

COMMUNICATION POLICY
The Corporation of the Municipality of Whitestone

Purpose:

The purpose of the Communications Policy is to ensure efficient, effective, timely, and comprehensive communication to the residents of the Municipality of Whitestone.

Internal Communications between Council and Staff

Council:

- will be open to discussion with staff.
- will keep staff informed of residents' concerns where / when appropriate.
- will consult with staff, when necessary, to ensure thorough and correct response to residents communications.
- correspondence will be copied and placed in Councillors' inboxes for comments to be brought to the table, if necessary. It may not be necessary to discuss some items at a council meeting.

Staff:

- will communicate all necessary information to Council to aid them in determining corporate policy and decision making.
- will be open to discussion with Council.
- will prepare and maintain a semi-monthly Council Information Update which will be referred to as 'Task Trackers'; one will be for Open Council Direction, the second for Special Closed items.
- the Task Trackers will be circulated electronically by the CAO-Clerk-Treasurer to Council to coincide with circulation of the Council agenda.
- the designate will be responsible for updating the respective item in the Task Tracker in the work folder.
- the CAO-Clerk-Treasurer will be responsible for ensuring the relevance and value of items on the Trackers.
- items from the Mayor and Council not yet, but to be included on the Trackers, will be forwarded to the CAO-Clerk-Treasurer on an as necessary basis.
- the CAO-Clerk-Treasurer and designate will provide accurate and timely information to Council by email or other means outside of the formal Trackers as necessary.

Confidential Information:

It is a basic and given principle that staff will not intentionally withhold information that the Mayor and Council *should* be aware of.

Staff occasionally become aware of information that from a primarily development or a personnel perspective, is confidential. There is often a requirement to respect the confidentiality of the information, its source, or the employee. Timing of making

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relevant information available to the Mayor and Council is critical, requiring at times, judgment by staff. Staff will see the exercising of this judgment of highest importance.

Mayor:

As the Mayor is the official voice of the Municipality of Whitestone, the Mayor must be notified of any issue that is politically or legally sensitive, or has the potential to negatively impact on public or stakeholder relations or the reputation of the Corporation. Based on the issue, the communication may be forwarded to all of Council.

Internal Communications between Staff Members

A staff meeting will be held every Wednesday:

- to keep staff informed about projects/issues that each department are working on.
- to share what had been discussed at the Council meeting.
- to obtain input and discuss issues relevant to each department.

The staff meeting minutes will be circulated electronically and by hard copy.

External Communications between Residents and Council

- Council's contact information will be provided on the Municipal website, Interim and Final Tax Notices and in the newsletters
- respond to resident's communications when they deem it appropriate
- residents communicating verbally with any member of Council is considered to be general in nature and will not receive a formal response unless specifically requested in writing
- residents communicating with any single member of Council in writing is considered to be general in nature and will not receive a formal Municipal response unless specifically requested in writing, or unless the member of Council puts the matter before Council on a Council meeting Agenda
- residents requesting action from the Municipality or wishing to ensure their communication is addressed formally by all of Council should send their communication to the Municipal office addressed to all of Council

External Communications between Staff and Residents

- respond to telephone and email messages within one (1) business day
- respond to written enquiries within ten (10) business days
- avoid transferring a caller on the phone more than one time
- advise residents of the reason for a delay and when they can expect to receive a response
- have sufficient counter presence when the residents visit our office
- deal with the residents enquiries at the time of visiting our office, and if not, explain why and provide a written response within ten (10) business days
- aim to make information resources, such as forms and pamphlets, available on our website and at our office

- aim to ensure that our written correspondence and information is easily understood and written

Agendas of Council and Committee of the Whole

Municipal staff will endeavour:

- a. to electronically send a copy of the completed Agenda to the Councillors no later than Thursday prior to the meeting.
- b. that the completed Agenda will be available for pick-up by the Councillors no later than Thursday prior to the meeting.
- c. to electronically send a copy of the upcoming Agenda to all residents who provide an e-mail address no later than 12:00 p.m. on the Friday prior to the meeting.
- d. hard copies of the Agenda will also be available to the general public at the Municipal office and in the information boxes no later than NOON on the Friday prior to the meeting.
- e. that the Agenda will be posted on the Municipal website.
- f. that the Agenda will be provided to each department for circulation amongst staff.

Minutes of Council and Committee of the Whole

Municipal staff will endeavour:

- a. to electronically send a copy of the draft Minutes to all Councillors no later than three (3) days after the meeting.
- b. that the draft Minutes be completed and made available for pick-up by the Councillors no later than four (4) days after the meeting.
- c. to electronically send a copy of the draft Minutes to all residents who provide an e-mail address no later than four (4) days after the meeting.
- d. that the draft Minutes be completed and made available for pick-up by the general public no later than four (4) days after the meeting.
- e. that the draft Minutes be posted on the Municipal website.
- f. that the draft Minutes will be provided to each department for circulation amongst staff.

Agendas of Boards and Committees

The Boards and Committees will:

- a. electronically send or drop off a copy of the upcoming Agenda to the Municipal office no later than 12:00 p.m. on the Friday prior to the meeting so that the Municipal staff may post the Agenda on the Municipal website.
- b. endeavour that the Agenda be completed and available for pick-up by the Members and the general public no later than 12:00 p.m. on the Friday prior to the meeting.
- c. endeavour that the Agenda will be provided to all members of the Boards and Committees.

Minutes of Boards and Committees

The Boards and Committees will:

- a. electronically send or drop off a copy of the Minutes to the Municipal office no later than three (3) days after the meeting so that the Municipal staff may post the Minutes on the Municipal website.
- b. endeavour that the Minutes be completed and made available for pick-up by the Members and the general public no later than three (3) days after the meeting; and
- c. endeavour that the Minutes be provided to all members of the Boards and Committees.

Meetings of Council, Committee of the Whole Council, Boards, and Committees

1. Council and Committee of the Whole Council meeting dates, times and locations will be determined by resolution of Council on an annual basis.
2. Council and Committee of the Whole Council meeting dates and times as determined by resolution will be published on the Municipal website and posted in a visible location within the Municipal Office.
3. Re-scheduling of the date, time, and/or location of any of the above noted meetings will be posted on the Municipal website.
4. The Mayor may at any time summon a special meeting of the Council on giving a minimum of 24 hours notice to members or, upon receipt of a petition from a majority of the members, or at the call of the Mayor in case of an emergency the CAO-Clerk-Treasurer shall summon a meeting for the purpose, and at the time mentioned in the petition. The only business to be dealt with at a special meeting is listed in the notice of the meeting.
5. Special Council or Special Committee of the Whole Council dates, times and locations will be posted on the Municipal website and in a visible location within the Municipal Office no later than twenty-four (24) hours prior to the meeting.
6. Committee and Board meeting dates, times and locations will be posted on the Municipal website and in a visible location within the Municipal Office no later than one (1) week prior to the meeting.
7. Public information meetings will be posted on the Municipal website no later than one (1) month prior to the scheduled meeting.

Report Card

A report card will be made available periodically during the Council's term, for the residents to comment on the Council's performance and priorities.

Information Boxes

1. Weather-proof information boxes are in place throughout the Municipality of Whitestone which will contain public information.
2. Municipal staff will be responsible for the removal of expired public information contained in the information boxes.

RESIDENTS FINDING INFORMATION

A. Municipal Website – www.whitestone.ca

A primary source of official information for residents of Whitestone. The website is utilized to access information, and it is a resource for searchable reference material on the Municipality.

The Municipal website:

- a. will maintain up-to-date user-friendly information to assist residents in their business with the Municipality.
- b. will be informative and inter-active to facilitate communication between the public, Councillors and staff. A calendar of Municipal meetings and events open to the public will be kept up-to-date.
- c. is the primary source of official Municipal information and is not a forum for commenting on Municipal issues and services.
- d. will be neutral in focus.
- e. will archive Agendas and Minutes of official meetings.
- f. will be updated on a regular basis.
- g. will contain links to easily enable e-mails to Municipal officials.

B. Newsletters

1. A newsletter will be created, printed, and made accessible to all residents.
2. The Receptionist will gather information through department heads, Council, Boards and Committees to be included in each newsletter:
 - a. notice will be given of deadline for submission
 - b. draft newsletter to be prepared for Council review
 - c. amendments will be processed if required
 - d. final viewing by the Mayor and the CAO-Clerk-Treasurer
 - e. printing
 - f. mailing
3. The Municipal newsletter will consist of four editions throughout the year:
 - a. Spring (to be published, and mailed with the Interim Tax Notice and to be made available on the Municipal website in February)
 - b. Summer (to be published, and mailed and made available on the Municipal website in May)
 - c. Fall (to be published, and mailed with the Final Tax Notice and to be made available on the Municipal website in August)
 - d. Winter (to be published, and mailed and made available on the Municipal website in November)
4. Newsletter will be sent electronically to all residents who provide e-mail addresses.

5. All members of Council may have the option to write a personal letter to taxpayers, which would accompany the quarterly newsletter.

C. Media Requests

All media requests for interviews will be handled through the office of the Mayor and/or CAO-Clerk-Treasurer.

Individual Council members who are contacted by the media for interviews, will notify the CAO-Clerk-Treasurer to inform of the discussion.

The Mayor and/or CAO-Clerk-Treasurer will ensure that the media has current contact information and is reminded of the Municipality's policy.

The Mayor and/or CAO-Clerk-Treasurer will work to ensure all requests are handled in a timely fashion.

The Whitestone Fire Department will follow their Standard Operating Guidelines.