



Staff Report

Report Title: Communications Status Report December 2023

Prepared By: Kristen Prentice, Communications Coordinator

Department: Legislative Services

Date: Dec. 4, 2023

Report Number: CLK-2023-12-70

File Number: C11-CLK23

Attachments:

Recommendation:

THAT the Township of Huron-Kinloss Committee of the Whole hereby receives for information Report CLK-2023-12-70 prepared by Kristen Prentice, Communications Coordinator.

Background:

The Huron-Kinloss Communications Strategy and Action Plan was approved by the Committee of the Whole in November 2021. The Communications Coordinator works to achieve the objective defined within the goals of the Action Plan:

1. Build a Foundation of Successful Communications
2. Create a Culture of Two-Way Communications
3. Provide Clear, Concise, Accurate and Timely Messaging

The Township aims to create content for our audience that aligns with these goals and is guided by these principles from the 2021 Communications Strategy:

- Resident focused,
- Strategic and well-planned,
- Two-way communication (informed and engaged),
- Take responsibility and be accountable.

Discussion:

In October 2023, the Manager of Strategic Initiatives and Communications Coordinator collaborated on an enhanced Communications Action Plan 2.0 with the goal of streamlining external communications. This comprehensive strategy seeks to eliminate duplicated efforts, underscore the Township's consistent tone, and

broaden our outreach. The restructuring of responsibilities empowers the Communications Coordinator as the central point of contact for all external media relations. This strategic shift consolidates various communication-related tasks under a single, dedicated role, ensuring a streamlined and coordinated effort.

Our external communications take a multi-faceted approach by using several channels to reach our audiences, including:

- Corporate social media accounts for Facebook and Twitter*
- Website News, with notifications, updates and alerts delivered to subscribers
- Local newspapers (Kincardine Independent, Kincardine Record, Lucknow Sentinel)
- Community Events Calendar for community and charity, volunteer and not-for-profit organizations' events
- HK Connects, our monthly e-newsletters delivered to subscribers
- Press releases
- Poster boards throughout the Township

Facebook

In the second half of 2023, our reach (number of people who see content from or about our Facebook page) increased by 38.8% compared to the previous 6 months. Our Facebook Page visits are 50.7% higher than they were in the first half of the year. We have added 288 new page followers in the same period, for a total of 3,412. This consistent audience growth aligns with our strategic approach to communications, noticeably optimizing our online presence.

We had successful paid ad campaigns including the Huron-Kinloss Job and Career Development Fair, Women in Construction Open Houses, and the Strategic Plan Workshops. Our most successful organic (unpaid) posts were the Grain Dryer Awareness, CAO Resignation and subsequent Announcement, and Recruiting a Fire Chief career opportunity post.

In addition to posting organic content, the Township page consistently shares and promotes community organization and non-profit groups' social media content with resident focused event information.

*Twitter

We are currently "locked out" of our Twitter (*the platform now known as X) account. We have submitted three "Appeal a Locked or Suspended Account" forms to address this, without resolution to date.

Twitter was our lowest performing external communication medium and while we will continue to work on resolving our account issues, moving forward in 2024 we will evaluate whether we need to maintain an account with Twitter.

H-K Connects Newsletter

The Township of Huron-Kinloss eNewsletter, HK Connects, is issued on the last day of each month delivered directly to subscribers' inboxes. The focus is to provide up to date information from all Township departments. We continue to have high averages for our monthly HK Connects; there are 983 (a 13% increase from first half of the year) subscribers, with 52% of users "highly engaged", meaning they open, read through and often click on links in the email campaign (newsletter). While the newsletter provides brief updates or high-level overviews of information, readers are encouraged to click links to bring them to the relevant page on our website where they will find comprehensive coverage.

Newspaper Advertising

Currently, newspaper ads are booked as required by departments' needs. The Township has banners in the local print newspapers, Lucknow Sentinel and Kincardine Independent, as well as online with the Kincardine Record. Moving ahead in 2024, the Township is considering an advertising proposal for a dedicated, weekly, full-page "Huron-Kinloss Community Update" for consistent content which could include notices, events, programming, report-a-problem and contact information.

Discovery Guide

The 2024 Discovery Guide will be printed in April and distributed by mail to each Township of Huron-Kinloss resident, tourism kiosks and outlets throughout the province. The Discovery Guide is a comprehensive resource for municipal information including maps, by-laws, recreation programs and facilities, Mayor and Council, tourism and local business information. The Guide will also be available online.

Financial Impacts:

Expenses related to paid Facebook campaigns are designated to departmental and project specific budgets for which the funds have already been allocated. There are no additional budget implications associated with this report.

Strategic Alignment / Link:

The information provided in this report is consistent with and in keeping with the Municipality's Vision and Mission. The recommendations contribute to our goals in achieving a prosperous community, a vibrant community, and a spirited community.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Kristen Prentice, Communications Coordinator

Report Approved By:

Mary Rose Walden, Chief Administrative Officer