

## Policy (O&A) 2.11 Responding to Compliments, Concerns and Complaints

Pursuant to the communities expressed concern to reduce administrative costs, and the trustee's intent to remain open and transparent, and supporting the custom to remain approachable, the trustees of the Hagensborg Waterworks District had a website constructed that would allow the publication of any and all documents that are public information to be viewed 24/7.

Additionally, they have created a position for a Communications portfolio, a position filled by a trustee to draft press releases and news letters, and arrange for public meetings as needed.

Additionally, a small percentage of people will correspond directly to the district, to staff, or to trustees, with complements, concerns and complaints. A very few will correspond with complaints that could reasonably be described as repetitious, vexatious or harassing. This correspondence from a small minority of individuals takes up a disproportionate amount of administrative time and corresponding expense, and can result in unacceptable stress for trustees and staff.

This policy is designed to ensure that the district remains transparent and accountable, while ensuring that administrative time is used fairly and cost effectively, and that trustees and staff receive a reasonable degree of protection from the stress that can be caused by vexatious correspondence and complaints.

To provide parameters for responding to correspondence, the trustees resolve the following.

### **Defining vexatious correspondence or complaints**

Vexatious or persistent complaints and correspondence can be characterised in the following ways:

- Behaviour which is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious, vexatious and/or;
- Displays an insistence on pursuing unmeritorious issues and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason;
- Displays an insistence upon pursuing meritorious complaints or issues in an unreasonable manner;
- A "scatter gun" approach, with copies of letters being sent to several recipients on a regular basis, often including the media, the Ministry and external regulators;
- Repeated and/or frequent requests for information, whether or not those requests are made under the access to information legislation.

### **Policy:**

1. In the interest of clarity and accuracy, all questions to the board or staff must be in writing either as an email, email attachment, a hard copy mailed.
2. If a person stops to speak to a trustee or staff person or phones with questions, concerns or complaints that are not concerning their own account, they will be thanked for bringing the question, concern or complaint up, and asked, in the interest of ensuring clarity and accuracy, to submit it in writing.
3. The matter will not be discussed in public.

4. All correspondence will be acknowledged as received, by the staff or trustee to the sender within a reasonable space of time allowed within their work schedule, but no later than three working days from receipt of the correspondence.
5. If the correspondence speaks to
  - An enquiry to a community members account - the appropriate staff person will respond. They will not be expected to report this correspondence to the trustees.
  - A compliment or note of appreciation- the administrator will acknowledge receipt and determine if the matter should be reported to the trustees.
  - A question that has an answer in whole or in part, on the districts website, or the provincial government's website - the CAO or CFO will respond with a reminder that the information can be found on the website(s), and while the staff can answer it, it may cost pursuant to Miscellaneous Charges Bylaw 219, section 3. A decision to charge shall be at the discretion of the staff. Response of this kind will be reported to the trustees at the next In Camera meeting.
  - A vexatious or persistent complaint of any kind, or persistent correspondence from the same person for the same or similar questions or concerns - the staff will acknowledge that the matter has been received, and will be placed on the agenda for the trustees to respond to at their next regular board meeting.
  - Correspondence received by a trustee will be brought to the board for opening and discussion.
6. All correspondence addressing any part of a personal account, will be discussed In Camera. The trustees will determine if the matter can be brought out of In Camera. The trustee's decision in this is final.
7. From time to time, a community member may wish their letters to form a part of the public record. The process for public record of any correspondence is as follows:
  - a. The matter will be noted in the public portion of the minutes having been received and a brief explanation of what the letter is about.
  - b. The trustees may choose to provide a response to the letter in the minutes, or to add a response to the letter and attach it to the letter.
  - c. The letter will be provided upon request to any person of the public, by hard copy, pursuant to Miscellaneous Charges Bylaw 219.

Date Adopted: 01.16.17