



POLICY C-AD05

Public Response Standards

Prepared By:	Legislative and Administrative Services	Council Approval Date:	Sept. 11, 2012
Effective Date:	September 11, 2012	Council Resolution No.:	N/A
References:	Social Media Policy A-AD13 Communications Guidelines	Previous Revision Date:	January 23, 2007 (Policy AD 005)
Function:	Public Relations	LAS Review Date:	July 7, 2012

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish Parkland County's response standards relating to receipt of, and response to, written or verbal public inquiries.

POLICY STATEMENT

Parkland County shall strive to respond to the public as soon as possible after receiving general inquiries, to provide good customer service and demonstrate professional business practices.

DEFINITIONS

1. "Social Media" refers to online e-technologies used to share opinions and information, promote discussion, and build relationships. Social Media includes a variety of platforms and formats including, but not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, and others described in Social Media Policy A-AD13.
2. "Written Inquiries" shall mean letters or emails received from the public that request or provide information, express concern, or otherwise require a response.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all Parkland County employees.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

All managerial and supervisory staff are responsible for ensuring that their staff are familiar with, and abide by, the standards of this policy. The Manager of Legislative and Administrative Services is responsible for ongoing review and monitoring of this policy.

STANDARDS

1. Public response requirements provided by federal or provincial legislation, Parkland County bylaws, and/or other Parkland County policies (e.g., Assessment Review Board, Subdivision and Development Appeal Board, Municipal Planning Commission) shall take precedence over these public response standards.
2. As it may not be possible to provide all the information requested within the time frames provided in this policy due to the complexity and timeliness of the inquiry, an acknowledgement shall be provided as a courtesy, either in writing, by telephone, or using social media, from the appropriate department, within the required time frame, advising the writer/caller of how and when the County will further respond to their inquiry or concern.

3. Written Inquiries

- a. Written inquiries (received by mail, email, fax, or personal delivery) will be immediately referred to the appropriate department manager for processing. If the recipient is not sure which department the written inquiry should be directed to, the inquiry should be forwarded to Legislative and Administrative Services for further follow-up.
- b. The department manager will review the written inquiry to determine whether it is deemed valid by Parkland County. Valid written inquiries must meet the following criteria to receive a response:
 - a. must be legible and coherent,
 - b. must be signed by at least one person, providing their printed name and return address, and
 - c. must not be libelous (i.e., harmful, untrue), impertinent or improper.
- c. When readily available information is requested, the appropriate information will be sent to the public member by written response as soon as possible, but no later than ten (10) business days, subject to Standard No. 2.
- d. When public letters or concerns require research, or if there is a delay (i.e., pending motion or decision), written response will be forwarded to the public member as soon as possible, but no later than ten (10) business days, confirming the receipt of the letter or concern and providing the estimated time frame for a response.

4. Social Media Inquiries

- a. If a staff person receives an inquiry by social media, they are to forward the inquiry to the Communications Department. It is the responsibility of the Communications Department staff to respond to the sender, using social media practices provided in the Communications Guidelines (unless the sender requests the response to be made by telephone or in writing), by either:
 - i. providing the information requested, or
 - ii. forwarding the inquiry to the appropriate department, and advising the sender that his inquiry has been forwarded, or
 - iii. forwarding the inquiry to Legislative and Administrative Services, if the recipient is not sure which department the inquiry should be directed to, and advising the sender that his inquiry has been forwarded.
- b. Inquiries received through social media shall be responded to within one to two (1-2) business days of being received, subject to Standard No. 2.

5. Telephone Inquiries

- a. Telephone messages/inquiries shall be responded to, by telephone, within one to two (1-2) business days of being received, subject to Standard No. 2. If telephone calls are transferred internally, the caller is to be advised that their call is being transferred to a particular department, as a courtesy.
6. When not covered by these policy standards, common sense and courtesy shall prevail, and the caller/sender shall be acknowledged as soon as possible, in writing or by telephone, so the public is assured that their inquiries/concerns have been received and will be responded to in a timely manner.