

Communications Policy 2024-02

Policy Statement:

It is the policy of Harvey Rural Community to:

1. Inform citizens about the Municipality’s policies, programs, services, projects, and initiatives through communication that is effective, timely, accurate, and consistent.
2. Consult and inform stakeholders when establishing or developing priorities, policies, programs, and services where reasonable and practical.
3. Anticipate the needs of the community, Council, and Administration for timely and relevant information.
4. Engage in a proactive communications program that uses a variety of formats to accommodate diverse needs and that reflects the diversity of the community.
5. Market and promote community engagement and growth.
6. Ensure Harvey Rural Community is visible and responsive to the citizens it serves.

The purpose of this policy is to:

Establish guidelines to ensure that communication with the stakeholders and residents of Harvey Rural Community is efficient, effective, consistent, timely, and open. This policy will apply to all internal and all external communications of Harvey Rural Community.

External Inquiries

Information on the Municipality’s policies, programs, services, projects, and initiatives should be generally available to the public in a variety of formats, subject to available resources.

Guidelines for dealing with general external inquiries include:

- Information is provided to the public by trained and knowledgeable staff.
- Service is timely, courteous, and efficient.
- When information is unavailable, a prompt and clear explanation is provided.
- Information in all formats is well identified as being from Harvey Rural Community.
- Commonly available information will be made available on the Municipality’s website for public access. Information must be posted when a major new policy, program, service, project, or initiative is underway to advise the public of services for which they may be eligible, to explain new developments, or to inform citizens of risk(s) to health and safety.

For inquiries made by representatives of the media; inquiries regarding legal issues, Harvey Rural Community personnel, or municipal elections; the following guidelines must be followed.

1. Media Inquiries

- a. The media play an important role in disseminating information to the public. Due to the delicate balance that must be struck between freedom of information and protection of privacy when dealing with the media, all media inquiries shall be directed to the CAO or their designate.
- b. The Mayor is generally the Municipality’s chief spokesperson regarding policies, priorities, and decisions to the public, unless another member of Council is

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designated by Mayor and Council. The CAO shall direct all appropriate inquiries regarding Council matters to the Mayor.

- c. Committee Chairs are normally the spokesperson for regular matters dealt with under the jurisdiction of their particular committee.
 - i. If a committee issue becomes controversial, or is likely to become controversial, the Mayor may be the spokesperson for the committee.
- d. The CAO is the spokesperson for administrative and operational matters but may direct inquiries of a technical nature to the foreman or director of individual departments, programs, or projects. With the approval of the CAO, foremen may designate technical experts to present information on specific programs or projects with which they are intimately familiar.
- e. Municipal staff approached for comment on any project or subject related to Harvey Rural Community or any past, present or future project partners must seek approval of the CAO before issuing a comment on behalf of the Municipality.
- f. Any unapproved administrative staff issuing statements without approval are expressing their own opinions and not that of Harvey Rural Community.
- g. The CAO may recommend media training for Council or Staff when deemed appropriate.
- h. Inaccurate information published by any third parties or unauthorized sources may be challenged and corrected to ensure fair and accurate representation of Harvey Rural Community.

2. Legal, Personnel, and Election Inquiries

- a. Inquiries regarding pending litigation, or involving a significant exposure to litigation, should be directed to the CAO.
- b. Inquiries regarding personnel-related information should be directed to the CAO.
- c. Inquiries regarding municipal election residents are to refer to elections New Brunswick website for all position inquiries.

External Communications

1. Coordination

- a. The CAO is responsible for the overall coordination of communication and the carrying out of this policy.
- b. The Clerk is normally responsible for carrying out external communications.
- c. General guidelines for external communications include:
 - i. Respect the authority and responsibility of the Council, whose members are entitled to learn about proposed policy initiatives, or major new services, programs or initiative before information about them is released to the general public or the media.
 - ii. Consult with the CAO when preparing information campaigns or strategies, or when preparing a response to a media inquiry.
 - iii. Keep sensitive information that is related to matters in draft form, under investigation, before the courts, or under the jurisdiction of another authority in strict confidence.

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- iv. Represent the will of Council in all communications.

2. Public Events and Announcements

Information campaigns regarding public events are arranged to communicate about major developments or to release information that is new and important to municipal services, programs, projects, and initiatives.

Guidelines for each proposed public event or information campaign include:

- a. Determine whether individual departments will arrange or participate in an event or information campaign.
- b. Prepare a Communications Plan to ensure well-managed communication. The plan should take into account appropriate recognition of partners and funders. Such recognition may include the use of partner or funder corporate names and logos.
- c. Provide, in advance, an agenda or copy of the Public Event or News Conference Plan and Briefing Notes to the CAO and any Council representative(s) taking part, together with an advance copy of any Media Advisory, Release, or Backgrounder.
- d. Coordinate participation through the CAO when multiple municipal departments, community partners, or other levels of government are involved, or as requested by the Mayor or CAO.

3. Public and Stakeholder Consultations

Open and effective communication is the key to successful public consultations.

Guidelines for Public Consultations include:

- a. Consult with the CAO who provides support, advice, and approval to administrative staff (e.g., Clerk) who plan, implement, and evaluate public consultation processes.
- b. Prepare public consultation plans for any significant changes in service levels, notify Council in advance of the Consultation plan.
- c. Inform citizens and stakeholders about opportunities to participate in public consultation and citizen engagement processes (such as surveys, town hall meetings, public hearings, open houses, committee's meetings, etc.) including dates, times, and locations.
 - i. This may be done through the Municipal website, Municipal run social media, letters of invitation, posted notices, media notices, advertisements, and other formats.
 - ii. Clearly identify public information materials as being from Harvey Rural Community.
- d. Report back to Council on the results of the public consultation.
- e. Inform participants in summary form of the results of the public consultation and outcomes.
 - i. This may be done through the Municipal website, Municipal run social media, letters of invitation, posted notices, media notices, advertisements, and other formats.

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Internal Communication

Open, two-way communication between Council and Administration and among Foremen, Managers, or Supervisors and Employees is vital to the effective operation of Harvey Rural Community and to achieve the Mission and Vision of the Municipality.

1. Council and Administration:

- a. Requests for Decision and Information Packages are the formal means of communication between Administration and Council. Clear, concise, relevant reports provide Members of Council with the information they need to make decisions on municipal policies, programs, services, and initiatives.
- b. Public Announcements must be distributed concurrently to Members of Council, except in urgent situations affecting public health, safety, or danger to persons or property, where every attempt will be made to distribute as soon as possible after distribution to the Media.

2. Foremen, Managers, or Supervisors and Employees:

- a. Effective internal communication is a shared administrative responsibility, led by the CAO and senior administrators.
- b. Foremen, Managers, and Supervisors must communicate with employees openly, often, and before information is made public, whenever possible.
- c. To inform and engage employees, a variety of formats must be used, as appropriate and as resources permit.
 - i. This may include the Municipality's intranet or published materials such as memoranda, notices, employee newsletters, electronic bulletins, oral presentations, 1-on-1 discussions, and staff meetings.
 - ii. Whenever possible, the needs of all employees should be considered including any employees who may not have access to electronic information.

Internet and Electronic Communication

The internet and other electronic communication are important tools, which allow 24-hour access to information and support two-way communication.

Guidelines for the use of the internet and electronic mediums in communication include:

1. Make publications and routinely available information of interest to citizens available on the Municipality's website and social media platforms as soon as possible.
2. Incorporate mechanism for receiving and acknowledging public inquiries and feedback made through electronic means.
3. Establish ongoing updates and regular reviews of departmental pages and sub-sites so that information on policies, programs, services, projects, initiatives, and related third-party links is accurate, organized, and easy to understand.

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4. Maintain a consistent look and feel across all pages on the Municipality's website, in compliance with Harvey Rural Community brand guidelines.
5. Administration may allow approved third parties to post items of interest to Harvey Rural Community citizens on the website or social media platform, but all third-party posts must be approved by Administration. The third party will not be allowed to post items which may incite controversy or cause offense. Postings individuals involved in criminal activity will be discouraged.
 - a. In adherence to our commitment to fostering a respective community, all offensive content will be moderated and may be removed without notice by the administration.
6. Links to Third Party Sites:
 - a. This type of link, which will generally open a new browser window, is provided for the convenience of the visitor. Inclusion of the link does not imply endorsement by Harvey Rural Community, and the Municipality accepts no responsibility for the content found on any third-party website.
 - b. Links are subject to the approval of the appropriate department and may be removed without notice at the discretion of the CAO and administration staff. Factors affecting approval or removal may include business case considerations, an assessment of the needs of the intended audience, the relevance to the Municipality or appropriate department and technical or legal considerations.

Finding Information

The Harvey Rural Community's municipal website is the primary source of official information for the residence of Harvey Rural Community. The website is utilized to access information and it is a resource for reference materials on the Municipality, Council, and ongoing/past projects.

The Municipality's website will:

- Maintain up to date information.
- Facilitate communication between Residents, Administrators, and Council.
- Will archive minutes of official meetings for one full calendar year.
- Provide the primary source of municipal information.
- Facilitate written inquiries and act as the central inbox for administrative questions.

Uses of Social Media:

- The Municipality's social media tools (e.g., Facebook) will always be used as a secondary source of information for the residents of Harvey Rural Community, primarily as vehicle to push information in a one-way dialogue, and in most cases will link back to the municipal website.

Visual Identity and Branding

A clear and consistent visual identity assists the public in recognizing and accessing the policies, programs, consultations, services, projects, initiatives, etc., of the Municipality. A Brand Standards

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Guide will be developed as per the Communications Plan to address this issue. Once the guide has been developed, this policy will be amended to reference that guide.