

## POLICY MANUAL

<b>Title:</b> Political Activity Policy	<b>Policy No:</b> 3.18  <b>Supersedes:</b> N/A
<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:</b> July 12, 2022  <b>Review Date:</b> July 12, 2023
<p><b>Policy Statement:</b></p> <p>This Policy sets out provisions and a conduct framework for Candidates, Elected Officials, Third Party Advertisers, Interested Parties, and City Staff for the use of City Facilities and City Resources during Elections in order to maintain the City's political neutrality.</p> <p>As an organization, the City must remain politically neutral with all Candidates and preserve the public trust and integrity of the election process. Under this Policy, the City sets out means by which City Facilities remain non-partisan venues.</p> <p>As citizens, City Staff have the fundamental right to participate in Political Activities. This right must be balanced with the City's obligation to provide a neutral public service that also maintains the perception of impartiality. Under this Policy, the City provides direction to City Staff on what activities align with the City's politically neutral position.</p> <p>Nothing in this Policy shall preclude a member of Council from performing their duty as an elected official, nor inhibit them from representing their constituents.</p>	
<p><b>Purpose:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To provide a consistent approach and direction for Candidates, City Staff and all interested third parties regarding the use of City Facilities and City Resources for Political Activity;</li> <li>2. To provide City Staff with direction on conduct regarding Political Activities during Working Hours; and</li> <li>3. To ensure City Facilities, including those operated on behalf of the City by a third party, and City Resources remain impartial and used for the intended purpose of conducting official City business.</li> </ol> <p><b>Scope:</b></p> <p>This Policy applies to Elections, as well as questions on the ballot and Assent Voting.</p>	

This Policy applies specifically to:

- Candidates
- Elected Officials
- Third Party Advertisers
- Interested Parties
- Anyone acting on behalf of a Candidate, Elected Official, Third Party Advertiser, or Interested Party
- City Staff

**1. Definitions:**

**“Affiliated Person”** means a person who materially supports a Candidate in their Campaigning and furtherance of electing the Candidate in an Election;

**“Assent Voting”** means assent voting as set out in the *Local Government Act*;

**“By-Election”** means a Local, Provincial, Federal or School Trustee election other than a general election;

**“Candidate”** means a person who is running or has expressed an intention to run for an elected office in an Election;

**“Campaign Materials”** means any materials used to solicit votes for a Candidate, position on a political issue, question on the ballot or assent voting including, but not limited to, flyers, signs, electronic displays, buttons, or other paraphernalia;

**“Campaigning”** means any activity by or on behalf of a Candidate or political position that is meant to elicit support or opposition during an Election or other voting, including distributing Campaign Materials. Campaigning does NOT include the appearance of Elected Officials, potential Candidates, or other Affiliated Persons at an event in their personal capacity;

**“City”** means the City of Maple Ridge;

**“City Facilities”** means any Park, Public Place, or Recreation Facility as defined herein;

**“City Resources”** means resources expended or acquired in furtherance of City operations including, but not limited to, paid City Staff time, supplies, funding, computers or other electronic or mechanical devices, email accounts, information, assets and any logo or image discussed in Section 3.1 of this Policy which may be perceived as City endorsement or affiliation with a Candidate;

**“City Staff”** means any person employed by the City, any person who has been assigned or hired to act on the City’s behalf, and any third-party contractors hired by the City to complete work on the City’s behalf;

**“Elected Official”** means an elected official of the City, including Council Members and the Mayor;

**“Election”** means Local general election for the number of persons required to fill a local government office under *Local Government Act*, [RSBC 2015], C-1, an election for a board of

school trustees constituted in an electoral under election area under the *School Act*, [RSBC 1996], C-412, Provincial general elections to elect a member of the Legislative Assembly under the *BC Elections Act*, [RSBC 1996], C-106, Federal general elections to elect a member to serve in the House of Commons under *Canada Elections Act*, S.C. 2000, c. 9, or By-Elections;

**“Interested Party”** means any person seeking to influence other persons to vote for or against any Candidate, political issue, or any question submitted to the electors or assent voting during Elections;

**“Park”** means and includes any real or personal property within the City used for public park and recreation purposes and includes all buildings and structures situated thereon and shall include any other parcel of land improved, maintained, developed or administered by the City such as school grounds, pursuant to direction from the Council;

**“Political Activity”** means participation in any and all activities related to an Election, whether by an individual or in a group, in person or on social media, including, but not limited to, running as a Candidate or expressing interest in running as a Candidate in an Election, Campaigning, and engaging in activities that support or oppose a Candidate, political party, political issue, or question submitted to electors or assent voting during Elections;

**“Public Place”** includes all public plazas, public squares and public buildings, including but not limited to City Hall, any community center, public library, art gallery, museum, exhibition hall, fire hall, City works yard and any real or personal property or portions thereof owned by the City to which the public is ordinarily invited or permitted to be in or on, and includes but is not limited to, the grounds of public facilities or public buildings, public greenways and public parkades or parking lots controlled by the City;

**“Recreation Facility”** means a building, recreation facility or other land improvement, including, but not limited to, recreation centres, public pools, arenas, sports fields, ball diamonds, gymnasium, and other recreation facilities located in a Park or on any other land which the City owns or controls by means of a lease, licence or other legal instrument, that is intended for athletic, social or recreational use by members of the community;

**“Social Media Policy”** means the City’s Social Media Policy (Policy Number 30.10);

**“Third Party Advertiser”** means a person, corporation or group that engages in Election advertising to promote or oppose, or take a position on an issue associated with a Candidate;

**“Working Hours”** means the regularly scheduled hours of work by City Staff for City business;

## **2. Use of City Facilities:**

### **2.1. Campaigning**

Campaigning in a Public Place is prohibited unless such activities occur within spaces where rental is permitted and done in accordance with established rental procedures and fees for those specific City Facilities. Campaign Materials must also be contained within the rented space.

Campaigning in a Park is generally permitted provided that:

- Such activities do not interfere with access to the Park;

- Such activities do not disrupt regular City business and are compliant with City bylaws;
- No Campaign Materials are attached to buildings, structures, trees or driven into the ground; and
- Rental of the Park is done in accordance with established rental procedures and fees for those specific Parks.

Campaigning in a Recreational Facility is prohibited.

Candidates, Third Party Advertisers, Interested Parties, or those acting on their behalf, shall not distribute Campaign Materials during any event or program hosted or financially supported by the City, whether at a City Facility or not.

Political Activity will not be permitted at a City Facility being used for advance, assent or other voting on the same day(s) that the City Facility is used for voting.

## **2.2. Candidate Meetings**

All-Candidates meetings may be held at City Facilities provided all Candidates are invited to attend such meetings, however, no Campaign Materials may be displayed or distributed at such meetings.

## **2.3. City Events**

Elected Officials are permitted to attend City organized events or events held at a City Facility, and may act as ceremonial participants in their capacity as Elected Officials, including speaking at the event and partaking in ceremonial activities, but may not engage in Campaigning at such an event.

# **3. Use of City Resources:**

## **3.1. City Branding**

Use of the City's corporate image, crest or logo, or any other graphic which implies endorsement by the City or affiliation with the City, may not be printed, posted or distributed on any Campaign Materials or included on any Election-related website, except for the purpose of linking to the City's website to provide information to citizens about the Election.

Photographic or video materials which have been created by City Staff or with City Resources may not be used for any Election purpose or in Campaign Materials.

Candidates may not post photographs of themselves in a City uniform or with City Staff in City uniform.

## **3.2. City's Social Media**

Throughout the Election, the City may periodically post neutral Election outreach content on social media channels in adherence to the City's Social Media Policy.

To preserve the neutral nature of the City's Election posts, Candidates, Third Party Advertisers, Interested Parties and Elected Officials are not permitted to write any comments on the City's social media posts. Any such comments will be removed immediately.

#### 4. Equal Access to Information and Tours:

The City will maintain its transparent and neutral political position by equally and openly sharing Election information with all Candidates and Third Party Advertisers, in line with the below table describing the type of information and meetings that can be accommodated:

Who is Responsible	Information	Meetings
City Staff	City Staff will direct any requests for information to the Chief Election Officer.  City Staff may assist the Chief Election Officer in posting general information on the City's website or social media channels, and organizing general meetings and tours, if approved by the Election Office.	City Staff may help organize general meetings and tours once approved by the Chief Election Officer.  City Staff will not accommodate personal meetings/tours with Candidates or Third Party Advertisers.
Chief Election Officer	Information of a general nature that may provide valuable guidance will be shared equally and openly with all Candidates and Third Party Advertisers by the Chief Election Officer.  This general information will be posted on the City's website or social media channels, or through other means of communication, in accordance with the City's Social Media Policy, to ensure the information is accessible at all times.	Any requests from Candidates or Third Party Advertisers for a tour or meeting must go through the Chief Election Officer.  In the event a tour or meeting is approved by the Chief Election Officer, the tour or meeting will be open for all Candidates or Third Party Advertisers to attend.
Chief Administrative Officer	If a request is made by a Candidate or Third Party Advertiser for information that would not normally be provided by the Chief Election Officer, or a request for information is denied and the Candidate or Third Party Advertiser wishes to appeal this decision, this request may be escalated to the Chief Administrative Officer within five (5) calendar days to determine the appropriate course of action.	If a request is made by a Candidate or Third Party Advertiser for a meeting or tour that cannot be accommodated and the Candidate or Third Party Advertiser wishes to appeal the decision not to accommodate this meeting or tour, this request may be escalated to the Chief Administrative Officer within five (5) calendar days to determine the appropriate course of action.

#### 5. Conduct Framework for City Staff:

All citizens of Maple Ridge have a right to participate in the Election process, including City Staff, and this Section provides a framework that balances such participation with the City's politically neutral position.

The following table provides examples of how City Staff can maintain political neutrality while working at the City, as well as examples of what would not be considered politically neutral activities:

Maintaining Political Neutrality	Not Maintaining Political Neutrality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following this Political Activity Policy;</li> <li>• Exercising discretion and good judgment if they decide to participate in Political Activities outside of Working Hours, including on social media;</li> <li>• Being mindful that participating in Political Activities outside of Working Hours could still affect the public's perception of the City's neutral political position;</li> <li>• Seeking guidance from their Department Manager or Department Supervisor if they are uncertain about whether participating in an activity could affect the public's perception of the City's political neutrality.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engaging in Political Activities during Working Hours;</li> <li>• Engaging in Political Activities while wearing a City uniform;</li> <li>• Wearing clothing or buttons that advertise a Candidate, political party or issue during Working Hours or while wearing a City uniform;</li> <li>• Using their title or position within the City in a way that might lead the public to believe that the City is endorsing a Candidate, political party or issue.</li> </ul>

#### 6. Administration of Policy:

The Chief Election Officer is responsible for administering and maintaining this Policy.

In the event the provisions or conduct framework in this Policy are not adhered to, the Chief Election Officer may do any, some, or all of the following:

- immediately order cessation of any Political Activities, Campaigning, or any other Election-related activity that contravenes this Policy;
- order the removal of any Campaign Materials that contravenes this Policy;
- notify the Chief Administrative Officer if City Staff are involved, who may then commence an investigation and determine an appropriate response.

The guidance in this Policy is in addition to, and not a substitute for, required compliance with any other applicable City bylaw or policy, including but not limited to:

- Social Media Policy
- Council Conduct Bylaw - No. 7637-2020
- Sign Bylaw - No. 7630-2020
- Public Places, Parks and Recreation Facilities Regulation Bylaw – No. 7854-2022