



## **Township of Ramara Social Media Policy**

### **1.0 INTENT:**

The Social Media Policy sets guidelines and standards to ensure the appropriate use and management of social media on behalf of the Township of Ramara. This policy aligns with the Township's Corporate Priorities and encourages clear and effective communication with all citizens using a variety of accepted tools including, social media.

### **2.0 SCOPE:**

This policy applies to all Township of Ramara employees who make public statements on Township social media sites and social networks that discuss, share or comment on the Township of Ramara. This policy also applies to members of the public who comment on posts made by the Township social media sites and social networks.

### **3.0 RESPONSIBILITY**

The responsibility is on all Township employees to read, understand and follow the policy. The Business and Communication Coordinator and/or any other employee that the CAO chooses will create and administer social media sites.

### **4.1 GUIDELINES:**

#### **4.1. Acceptable Use of Social Media by Township Employees on behalf of the Township.**

##### **I. Purpose and Use**

Social Media should be used as a communication tool for the intent of enhancing communication from the Township to the public about programs and services for the following purposes:

- Raising awareness and sharing information
- Recruiting volunteers and employees
- Promoting Township events, programs, and services
- Increasing access to information for specific audiences
- Disseminating time-sensitive information quickly
- Promoting opportunities for public involvement
- Where possible, Township social media accounts should link back to the Township's website for the purpose of downloading forms, documents, and providing specific or additional information

- Utilizing social media as an analytical tool to help monitor, track and evaluate the Township's communication and marketing efforts

## **II. Conduct**

Township employees using social media on behalf of the Township will conduct themselves in a professional and ethical manner as stated in the Township of Ramara Code of Conduct. Any breach in this policy will result in being reprimanded based on the Staff and/or Council Code of Conduct. Staff will:

- Post accurate, credible, and consistent information and links consistent with the Township's information, messages, brand identity, and policies. This includes the expression of personal opinions or furthering personal agendas that do not align with the Township.
- Post content in a manner that is discreet and does not disclose confidential information or release personal or corporate information without prior consent. Social media must take the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA) into consideration.
- Post content in a professional and non-confrontational manner that does not contravene the Township's Code of Conduct.
- Ensure proper protocols and obtain permissions before posting any copyrighted material (including documents, websites, logos, images).
- Maintain security of social media accounts, including password and login information.

Where possible, each social media account used by the Township should contain a disclaimer clearly advising visitors to the site that third-party comments are not official communications of the Township of Ramara. The disclaimer should also note that in addition to the social media accounts, the township website is the official destination for township information and that social media accounts are regularly monitored Monday-Friday during regular business hours.

Disclaimer example:

*“Comments made by members of the public are not official communications of the Township of Ramara and are owned by the contributing commenter. These comments are not reflective of the Township's views, opinions, and/or policies.”*

*This page is primarily monitored during regular business hours, between 9:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday. The Township of Ramara website at ramara.ca should be used as the official online resource for township information.”*

### **III. Sharing Content**

When sharing or re-posting content from a social media account that is not owned by the Township of Ramara, the following guidelines must be followed:

- a. Connects the public with information and services provided by upper tier governments or government-funded agencies or boards in Canada.
- b. Provides further information on subject matter found on the Township's website. Such information must be provided by an official and/or accredited source.
- c. A Township affiliated organization, service club or registered charity (direct partnership by way of funding, sponsorship, staff resources or in-kind contributions).
- d. A business improvement area operating within the Township.
- e. A professional association as determined solely by the Township of Ramara.
- f. Organization approved by Council.
- g. General benefit to the Township and its residents.

The Township's social media account cannot share or re-post the following: links to a personal account/website, individual business account/website, political party/candidate account/website, or objectionable material as defined in the Website policy.

### **IV. Content promoting events:**

- a. Organized or funded by another level of government;
- b. Organized by a government-funded agency or board;
- c. Organized by the Township of Ramara or an affiliated organization/group;
- d. Funded in full, or in part, by the Township of Ramara;
- e. Sponsored by the Township of Ramara;
- f. Organized by a service club operating within the Township of Ramara and performing work that benefits Ramara residents;
- g. Organized by a business improvement area or Chamber of Commerce located in the Township for general promotional purposes;
- h. General benefit to the Township and its residents.

The Township's social media account cannot share or re-post the following: any posts that promote events that are for individual businesses, include objectionable material, are political in nature, or promote an individual religion or religious service.

## **4.2 Personal Use of Social Media by Members of Council and Employees**

### **I. Conduct**

The Township expects all Employees and members of Council who use social media to do so without breaching their duties to the Township and adhere to their respective Codes of Conduct. Any breach in this policy will result in being reprimanded based on the Staff and/or Council Code of Conduct. Employees and councillors should consider the following:

- Even if you do not explicitly identify yourself as a Township employee or councillor, others may identify you as an employee or councillor by your name, your place of work, a photograph, or by the content you post.
- Posts should not include Township owned logos, photographs, graphics or other media without the Township's authorization.
- Posts should not circulate any organizational or confidential information such as internal deliberations, personal information such as client or employee information, or negative comments about the Township of Ramara, councillors, Employees or residents.
- Posts should not engage in workplace discrimination or harassment, or activity that includes inappropriate comments, photographs, links, etc.

Overall, employees and councillors are expected to conduct themselves professionally on and off duty. Even when an Employee does not publicly associate themselves with the Township on social media, all materials related to their page may be perceived to reflect upon the Township. Further, employees and councillors should not expect confidentiality or privacy in relation to their online activities pertaining to the Township of Ramara. The traditional legal view is that posting content on social media sites about an employer is considered a publication and not private activity. Councillors and employees are personally responsible for the content they publish online related to the Township.

## **4.3 Personal Use of Social Media by members of Local Boards and Committees**

### **I. Conduct**

The Township expects all members of Local Boards and Committees who use social media to do so without breaching their duties to the Township and adhere to their Codes of Conduct. Any breach in this policy will result in being reprimanded based on the Member of Council, Local Board and Committees Council Code of Conduct. Members of Local Boards and Committees should consider the following:

- Posts should not include Township owned logos, photographs, graphics or other

media without the Township's authorization.

- Posts should not circulate any organizational or confidential information such as internal deliberations, personal information such as client or employee information, or negative comments about the Township of Ramara, Councillors, Members of Local boards and Committees, Employees or residents.
- Posts should not engage in workplace discrimination or harassment, or activity that includes inappropriate comments, photographs, links, etc.

Overall, members of Local Board and Committees are expected to conduct themselves professionally both on and off duty. Even when a Local Board and Committee member does not publicly associate themselves with the Township on social media, all materials associated with their page may be perceived to reflect upon the Township. Further, members should not expect confidentiality or privacy in relation to their online activities as they pertain to the Township of Ramara. Members of Local Boards and Committees are personally responsible for the content they publish online, and cannot use Township resources to investigate or defend any matters related to their personal posts.

## **II. Township Councillor Accounts**

If a Councillor representing the Township of Ramara has a personal social media account, the Township of Ramara social media accounts are permitted to like/follow the account and share/re-post content. Accounts belonging to the Township Councillors must be created and maintained by the Councillor and not the Township employee. The Township of Ramara's social media accounts will share/re-post only appropriate shareable content that includes, but is not limited to, community events, funding announcements, bill/law announcements, etc.

Effective DATE of an election year (the beginning of the nomination period), all links, likes/follows, and sharing of content with a Councillor, MP, or MPP site shall be stopped and removed until the inaugural Meeting of the newly elected Council or Legislature is complete.

## **III. Township CAO Account**

If the Chief Administration Officer representing the Township of Ramara has a personal social media account, the Township of Ramara social media accounts are permitted to like/follow the account and share/re-post content. Council must approve any social media accounts belonging to the CAO. As well, it must be created, and maintained by CAO and not a Township employee. The Township of Ramara's social media accounts will share/re-post only appropriate shareable content that includes, but is not limited to, community events, funding announcements, bill/law announcements, etc. If the

Township no longer employs the CAO, that social media account will be deleted by the CAO.

#### **4.4 Citizen Conduct**

Users and visitors to the Township's social media accounts/pages should be notified that the intended purpose of the site is to serve as a communication platform and information-sharing tool between the Township and the public. A hyperlink to the Township of Ramara Social Media Policy is posted on the respective social media account/page where possible. The Township reserves the right to remove inappropriate, inaccurate, irrelevant or unproductive content (i.e. posts and comments) from social media accounts. If the user continues to post inappropriate, irrelevant, inaccurate or unproductive content, the Township may ban/block the user from the site at the discretion of staff. The Township's social media accounts/pages that the below citizen conduct criteria applies to ***'the online technologies that enable individuals to join and/or participate in online communities for the purpose of publicly sharing information, ideas, messages, pictures, etc.'*** For example, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube accounts, Township website, blogs, etc. Comments, posts, or articles containing the following content will not be allowed:

- Posts should not include Township owned logos, photographs, graphics or other media without the Township's authorization.
- Comments not topically related to the topic and/or issue being commented upon.
- Account spamming, trolling or over posting.
- Posts that are meant to solicit sales, products, or goods and services.
- Profane, aggressive, hateful, defamatory, insulting, rude, abusive or violent language or content.
- Content that includes or includes links to objectionable material, as defined in the Website policy.
- Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity.
- Information that may compromise the privacy, safety or security of the Township, public, or public systems.
- Comments or posts that includes inaccurate material or misrepresent facts as known by the Corporation.
- Comments or posts that impersonate or misrepresent someone else, including public figures, Township staff or Township officials.
- Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party.
- The Township of Ramara is not responsible for any comments or use of material posted by users.

## **4.5 Information Management and Security**

All credentials and details for Corporate and Separate accounts must be communicated to the Township's IT staff. The County of Simcoe manages the Township's IT and will maintain a master list of the Township's social media login information. Password changes must be immediately communicated to the County IT departments. Accounts created to represent the Township must be associated with a valid Township e-mail address (@ramara.ca).

If a Township employee leaves, all passwords should be changed for those Social Media sites that the employee had accessed to. The CAO and IT staff will need to be aware of the change in employment status as soon as readily possible.