



CORPORATE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

Policy Title:	Communications Policy	Policy No:	GOV-003
Section:	Communications	Resolution:	
Policy Lead:	Chief Administrative Officer	Effective Date:	4/28/2020
Application:	All Staff and Council	Last Review Date:	-
Approved by:	Council	Previous Resolution:	-

1.0 PURPOSE

The purpose of the Corporate Communications Policy is to ensure that the municipality's communications practices are consistent, appropriate, efficient, effective, timely, and meet the needs of the community. The Municipality of East Ferris recognizes the importance of having open and transparent communications with its citizens, businesses, and other stakeholders, and that each of them has different communication needs. This policy will serve as a guiding document to support corporate communications practices and make information more accessible in order to meet those needs.

2.0 SCOPE

This policy applies to all forms of communications received by the Municipality from the public and all forms of communications sent by the Municipality to the public. Forms of communication include electronic, printed and verbal communications.

3.0 CONTENT

3.1 Introduction

The Municipality of East Ferris is a vibrant and healthy rural community with steady growth. It is a community where residents and the municipality work together to promote health and well-being for all. Promoting effective communications with the public aligns with our guiding principle of being transparent, where transparency is defined as having open government decision making and operations, and essential in order to have positive and effective relations with our stakeholders.

The Municipality of East Ferris provides a range of services to the public and its aim is to provide a high level of quality service to meet the needs of its stakeholders. Lack of effective communications inhibits customer service excellence. This policy will guide the Municipality as it strives for effective communications with stakeholders.

3.2 Background

The Municipality of East Ferris' 2019-2022 Strategic Plan identified the need for developing a communications policy to improve communications and access to municipal information with external stakeholders. This policy was developed by conducting a scan of communications policies being utilized in other municipalities. These plans were identified by availability on municipal websites.



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3.3 Desired Outcomes

The main goal of the Corporate Communications Policy is to improve public communications and access to municipal information and aims to achieve several desired outcomes:

- Provide stakeholders with consistent, appropriate, efficient, effective, and timely information about its policies, programs, services and initiatives;
- Employ a variety of ways and means to communicate information;
- Improve access to information;
- Encourage citizens to attend and participate in public meetings; and
- Provide direction to staff and Council on how to disseminate information of interest to citizens and other parties, and how communications received from the public are handled.

3.4 Current Communication Tools and Initiatives

The following table summarizes the communication tools and initiatives currently being used by the Municipality. These tools and initiatives will continue to be used to communicate information to the public.

Communication	Details
Newspaper	Advertisements may be placed in local newspaper(s) to announce open houses, public notices, employment opportunities, etc. or any other information as required and in accordance with various Acts.
Letters	Issued as needed in response to requests and as required by departments to communicate various matters.
E-mail	Issued as needed in response to requests for information and day-to-day operational needs.
Press Releases, Media Advisories and Public Notices	Press releases, media advisories, and public notices are also posted to the Municipal website and social media accounts. Press releases and media advisories will be issued by the CAO.



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Social Media	East Ferris has two corporate Facebook pages (Main Municipal Facebook page and East Ferris Business Networking page) and one Twitter account to communicate information in a timely manner to a wide population in accordance with the Social Media Policy.
Contact at Municipal Office and other Municipal facilities	Daily in-person contact with members of the public and other stakeholders.
Telephone Interaction	Daily interaction via telephone for different purposes (all departments).
Annual Tax Pamphlet	A pamphlet shall be included with the final tax bill providing tax related information and other Treasury Department information.
On-site inspections, meetings, by-law enforcement	Chief Building Official and Manager of Planning & Economic Development visit sites as requested/required to inspect permit projects and/or for consultation and verification of information provided in applications. Municipal Engineer and other Public Works Department staff visit sites as requested/required to perform construction/maintenance or investigate a request for service. By-Law Enforcement Officer and Fire Chief visit residences and businesses to address complaints and perform inspections as authorized through legislation/by-law. Meetings with various members of the public and community groups/organizations by various staff.
Meetings of Council, Advisory Committees and Boards	All Council meetings and meetings of advisory committees and boards provide an opportunity for members of the public to speak with the exception of in-camera sessions. Various committees involve staff and council members. Committee/Board members engage with the public and staff. All meetings shall be open to the public and will be advertised on the municipal website and social media.
Open houses, legislated public meetings (except for Council meetings)	Open houses and other special public meetings may be advertised in local media, the municipal website and social media.
Municipal Website	The primary source for information on municipal departments, services and programs is our municipal website www.eastferris.ca .



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Municipal Calendar	An informative calendar will be produced and mailed to residents on an annual basis. The calendar will include departmental information and special interest information as well as planned meeting and event dates within the municipality. The objective of the calendar is to include as much information as possible so that it is highly informative for residents and provides information at their fingertips.
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3.5 External Communications Between Staff and the Public

The following are guidelines for communications between staff and citizens, businesses, and all other stakeholders:

- Staff will endeavor to provide excellent customer service and communications with members of the public;
- Staff will respond to telephone and email messages within two (2) business days unless the staff member is away from work due to illness, vacation or other leave. Staff shall indicate their absence by way of a pre-recorded message on their voicemail and by utilizing the automatic reply (out-of-office) feature on their email account. The message should include wording that indicates where the caller or email sender can obtain immediate service if the matter is urgent;
- Staff will respond to written enquiries from members of the public within five (5) business days unless legislation, a municipal by-law, or another extenuating circumstance dictates otherwise. Staff will advise the member of public of the reason for a delay and when they can expect to receive a response should they not be able to provide written responses within this timeframe;
- Staff will deal with enquiries from all members of the public at time of visiting the municipal office, and if not, explain why and provide a written response within five (5) business days;
- Staff will make information resources, such as forms and pamphlets, available on our website and/or at our office; and
- Staff will aim to ensure that our written correspondence and information is easily understood and written.

3.6 External Communications Between Council Members and the Public

The following are guidelines for communications between Council members and citizens, businesses, and all other stakeholders:



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- The telephone number and corporate email address for members of Council will be listed on the municipal website and the public is encouraged to use these methods of communication should they wish to communicate with individual members of Council;
- Council members will respond to communications when they deem it appropriate;
- Any member of the public communicating verbally with any single member of Council is considered to be general in nature and will not receive a formal response from the Council member unless specifically requested in writing;
- Any member of the public communicating with any single member of Council in writing is considered to be general in nature and will not receive a formal response from the member of Council unless specifically requested in writing or unless the member of Council puts the matter before Council on a Council meeting agenda. In the latter case, the member of Council will communicate to the member of the public that the matter has been referred to Council or a Committee;
- Any member of the public that wishes to communicate in writing and be addressed formally by all of Council should send their communication to the Municipal Clerk's office addressed to all of Council and the matter will be put forward to Council on a Council meeting agenda. In this case, Council will address the matter at a Council meeting and the Municipal Clerk will communicate the results of the discussion with the member of the public within three (3) business days following the date of the Council meeting; and
- All requests for service (day-to-day municipal operational issues) or enquiries for information by any member of the public that require municipal staff or municipal department action shall be directed to the municipal office. Any member of the public communicating requests for service or enquiries for information that require municipal staff or municipal department action with any member of Council will be directed by the member of Council to contact the municipal office.

3.7 Requests for Service and Formal Complaints

Requests for Service and Formal Complaints will be treated in accordance with the Municipality of East Ferris Request for Service and Complaint Policy.

3.8 Plain Language

The Municipality of East Ferris will use 'plain language' for its external communications wherever possible. 'Plain language' can be broadly described as any writing designed to



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ensure the reader understands the message as quickly, easily, and completely as possible. Plain language strives to be easy to read, understand, and use. It avoids verbose, convoluted language and jargon and uses document structure and visual aids (such as graphics, charts, tables) to guide the reader.

3.9 Communications with Media

All communications with the media shall be in accordance with the Municipality of East Ferris Media Relations Policy.

4.0 COMMUNICATION OF POLICY

This policy will be communicated to the Council and staff of the Municipality of East Ferris. The policy will be communicated to the public through the Municipality of East Ferris website and Facebook page.

5.0 CONNECTIONS TO OTHER POLICIES AND BY-LAWS

Municipality of East Ferris Social Media Policy

Municipality of East Ferris Procedural By-law

Municipality of East Ferris Community Emergency Plan

Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

Municipality of East Ferris Request for Service and Complaint Policy

6.0 REVIEW

This Communications Policy will be reviewed once per term of Council or as requested by the CAO or Council.