

## THE TOWNSHIP OF SOUTH STORMONT

Schedule "A" to By-law No. 2012-075	Effective Date: October 10, 2012
Title: Social Media Policy	Department: All Departments

### A. Policy Purpose and Scope

The purpose and objectives of this policy are to establish the acceptable use for social media within the Township of South Stormont and the electronic communications therein. This policy shall apply to personnel / staff or anyone using electronic communications on behalf of the Township of South Stormont. The policy is set to ensure that those using social media provided by the Township of South Stormont are knowledgeable in their use and have a full understanding of the circumstances in which these forms of communications are appropriate and permitted. The Township of South Stormont encourages the use of social media to further the goals of the Township and the mission of its departments, where appropriate.

The Township of South Stormont has an overriding interest and expectation in deciding what is "spoken" on behalf of the Township on social media sites. This policy establishes guidelines for the use of social media.

### B. Definitions

#### Social Media Tools

Forms of electronic communications (as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, person messages and other content (as videos).

#### Facebook

Facebook is a social networking service and website operational and privately owned by Facebook, Inc. Users may create a personal profile and other users as friends and exchange messages including automatic notifications when they update their profile. Users may join common interest user groups organized by workplace, school or other characteristics.

#### Twitter

Instant messaging system that lets a person send brief text messages up to 140 characters in length to a list of followers. Launched in 2006, Twitter was designed as a social network to keep friends and colleagues informed throughout the day.

#### YouTube

YouTube provides a venue for sharing videos among friends and family as well as a showcase for new and experienced videographers.

### Flickr

Flickr is a photo sharing website that allows members to upload their own photos into customizable albums that can then be labeled, organized, tagged and publicly posted. Flickr, as well as many other photo hosting websites, provides URLs for every file that is uploaded and their image URLs can then be used to embed a photo in a website, social networking profile, blog post or email.

## **C. Accountability and Control of Content**

The Township CAO/Clerk will work together with appointed personnel / staff to ensure that the information posted / published using social media tools will be easy to understand, accessible in multiple formats and is accurate.

### General Guidelines of Acceptable Use

1. All Township of South Stormont social media sites will be subject to approval by the appointed communications officer.
2. The Township of South Stormont website, [www.southstormont.ca](http://www.southstormont.ca), will remain the Township's primary and predominant internet presence.
3. The Township of South Stormont will use social media as a tool that can fall into two separate categories:
  - a. As channels for disseminating time sensitive information as quickly as possible, for example, emergency information;
  - b. As marketing / promotional channels that will increase the Township's ability to broadcast its messages to the widest possible audience.
4. Wherever possible, the information and content that is posted to the Township of South Stormont social media sites will also be available on the Township's main website in an effort to remain consistent and reach multiple communication channels.
5. When posting to social media, the information should always contain a link directing users to the Township's official website. As there are limitations for amount of content posted, for example Twitter's 140 character cap, links should accompany these social media communications to ensure that community has access to in-depth information relating to the topic, forms, documents and other online services necessary.

### Control of Content

General upkeep and communications for the Township's social media tools will be managed by the Township's appointed personnel / staff.

It is absolutely mandatory that all use of social media sites shall comply with the appropriate policies, standards and procedures. All social media activity must comply with the relevant Township of South Stormont policies and standards.

*If an exception needs to be made, it must be approved by the Township CAO/Clerk prior to implementation.*

Any content maintained on the social media tools and related to Township business, including a list of subscribers and posted communication, is public record. Content shall be maintained in an accessible format.

#### Unsuitable Content

Content posted on the Township sites shall be related to Township business. Appointed personnel / staff reserve the right to edit or remove content from social media sites if the information presented is inappropriate or in violation of this Social Media Policy. Users and visitors to the Township of South Stormont social media sites shall be notified that the intended purpose of the site is to serve as a mechanism for communication between the Township and members of the community. Any content that is removed must be archived with the date, time and reason for removal.

Information that is deemed inappropriate would include, but not be limited to:

1. Confidential Information  
This includes confidential or proprietary information in the possession of the Township. This also includes confidential information about members of the public or staff of the Township of South Stormont.
2. Discriminatory Language  
This includes discriminatory, derogatory portrayal of individuals or groups, demeaning language or anything that could be deemed inappropriate. Any language that promotes and fosters discrimination on basis of race, creed, colour, age, religion, gender, marital status, family status or status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation is strictly prohibited.
3. Personal Political Content  
Includes support or opposition to political campaigns or matters before Council of the Township of South Stormont, personal comments or opinions of Township staff or elected officials or any personal opinions or political process.
4. Commercial Endorsement or Solicitation  
Includes endorsement by the Township of South Stormont of one product or service over another. This includes statements about acquiring or the receipt of any product, service or asset for personal gain or use.

These guidelines must be displayed to users or made available by hyperlink. Any content removed based on these guidelines must be retained, including the time, dates and identify of the poster when available.

### **C. New Social Media Tools**

All new social media tools proposed for Township use will be approved by the Township CAO/Clerk.

- The Township will maintain the list of all approved social media.
- The Township CAO/Clerk will be the keeper of login and password information. If any changes to these sites are required, the personnel / staff must notify the Township CAO/Clerk.

At any point, the Township can, at their discretion, immediately edit or remove content from social media sites.

For each social media tool approved for use by the Township, the following documentation will be developed and adopted:

- Guidelines for operational use; and
- Standards and processes for managing accounts on social media sites.

### **D. Policy Compliance**

Any personnel / staff found in violation of the Social Media Policy will be subject to review and if required, disciplinary action may take place. It is up to the Township to ensure that this policy is reviewed by each personnel / staff member in order to be well educated and ensure compliance. A hard copy of this policy may be distributed to each member of personnel / staff.

All social media activity must comply with the relevant Township of South Stormont policies and standards.

### **E. Privacy Act and Record Retention**

Social media content that is generated by personnel / staff of the Township of South Stormont are records owned by the Township and not the individuals managing the content. In addition to being a record, content maintained in a social media format that is related to Township business is a public record and is subject to the rules of the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. This includes information classes unique to social media, including lists of subscribers and posted comments. Any request for public records on social media will be responded to by the Township CAO/Clerk in accordance with all federal and provincial laws, as well as Township policy.

Content must be managed, stored and retrieved in compliance with the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* as well as other legislation as deemed appropriate by the Township. Wherever possible, such sites will clearly indicate that any articles and other content posted or submitted for posting are subject to public disclosure. Users shall be notified that public disclosure requests must be directed to the Township CAO/Clerk. The Township's policies and by-laws apply to social media formats and social media content.

Please note: Social Media Tools are third party sites and are separate private businesses with their own terms of service and private policies. The Township of South Stormont is not responsible for the operation of third party social media sites and in no way can guarantee the privacy of individuals who access content provided to such sites by the Township.

In an effort to ensure that the privacy rights of the Township and its staff are protected, personnel / staff shall be asked to read and sign that they have read and understand the Social Media Policy.

## **Facebook Specific Standards and Procedures**

### Purpose

Facebook is a social networking service and website. Users may create a personal profile, add other users as friends and exchange messages, including automatic notifications when they update their profile. Users may join common-interest user groups, organized by workplace, school or other characteristics. Recently cities and townships have joined Facebook as a means to drive traffic to their website and to inform their community members of city/township specific activities. The Facebook Specific Standards and Procedures must be used in conjunction with the Township's Social Media Policy stated herein. As Facebook changes and evolves, so will these standards.

### Content

#### *Type of "pages"*

The Township will only have one specific "page". The Township will not participate in "Facebook Groups".

#### *Pages*

Pages are used to communicate information in an official, public manner to people who choose to connect with them. Similar to profiles, Pages can be enhanced with applications that help the entity communicate and engage with their audiences and capture new audiences virally through friend recommendations, News Feed stories, Facebook events and beyond.

#### *Groups*

Facebook Groups are set up for more person interaction. Groups are also directly connected to the people who administer them, meaning that activities that go on there could reflect on you personally. Pages, on the other hand, don't list the names of administrators and are thought of as a person, almost like a corporate entity is considered a "person" under the law.

### Facebook Pages vs. Groups

Facebook considers groups to be an extension of your personal actions. When you post something as a group administrator, it appears to be coming from you and is attached to your personal profile. Alternatively, Pages can create content that comes from the Page itself, so that content doesn't have to be linked to you personally.

### Visual Guidelines

All images on the Township of South Stormont Facebook page will be standardized as per the branding guidelines of the Township. Township appointed personnel / staff will not be authorized to change these set images and branding unless given permission by the Township CAO/Clerk.

If "wall" content is to be enabled on the Township of South Stormont Facebook page, public disclosure text must be placed on the page notifying:

*The Township of South Stormont Facebook page is intended to serve as a point of communication between the community and the Township. Any comments submitted to this page and its list of "fans" are of public record and subject to disclosure. If you have any requests, questions or concerns please direct your questions to our Township CAO/Clerk.*

If comments are turned on, the wall page should include a link to a Comment Policy tab with the following disclaimer:

*Comments posted to this page will be monitored. Under the Township of South Stormont Social Media Policy, the Township reserves the rights to remove inappropriate comments including those that have obscene language or sexual content, threaten or defame any person or organization, violate the legal ownership interest of another party, support or oppose political candidates or ballot propositions, promote illegal activity, promote commercial services or products or are not topically related to the particular posting.*

#### Link to Township of South Stormont

A link to [www.southstormont.ca](http://www.southstormont.ca) or [www.southstormont.com](http://www.southstormont.com) will be included on the Info page.

#### Page Administrators

A successful page requires monitoring. The appointed personnel / staff is responsible for monitoring the Facebook page. This individual(s) is also responsible for upkeep and to ensure that content posted is current and appropriate.

#### Discussion Boards

Comments on the wall will generally be left on, however, may be turned off should the necessity arise. At all times, discussion boards should be turned off.

#### Style

The Township Facebook page will be based on a template that includes consistent Township branding. This styling shall not be changed at any point in time.

It is up to the appointed personnel / staff to ensure that proper grammar and spelling is used and to ensure that slang and abbreviations are avoided. The Facebook page is a reflection of the Township and must represent professionalism at all times.

### Applications

There are thousands of Facebook applications. Common applications can allow users to stream video and music, post photos and view and subscribe to Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds. While some may be useful to the page's mission, they can cause clutter and run potential security risks.

An application should not be used unless it services a business purpose for the Township, adds to the user experience, comes from a trusted source and is approved by the Township CAO/Clerk.

An application may be removed at any time, especially if it appears to be causing a security breach.

## **Twitter Specific Standards and Procedures**

### Purpose

Twitter is an instant messaging system that lets a person send brief text messages up to 140 characters in length to a list of followers. It is proposed that the Township of South Stormont will maintain a Twitter account and appointed Township staff will communicate information directly to the Township Twitter Account Followers. The main purpose of the Twitter account is to alert the followers of township news and to direct them back to the Township of South Stormont website for more information. The Twitter specific standards and procedures must be followed in conjunction with the Township's Social Media Policy stated herein.

### Content

- The Township of South Stormont contact information must be clearly stated in the Twitter profile information;
- The appointed Township personnel / staff will manage the Township's Twitter account. It is crucial that these appointed staff hold the account information in a safe and secure area and it is imperative that this information not be shared with individuals outside of the appointed staff;
- The Township will only manage one Twitter account unless it is approved by the Township CAO/Clerk. Account information, including usernames and passwords shall be kept by the Township CAO/Clerk and not be changed or modified in any way;
- The Township bio must state that: "This site is not monitored, you must call 911 for emergencies"; and
- The Twitter account background and logos for the Township of South Stormont must not be altered in any way. Any modifications or requests for styling will need to be directed to the Township CAO/Clerk at which point a review will be conducted.

Twitter accounts shall serve three primary purposes:

1. Get emergency information out quickly;
  2. Promote Township specific sponsored events; and / or
  3. Refer followers to content hosted on the Township website [www.southstormont.ca](http://www.southstormont.ca).
- Tweets shall be relevant, timely and informative; and
  - Twitter content shall mirror information presented on the Township of South Stormont's website. As Twitter does not allow for content editing, it is up to Township personnel / staff to communicate information accurately and correctly the first time.

## **YouTube and Flickr Specific Standards and Procedures**

### Purpose

It is proposed that the Township of South Stormont will provide access to Township related video and images as a way to communicate and obtain information online.

Videos and images posted to Flickr or YouTube must meet key objectives in order to be considered.

The Township of South Stormont may provide access to online video because this is the way many residents communicate and obtain information online. Key objectives for video content should meet one or more of the following goals:

- Provide information about Township services;
- Showcase Township and community events; and
- Explore Township of South Stormont issues and highlight outstanding individuals and organizations that contribute to South Stormont and the region.

The Township encourages the use of video content to further the goals of the Township and the missions of its departments, where appropriate.

### Content

The Township CAO/Clerk will be responsible for approving the video content.

Low quality content will be considered as long as audio is clear and the content is compelling and informative.

All video will be submitted to the Township of South Stormont channel for hosting and posting.

The Township must have secured rights to stream the video.

Videos streamed from sources other than [www.southstormont.ca](http://www.southstormont.ca) may not be embedded on Township of South Stormont pages. Links to external videos are permitted, but should only be used when content is not available through the Township of South Stormont.

### Archive

Any video posted to a third party video site must also be posted to South Stormont's Channel site for purposes of records retention.

## **Social Media Policy Agreement**

I \_\_\_\_\_, have read and understand the Township of South Stormont Social Media Policy and I agree to abide by this policy

I understand that the Township personnel / staff who violate the Township's Social Media Policy are subject to disciplinary action.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

For further information, contact:

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