

	<h2>The City of Woodstock Policy Manual</h2>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Rules for the Use of Municipal Resources During the Election Period</b>
<b>Policy Number:</b>	<b>GA028</b>
<b>Revision:</b>	<b>02</b>
<b>Approved by Council:</b>	<b>March 17, 2022</b>
<b>Amended:</b>	<b>March 5, 2026</b>

### **Purpose & Background**

The *Municipal Elections Act, 1996, as amended* (“the Act”), requires municipalities and local boards to establish rules and procedures for the use of municipal and board resources during the election campaign period. The Act also provides that the City cannot make a contribution (including money, goods, and services) to any candidate or registered third party advertiser during an election.

Any use of City of Woodstock resources by or on behalf of candidates, registered third party advertisers, their representatives, or staff for election campaign purposes would be considered a contribution by the City. As a campaign contribution may take the form of money, goods, or services, any use of corporate resources for election campaign purposes is not permitted.

Nothing in this policy shall preclude a Member of Council from performing their duty as an Elected Official, nor inhibit them from representing the interests of their constituents. The City recognizes that Elected Officials are responsible to serve their constituents and fulfill their responsibilities until the end of their term, but a clear separation must exist between the Elected Official’s role as a candidate and their role as a Member of Council or local board.

### **Application**

This policy applies to municipal and school board elections or by-elections and to campaigns related to by-laws or questions on the ballot. This policy also applies, with necessary modifications, to the use of resources during provincial and federal election campaign periods.

In accordance with the Act, the Woodstock Public Library Board, Woodstock Police Services Board, and School Boards are required, as local boards, to also establish rules and procedures for the use of board resources during the election campaign period. It is

the responsibility of candidates, registered third party advertisers, and political parties to adhere to the policies of these boards with respect to their resources, assets, facilities, and events.

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.

The City Clerk has the authority to define and make amendments to this Policy from time to time to address specific implementation requirements. All determinations and interpretation of this Policy during the election period shall be the sole responsibility of the City Clerk. The Clerk's decision on these matters shall be final.

*Further details on election sign rules can be found in the City's Candidate and Registered Third Party Advertiser Nomination and Registration Packages.*

### **Definitions**

"Campaign material" means material in any media, including but not limited to print, displays, electronic, radio, television, and online sources including websites and social media, used to promote, support or oppose a candidate or question on the ballot. Campaign material also includes but is not limited to signs, banners, literature, pamphlets, brochures, cards, posters, placards, buttons/pins, pictures, clothing, car wraps, and other paraphernalia.

"Campaigning" means any activity that seeks to promote or oppose a candidate, registered third party advertiser or question on a ballot during an election period that is meant to elicit support or opposition. Campaigning does not include the appearance of Elected Officials, other candidates or registered third party advertisers at an event in their personal capacity without the display of any signage or graphic which identifies the individual as a candidate or registered third party advertiser and without the solicitation of votes. Campaigning does not include the appearance of Elected Officials at an event in their capacity as Elected Officials without the display of any signage or graphic which identifies the individual as a candidate or registered third party advertiser and without the solicitation of votes.

"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.

"Election period" means the official campaign period of an election. For a regular municipal and school board election, the election period commences on May 1 of an election year and ends on Voting Day. For a provincial or federal election, the election period commences on the day the writ for the election is issued or a by-election is called and ends on Voting Day.

"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.

### **Administration**

City of Woodstock resources, parks, trails, recreation/sports fields, services, publications, events, assets, equipment, transit, and City operated facilities may not be used for campaigning except as identified in this policy.

#### **1. Access to City Property during an Election Period**

- 1.1 City operated facilities, civic squares, parks, trails, and recreational/sports fields may not be used for any campaigning. This restriction includes all candidates' meetings/debates, as there are other adequate private facilities in the City for campaigning use.
- 1.2 Campaign material may not be erected or displayed on or adjacent to a City operated facility, park, trail, or recreational/sports field. This restriction does not include adjacent private property or public boulevards which are not adjacent to City operated facilities, parks, trails, or recreational/sports fields.
- 1.3 Campaigning and campaign material of any kind is not permitted in, on, or in the immediate vicinity of the premises used as a voting place on voting days. The premise is deemed to include the entire building and the property, including any parking lot.
- 1.4 Candidates registered third party advertisers or political parties, or anyone acting on their behalf, may not distribute campaign material on or in City operated property or at City events, but are permitted to distribute campaign material on public right of ways such as sidewalks.
- 1.5 Photographs of City parks or the exterior of City buildings may be used in campaign materials to identify the location as a community asset.

- 1.6 The City may use a City facility for election-related education or administration purposes only, as long as no particular candidate, registered third party advertiser or political party is promoted, supported or opposed at the event. These events may include but are not limited to: providing information on how to become a candidate or registered third party advertiser, or providing a voting place for electors.

## **2. Use of Corporate Technology and Digital Resources**

- 2.1 Corporate resources or services such as, but not limited to, computers, cell phones, smart phones, telephones, tablets, printers, scanners, copiers, e-mail, file storage, voicemail, or any other equipment or technology owned by the City of Woodstock, may not be used for any campaigning.
- 2.2 Websites, domains, and social media accounts that are operated or funded by the City of Woodstock shall not include any campaign material.
- 2.3 Notwithstanding the restriction of campaign material and links on websites and domains operated or funded by the City of Woodstock, the City of Woodstock election website which lists candidates and registered third party advertisers may include information for candidate's websites, social media, or other contact information for the purpose of providing election information to voters but shall in no way endorse any candidate.
- 2.4 The City of Woodstock logo, other similarly branded corporate resources or property and other digital assets may not be used on any campaign material or for campaigning or included on any election campaign related website or social media accounts, except in the case of a link to the City's website or other documents/resources to provide voters with information about the municipal and school board election or sharing program/service information.
- 2.5 Photos, videos or other material which has been created by City employees or with City resources or for which the City has proprietary rights cannot be used for campaign material or campaigning.
- 2.6 Official photographs of Elected Officials may not be used for campaigning.
- 2.7 If an Elected Official uses any social media account for campaigning, such account must not be created or supported by City resources. Social media accounts used for campaigning must utilize personal cell phones, tablets and/or computers.

## **3. Attending City Events during an Election Period**

- 3.1 Candidates, registered third party advertisers or political parties are permitted to attend City events, or events held at City facilities, in either

their capacity as Elected Officials or as private citizens but may not campaign while in attendance. No campaign material may be posted or disseminated at City events.

- 3.2 Elected Officials are permitted to attend City-organized events or events held at City facilities and act as ceremonial participants in their capacity as Elected Officials, including speaking at the event and partaking in ceremonial activities.

#### **4. City of Woodstock Employees**

In accordance with the City of Woodstock's Employee Code of Conduct:

- 4.1 City of Woodstock employees shall not engage in campaigning during their working hours or anytime they are receiving remuneration from the City of Woodstock, not including scheduled time off such as vacation or a leave of absence.
- 4.2 Employees may engage in campaigning outside of working hours as long as those activities are separate from their official positions and duties. Employees must ensure that their political activities do not create a perceived or actual conflict of interest in their day-to-day work. No vehicles, technology, or other resources that are owned or leased by the City of Woodstock shall be used while engaging in campaigning.
- 4.3 Employees shall not wear any clothing, such as a uniform or badge, which identifies them as a City of Woodstock employee while engaging in campaigning. Candidates may not post photographs of themselves with City employees in uniform.
- 4.4 Requests for personal meetings with the Chief Administrative Officer and Department Heads will be accommodated subject to resource and time constraints and will be available for all candidates and registered third party advertisers.
- 4.5 Despite the provisions of this section, any employee or person who has been selected to work as an election worker in a municipal and/or school board election shall not engage in any campaigning activities at any time once they have received notification that they will be working as a member of the municipal election administration team.
- 4.6 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.

## 5. City of Woodstock Committees

- 5.1 Woodstock City Council advisory committee resources, social media accounts, services, publications, events, and equipment may not be used for campaigning.
- 5.2 Committees shall not engage in campaigning activity as to not create a perceived or actual conflict of interest as a representative body of the City of Woodstock and Woodstock City Council.
- 5.3 Individual committee members may engage in campaigning outside of their roles and positions as Committee members.

## 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.

<b>Revision Date</b>	<b>Rev #</b>	<b>Particulars</b>
March 5, 2026	02	Added compliance and enforcement section Added employee impartiality provision Clarified application to boards and committees Updated definitions