authority:</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Legislative <input type="checkbox"/> Operational  <b>Approval:</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Council <input type="checkbox"/> CMT  <input type="checkbox"/> General Manager	<b>Effective Date: July 28, 2020</b>
	<b>Review Date: December 1, 2021</b>
<p><b>Policy Statement:</b></p> <p>It is the City of Maple Ridge's policy to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Provide clear, accurate and timely information about its policies, programs, services and initiatives to residents and business owners/operators.</li> <li>b) Use a variety of communication methods to engage and provide access to local government information in formats that accommodate the needs of all citizens.</li> <li>c) Engage the public when establishing priorities, developing policies, and planning programs and services.</li> <li>d) Ensure that the City is visible, accessible and accountable to citizens.</li> <li>e) Ensure that communications and engagement planning, coordination and execution are an integral component of the strategic management processes of the City.</li> <li>f) Foster a collaborative approach to communications and engagement across the organization including communications and engagement specialists working with senior management, policy developers and staff who are involved in program delivery.</li> <li>g) Ensure that employees and service delivery partners have opportunities for input into decisions affecting them and are well informed of current issues and directions.</li> <li>h) Provide clear and timely messaging to the community regarding large scale emergencies or crises.</li> <li>i) Ensure communications regarding the official position of the City Maple Ridge on all issues reflect the majority vote of Council or existing policy framework adopted by Council.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Purpose:</b></p> <p>This document sets out a strong set of principles which defines our approach to communications and engagement and provides specific guidance around how we present information internally when interacting with citizens, with the media and how we use our corporate brand.</p>	

**Values:**

**Accessibility:** The City must communicate and engage in various ways that respect the diversity of the community to ensure the widest possible applications and delivery including the use of traditional methods such as, face-to-face, telephone and in print.

**Accountability:** Our communications and engagement must always reflect that we take responsibility for our actions, words, goals and objectives. When we make an error, we must not only correct it, but apologize and take responsibility for it.

**Empathy:** To serve those in our community, we need to understand their needs and expectations. Our relationship with citizens is driven by our ability to listen to their concerns, understand and feel compassion for their perspectives and to offer answers and solutions that strengthen their relationship with our community.

**Listening:** As an organization, including Council and staff, we will strive to listen to the input from our citizens to gain new information, view an issue from a unique perspective, reduce conflict and build confidence and trust with our citizens.

**Friendliness:** As individuals, and as an organization, our communications, systems and the execution of our work must be delivered with friendliness, kindness and compassion.

**Skill:** Our communications must show attention to detail both in form and content. Whether writing an email, letter or articles, we must take responsibility for spelling, grammar and language use.

**Timeliness:** We must communicate with citizens as quickly as possible without compromising key values. If an interaction requires seeking additional or detailed information and input from colleagues, we will acknowledge the request and define expectations around the communications and/or community engagement.

**Transparency:** We must be and be perceived to be completely transparent about the work we do. People trust those who have nothing to hide, and it is often an error of omission that creates mistrust.

**Truth:** Citizens expect all staff, in every interaction, to speak truthfully.

**Definitions:**

**Communications & Engagement** means:

- activities involved in the production and dissemination of material and information about City policies, programs, services and initiatives
- communications advice to Council and senior management
- corporate identification of the City, its departments, programs, services and activities, as well as service delivery partners
- interaction and engagement with the public
- dissemination of information in print and electronic media

**Departments** means the City of Maple Ridge departments.

**City or the City** means the City of Maple Ridge.

## **1 Access to Information**

### **a. Availability and Dissemination of Information**

The City has a duty to ensure that information about our policies, programs, services, initiatives and matters affecting the benefits, rights and obligations of its citizens can be readily and easily accessed through a range of communications and engagement channels and tools. Information must be available to people living locally, and where practicable, to those outside the City's boundaries.

Departments will ensure:

- a variety of communications and engagement methods are used
- information about a department's mission, structure, programs and services is accessible through the City's website [mapleridge.ca](http://mapleridge.ca)
- information is clearly identified as being from the City
- public information is available on request
- there is a means of contacting City departments regarding questions, comments, concerns or requests for further information and for such to be dealt with promptly
- employees are aware that all communications in all forms are subject to scrutiny under the Freedom of Information Act
- opportunities are available for the public to provide feedback on major policies, programs, services and initiatives affecting them or the community, and that such feedback is considered in reviews or evaluations.

### **b. Cataloguing and Securing Information**

Published information in all formats, past and present, will be updated on a regular basis, well indexed, easily retrievable and security maintained in compliance with corporate policy and legal requirements.

### **c. Publishing**

The City must provide citizens access to its publications (whether by sale or otherwise).

Departments will:

- maintain a register or record of all publications
- publish all public information on the City's website and in hard copy, where feasible and reasonable
- ensure that all published materials include the title of the publication, author(s), source, date of publication, City logo, and, and where applicable standard bibliographic reference numbers (International Standard Book Numbers) or International Standard Serial Numbers
- make publications available on request (for purchase if applicable)
- ensure that the permission of subjects is gained (whether they be staff, clients, students or members of the public) when publishing photographs in department and/or City publications. Photo Release Consent Forms are available from the Communications Department.

## **2 Advertising**

Advertising is a key method of making citizens aware of the City's initiatives, available programs and services as well as changes Council may be considering. The effectiveness of the City's advertising is in large part dependent on the advertisement being immediately recognized as originating from the City and the content being informative, comprehensive, and easily understood.

#### **a. Local Advertising**

The vast majority of the City's advertising relates to public and statutory notices, auctions and tenders, recruitment, program offerings, and construction project notices.

The combining of individual advertisements into one comprehensive advertisement shall be undertaken whenever possible, and individual discretionary advertisements shall only be placed with the recommendation of the Manager Community Engagement & Relations.

Departments will:

- follow advertising protocols established between the City and the newspaper (contact the Manager Community Engagement & Relations for details)
- identify that the advertisement has been placed by the City and contains appropriate contact information (address, telephone number, email and web address) to allow the reader to follow-up for further information
- use the current and correct version of the City logo
- obtain approval from the Manager Community Engagement & Relations for advertising in publications outside the community

#### **b. Advertising In Other than Local Papers**

On occasion, departments will advertise in regional, provincial or national newspapers, publications and/or websites. Departments must identify that the advertisement has been placed by the City and contains appropriate contact information (address, telephone number, email and web address) to allow the reader to follow-up for further information.

### **3 Consultation and Community Engagement**

An open and responsive consultative process with the community is vital for effective public policy development and for gaining public support for decisions. This requires a partnership approach with the community and ensures that the City explains, communicates and receives feedback from the community.

Departments will:

- inform the community of opportunities to participate in public consultation and citizen engagement initiatives
- use communications methods that will reach key stakeholders, engage them in two-way communications, elicit their concerns, involve them in the decision making process, and provide feedback or follow-through
- ensure that communications or information materials prepared for consultative purposes are professionally presented and identified as being from the City.

### **4 Corporate Identity**

Identity applies to all communications or information media such as print, electronic, television, radio and the website, and all communications or information products, including advertising, publications, stationery, audio-visuals, website, signage and collateral items such as clothing and giftware.

The use of a consistent corporate identity ensures savings through standardization and best practices in information design. The City logo and tagline are Official Marks registered in the Canadian Intellectual Property Office.

Departments will ensure:

- buildings, facilities, vehicles, programs, services and activities carry the approved City logo
- all information and communications materials for internal or external use, regardless of medium, carry the approved City logo.

Where more than one department is engaged in an undertaking, please refer to the “Graphic Guidelines” published by the Communications Department to determine the appropriate placement of the City’s logo.

## **5 Corporate Public Events and Announcements**

Corporate Public Events are occasions attended by members of Council for the purpose of publicizing significant initiatives or contributions of the City. Adequate planning and preparation are important in ensuring a professional image for the City.

When undertaking a public event, departments must refer to the “Protocols” guidelines prepared by the Communications Department.

## **6 Crisis and Emergency Management**

Effective communications are a vital and integral part of both crisis and emergency management before, during and after an emergency to help prevent injury or loss of life, limit damage to assets and property, maintain public services and to assist in the process of recovery and to maintain or restore public confidence in the City. Media and public scrutiny are to be expected in a crisis or emergency and the City’s reputation and credibility will be judged by our response.

To ensure effective emergency management, all management staff must be familiar with and follow the procedures outlined in the Emergency Response Plan developed by the Information Officer/Manager of Community Engagement & Relations (Disaster Response Plan based on the BCERMS model).

## **7 Diverse Needs**

Communications and engagement materials must depict diversity in society in a fair and inclusive manner representing the ethnic, cultural and religious diversity within Maple Ridge as well as those with special needs and abilities.

City communications must not contain unacceptable language, sexual stereotyping, and unfair depiction of people in relation to race, ethnic origin, religion or disability.

When planning and executing communications, consideration should be given to any available means to communicate with people from diverse ethnic or religious backgrounds or persons with special needs and abilities including literacy levels and sensory disabilities.

## **8 Internal Communications**

To achieve optimal organizational performance and support of City goals, departments must create a positive environment where feelings of trust, awareness, openness, security, involvement and confidence predominate, particularly between managers and employees. This means articulating the organization’s vision and objectives, implementing feedback mechanisms and recognizing and celebrating staff innovation, achievements and customer service excellence. Properly engaged in the life of an organization, employees can be valuable allies in external communications.

To foster employee knowledge, awareness and understanding of department and City business, policies and activities, departments will:

- have in place a system, process or mechanism for communicating with employees
- develop and implement strategies that encourage proactive and interactive communications
- develop and implement mechanisms that recognize the contribution of staff (and volunteers) for service delivery and meeting business objectives
- develop and implement communications strategies for the collection, dissemination and exchange of information and knowledge
- communicate with employees openly, frequently, and where possible before or at the same time as information is communicated to the public, or as soon as possible

Internal communications activities and processes must be reviewed from time to time to evaluate results, to identify areas for improvement, and to make adjustments as needed.

## **9 Council Communication**

Where an individual member of Council expresses an opinion, it should be made clear to the audience that he or she is not speaking on behalf of the City or Council as a body. Individual members of Council are encouraged to reflect the opinion of Council as a whole, or state that comments reflect their own personal opinion.

The decisions of Council shall be reflected as collective corporate decisions. (Please refer to the Mayor & Council Correspondence Policy for more details.)

## **10 Media Relations, Spokespersons and News Releases**

For many citizens, local newspapers, radio and television are their primary sources of news and information about City activities, issues and events. Media coverage of City's activities and issues need to be accurate, timely and in context.

Departments are expected to take a proactive approach to working with the media to promote public awareness and understanding of City policies, programs, services and initiatives.

News Releases are an effective method of disseminating information. The City's approved template must be used for News Releases and can be obtained by contacting the Communications Department. News Releases should be checked first by the Communications Department with final copies provided to the Communications Department after approval by the CAO and/or CMT.

Whenever possible, News Releases on behalf of the Mayor and Council and other public notifications of significance will be distributed first to members of Council and senior management.

Departments will:

- identify managers or staff with the knowledge and/or technical expertise to provide input to media responses or to speak as official representatives of their department
- ensure that designated spokespersons receive instruction in media relations
- respond promptly and accurately to all media inquiries providing factual information
- develop, disseminate and maintain in-house protocols regarding designated spokespersons
- contact the Manager of Community Relations & Engagement prior to acceptance of any invitation to appear on a radio or television program
- promptly submit a copy of news releases issued to the Communications Department

## **11 Monitoring and Evaluation**

Measurement is a critical component of any communications, engagement campaign or strategy developed in support of policy or program initiatives. The objectives of this policy are to ensure these are well-coordinated and effectively managed and are appropriate for the needs of the citizens of Maple Ridge and contribute to the advancement of City objectives and priorities. The effectiveness of such can only be determined through monitoring and evaluation. The performance of communications products should be measured against objectives set out in communications and business plans.

Departments must evaluate compliance with the requirements of this policy in consultation with stakeholders and evaluations will be conducted by the Manager of Community Relations & Engagement to assist the City to meet its objectives.

## **12 Partnerships**

Partnerships are mutually beneficial and co-operative relationships where partners share values, objectives, resources (human, material or financial), roles and responsibilities to achieve mutually desired outcomes. Partnerships can bring together expertise from a range of sectors, and provide a means of developing cohesive and integrated services.

When planning, negotiating or implementing a partnership or collaborative arrangement, communications requirements must be taken into account to avoid misunderstandings. These includes:

- establishing communications and engagement roles and responsibilities of all parties
- determining and delineating the corporate identity, visibility, publishing, marketing and promotional activities to be used in the partnership
- communicating joint activities/initiatives in a manner that is fair and equitable to all parties

While advertising and promotional activities involving the media may be part of the partnership's communications and engagement strategy, such efforts must not be a focus but an aide to informing the public.

Departments will:

- ensure that appropriate identifiers are used to acknowledge and attribute the contributions of all participants, e.g. corporate names and/or logos
- use the City's logo when identifying their own participation in a collaborative arrangement to enable public recognition of the contributions of the City
- ensure that the parties involved acknowledge the City's contribution in their own communications with the public
- articulate the communications and engagement protocols in partnership agreements, and where possible, communicate the results of collaborative arrangements through normal audit, evaluation and performance reporting processes

## **13 Project/Issue Specific Communications & Engagement Strategy/Plans**

A shared responsibility exists between the service department, the Communications Department and other support departments. Communications and engagement strategies and plans should be an integral part of program and policy initiatives and be fully accounted for within budgets and financial plans.

Significant projects and "urgent or developing" issues require specific communications and community engagement plans. Such plans will:

- integrate City priorities
- identify internal and external audiences
- take account of the internal and external environments
- delineate strategies, tools, messages and responsibilities for engaging with target audiences
- set out operational needs and resource allocations

## 14 Research and Public Surveys

Research and Public Surveys are used to gain a better understanding of the needs, expectations or emerging concerns of the citizens in our community.

They may be used to:

- assess the public's response to proposals or to possible changes or initiatives
- assess the effectiveness of policies, programs and services
- measure progress in service improvement
- evaluate the effectiveness of communications activities, such as advertising

When contracting policy research departments must adhere to the requirements of the City's Procurement Policy.

## 15 Social Media

The City will use Social Media to reach out to citizens. The City's Social Media brand will be consistent across platforms, including Facebook, Twitter and Google+ as 'yourmapleridge.' Employees are required to read and be familiar with the City's Social Media Policy.

## 16 The Website

The website, *mapleridge.ca*, is an important tool for providing information and services to the public 24 hours a day, and for facilitating interactive, two-way communications within the City and with external audiences. Departments are responsible for their own electronic publications.

To ensure publishing standards and communication requirements are met, departments must:

- ensure that all website publications comply with Provincial and Federal laws
- ensure access to and usability by the widest possible target community appropriate to the service or information resource
- ensure that the services and information provided online are comparable in quality and functionality to those delivered by other means
- ensure that information on policies, programs, services and initiatives published on the website is regularly updated, accurate, easy to understand and includes a mechanism for receiving and acknowledging feedback from the public (including online)
- respect privacy rights and copyright ownership in all online publishing and communications in compliance to any applicable laws or regulations
- ensure that the permission of subjects is gained (whether they be staff, clients, students or members of the public) when publishing photographs on the City website
- ensure that information published on websites is recorded and archived to preserve the City's history
- read and be familiar with the following City policies:
  - Community Directory & Events Calendar Postings on Website
  - Information Security



## 17 Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every five years from the date of approval by Council. Council will be provided with recommended updates, as required, based on changes in the corporate reporting structure, changes in best practices or technological changes that need to be addressed in the Policy framework.

Key Areas of Responsibility	
Action to Take	Responsibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Presentation and explanation of City policies, priorities and decisions to the public.</li> <li>▪ Leadership for establishing priority and overall themes of the City communications.</li> </ul>	<b>Mayor and Council</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provision of advice and support on communications issues.</li> <li>▪ Oversight of effective communications of municipal policy and initiatives.</li> <li>▪ Acts as City spokesperson when required.</li> </ul>	<b>Chief Administrative Officer</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Coordination of effective communications of municipal policy, initiatives and programs.</li> <li>▪ Leadership of communications activities, attract resources, build cross-departmental partnerships and position the communications function in line with the strategic directions of the City.</li> <li>▪ Advise departments of government priorities and themes to be reflected in communications plans and strategies.</li> <li>▪ Oversight of the development and implementation of media strategies.</li> <li>▪ Ensure the Policy is brought forward to Council as part of the department work plan every five years.</li> </ul>	<b>Corporate Services General Manager</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Management of day-to-day media relations, including media enquiries and news releases.</li> <li>▪ Collecting and analyzing information to provide high level advice to Council and senior management.</li> <li>▪ Acts as Media Liaison for the City and provides advice to Council on day-to-day media issues.</li> <li>▪ Writing news releases and coordinating news conferences.</li> <li>▪ Coordinating media issues relating to City initiatives and policies.</li> <li>▪ Management of corporate identity and monitoring compliance with the City's visual identity standards.</li> <li>▪ Management, monitoring, and evaluation of the implementation of the Communications Policy including examining departmental communication plans and strategies.</li> <li>▪ Provision of Policy interpretation and application and ongoing development of guidelines and materials.</li> </ul>	<b>Manager and Department of Community Relations &amp; Engagement</b>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Coordination of paid advertising, marketing and sponsorship activities and all discretionary advertisement by the City in local papers. Assists with negotiations of the City's local newspaper advertising contract.</li> <li>▪ Approval of advertising in local newspaper without an advertising contract.</li> <li>▪ Procurement of communications services.</li> <li>▪ A formal evaluations of communications projects (e.g. information campaigns).</li> <li>▪ Project specific communications plans development assistance.</li> <li>▪ Communications environmental analysis and research.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Contact the media when a story has been published/aired that contains a factual error. The Chief Administrative Officer and the Manager of Community Relations &amp; Engagement should be notified and will assist.</li> <li>▪ Inform the Manager of Community Relations &amp; Engagement of any media contact as soon as possible.</li> <li>▪ Oversee department communications to ensure they fully reflect City-wide policies, themes and priorities.</li> <li>▪ Implementation of the Communications Policy in their department and ensure related directives, instructions or administrative procedures are carried out.</li> <li>▪ Identification of department media spokesperson(s).</li> <li>▪ Arrange media training required for their department.</li> <li>▪ Creation and maintenance of department website content to ensure it meets communications standards.</li> </ul>	<p><b>General Managers, Directors, Managers</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Management of their department's newspaper advertising.</li> <li>▪ Participate in committee roundtable discussion to update all departments of communications-related issues from their area.</li> <li>▪ Assist with employee surveys.</li> <li>▪ Provide input on organization branding.</li> <li>▪ Participate in the selection of communications contracts such as local advertising.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Communications/Website Committee Members</b></p>