

COUNCIL COMMUNICATION POLICY

Subject: External & Internal Communications

Ref: Council

Code: 11

Date Approved: October 24th, 2017 Motion No.: 475/24/10/17

New

The County of Northern Lights believes in establishing standards relating to the receiving, responding and conducting of communications of Council either internally within the County as an organization or externally with residents, neighbours and other levels of government.

The County of Northern Lights believes in transparent communication between Council and Administration, contributing to sound and professional working relations.



Chief Elected Official



Chief Administrative Officer

DEFINITIONS

“Administration” means all employees (Management and Staff) of the County of Northern Lights,

“Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)” means the individual appointed by Council to the position of CAO under Section 205 of the MGA or any person she/he delegates under Section 209 of the MGA and is the only employee of Council. The CAO is the head of the Administration,

“Communications” means correspondence or communication from both written and unwritten sources, including but not limited to letters, emails, voicemail messages, text messages and phone calls,

“Council” means the CEO and Councillors of the County of Northern Lights at the time, being elected pursuant to the provisions of the Local Authorities Election Act whose term is unexpired, who have not resigned and who continue to be eligible to hold office as such under the terms of the MGA,

“Councillor” means a duly elected member of council, including the CEO/Reeve,

“County” means the County of Northern Lights,

“Deputy CEO/Deputy Reeve” means the member who is appointed by Council pursuant to the provisions of Section 152 of the MGA to act as CEO in the absence or incapacity of the CEO,

“Protocol” means both written and unwritten conventions, ethics, and/or rules of interaction and communication between Council and Administration,

“When Deemed Appropriate” when referenced, includes but is not limited to, situations that are politically or legally sensitive or situations when Council requests to be cc'd on correspondence.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Chief Elected Official/Reeve:

1.1 Coordinates Council decisions, acts as Council spokesperson, facilitates the Council/Administrative interaction, and performs the duties of the chief elected official as per the Municipal Government Act, R.S.A., 2000.

Council:

1.2 Council provides direction, makes strategic Policy decisions, represents the public interest, and performs the duties of a councillor as per the Municipal Government Act, R.S.A., 2000,

1.3 Council is responsible for hiring, supervising, evaluating and terminating the CAO. Council has one employee: the CAO.

Chief Administrative Officer:

1.4 Coordinates the organization's systems, manages organizational resources, facilitates the Administrative/Council interaction, performs the duties as outlined in the CAO Bylaw, and performs the duties of chief administrative officer as per the Municipal Government Act, R.S.A., 2000,

1.5 Is responsible for the hiring, leading, and terminating of all the employees of the County.

Administration:

1.6 Implements Council's directions and the corporate business plan, provides decision-making advice, and communicates customer needs under the direction of the CAO.

GENERAL COMMUNICATION PROCEDURES

2.1 Council and Administration will adhere to formal channels of communication between each other as established by Policy, Bylaw (*ie. Code of Conduct*), and legislation(*MGA*),

2.2 The professional and personal conduct of members while exercising the duties of their office must be above reproach and avoid even the appearance of impropriety.

Council and Administration will communicate to one another with respect and integrity. Councillors shall refrain from abusive conduct, personal charges or verbal attacks upon the character or motives of other members of Council, Boards and Committees, employees of the County or public,

2.3 The Reeve will advise the Councillor and/or Council when a Councillor's activities are affecting Administration's performance,

2.4 Council will deal with Administration performance concerns by communicating them through the Reeve to the CAO.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN COUNCIL AND ADMINISTRATION

3.1 Council will provide direction to Administration through a resolution of Council,

3.2 The CAO will ensure that correspondence directed to Council is forwarded to the next agenda for action/response and emergent issues with immediate deadlines may be forwarded electronically so that there is no adverse delay in the communication process,

3.3 Responses for e-mails and letters addressed to Council as a whole will be drafted by Administration following a Council directive or 'when deemed appropriate' in consultation with the Reeve and/or Reeve and Council. In instances where an email is sent to all, any responses from Council shall be "reply all".

3.4 The CAO will provide information to all of Council when deemed appropriate. Such provision is to be governed according to the following principles:

- a) All correspondence, invitations, and informational items,
- b) Responses to requests for information from one Council member,
- c) Responses to e-mails and letters addressed to an individual member of Council may be coordinated through the office of the CAO. The response shall be shared with all members of Council,
- d) Any non-routine information in written form provided to one member of Council will be provided to all members of Council, particularly if there is a likelihood that the matter will be discussed by Council in the foreseeable future.

3.5 To protect the right to privacy, information provided to an individual member regarding a complaint will not be distributed to all members of Council unless 'when deemed appropriate' by the CAO,

3.6 Notwithstanding Section 3.4, items addressed to an individual member of Council which are personal or confidential in nature are excluded from this requirement,

3.7 Council has a responsibility to make information requests of Administration with the following understanding:

- a) Information that is readily available to the public can be requested from the appropriate member of Administration directly.
- b) All other information requests will be directed to the CAO.

3.8 Administration will advise the CAO if a request for information from a member of Council will create a significant impact on performance/workload. In such an event, an authorized Council resolution may be necessary,

3.9 The CAO will coordinate and direct the employees of the County regarding the action and response to be taken by Administration to written or verbal communications. The CAO will also coordinate these actions and responses with Council, when deemed appropriate,

3.10 If a Council member is dissatisfied with a response received to an inquiry, they shall refer the matter to the CAO. The CAO will follow up on the matter and provide a response which clearly indicates a timeframe for investigation or resolution,

3.11 If the Council member continues to be dissatisfied with Administration's response, they shall contact the Reeve, and if necessary, submit an 'In Camera, i) Personnel' agenda request for the next meeting of Council,

3.12 Council inquiries are to be forwarded to the CAO's office with the preference being that inquiries are in a written format as in an email to the CAO. Inquiries can be made in person or via phone or text. The Executive Assistant assists with the coordination and response of inquiries as the position is considered to be part of the CAO's office,

3.13 Responses for emails and letters addressed to Council as a whole will as timely as possible be placed on the next Council agenda for response by Council. Letters of response will be written with content direction from Council by the CAO's office,

3.14 Responses to all inquiries received for Council will be marked by the appropriate index code, scanned and placed in the next appropriate Council Info Package,

3.15 When drafting responses to inquiries, Administration will adhere to professional etiquette, knowing that the response is considered public.

RESIDENT COMMUNICATION

4.1 Council will direct a resident inquiry, complaint, or request for municipal services to the County's front desk. Front desk personnel will then direct the resident to the appropriate department personnel,

4.2 Council will direct funding, grant and/or sponsorship requests from organizations to the CAO's office for action,

4.3 A Councillor may choose to respond to requests for information from a resident that are routine in nature, where the information is readily available to the public,

4.4 If a Councillor is inquiring as a ratepayer and not as a member of Council, requests for public information can be made directly to the respective department. If there is uncertainty as to whether the request is for public information or is a Council inquiry, the Councillor shall submit the request to the CAO,

4.5 Administration will record miscellaneous public works requests that come in from the public,

4.6 'When deemed appropriate' the CAO/DPW will coordinate actions and responses of such requests and will inform Council,

4.7 Resident or Organization requests of Council will go through the office of the CAO and 'when deemed appropriate' placed on the next Council agenda with any additional information administration feels necessary for Council to make an informed decision,

4.8 Residents or Organizations wishing to speak to Council as a whole will be directed to the office of the CAO and the delegation protocol from the 'Council Procedures Bylaw' will be followed.

DUTY TO RESPECT CONFIDENTIALITY

5.1 A Council member or former Council member must, unless specifically authorized otherwise by resolution of Council:

- a) Keep in confidence any record held in confidence by the Municipality, until the record is released to the public as lawfully authorized or required,
- b) Keep in confidence information considered in any part of a Council meeting or Committee meeting that was lawfully closed to the public, until the Council or Committee discusses the information at a meeting that is open to the public or releases the information to the public.

5.2 If the municipality suffers loss or damage because a Council member or former Council member contravenes section 5.1 a) & b) and the contravention was not inadvertent, the Municipality may recover damages from the person for the loss or damage.