

RURAL MUNICIPALITY OF WHITEHEAD		POLICY NO: GG-08
REFERENCE:	ADOPTED BY: Council	Page 1 of 4
Resolution No. 2026-118	Date: June 8, 2026	
TITLE: Digital Communications Policy		DATE LAST REVIEWED BY MGMT: June 8, 2026

1. PURPOSE

The Rural Municipality of Whitehead (The “RM” or the “Municipality”) frequently uses digital methods of sharing information into the community. Across Canada the importance of digital communication from local governments has increased along with expectations by residents for accurate and available information. Therefore, it is considered necessary and prudent to establish a policy which outlines the RM’s approach to and practices for communicating with the public via digital means.

2. DEFINITIONS

Digital Communications – means any communication transmitted electronically, including but not limited to websites, email, social media platforms, mobile applications, and other internet-based tools.

Emergency Communication – means the rapid dissemination of information to the public during urgent or crisis situations that may affect public safety, essential services, or municipal operations.

Moderation – refers to the process of actively monitoring, reviewing, and managing public interactions on municipal communication platforms

Official Municipal Account – means any social media account, website, or digital platform that is created, managed, or authorized by the Municipality for the purpose of communicating with the public.

Personal Account – refers to an individual’s private social media or online account that is not officially authorized to represent the Municipality, even if the individual is a municipal employee or elected official.

Public Notice – refers to information that the Municipality is required or chooses to publish to inform the public, often in accordance with legislation, regarding decisions, hearings, service changes, or other matters of public interest.

Social Media – refers to online platforms and applications that enable users to create, share, and interact with content or participate in social networking. This includes platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, and similar current or future services.

Spam – refers to unsolicited, irrelevant, or repetitive messages sent through digital communication channels, including email or social media, often for promotional, misleading, or malicious purposes. Spam may also include automated or bulk messages that disrupt normal communication or engagement.

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to the use of any digital platform by the Municipality for the purpose of communicating between representatives of the RM and the public.

This policy does **not** apply to personal social media accounts; however, personal use must still comply with any applicable responsibilities as per the Employee Handbook or any other relevant policy regarding respectful conduct.

4. STANDARD PRACTICES

All official municipal accounts are maintained for the purpose of sharing municipal information or supporting awareness of information considered to be beneficial to the community. This includes but is not limited to:

- Public Notices (e.g. by-laws, financial plans, planning hearings, public engagement)
- Service Disruptions (e.g. office closures)
- Burn Bans
- Boil Water Advisories
- Emergency information
- Community updates
- Recreational events
- Council-approved messaging

4.1. All digital communications shall be guided by a commitment to accuracy, clarity, transparency, consistency, and respect. Further, all communications on behalf of the Municipality must demonstrate professionalism, inclusivity, and respect for diverse audiences, ensuring accessibility wherever reasonably possible.

4.2. Information released must be factually correct and verified prior to distribution, presented in plain language where possible, and supported by sufficient context to promote understanding.

4.3. Communications should be provided in a timely manner; particularly where public safety or service disruptions are involved.

4.4. The Municipality is committed to openness and accountability while respecting confidentiality requirements and applicable legislation, including privacy laws.

5. WEBSITE

The Municipality operates a website, www.rmofwhitehead.ca, as the most readily available repository of information available to the public.

6. SOCIAL MEDIA

The Municipality manages a Facebook account as the preferred social media platform to issue quick and brief information packets to the public. For any social media platform the RM chooses to utilize, the following will be applicable:

- 6.1.** All social media platforms are to be used on an “Information Only” basis. Public interaction features (comments, replies, direct messages) must be disabled whenever possible to avoid the perception that the Municipality’s social media is moderated and a viable means to contact staff.
- 6.2.** The Municipality’s social media platforms are not moderated and cannot be used as a means of submitting service requests and/or concerns.
- 6.3.** Posts are intended to be brief and concise within platform limitations. Any posts with additional information are to direct residents to the website

7. MASS DIGITAL COMMUNICATION

The Municipality operates digital software “Mass Notifications” for the purpose of issuing mass email, text and call notifications to residents that wish to subscribe.

- 7.1.** Any publication that would be publish on the RM website or social media account(s) will be circulated through Mass Notification. All methods available in the software (emails, texts, robo-calls) will be made as an available option to registrants.
- 7.2.** To avoid unwanted spam, categories are to align with specific areas of expected interest. These are to be periodically reviewed and amended to ensure appropriate use/relevance.

8. URGENT & EMERGENCY USE

Matters may arise that require urgent dissemination of information to residents. All means are utilized to provide information in a quick and timely manner in such situations. To maximize distribution with the most efficient use of available staff, the following is determined a reasonable and necessary use of mass notifications:

- 8.1.** Burn permit holders will be automatically registered by the RM Office with the Mass Notification software with the resident’s preferred method of contact. Priority notifications will be sent as soon as a burn ban is instituted, as well as the other normal means of advertising notice on the RM website, social media, notice boards, boundary signage, and with the Province of Manitoba.
 - 8.1.1.** Staff will not call individual permit holders to confirm receipt; not receiving direct notice is insufficient reasoning for any failure to comply.
- 8.2.** Water utility customers receiving electronic billing will be automatically registered by the RM Office with the Mass Notification software. All utility customers will be required to register with a preferred method of contact. Any customers affected by a boil water advisory will be sent priority notification as

soon as an advisory is instituted, as well as the other normal means of advertising advisories on the RM website, social media, notice boards, and with the Province of Manitoba.

- 8.3.** In the event of an emergency, the Mass Communication software will be utilized to push urgent information to all registered users, regardless of selected categories. This use potential will be clearly communicated to users during the registration process.

9. ADVERTISING/PROMOTIONS

The Municipality has a responsibility to ensure that, as a public source of information, that published information on an official municipal method of communication serves and supports the community. From time to time, requests may be made to the RM to circulate information that does not originate from municipal staff or another level of government, in such events the following will be considered:

- 9.1.** The Municipality may, upon request, support non-profit, community-led initiatives/events by advertising posters, notices, sharing, etc. through various digital communication methods.
- 9.2.** The municipality cannot reject requests or differentiate support to non-profit and/or community-led initiatives except when it is determined that a request is inappropriate or would be harmful to the community.
- 9.3.** The Municipality will not issue general information on behalf of an external organization except when provided or sourced from another government entity. The RM must avoid any risk of unknowingly circulating false or misleading information.
- 9.4.** The Municipality will not advertise, promote, or endorse private interests or commercial enterprises.
- 9.4.1.** Posts for the purpose of recognizing donations and sponsorships by a private and/or commercial enterprise are permissible as they do not constitute advertising, promotion, or endorsement of same.
- 9.5.** Any requests determined to be political in nature will not be published.