

	<b>COUNCIL POLICY</b>	<b>Policy No:</b> CP-1048-23
		<b>Approved By:</b> Council
		<b>Effective Date:</b> <b>Resolution No.:</b> <b>Last Reviewed Date:</b>
		<b>Division:</b> Corporate Services - City Clerk's Office

## RESPECTFUL INTERACTIONS WITH CITY EMPLOYEES POLICY

### POLICY STATEMENT

The City of Spruce Grove is committed to serving the community and recognizes the importance of public input and welcomes inquiries, comments, requests, and complaints as valuable forms of feedback. While most members of the public interact with City Employees in a respectful, polite, and reasonable manner, the City also recognizes that inquiries, comments, requests, and complaints which are Frivolous, Vexatious, Harassing, and/or Violent can consume a disproportionate amount of time and resources, can impede Employees from attending to other members of the public or essential services, and can create an unsafe working environment.

It is the intention of the City to deal with public inquiries, comments, requests, and complaints in ways that are consistent, fair, and reasonable while acknowledging that there is a need to set expectations regarding appropriate conduct when the public is interacting with Employees.

### 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To establish standards of conduct that the public are expected to adhere to when interacting with Employees; and
- 1.2 To establish the consequences and processes for handling Interactions of a Frivolous, Vexatious, Harassing, and/or Violent nature.

### 2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 "City" means the municipal corporation of the City of Spruce Grove in the Province of Alberta.
- 2.2 "City Manager" means the administrative head of the City.

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- 2.3 “Cyberbullying” means the use of electronic technologies to engage in deliberate, repeated, or hostile behaviour intended to harm, embarrass, Harass, or slander another person. Electronic technologies include, but are not limited to, City sanctioned social media platforms, blogs, webpages, online discussion groups, or online media articles.
- 2.4 “Employee” means persons who are compensated for services performed and whose duties are under the control of the City and includes all Employees regardless of whether they are temporary, permanent, part-time, casual, and/or seasonal.
- 2.5 “Frivolous” means an inquiry, comment, request, or complaint that has no serious purpose or value or may have little merit and be trivial, and is part of a pattern of conduct that amounts to an abuse of the right of access, interferes with the operations of the City, or is made in bad faith or for a purpose other than to obtain access.
- 2.6 “Harass” means any single Incident or repeated Incidents including conduct, behaviour, or communication that a reasonable person knows or ought to have known would be objectionable, unwelcomed, threatening, insulting, stalking, bullying, or harassing behavior in person or through other means and includes:
- (a) action that causes offence or humiliation to an employee’s dignity, or adversely affects the Employee’s health and safety or would cause a reasonable person to fear for one’s safety or the safety of loved ones, or could foreseeably cause emotional distress and cause harm;
  - (b) conduct, comment, bullying, or action because of race, religious beliefs, colour, physical disability, mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income, family status, gender, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation; and
  - (c) sexual solicitations or advances or stalking.

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- 2.7 “Interaction” means any contact with an Employee including but not limited to in-person contact, or contact via email, phone, hard copy documentation, or social media.
- 2.8 “Peace Officer” means a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police or a Peace Officer appointed under the *Peace Officer Act*, S.A. 2006 c P-3.5, as amended.
- 2.9 “Unreasonable” means given the nature and frequency of an inquiry, comment, request, or complaint, it is likely to cause distress or disruption to the City, Employees, or other members of the public.
- 2.10 “Veiled Threat” means a threat that is non-specific and subjective in nature (e.g., “you better watch your back”) and includes a statement and/or body language, psychological injury, or behaviour which shows an intent to harm (e.g., “I know where you live”, “how are you going to make me?”, shaking fist motion, hand signal like a gun).
- 2.11 “Vexatious” means an inquiry, comment, request, or complaint without merit, that is pursued in a manner that is malicious, intended to inconvenience, embarrass, or Harass the recipient or is a pattern of conduct that amounts to the misuse of processes and procedures.
- 2.12 “Violence” or “Violent” means a Veiled Threat, attempted or actual conduct of person that causes or is likely to cause physical or psychological injury or harm.

### 3. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 3.1 The City Manager through corresponding Administrative Policies must outline standards and procedures for Employees to follow, to document, and manage Frivolous, Vexatious, Harassing, and/or Violent conduct from members of the public.

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#### 4. STANDARDS OF CONDUCT OF THE PUBLIC

- 4.1 When interacting with Employees, members of the public are expected to adhere to following standards of conduct:
- (a) Respectfulness, even when providing criticism;
  - (b) No crude, vulgar, obscene, or offensive language or gestures;
  - (c) No defamatory and libelous remarks or unsubstantiated allegations;
  - (d) No remarks of a racial or discriminatory nature;
  - (e) Refrain from physical confrontations, including those that are intended to intimidate;
  - (f) Refrain from psychological or physical threats; and
  - (g) No engaging in any other conduct of a Frivolous, Vexatious, Harassing, and/or Violent nature.

#### 5. DETERMINATION OF FRIVOLOUS, VEXATIOUS, HARASSING AND/OR VIOLENT INTERACTIONS

- 5.1 An inquiry, comment, request, or complaint may become Frivolous, Vexatious, Harassing, and/or Violent based on the nature and frequency of the inquiry, comment, request, or complaint. A pattern of conduct occurs when, on one or more occasions, a member of the public engages in conduct that includes, but is not limited to:
- (a) Bringing an inquiry, comment, request, or complaint on an issue that an Employee already investigated or provided a response to and determined to be groundless or bringing an inquiry, comment, request, or complaint similar to an issue that an Employee already investigated and determined to be groundless;

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- (b) Engaging in Unreasonable conduct, including Harassing, verbally abusing, or otherwise seeking to intimidate an Employee or to secure preferential treatment;
- (c) Making multiple lines of inquiry regarding the same issue. For example, pursuing an inquiry, comment, request, or complaint with staff in multiple departments, with Employees simultaneously or via multiple methods such as phone, email, etc., even after being advised that the inquiry, comment, request, or complaint is being investigated or a response is being formulated;
- (d) Repeatedly challenging the findings or response provided by an Employee;
- (e) Refusing to accept that an issue falls outside the scope of the City's jurisdiction;
- (f) Making Unreasonable demands on Employees such as demanding a response within an Unreasonable timeframe;
- (g) Making statements or providing representations that the member of the public knows or ought to know are incorrect or persuading others to do so;
- (h) Changing the basis of the inquiry, comment, request, or complaint and/or denying statements or information provided at an earlier point in time;
- (i) Failing to clearly identify the precise issues of the inquiry, comment, request, or complaint while still wanting a response;
- (j) Making malicious and unsubstantiated allegations about an Employee;
- (k) Using crude, vulgar, obscene, or offensive language or gestures;
- (l) Submitting falsified information about themselves, others, or the issue; and

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(m) Engaging in Cyberbullying.

## 6. CONSEQUENCES OF FRIVOLOUS, VEXATIOUS, HARRASSING AND/OR VIOLENT INTERACTIONS

6.1 The following consequences may occur if a member of the public engages in Frivolous, Vexatious, Harassing, and/or Violent Interactions:

- (a) A warning that their conduct contravenes this policy and that if the conduct is not remedied, further actions may be taken;
- (b) Limiting communication with Employees to a particular format (e.g., written correspondence only);
- (c) Limiting communication to an established point of contact at the City;
- (d) Limiting face-to-face contact to the presence of a City-sanctioned third party;
- (e) Employees ceasing to communicate with the member of the public on the specific issue or in extreme cases of Frivolous, Vexatious, and/or Harassing Interactions, ceasing to communicate with the member of the public entirely;
- (f) Blocking emails or social media profiles or deleting or hiding comments on City social media platforms;
- (g) If there is a specific or general threat of Violence or potential of Violence threatening the safety or security of an Employee, a Peace Officer will be contacted immediately.

6.2 In the case of a member of the public engaging in Frivolous, Vexatious, Harassing, and/or Violent Interactions with

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an Employee, the City Manager or designate will determine what consequences will be implemented.

## RELATED DOCUMENTS

Respectful Interactions with City Council Policy, as amended

Administrative Policy - Respectful Interactions with the Public and Outside Parties Policy, as amended

Administrative Policy - Harassing and Violent Interactions Policy, as amended

<b>Approval</b>	
Mayor _____	Date _____