

Appendix to By-Law No. 4b-17

Town of Hearst Online Media Policy

TOWN OF HEARST ONLINE MEDIA POLICY
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Town of Hearst Online Media Policy

Objectives – Website and Facebook

1. The Town of Hearst is committed to increase communication efforts with the public via its website: www.hearst.ca and social media Facebook page: Corporation of the Town of Hearst, by providing convenient, accurate, timely and efficient access to information about municipal services, activities, policies and programs for residents, visitors and persons conducting business in the Town of Hearst.

Guidelines

1. These guidelines apply to all employees of the Town of Hearst, members of Council and relate to the municipal Facebook page and website.
2. The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure suitable and acceptable content within the municipal website and the Facebook page registered under the Town of Hearst, and to ensure that all content meets the required standards by establishing rules and procedures for the collection and dissemination of such content. This policy will ensure consistent standards in providing information to the public.
3. The content of the municipal website and the Facebook page are to be maintained and administered by the Administration Department. All routine maintenance shall be the responsibility of the Administrative Assistant, under the authority of the Chief Administrative Officer or Clerk.
4. No Facebook comment made by a resident will be answered publicly; all replies will be made via private message or by written municipal staff correspondence.
5. It is the responsibility of each department head to provide pertinent information pertaining to documents and activities of their department.

Website: www.hearst.ca

Guidelines

1. The Town of Hearst provides information about the Corporation of the Town of Hearst and may provide links to service clubs, organizations and/or government agencies (municipal, provincial, federal).
2. The Town of Hearst website www.hearst.ca will remain the Town's primary and predominant internet presence for in-depth information, forms and online documents. All social media usage will direct visitors back to the appropriate section of the website, if possible.

The following statements shall be posted on the website:

1. Information on the Town of Hearst's website is provided solely for information of the user as a guide to services and notices which may affect residents and visitors to the area.
2. Every effort is made to ensure that the content contained within the website is timely and accurate. However, changes are made periodically to many municipal documents, including municipal by-laws, regulations, guidelines, and schedules and these changes may or may not be reflected in the materials or information present on the Town of Hearst website. Reliance upon any material in said sites shall be at the user's risk. Refer to Town Hall for official copies.
3. The Town website is provided as general information only and is not intended to provide specific legal advice for any individual and should not be relied upon in that regard.
4. The Town of Hearst acknowledges and appreciates that the communication of personal information is extremely sensitive and it recognizes the need to protect the personal privacy of individuals who interact with the Town of Hearst through various means of communication. The Town of Hearst is subject to the provisions of the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 1990*.
5. This privacy statement applies solely to information collected in the Town of Hearst website and not third party sites (i.e. community and government links, etc.). The Town is not responsible for the privacy practices of other sites. When accessing other links from the municipal website, users are encouraged to read the privacy statement of each and every website that is visited before providing any personal information. The Town makes every effort to ensure the links listed are current and are indeed linked to the appropriate site. When it becomes aware of a link to a site with questionable content, appropriate action will be taken.

Facebook Page: Corporation of the Town of Hearst

Guidelines

1. The Town of Hearst recognizes the importance of social media resources as communication tools used to provide information and create awareness about municipal programs, services and events, and as such are an important part of the Town of Hearst's communications strategy. The Town also has an overriding interest and expectation in deciding what is spoken on behalf of the Town of Hearst on social media, and as such, this policy establishes guidelines to be followed.

2. The Municipal Facebook page is intended to serve as a point of communication between the community and the Municipality. Any comment submitted to this page is public records and subject to disclosure. The Facebook page is intended to enhance communication, not to replace normal Town business processes.
3. Content and conversations on the Facebook page should be professional, and intended to inform and engage. Information posted by the Town shall be deemed to be accurate, relevant and consistent with corporate policies and protocols.

Guidelines for Users

The following guidelines shall be posted on the Municipal Facebook Page:

1. The Town of Hearst welcomes your postings. Before posting to this Facebook page, please note that the information on this page is for the purpose of sharing municipal-related information only.
2. Comments or any type of material posted by members of the public do not necessarily reflect the opinions or ideals of the Town of Hearst, or its employees, members of Council or affiliates. The Town is therefore not responsible for the comments made by citizens or members of this page. Posting on this Facebook page by members is not considered “official” notice to the Municipality.
3. The Town invites all users and interested parties to share their opinions provided that all comments remain respectful. The Administrative Assistant will respond to questions and comments that are consistent with the municipal Facebook page and will do so privately within a reasonable timeframe.
4. Information and comments shared through the Facebook page will comply with the Town’s policies and procedures and shall not disclose confidential or proprietary information.
5. Communication made through messaging systems shall, in no way, be deemed to constitute legal notice to the Municipality or any of its agencies, officers, employees, agents or representatives, with any respect to existing or potential claims or cause of action against the municipality where notice to the municipality is required by any federal, provincial, or local laws, rules, or regulations.

Unsuitable Content / Negative Comments

6. The Town reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed inappropriate, in violation of the guidelines or of any applicable law, and shall not be held liable for any loss or damage caused by, or in connection with, such removal. Repeat offenders will be blocked from commenting on the Municipal Facebook page. The Town may report all users posting inappropriate or offensive material and shall not be obliged to reinstate any individual it blocks.

7. Examples of inappropriate content include but are not limited to the following:
 - Comments unrelated to the Municipality of the Town of Hearst
 - Profane language or content
 - Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination (race, creed, colour, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, ethnic origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation);
 - Sexual content or links to sexual content;
 - Commercial advertising;
 - Content encouraging illegal activity;
 - Information that may compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems;
 - Violation of legal ownership interest of any other party (copyright and intellectual property infringement);
 - Content for the purposes of promoting a candidate for municipal, provincial, or federal election;
 - Support or opposition to political campaigns or matters before Council of the Town of Hearst, personal comments or opinions on Town staff or elected officials or any personal opinions or political process;
 - Content that is believed to be inappropriate in the opinion of the Town.

Disclaimer / Privacy

1. By using the Facebook page, you are agreeing to be bound by the current version of these guidelines. The Town of Hearst reserves the right to change or modify these guidelines and/or this site at any time without notice.
2. The Town of Hearst shall not be held liable for any improper or incorrect use of the materials or information utilized on Facebook, and assumes no responsibility for any user's use of them, either indirectly or directly. All comments or other content posted via Facebook is considered public records and shall be subject to public disclosure under the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.
3. Users are advised that comments made concerning municipal staff are covered by the Town of Hearst Harassment and Discrimination in the Workplace Policy, By-law No. 32-11.