

Election Campaigns

Date Approved by Council : August 22, 2017

County Commissioner: 

1. Purpose

To instill public confidence in the County's electoral process by clearly defining parameters for the use of County facilities and County resources during election campaigns. These parameters will assist to ensure that all Candidates have access to the same information, and that all members of the Administration remain neutral throughout an election campaign period. This policy relates only to Sturgeon County municipal elections.

2. Revision History

Approval Date	Revision Number	Modification
August 22, 2017	1.0	New Document

3. Persons/Areas Affected

All Sturgeon County Employees
Council
Election Candidates

4. Policy Statement

In accordance with the *Local Authorities Election Act*, RSA 2000, c. L-21 ("LAEA") and the *Municipal Government Act*, RSA 2000, c.M-26 ("MGA"), it is stated that an elected official serves in that capacity until such time as a newly elected Council is sworn in.

In an election year, it is important that there be a clear and concise delineation between the role of an elected official and the role of a Candidate. This Policy sets out guidelines respecting the use of County resources for election-related purposes to promote public confidence in local government elections and to protect incumbent Candidates from allegations of benefit or privilege or inappropriate use of County resources by taxpayers or other Candidates.

5. Definitions

Administration - any member of staff employed by Sturgeon County.

Candidate - an individual nominated as a candidate for election as a councillor of a municipality under the LAEA or an individual who intends to be nominated as a candidate for such an election and accepts campaign contributions or incurs campaign expenses.

County - the municipality of Sturgeon County.

County Facilities - any County-owned or County-leased building, office, structure or parking lot and any property developed or used by the County as a public park, sports field, playground or recreational area.

County Commissioner - the Chief Administrative Officer as defined within the *Municipal Government Act*, RSA 2000 c.M-26, as amended.

County Resources - resources (including human resources) paid for or acquired with County funds, and includes but not limited to, staff time, equipment, technology, financial assets and nonfinancial assets (for example, vehicles, material, paper or electronic documents, tools, electronic equipment, (ie: fax machines, photocopiers, printers, computers, cell phones, telephones, and phone numbers), County funds, promotional material, Internet services (including e-mail and social media), and intellectual property, such as County logos, crests, or slogans.

Council - the current municipal Council of Sturgeon County.

Election -

1. a municipal election, by-election, or vote on a question, held in accordance with the LAEA;
2. an election pursuant to the *School Act*, RSA 2000, c.S-3, as amended for the Province of Alberta, and
3. elections as required for provincial or federal office.

Election Day - the date of voting for the County's municipal election or by-election.

Nomination Day - the date when individuals submit their nomination papers indicating their intent to run in a municipal election or by-election (4 weeks prior to Election Day).

Social Media - freely accessible, third-party hosted, interactive technologies used to produce, post and interact through text, images, video to inform, share, promote, collaborate or network.

6. Responsibilities

- The County shall balance the need for freedom of expression and assembly of Candidates with its legal responsibility to ensure no unfair advantage exists for any Candidate or a supporter of a question on a ballot during an election.
- This Policy is applicable for all municipal elections and by-elections, as well as a vote on a municipal bylaw or question.
- The County's election processes are governed by the LAEA, as well as any other related County Bylaws.
- While applicable legislation may include provisions which regulate the conduct of Candidates and Administration, there is opportunity for the County to ensure documentation is in place to further ensure that its election practices reflect fairness, accountability and transparency.
- The County Commissioner is responsible for administrative compliance with this Policy, and Council is responsible for compliance by its members, County Bylaws, the *Municipal Government Act*, and other applicable legislation.

7. Procedures

Candidates & Members of Council:

- a. Once nomination papers are filed with the Returning Officer on Nomination Day, responses to Candidate campaign requests or for general information shall be distributed to all Candidates via email communication. This is to ensure that all Candidates have access to and are provided with the same information at the same time.
- b. Members of Council are elected in the capacity of Mayor or Councillor, and serve in that capacity until such time as newly elected Council members are sworn in, resign, or are disqualified. Therefore, this Policy shall not limit a member of Council who is also a Candidate from performing his or her duties as Mayor or Councillor as prescribed by the *Municipal Government Act*, nor impede him or her from representing the interests of their constituents.
- c. All Candidates will receive equal treatment and access to public information from County Administration regardless of whether the Candidate is an incumbent.

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- d. No Candidate is permitted to create a link to the County's website or devices to any campaign-related material or websites. County content, graphics, logos or other branding, shall not be used for any campaign related material.
- e. Current members of Council shall not use County devices for campaign or campaign-related purposes. Any social media accounts used for campaign purposes must be set up on personal devices.
- f. While holding the office of Mayor or Councillor for the County, no member of Council shall use County funds for any purpose relating to a campaign, campaign period or campaign-related activities, including funding or resources required for any form of media advertising for the purpose of discussing or promoting the election process.
- g. No County facilities or County resources shall be used for any election campaign or campaign-related activities, except on the same basis that would normally be made available to members of the public, and in accordance with a valid rental contract, if applicable.
- h. Campaigning and posting or distributing of campaign material in or on a County facility is prohibited for individual Candidates. The only exception may be an all Candidates Forum.

Administration:

- i. The County Commissioner shall not participate in any municipal campaigns.
- j. General Managers and Legislative Services Department staff shall not participate in County municipal campaigns. These positions are required to maintain an impartial relationship with all Candidates.
- k. Administration shall not participate in or conduct any work in support of a Candidate or a campaign while being compensated for work by the County. However, Administration may participate in Candidate campaigns on their own time.
- l. Under no circumstances can Administration working on a campaign portray themselves as acting on behalf of the County.

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- m. No member of Administration shall use or attempt to use their position at the County to influence other members of Administration to affect the outcome of an election or a vote on a question to the public.
- n. All members of Administration shall treat all Candidates in the same manner throughout the election campaign period. All members of Administration shall remain neutral while being compensated by the County, and ensure that the County conducts its election without influence.

8. Cross Reference

Local Authorities Election Act, RSA 2000, c.L-21