



City of Rossland
Communications Strategy
Short term: January – June 2015
Long term: 2015-2018

Background:

During the November 2014 municipal election, Rossland citizens had the opportunity to change their local government leadership. As a result, a new Mayor and council were elected who pledged to increase communication channels and rebuild trust between the city and the community. Over the next four years the newly elected officials will work to ensure the community is informed and understands the actions of local government, and will strive to not only communicate with residents, but to engage them in ways where they can be a part of discussions and outcomes. These commitments will help the city achieve its goals of engaging, informing and building trust in the community as well as providing opportunities for residents to offer meaningful input.

Purpose:

The purpose of this communications strategy is to support the Mayor and council, and the City of Rossland, to:

- identify activities that will help increase the level of communication with residents,
- build trust and
- engage the broader community (including businesses, seasonal residents, etc.) in discussions and decisions to increase transparency.

Engaging Rossland citizens will help make the city stronger, healthier and better able to meet the needs of those who live in the community. Residents will also have a greater sense of trust, wellbeing and belonging if they are informed, educated and involved in their local government. Increased communication will result in better understanding of the challenges facing the city and help council get buy-in on tough decisions.



This is a short-term strategy that outlines objectives, key audiences, messages and the tactics required to develop and maintain effective communications and information-sharing with city stakeholders and residents.

Communication Objectives:

The communication objectives below are both short-term and long-term outcomes desired by the City of Rossland. Short term objectives are also incorporated into long term objectives.

Overall aim: To become a model for how small city governments interact and engage with its citizens.

January – June 2015:

- Provide timely and accurate communications regarding City of Rossland activities and decisions.
- Ensure that all information is easy to read and understand. Use 'clear language' writing/editing guidelines to guarantee consistency throughout all materials.
- Engage residents in discussions and decision-making processes (where possible) to solicit valuable feedback and begin to develop a greater sense of trust between the city and the community.
- Increase community understanding and knowledge of the city, its services and fiscal situation.
- Use as many modes of communication as possible to reach as many people as possible: print, radio, social media, town hall meetings, and individual meetings.
- Deliver quality communication materials that provide clear and consistent information and are easy to read (high-quality links, easy-to-open newsletters etc.).
- Move away from paper newsletters to decrease the expense and waste of resources, while still considering those who do not have access to computers.
- Highlight the positive things happening in Rossland to create and foster a sense of optimism, both inside and outside the city.



Four-Year Strategy: 2015 – 2018:

- Build and maintain trust with Rossland citizens as a result of positive relationships and effective communications.
- Increase citizen involvement in city programs and committees.
- Develop increased support for City of Rossland activities and services as a result of positive community interactions with the city.
- Increase Rossland citizens' knowledge and understanding of challenges facing the city.
- Develop and foster a sense of optimism in the city so people view it as place where positive things are happening.

Issues and Opportunities:

The following opportunities and issues may arise from increased communication and engagement activities.

Opportunities:

- Improve public's understanding of City government (to create buy-in on Council decisions) through increasing the public's knowledge of:
 - Rossland activities and services, staff and council members and how to connect with them.
 - City decision-making process (to increase transparency)
 - issues and challenges facing the city
- Build trust with residents by:
 - increasing transparency of city activities and decisions
 - engaging residents on city committees, gaining from their knowledge, expertise and experience for better decisions
 - Increasing opportunities for meaningful dialogue between elected officials and citizens.
- Outwardly promote the positive image of Rossland as a community defined by openness, honesty, integrity and sustainability.



Issues:

- Some Rossland citizens may not trust the city's communications after many years of 'closed door' operations.
- Rossland residents may not sign up for newsletters or access social media channels to learn about events, activities, meetings etc.
- Citizens may not get involved in committees, attend meetings or provide input because they don't believe their opinion matters, they are tired of being asked and feeling their view doesn't count, or they don't have time.
- It may be difficult to engage the broader community - those who are regularly involved are typically the same group of individuals.
- Some citizen groups are challenging to reach including seniors, youth, and the working population.
- After casting their vote, some citizens may have unrealistic expectations of the new council and think issues are now solved.

Key Audiences:

The following audiences are identified as all community stakeholders affected by City of Rossland activities and communications.

- Rossland Citizens, as individuals, family representatives, critics and fans of local government (all of whom are users of city services at some point)
- Community organizations
- Business community/Chamber/Tourism Rossland, including current and potential business owners
- Media (print, radio, online)
- Other levels of government – municipal, regional district, provincial MLAs and federal MPs
- Property owners (residential and business)
- Renters
- Seniors
- Youth
- Tourists, visitors and potential residents
- Seasonal residents and workers
- Marginalized groups (due to income, sexual orientation, language, race, etc.)



Key Messages:

These messages are high-level and relate to the overall strategy of the city. Messages regarding individual projects will be more specific and included in a separate communication plan.

- The City of Rossland is dedicated to communicating regularly with Rossland residents, through a variety of channels, to help reach as many citizens as possible.
- Whenever possible, we will engage the community to gain valuable feedback on city actions and activities.
- Our goal is to help residents stay connected to the Mayor and council, and have a better understanding of what’s happening in local government.
- Our goal is to support our community thrive by supporting our business community and communicating the benefits of doing business in Rossland
- We want more citizens to get involved and help shape Rossland’s future together.
- We want citizens to feel comfortable contacting and presenting to council.

Communication Methods

<i>Communications Mode</i>	<i>Vehicle</i>	<i>Opportunities for interactivity</i>
Primarily one-way	Council Connects Newsletter	Invitation to contact with thoughts/concerns.
	City of Rossland Website	Opportunity to e-mail councillors
	Thoughtexchange Process	Input from residents; can be used as basis for interaction.
	Local Print/Online Media – submissions and opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rossland News • Rossland Telegraph • Trail Daily Times 	Opportunity for responses via letters to the editor, online comments
	Online Video Series: local digital media talent to volunteer to work together to create unexpected, funny, unique series of short videos posted regularly	One-way, with opportunity for comments.

Some interaction	Facebook – Mayor and Councillors	Commenting provides some interaction
	Bhubble – Postings and Responding to Discussions	
	Local Radio Media: Goat FM, CBC, EZ Rock	Talk-show format provides interactive possibilities
	Rossland News Community Events Calendar	
Fully interactive (on spectrum to engagement)	Town Hall Meetings	Fully interactive. Ensure all voices have opportunity to be heard
	Casual meetings – with citizens or local stakeholders groups and other local governments	
	Youth and Seniors Mayor or Council Ambassadors: sharing of information to their groups	
	Seven Summits School: possible volunteer opportunities	
	Public Speaking Opportunities: speak at local or other events to pass on Rossland’s message / have a presence	
	Office Hours with the Mayor	
	Walk or Ski with a Council Member	

Evaluation (measured against the over aim): To become a model for how small city governments interact and engage with its citizens.

Results Will be Measured by:

Process Measures

- Actual number of newsletters we publish each year compared to target
- Consistency of Facebook postings by council members; amount of commentary received and “likes”

- Regularity of website updates by staff
- Regularity of Bhubble postings; amount of comments received from postings
- Actual number of town hall meetings conducted compared to target.
- Actual number of residents who attend town hall meetings as a percentage of the voting population
- Number of participants in Thoughtexchange process as a percentage of the voting population.
- Number of casual gatherings held, and number of people who attend
- Number of opinion pieces submitted to local print media compared to target
- Number of regularly scheduled radio interviews compared to target
- Number of media originated interviews given
- Number of regularly updated community calendars each year compared to target (weekly)
- On line response to video shorts produced
- Number of visitors for office hours with mayor
- Number of participants to ski/walk with council member

Outcome measures:

- Number of residents active on city committees (increase over previous Council)
- Number of decisions influenced by resident input (changes from draft to final documents as a result of engagement)
- Change in resident opinion regarding the openness/transparency of City Government (as measured through surveys, analysis of social media posts, media stories, etc.)
- Increase in trust of municipal officials (as measured through surveys, analysis of social media posts, media stories, etc.)



Communication Action Plan

Communication Activity	Date	Target/Audience	Supporting Materials Required	Responsibility	Status	Cost
Council Connects Newsletter	Every other month	All community members	Paper newsletter, transitioning to mostly online. Update on council business, news, upcoming items of interest	Mayor, councillors, staff, comm. committee for editing	February	\$2,500 assumes print version 6x per year.
Facebook – Mayor and Councillors	Twice a week	All community members	Interesting things to post; news, events, observations – current and relevant	Mayor and councillors maintain their own pages; committee members help spread info	On going	No cost
City of Rossland Website	As needed	All community members	Knowledge of topics and technical access to update website.	Staff: Stacey Lightbourne	On going	Staff time
Bhubble – Postings and Responding to Discussions	As topics arise	All community members	Knowledge of topic	Mayor and councillors all contribute their perspectives	On going	No cost



Communication Activity	Date	Target/Audience	Supporting Materials Required	Responsibility	Status	Cost
Town Hall Meetings	Quarterly	All community members	Issue specific	Mayor and council	2 nd Quarter	Hosting \$400
Thoughtexchange Process	As needed - at least annually	All community members	Could be aspects of budget; general feedback, issue specific- whatever is needed at the moment.	Mayor/Council/Staff for content. Thoughtexchange for process. Communications Committee for editing	First one is in process	Free initially, may be charge in future
Small casual gatherings – with citizens or local stakeholder groups	Quarterly	All community members	Open topics, hear concerns, share news; build rapport	Mayor and council	1 st Quarter	Hosting \$500
Local Print Media – Rossland News	Monthly	All community members	Summary of current events/issues/ideas	Mayor and council, Communications committee for editing	1 st due Jan 23rd	No cost
Local Online Media – Rossland Telegraph	Monthly	All community members	Summary of current events/issues/ideas	All of council is free to contribute – everyone should write something 4x per year	On going	No cost



Communication Activity	Date	Target/Audience	Supporting Materials Required	Responsibility	Status	Cost
Local Print Media – Trail Daily Times	March 2 nd Every 6 weeks and based on media schedule	All community members	Summary of current events/issues/ideas Include cooperative activities or development between local mayors	Rotates among all of council; communications committee for editing	Upcoming	No cost
Local Radio Media – Goat FM CBC EZRock	Monthly As stories arise	All community members	Summary of current events Comment on specific issues	Mayor or councillors	Jan 13 th - Completed	No cost
Rossland News Community Events Calendar	Weekly	All community members	Dates of significant events	City Staff	On going	Staff time
Online video series	Monthly	Online community / younger audience	Local talent – web / video / audio	Communications Committee	Idea phase	Need estimate
Office Hours with the Mayor	On Request	All community members	Share news or talk about specific issues	Mayor	On going	No cost
Walk/Ski with Mayor or Councillor	On Request	All community members	Share news or talk about specific issues	Mayor or councillor	On going	No cost



Communication Activity	Date	Target/Audience	Supporting Materials Required	Responsibility	Status	Cost
Coffee or Beer Meetings with Citizens	Quarterly	All community members	Hear concerns and share information or news	Mayor or councillor	1 st Quarter	No cost
Table at Farmer's Market	Market Schedule	Community members who attend the market	Hear concerns and share information or news	Mayor and councillors	NEXT: Jan 31 st 2 – 7pm	No cost but need banner
Community Events: Rossland and Other Communities. Winter Carnival, Golden City Days, Canada Day, Parades	As scheduled Rossland Winter Carnival – Jan 2015	All community members and specific event attendees	Build stronger positive relationships with community.	Mayor and council	Winter Carnival: Jan 29-Feb 1	No cost
Engage Other Levels of Government	Meeting MP Atamanenko – Jan 19 th	City of Rossland and other levels of government	Promote Rossland and reach out on issues.	Mayor with council support	Meeting MP Atamenanko Jan 19	No cost
Meet with CBT	Ongoing when possible	CBT/City of Rossland	Build relationship, promote Rossland and advocate for projects	Mayor with council support	Last meeting with CBT CEO Neil Muth on Jan 9th	No cost
Casual meetings with other local governments	Ongoing when possible	Local government colleagues	Build relationship with other municipal governments, discuss common interests, issues	Mayor and councillors	On going	No cost