Town of Taber

Communications
Plan 2018

TOWN OF
TABER

About this Plan

THIS DOCUMENT OUTLINES THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF THE TOWN OF TABER'S COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY.

It will provide a path for the Town's commitment to transparency and working collaboratively to promote active citizen engagement. The goals and actions within this document actively encompass both Administration and Council's mission to inform, promote, and adapt and will therefore be updated on an annual basis. Enhanced communications will serve to improve stakeholder relations, public engagement, and help achieve organizational goals.

FOLLOWING THE ADOPTION OF THE TOWN'S STRATEGIC PLAN IN 2018, this Communications Plan has been written to match and expand on the goals within the Strategic Plan.

Ultimately, it is the goal of this plan to provide a clear path of two-way communications for the Town of Taber demonstrating we are a great place to grow.

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Mission

1 EDUCATE

The people of Taber of the government's role in their lives

2 ENGAGE

Our stakeholders in every level of project implementation

3 EVOLVE

Our processes to help make Taber a great place to grow

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Overarching Themes

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> Provide information that is clear and well-timed.

> Use a variety of communications tools to reach a wider audience.

> Make our communications accessible to the majority of users.

> Collaborate with all Departments to ensure that messages are relayed factually and quickly.

> Obey all laws and bylaws that protect the privacy of all individuals.

> Strive to promote a relationship where stakeholders and public alike feel empowered to communicate with the Town.

The Path as it Was

> The Town employed the use of its current website starting in 2011.

> 2011 also saw the employment of the Town's official Facebook and Twitter Profiles.

> In 2015, Council identified a gap in the Town's communications following a large-scale news event.

> September 2015 saw the creation of a Communications and Projects Coordinator position. This position detailed that communications was only a portion of the intended duties, interspersed with a number of other projects as outlined elsewhere.

> The Town joined Instagram in 2016 as a way to capitalize on another demographic and social media platform.

> The Communications Coordinator was employed as the Information Officer for the Town's Emergency Operations Centre activations, such as in the February 2017 Structure Fire.

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The Path Ahead

CITIZENS EXPECT EASY ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT INFORMATION THEY WANT, WHEN THEY WANT IT.

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Communications is no longer a luxury in public service, it is a necessity. No other government level has quite the life-impacting proximity to their citizens as municipalities do. As such, municipal governments have the responsibility to effectively communicate to and engage with their citizens in the matters that impact their lives. The Town of Taber can be a frontrunner for providing timely, accurate, and necessary information to our citizens in a number of platforms, and has laid the groundwork to do so. This will be the first Communications Plan in the Town of Taber's history, and the goals and actions within it point towards laying even more groundwork for upcoming plans.

THIS COMMUNICATIONS PLAN IS INTENDED TO BE REVIEWED ANNUALLY. Depending on budgets, staff capabilities, and timelines, action items may have to be adjusted accordingly. As per the appendices, each action item has been given a scheduled quarter for it to be met. These timelines have been considered in light of the fact that the Town of Taber has a Communications Coordinator that only does communications as a portion of their duties.

While the action items have different responsible departments, success for this Communications Plan will rest on the collaboration between all Departments and Council. Each staff member and Councillor has a role to play in effectively marketing and promoting our community, the government's roles and responsibilities, and what makes Taber such a great place to grow.

Current Tools

THE TOWN OF TABER CURRENTLY EMPLOYS THE USE OF THESE REGULAR COMMUNICATIONS TOOLS:

> Website (www.taber.ca)

> Facebook (@TownofTaber)

> Twitter (@TownofTaber)

> Instagram (@townoftaber)

> Local print media

> The Corn Husk Chronicles

> Wikipedia (indirectly)

> Media Releases as needed

> WhatsApp

Communications Team

COMMUNICATIONS IN MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT IS A TEAM EFFORT.

However, there is typically a position or team responsible for the coordination of that effort. The Town of Taber's Communications Coordinator belongs to the Administrative Services Department. Main duties of the Coordinator in terms of communications include, but are not limited to, the following:

> Creates and maintains communication efforts on behalf of the Town, including website maintenance, social media platforms, media releases, speeches, newsletters, ads, brochures, and other various means.

> Point of contact for media and to provide general or news story-related information on behalf of the municipality.

> Handles issues management and crisis control for issues affecting the municipality.

> Provides support for communications to Council, the Chief Administrative Officer, and Management Team as required.

> Acts as the Information Officer during instances of Emergency Operations Centre activation.

> Authorized user of Alberta Emergency Alert.

> Acts as an ad-hoc photographer for the Town when required.

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Communications Survey

> The 2017 Communications Survey was the Town's first survey that allowed citizens "to give feedback on how they receive information about the Town and its operations." It was provided in both online and paper formats to give all residents equal opportunity to participate.

> The survey is intended to be annual, and is reflected in the action items within this Plan.

> Only 74 responses were received, reflecting only 0.9% of Taber's population. While this was a disappointing result, it should not deter future surveys. The more opportunities the public has to participate, the more responses we will see in future.

> The Report on the results has been posted to the Town's website for public viewing.

> Subsequent surveys will help track the successes of our communication initiatives to citizens.

SOME OF THE KEY RESULTS FROM THE 2017 SURVEY INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

> 43% of respondents are "satisfied" that they are being well-informed about Town operations.

> The top two sources respondents used for Town information were local print media and the Town's Facebook Page.

> 56% of respondents indicated they read the Corn Husk Chronicles, with 38.6% stating they find it "very informative."

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Desired Outcomes

THE FOLLOWING HAVE BEEN OUTLINED AS THE OUTCOMES TO BE SOUGHT ON THE MUNICIPALITY'S BEHALF FOR THE NEXT THREE YEARS AND THE GOALS THAT CORRESPOND TO EACH OUTCOME.

THERE ARE TWO OUTCOMES THAT EXPRESSLY RELATE TO EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS, WHILE THE OTHER TWO REFLECT CHANGES TO INTERNAL COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES.

All outcomes are reflective and coincide with the Town of Taber's new Strategic Plan as adopted in 2018.

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DESIRED OUTCOME # 1 — Town citizens feel they are well-informed about Town projects, news, events, and initiatives

GOALS	ACTION ITEMS	SUCCESS MEASURE	2018 (Q1–Q4)	2019 (Q1–Q4)	2020 (Q1–Q4)	DEPARTMENTS RESPONSIBLE
1 The Town proactively provides accurate and timely information to encourage engagement	**1.1** Administration and Council promotes the website as the Town's primary source of accurate and timely information	Increased website traffic by 10% each year		Q1	Q1	Communications/ All Departments
	1.2 Administration looks at ways to provide more service capabilities to residents from the convenience of their homes through online methods	Increased usage of "Request Tracker" tools on website by 5% per annum; added online services provided with 2018 website update		Q3		Communications/ IT
	1.3 An annual Communications Survey is released to determine the communication needs and desires of citizens	Survey released annually; report provided to Council and public following the report; established regular annual reporting cycle		Q1		Communications
	1.4 Management team liaises with front-line staff members to provide them timely information so they are able to provide accurate information to the public; establish opportunities to identify communication protocol errors and rectify them	Satisfaction expressed by workers the management team identifies as being front-line; internal communications survey expresses satisfaction amongst front-line workers		Q3	Q1	Communications/ Management Team
	1.5 An Advertising Policy and Procedure are created to comply with Section 606 of the Municipal Government Act	Completed and approved Policy and Procedure				Communications/ All Departments
2 The Town employs the use of a wide range of communication channels to maximize the reach of our messages	**2.1** Administration promotes current communication channels as easily-accessible resources for information for the Town	Increased engagement on Town social media sites by 10% each year		Q1	Q1	Communications
	2.2 Administration creates and implements a Public Participation Policy to encourage engagement with citizens	A completed Public Participation Policy as per the Municipal Government Act's mandatory July 23, 2018 deadline	Q2			CAO/Administrative Services/ Planning & Economic Development
	2.3 Implement media platforms that will fit within the municipality's needs and will provide easy engagement and access for residents	Successful implementation of communication platforms such as a request-tracker tool on new website, Whatsapp or other messaging tools, etc.	Q2			Communications
	2.4 The Corn Husk Chronicles is evaluated to measure its continued need	TBD: The outcome of the evaluation will determine the ultimate fate of the Corn Husk Chronicles		Q2		Communications
3 Council and Administration provide a unified voice and message to the public	**3.1** Council follows proper protocol through the CAO's office to unify messages during large projects or events	Council and CAO satisfaction with communication processes; general communication debriefs done after each large-scale news events will determine successes and failures of the communications during the event; annual report on the year's largest news stories and how to handle them better in the new year; established process so Council/Administration can identify communication protocol errors	Q3	Q3	Q3	CAO/ Communications
	3.2 Update the Town's social media policy to reflect Council's role in online communications for the Town	Updated Internal Social Media Policy	Q2			Communications
	3.3 Administration clearly defines the criteria and roles necessary for news releases	Completed News Release Policy and Procedure	Q3			Communications/ Management Team
4 Council and Administration foster positive relationships with the media	**4.1** Create a media relations policy and procedure which outlines roles and responsibilities for liaising with media contacts	Completed Media Relations Policy and Procedure	Q3			Communications/ Management Team
	4.2 Media training is actively provided to Council and Administration	Minimum of 2 training sessions offered within 3 years		Q2		CAO/ Communications
	4.3 Extend invites to local and regional media to events Council will be attending, as well as large events/announcements the Town is hosting	Increase media attendance at Town events; improved relationships with local media	Q1	Q1		Council/ Communications

• Blocks indicate the desired timeline of implementation, reporting, or completion for each associated task   • Blue font indicates direct alignment with the Town's Strategic Plan

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT: Improve Internal & External Communications

DESIRED OUTCOME # 2 — Administrative Staff feel valued and involved in the communications process

GOALS	ACTION ITEMS	SUCCESS MEASURE	2018 (Q1–Q4)	2019 (Q1–Q4)	2020 (Q1–Q4)	DEPARTMENTS RESPONSIBLE
1 Administrative Staff understand their particular roles in the communications process of the Town of Taber	**1.1** Identify the needs of staff members for communications processes annually; review current communication protocols	Implementation of an annual Employee Communications Survey		Q2	Q1	Communications
	1.2 Management Team informs all employees of the various communication policies and procedures that may affect their jobs	Increased employee knowledge of policies and procedures that relate to communications (i.e.: social media); policies and procedures become part of the employee orientation package	Q4			Communications/ Administrative Services/ Human Resources
	1.3 Avenues are provided for employees to provide suggestions for improved communication processes that will make their jobs more efficient; review current communication protocols	Implementation of a "suggestion box" for employees; updated intranet with accessible features for staff	Q3			Communications/ IT
2 A strong "employee-first" engagement culture is fostered	**2.1** All Employees are valued as "ambassadors of the brand" for the Town of Taber	Employees are trained in how to communicate with the public when asked questions; employees are encouraged to spread relevant information from official Town channels	Q4	Q4	Q4	Communications
	2.2 (Similar to 1.2) Management team supports front-line staff by proactively providing information regarding events, notices, news, projects, etc	Increased annual satisfaction from staff as determined by annual survey	Q4	Q4	Q4	Communications/ Management Team

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STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT: Establish appropriate communication protocols between Council & Administration

DESIRED OUTCOME # 3 — The Town becomes a leader in emergency management communications

GOALS	ACTION ITEMS	SUCCESS MEASURE	2018 (Q1 Q2 Q3 Q4)	2019 (Q1 Q2 Q3 Q4)	2020 (Q1 Q2 Q3 Q4)	DEPARTMENTS RESPONSIBLE
1 Administration and Council are trained in emergency communication processes	**1.1** Administration to craft and share a document containing information for Councillors to use during emergencies which outlines some key phrasing, information, how to handle questions, etc	Council feels prepared for potential emergency situations; the document is up-to-date and easy to use; Council is involved in the editing of the document so it fits their needs for any potential emergencies		Q1		Communications
	1.2 Administrative Staff designated in the IO Section receive the necessary training from organizations such as Alberta Emergency Management Agency and other agencies as offered	All staffing in the IO Section feel trained and capable of stepping into the IO roles and responsibilities; backup is established in the IO section so there is no longer reliance on just one individual			Q4	Communications
	1.3 Administrative Staff trained and authorized in Alberta Emergency Alert keep up-to-date with their training and mandatory practices	All authorized users keep their training up-to-date and submit quarterly test alerts		Q1	Q1	Communications
2 The Information Officer (IO) section of the Emergency Operations Centre is robustly staffed and trained to deal with emergencies as they arise	**2.1** At least three Administrative Staff members are trained to act in the Information Officer section in differing capacities	Minimum of 3 Administrative Staff members are trained and equipped to serve in the IO section of the Emergency Operations Centre by end of 2020			Q4	Communications/ Other Departments
	2.2 Permissions and training are provided to IO staff for the Town website for future need	IT and Communications provide necessary training to those selected as IO staff. Staff feel adequately prepared to post notices and edit the website to address an emergency situation		Q3		Communications
3 The Information Officer Section is trained to handle high-volume media calls and social media communications during a large-scale emergency situation	**3.1** Social media training is provided to each member of the IO Section	Communications provides in-house training for all staff selected to be members of the Information Officer section by end of 2020				Communications/ Other Departments
	3.2 Media scrum training and practice is offered to each IO team member	Implementation of at least one media scrum practice by 2020				Communications
	3.3 Access to official Town communication platforms are outline before an emergency occurs	Roles and responsibilities of each IO team member in regards to official Town communications channels (website, social media platforms) are to be decided on and documented	Q4			Communications

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STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT: Improve Internal and External Communications

DESIRED OUTCOME # 4 — The Town of Taber is marketed as a great place to grow for residents and businesses

GOALS	ACTION ITEMS	SUCCESS MEASURE	2018 (Q1 Q2 Q3 Q4)	2019 (Q1 Q2 Q3 Q4)	2020 (Q1 Q2 Q3 Q4)	DEPARTMENTS RESPONSIBLE
1 Demonstrate the wide array of choices of services and amenities our residents have to enjoy in their community	**1.1** Promote Taber's facilities and services using a variety of methods (brochures, ads, tourist information centres, signage, etc)	Implementation of print media to distribute to high-traffic areas for citizens and tourists; annual refresh of media to include new facilities, services, or tourist information	Q4	Q4	Q4	Communications
	1.2 Feature Town services and facilities throughout all stages of their gestation on the website (project conception, construction, implementation, etc); encourage departments to create project-specific pages on the Town website for upcoming projects; encourage updates on website to facility/service pages so the information is accurate and up-to-date	Steady increase to website traffic on project-specific pages; updates to department pages on websites are conducted on a regular basis	Q4			Communications
2 Increase public awareness of what differentiates Taber from communities similar in size	**2.1** Integrate the sharing of messages to reduce redundancy and promote fresh information	Increased inter-departmental sharing of information regarding projects so messaging is streamlined to the public		Q1	Q1	Communications/ All Departments
	2.2 Develop branding and a unified "look" for ads which will showcase the best of our community	A unified "brand" that is recognizable and attributable to Taber being a "great place to grow"		Q1		Communications/ Economic Development
3 Promote a feeling of community spirit and a sense that our community is one "unit"	**3.1** Provide avenues for public and local events to be advertised and easily accessible for citizens	Community calendar for local events to be made available on Town website		Q4		Communications
	3.2 Research avenues into accessibility for various languages, learning levels, and disabilities so all citizens have access to information; develop strategy to open Council meetings to the public, regardless of abilities	Potential implementation of translation services for online platforms; avenues for communication channels for blind or hearing impaired individuals; other opportunities as needed; consider livestream capabilities for Council meetings		Q3		Communications/ IT
	3.3 Foster a consistent "voice" from the municipality that promotes a community-minded spirit	(Similar to 2.2) A "voice" that is approachable and friendly is utilized for all Town-owned media types, and is recognizable to the general public as being from the Town of Taber		Q4	Q4	Communications
	3.4 Administration and Council fosters more opportunities and avenues for the public to provide input on Town initiatives, projects, ect, as per the Public Participation Policy	Increased satisfaction indicated by the public as to how they feel their participation is handled and considered (to be determined through the annual Communications Survey)	Q4	Q4	Q4	Council/ Administration

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STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT: Improve Internal and External Communications

Measure of Success

THE NEXT THREE YEARS WILL SEE A GREAT DEAL OF CHANGE AND GROWTH IN THE TOWN OF TABER COMMUNICATIONS.

The desired outcomes and their different action items will be integrated in the yearly quarters as outlined in the Appendices. Many items impact other departments whose participation will be beneficial in the educate-engage-evolve path of this plan.

Each action item will have its own corresponding success measurement, depending on the steps to be taken. Some are easier to report on, such as surveys or engagement numbers. A number of action items will have more subtle effects, and may not be as easily reported on. However, the Town of Taber Administrative Staff is committed to ensuring that Council and residents feel well informed on the progress of this Plan.

At any time, Council is welcome to provide input through proper processes for Town communication initiatives. The constantly changing projects and desires of the municipality dictate that communications be as flexible as possible.

ULTIMATELY, THE RESULTS OF ALL THE DESIRED OUTCOMES, GOALS, AND ACTIONS WILL LEAD TO A POPULATION AND MUNICIPALITY THAT IS EDUCATED, ENGAGED, AND ULTIMATELY EVOLVING.

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