



Subject: Use of Social Media for Business Purposes

Scope: Chief Administrative Officer, Department Heads and Authorized Middlesex County, Middlesex-London Paramedic Services, and Middlesex County Library Employees

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Reviewed:

SECTION 1 - PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to govern the use of social media accounts for Middlesex County by:
- Establishing criteria for the introduction of new social media accounts.
 - Establishing a formal process for authorizing new accounts and authorizing designated employees.
 - Clarifying expectations for the administration and management of social media accounts for business purposes.
 - Clarifying expectations for sharing information from third party sources.

SECTION 2 - POLICY

- 2.1 The primary goals of the County's use of social media are to:
- Increase awareness of municipal programs, services, projects, and decisions.
 - Grow County audiences through digital communications.
 - Drive audiences to County websites to access information, programs, and services.
 - Disseminate time-sensitive information quickly.
 - Monitor, track, and evaluate digital communication and marketing activities.
 - Engage in two-way communication with the County's audiences in a safe and respectful manner.
 - Collaborate with local municipalities and/or partner organizations on mutually beneficial programs and initiatives.

SECTION 3 – DEFINITIONS

3.1 In this policy:

3.1.1 “**Social Media**” is any form of digital communication through which users create or participate in online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages and other such content. This may include but is not limited to, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Tik Tok, Snapchat, or YouTube.

3.1.2 “**Designated Employees**” are employees of Middlesex County who have been authorized by their respective Department Head to manage approved social media accounts on behalf of the County.

SECTION 4 – PROCEDURES

Authorizing New Accounts

4.1 Middlesex County may authorize requests for new social media content if the following criteria are satisfied:

- Accounts are intended for audiences that are not easily reached by existing Middlesex County social media accounts.
- Account names or handles are easily recognizable as official accounts and are consistent across social media platforms.
- Appropriate staffing levels and account ownership is in place to effectively manage social media accounts on an ongoing basis.
- Relevant Department Heads and designated employees agree to comply with corporate guidelines or best practices in the administration of social media accounts.
- Communication through social media will comply with all other relevant corporate policies, procedures, and guidelines as well as any applicable provincial and federal legislation.
- There is a records retention plan for social media posts that is consistent with County records management and retention policies.
- Account passwords are changed regularly and provided to the Legislative Services Division as back up.

4.2 New social media account requests are to be endorsed by the appropriate Department Head who will act as executive sponsor and present the request to the Chief Administrative Officer for approval. The Chief Administrative Officer shall consult with the Manager, Legislative Services to verify the above criteria has been met prior to approval.

Authorizing Designated Employees

- 4.3 Employees who are authorized to manage social media accounts assume a high degree of accountability as official spokespeople for Middlesex County on social media and are expected to respond quickly to queries received through social media platforms. As such, Department Heads shall ensure that designated employees who are authorized to manage social media accounts:
- Have previous training or experience with digital communications.
 - Participate in ongoing inter-departmental discussions related to corporate guidelines and ongoing continuous improvement for digital communications.
 - Have sufficient authority and organizational awareness to issue content or respond to queries in the day-to-day management of social media accounts with minimal supervision.
 - Have access to Department Heads when higher order approval for content and replies if necessary.
- 4.4 Department Heads shall designate employees to manage social media accounts, and ensure adequate redundancies are in place to avoid staffing disruptions in the event of vacation, illness, leaves, and transitions.

Managing Social Media Accounts

- 4.5 Employees designated to manage social media accounts are expected to post professional, quality content and engage with audiences according to corporate criteria that includes, but is not limited to:
- Minimum frequencies for posting to social media platforms.
 - Compliance with corporate visual identity guidelines and best practices for translating visual content on social media platforms.
 - Minimum response times for responding to queries received through social media accounts.
 - Monitoring and tracking social media analytics for the purposes of consolidated corporate reporting for digital communications.
- 4.6 No confidential or private information will be posted on any Middlesex County social media account under any circumstance.
- 4.7 All Middlesex County social media accounts shall communicate:
- Regular hours of operation indicating when the social media account is actively monitored.

- Contact information for urgent requests outside of regular hours of operation.
- A clear statement that inappropriate user content will not be tolerated by Middlesex County and will be removed. Inappropriate user content includes:
 - Profane language or content.
 - Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, colour, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation.
 - Sexual content or links to sexual content.
 - Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity.
 - Content regarding non-County related sales, advertising, or promotion.
 - Comments determined by the County to be a specific attack on groups or individuals or to be inherently political in nature or cause.
 - Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems.
 - Content that reveals personal or private information about any individual or is otherwise protected by the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act or any other applicable legislation.
 - Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party.
 - Content that violates any County policy. Designated employees are responsible to be aware of all County policies that may impact their posts.
 - Any other content that is deemed to be inappropriate or offensive by the County.

4.8 When users of Middlesex County social media accounts post inappropriate content, as defined above, designated employees who manage social media accounts shall immediately:

- Log the incident including date, username and information, and a screen shot of the content.
- Remove the content.
- Report content to the relevant Department Head and Manager, Legislative Services who will consult with the Chief Administrative Officer, Legal Services and/or Human Resources to determine if further action is necessary.

Sharing Third Party Content

4.9 As a municipal government, Middlesex County is expected to act fairly and equitably when sharing third party content. To ensure a fair and equitable approach that is consistent with Middlesex County's message framework and partnership arrangements, the following third- party content may be shared on Middlesex County social media accounts:

- Social media content from local municipalities within Middlesex County.
- Social media content from federal or provincial government accounts that relate to Middlesex County or are of interest to target audiences.
- Public safety information relevant to Middlesex County audiences.
- Social media content from service providers acting under contract or on behalf of Middlesex County.
- Social media content from organizations that provide funding or in-kind support for Middlesex County projects, programs, or services.
- Social media content from grant recipients or organizations receiving formal, Council approved, in-kind or financial support from Middlesex County.
- Social media content from organizations participating in or supporting a Middlesex County program.
- Social media content from elected officials, provided they are acting in an official capacity as a spokesperson on behalf of Council or a Committee of Council as Warden or Committee Chair.
- Social media content that aligns with destination marketing strategies (only @visitmiddlesex accounts may post content, though other County accounts may share content posted by @visitmiddlesex).
- Social media content that aligns with economic development and workforce development strategies (only @investinmiddlesex and @workinmiddlesex accounts may post content, though other County accounts may share content posted by @investinmiddlesex and @workinmiddlesex).

4.10 Content on Middlesex County social media accounts is not considered third-party content. As such, content may be shared freely across all authorized Middlesex County social media accounts.

Non-Compliance with Policy

4.11 Any employee who fails to follow the guidelines set out in this policy may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.