

To: David Creery, Chief Administrative Officer

From: Matthew Vucic, Election Coordinator

Re: Rules for the Use of Municipal Resources During the Election Period

AIM

To adopt revisions to Council Policy GA028 - Rules for the Use of Municipal Resources During the Election Period.

BACKGROUND

The *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, as amended (“the Act”), requires municipalities to establish rules and procedures, no later than May 1 of an election year, governing the use of municipal resources during the election campaign period. The Act also prohibits the City from contributing - whether through money, goods, or services - to any candidate or registered third-party advertiser.

Specifically, Section 88.18 of the Act states:

Before May 1 in the year of a regular election, municipalities and local boards shall establish rules and procedures with respect to the use of municipal or board resources, as the case may be, during the election campaign period.

Any use of City of Woodstock resources for election-related purposes is considered a contribution by the City. Because campaign contributions may include financial support, goods, or services, the use of any City corporate resources for election campaign activities is strictly prohibited. These restrictions help ensure and protect the City’s neutrality throughout the election period and ensure fairness in the election process.

COMMENTS

The current policy adopted by the City prohibits the use of City of Woodstock resources – including parks, trails, recreation and sports fields, services, publications, events, assets, equipment, transit, and all City-operated facilities – for any campaign-related activities. It also restricts employees and volunteers from participating in campaign activities during their working hours.

The proposed changes to the policy are outlined in red text below. A copy of the revised policy is also attached to this report for Council’s consideration:

1. Additional clarity to the application of the policy –
The Downtown Woodstock Board of Management and all City of Woodstock Advisory Committees are subject to this policy, including their members, subcommittees, and any municipal resources provided to them. The Woodstock Police Services Board and the Woodstock Public Library Board are responsible for developing and maintaining their own policies regarding the use of institutional resources during the election period.

2. Additional clarity and specificity to definitions in the policy –

“Candidate” means a person who has filed a nomination under Section 33 of the Act to seek election to a municipal council or a school board, and includes a person certified by the Clerk under Section 35 of the Act.

“Clerk” means the Clerk of the City of Woodstock or their designate, who is responsible for conducting municipal elections under the authority of the Act.

“Employee” means any individual working for, or receiving compensation from, the City of Woodstock, including those in part-time, seasonal, or contract positions, as well as volunteers acting on behalf of the City in any official capacity.

“Registered Third Party Advertiser” means an individual, corporation or trade union that has filed a Notice of Registration as a Third Party Advertiser in the municipal election under Section 88.6 of the Act.

“Voting Day” means the final day on which the final vote is to be taken in an election.

3. Additional clarity for staff to align with best practices with respect to impartiality and assisting election candidates –

Employees must endeavour to make themselves equally available to all candidates and registered third party advertisers. When attending meetings with candidates, employees shall remain impartial, and only share information that is publicly available or part of normal customer service. Employees must document any substantive information requests and forward these records to the Clerk to ensure all candidates receive consistent and equitable access to information.

4. Add Compliance and Enforcement section –

6. Compliance and Enforcement

6.1 Any employee, committee member, candidate, or member of the public who becomes aware of a potential breach of this policy shall report it to the Clerk. The Clerk will review the matter and determine any follow-up action

6.2 Where a violation occurs, the Clerk may require immediate corrective action, including the removal of campaign materials, cessation of improper activity, or the correction of any information that was improperly distributed. Employees may also be subject to internal disciplinary measures.

6.3 The Clerk will maintain records of reported or confirmed violations and any actions taken. These records may be used to support consistent application of the policy throughout the election period.

6.4 If municipal resources are used contrary to this policy for the benefit of a candidate or registered third party advertiser, that use may constitute an illegal contribution under s.88.8(4) (candidates) and s.88.12(4) (registered third party advertisers). Any eligible elector may apply to the municipality’s Compliance Audit Committee if they believe a

candidate or registered third party advertiser has contravened the MEA, including contribution rules.

6.5 Where a matter may constitute an offence under the Act, the Clerk may refer the issue to the appropriate external authorities, including but not limited to the Compliance Audit Committee or local police services, for review or investigation

Once approved, the policy will be circulated to all City staff and committee members. In accordance with the Act, a copy will also be provided to each candidate and third-party advertiser, as well as to non-City-affiliated boards and committees for their reference.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – 2026 Rules for the Use of Municipal Resources During the Election Period.docx

RECOMMENDATION

That Woodstock City Council approve the revised version of Council Policy GA028 - Rules for the Use of Municipal Resources During the Election Period.

Authored by: Matthew Vucic, M.A., Election Coordinator

Approved by: Jeff Bunn, Manager of Legislative Services/Deputy City Clerk & Returning Officer

Approved by: Amy Humphries, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer/City Clerk

Approved by: David Creery, P. Eng, MBA, Chief Administrative Officer