



Meeting Date: February 3, 2021

Submitted by: Heather Kepran, Communications Specialist, and Tiffany Farrell, Director of Corporate Services

Report No: CPS-03-2021

Subject: Website and Social Media Overview 2020

Recommendation:

THAT Report CPS-03-2021 entitled “Middlesex Centre Website and Social Media Overview, 2020” be received.

Purpose:

To provide Council with an overview of the use of the municipal website and engagement through municipal social media channels in 2020.

Background:

Virtual / online communications through the municipal website, social media channels, and e-newsletter are key elements of our communications with residents, businesses and various stakeholders.

The attached infographic presents a quick overview of the municipality’s online presence in 2020.

- In 2020, the municipal website saw 98,692 visitors.
- Perhaps not surprisingly, the top viewed page on the website was Information on COVID-19, which was viewed 51,780 times.
- Engagement through social media – Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube – continued to expand, with the number of followers on each platform increasing over the year. This engagement was supported by regular posts and sharing of relevant content from other agencies, levels of government, etc.
- Subscribers to the monthly e-newsletter grew throughout 2020, with 977 subscribers at the end of the year.

Highlights - Social Media Content:

- While social media is often thought of as a rather harsh space, the top three posts on the Middlesex Centre Facebook page by way community reaction were about local residents doing great things: Medway student Callum Thompson's using his 3D printer to make face shields; the Boyko family of Kilworth's bottle drive to raise money for the London Health Sciences Foundation COVID-19 response fund; and Scott Moir and Tessa Virtue receiving the Order of Canada. Parks updates, street sweeping, a municipal fire truck tour and links to local take-out options were also popular.
- On Twitter, tweets about COVID-19 updates were among those garnering the most impressions, as were local-focused tweets on Ilderton's Laurie Stanton induction into the Middlesex County Agricultural Hall of Fame and Moir and Virtue's Order of Canada.
- On LinkedIn, which is primarily used to share information about the municipal corporation such as job postings, notice of Mayor DeViet's role on the 2020-2022 AMO Board of Directors, County Caucus, received the most reactions.
- The municipality's YouTube channel saw tremendous growth both in posted content (new videos) and in terms of subscribers. Much of this growth was driven by the move to live-stream council meetings.

Highlights - E-newsletter Content:

- The e-newsletter is a monthly digest of topical and timely news and information. This year, additional "COVID-19 Updates" were published throughout the spring and summer. These updates focussed on the municipal response to COVID-19, and often featured a message from the Mayor.

Analysis:

The municipal website, social media channels, and e-newsletter continue to be effective tools for sharing information about municipal new, services and facilities.

Particularly with fast past of changes in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, having a strong online presence allowed for timely and effective information sharing and the business of the municipality to continue despite office closures and work-at-home orders.

The website:

- provides 24/7 information on municipal news, notices, services and facilities;
- allows residents and businesses to access services including billing changes, fire inspection, and by-law enforcement; to report concerns about roads, parks and facilities; and to provide general feedback by-way of online forms that link directly to staff;

- serves as a launching pad for residents, businesses and various stakeholders looking to access third party sites such as Cloudpermit (building permits) and E-Scribe (council meeting management); and
- acts as a repository for forms, reports and documents of interest to residents and businesses.

Social Media:

- provides a means for the municipality to instantly share news and updates with residents, businesses and various stakeholders, which proved invaluable with the frequent changes to municipal services and facilities in response to COVID-19.
- Of particular note, the Municipality's YouTube channel served as a medium for public viewing of council meetings held virtually.

E-Newsletter:

- The e-newsletter provides an opportunity to share updates to those that do not necessarily engage on social media.
- In 2020, our e-newsletter format allowed us to deliver information on the municipal response to COVID-19 directly to people's email inbox.

Financial Implications:

None. Costs associated with the website and social media outreach are included in the annual budget process.

Strategic Plan:

This matter aligns with following strategic priorities:

- Responsive Municipal Government

Use of the website and social media respond directly to Objective 5.1 – Enhance Customer Service by expanding our digital services. Further, use of the website and social media respond to Objective 5.3 – Foster a culture of innovation, continuous improvement, and cost-effective services by sharing information and gathering input.

Attachments:

Infographic, Middlesex Centre Online 2020