

**BYLAW 22-026
OF
LAC LA BICHE COUNTY**

A BYLAW OF LAC LA BICHE COUNTY IN THE PROVINCE OF ALBERTA TO ESTABLISH A CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS OF COUNCIL TO ENCOURAGE THE HIGHEST STANDARDS OF ETHICAL BEHAVIOUR TO UPHOLD PUBLIC TRUST, INTEGRITY OF EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE, AND ESTABLISH ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS.

WHEREAS, pursuant to section 146.1(1) of the *Municipal Government Act*, a council must, by bylaw, establish a code of conduct governing the conduct of Councillors;

AND WHEREAS, pursuant to section 153 of the *Municipal Government Act*, Councillors have a duty to adhere to the code of conduct established by the council;

AND WHEREAS the public is entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from the members that it elects to council for the Lac La Biche County;

AND WHEREAS the establishment of a code of conduct for members of council is consistent with the principles of transparent and accountable government;

AND WHEREAS a code of conduct ensures that members of council share a common understanding of acceptable conduct extending beyond the legislative provisions governing the conduct of Councillors;

NOW THEREFORE the Council of the Lac La Biche County in the Province of Alberta, duly assembled, enacts as follows:

1. Short Title

1.1. This Bylaw may be referred to as the "Council Code of Conduct Bylaw".

2. Definitions

2.1. In this Bylaw, words have the meanings set out in the Act, except that:

(a) "ABC" means Agencies, Boards and Commissions, which are public sector bodies, as outlined in the *Public Agencies Governance Act*, R.S.A 2009, and associated regulations, as amended;

(b) "Act" means the *Municipal Government Act*, R.S.A. 2000, c. M-26, and associated regulations, as amended;

(c) "Administration" means the administrative and operational arm of the Municipality, comprised of the various departments and business units and including all employees who operate under the leadership and supervision of the Chief Administrative Officer;

- (d) "CAO" means the Chief Administrative Officer of the Municipality, or their delegate;
- (e) "External Meeting" means a meeting outside of an Organizational, Regular, or Special Meeting, as outlined in the *Municipal Government Act*, inclusive of internal or external committee meetings which Members are appointed;
- (f) "FOIP" means the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, R.S.A. 2000, c. F-25, any associated regulations, and any amendments or successor legislation;
- (g) "Complainant" includes any Member of Council, the Chief Administrative Officer or members of the public submitting a complaint
- (h) "Investigator" means the individual, or body retained or otherwise designated by Council to investigate and report on complaints;
- (i) "Member" means a member of Council and includes a councillor or the Mayor;
- (j) "Municipality" means the municipal corporation of the Lac La Biche County;
- (k) "Ward Representative" means an elected official elected to represent a ward as defined in the Ward Boundaries Bylaw, and any amendments thereof.

3. Purpose and Application

- 3.1. The purpose of this Bylaw is to establish standards for the ethical conduct of Members relating to their roles and obligations as representatives of the Municipality and a procedure for the investigation of Complaints and enforcement of those standards.
- 3.2. Each Member agrees to sign the Council Members Code of Conduct Acknowledgement annually as provided in Schedule "A".

4. Representing the Municipality

- 4.1. Members shall:
 - (a) act honestly and, in good faith, serve the welfare and interests of the Municipality as a whole;
 - (b) perform their functions and duties in a conscientious and diligent manner with integrity, accountability and transparency;
 - (c) conduct themselves in a professional manner with dignity and make every effort to participate diligently in the meetings of Council, committees of Council and other bodies to which they are appointed by Council; and
 - (d) arrange their private affairs and conduct themselves in a manner that promotes public confidence and will bear close public scrutiny.

5. Communicating on Behalf of the Municipality

- 5.1. All inquiries from the media regarding the official position related to decisions and resolutions of Council are to be referred to the Mayor, or in absence of the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor.
- 5.2. Matters relating to County operations, are to be referred to the Chief Administrative Officer, or the Chief Administrative Officer delegate.
- 5.3. Notwithstanding section 5.1, a Member may speak to the media as a Ward Representative on ward specific topics/issues, however, the Member will ensure their comments represent the policies and positions of Council as a whole. When possible, the Member should attempt to have the Mayor, or in absence of the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor, join them for media interviews.
- 5.4. Council Members have the right to express their personal opinions, however, in doing so, the Members must ensure that it is not perceived as representing Council's opinion or position on a matter.
- 5.5. No Member shall make a statement when they know that statement is false.
- 5.6. No Member shall make a statement with the intent to mislead Council or members of the public.

6. Respecting the Decision-Making Process

- 6.1. Decision making authority lies with Council, and not with any individual Member. Council may only act by bylaw or resolution passed at a Council meeting held in public at which there is a quorum present. No Member shall, unless authorized by Council, attempt to bind the Municipality or give direction to employees in Administration, agents, contractors, consultants or other service providers or prospective vendors to the Municipality.
- 6.2. Members shall conduct and convey Council business and all their duties in an open and transparent manner other than for those matters which by law are authorized to be dealt with in a confidential manner in a closed session, and are in so doing, allow the public to view the process used to reach decisions.
- 6.3. Members shall accurately communicate the decision of Council, even if they disagree with Council's decision, such that respect for the decision-making processes of Council is fostered.

7. Adherence to Policies, Procedures and Bylaws

- 7.1. Members shall uphold the law established by the Parliament of Canada and the Legislature of Alberta and the bylaws, policies and procedures adopted by Council.
- 7.2. Members shall respect the Municipality as an institution, its bylaws, policies and procedures and shall encourage public respect for the Municipality, its bylaws, policies and procedures.
- 7.3. A Member must not encourage disobedience of any bylaw, policy or procedures of the Municipality in responding to a member of the public, as this undermines public confidence in the Municipality and in the rule of law.

8. Respectful Interactions with Council Members, Staff, the Public and Others

- 8.1. Members shall act in a manner that demonstrates fairness, respect for individual differences and opinions, and an intention to work together for the common good and in furtherance of the public or Municipality's interest.
- 8.2. Members shall treat one another, employees of the Municipality and members of the public with courtesy, dignity and respect and without abuse, bullying or intimidation.
- 8.3. No Member shall use indecent, abusive, or insulting words or expressions toward another Member, any employee of the Municipality or any member of the public.
- 8.4. No Member shall speak in a manner that is discriminatory to any individual based on the person's race, religious beliefs, color, gender, physical disability, mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income, family status or sexual orientation.
- 8.5. Members shall respect the fact that employees in Administration work for the Municipality as a corporate body and are charged with making recommendations that reflect their professional expertise and a corporate perspective and that employees are required to do so without undue influence from any Member or group of Members.
- 8.6. Members and employees of the Municipality may be present at social and community events, and in such situations, both parties must refrain from discussing workplace matters, including the direction of municipal programs and services; however, this does not prevent Members and employees from generally communicating.
- 8.7. Members must not:
 - (a) involve themselves in matters of Administration, which fall within the jurisdiction of the CAO.
 - (b) use, or attempt to use, their authority or influence for the purpose of intimidating, threatening, coercing, commanding or influencing any employee of the Municipality with the intent of interfering in the employee's duties; or
 - (c) maliciously or falsely injure the professional or ethical reputation, or the prospects or practice of employees of the Municipality.

9. Confidential Information

- 9.1. Members must keep in confidence matters discussed in private at a Council or Council committee meeting until the matter is discussed at a meeting held in public.
- 9.2. In the course of their duties, Members may also become privy to confidential information received outside of a "closed session" meeting. Members must not:
 - (a) disclose or release by any means to any member of the public, including the media, any confidential information acquired by virtue of their office, unless the disclosure is required by law or authorized by Council;
 - (b) access or attempt to gain access to confidential information in the custody or control of the

Municipality unless it is necessary for the performance of the Member's duties and is not otherwise prohibited by Council, and only then if the information is acquired through appropriate channels in accordance with applicable Council bylaws and policies;

- (c) use confidential information for personal benefit or for the benefit of any other individual or organization.

9.3. Confidential information includes information in the possession of, or received in confidence by, the Municipality that the Municipality is prohibited from disclosing pursuant to legislation, court order or by contract, or is required to refuse to disclose under FOIP or any other legislation, or any other information that pertains to the business of the Municipality, and is generally considered to be of a confidential nature, including but not limited to information concerning:

- (a) the security of the property of the Municipality;
- (b) a proposed or pending acquisition or disposition of land or other property;
- (c) a tender that has or will be issued but has not been awarded;
- (d) contract negotiations;
- (e) employment and labour relations;
- (f) draft documents and legal instruments, including reports, policies, bylaws and resolutions, that have not been the subject matter of deliberation in a meeting open to the public;
- (g) law enforcement matters;
- (h) litigation or potential litigation, including matters before administrative tribunals; and
- (i) advice that is subject to solicitor-client privilege.

10. Conflicts of Interest

- 10.1. Members have a statutory duty to comply with the pecuniary interest provisions set out in Part 5, Division 6 of the Act and a corresponding duty to vote unless required or permitted to abstain under the Act or another enactment.
- 10.2. Members are to be free from undue influence and not act or appear to act in order to gain financial or other benefits for themselves, family, friends or associates, business or otherwise.
- 10.3. Members shall approach decision-making on matters where the requirements of procedural fairness imposes such an obligation, with an open mind that is capable of persuasion.
- 10.4. It is the individual responsibility of each Member to seek independent legal advice, at the Member's sole expense, with respect to any situation that may result in a pecuniary or other conflict of interest.

11. Improper Use of Influence

- 11.1. No Member shall use the influence of the Member's office for any purpose other than for the exercise of the Member's official duties.
- 11.2. No Member shall act as a paid agent to advocate on behalf of any individual, organization or corporate entity before Council or a committee of Council or any other body established by Council.
- 11.3. Members shall not contact or otherwise attempt to influence members of any adjudicative body regarding any matter before it relating to the Municipality.
- 11.4. Members shall refrain from using their positions to obtain employment with the Municipality for themselves, family members or close associates.
- 11.5. Members are ineligible to apply or be considered for any position of employment with the Municipality while they hold their elected position and for one year after leaving office.

12. Use of Municipal Assets and Services

- 12.1. Members shall use municipal property, equipment, services, supplies and staff resources only for the performance of their duties as a Member.

13. Orientation and Other Training Attendance

- 13.1. Every Member must attend the orientation training offered by the Municipality within 90 days after the Member takes the oath of office.
- 13.2. Every Member must attend all orientation and other training organized at the direction of Council for the benefit of Members throughout the Council term.

14. Remuneration and Expenses

- 14.1 Members are stewards of public resources and shall avoid waste, abuse and extravagance in the use of public resources.
- 14.2 Members shall be transparent and accountable with respect to all expenditures and strictly comply with all municipal bylaws, policies and procedures regarding claims for remuneration and expenses.

15. Gifts and Hospitality

- 15.1 Members shall not accept or give gifts, hospitality or other benefits that would, to a reasonable member of the public, appear to be in gratitude for influence, to induce influence, or otherwise to go beyond the necessary and appropriate public functions involved.
- 15.2 Members of Council are not precluded from accepting:

- (a) rewards, gifts or benefits not connected with the performance or duties of office;
- (b) political contributions that are accepted in accordance with applicable law;
- (c) reasonable quantities of food and beverages at banquets, receptions, ceremonies or similar events;
- (d) services provided without compensation by persons volunteering their time;
- (e) food, lodging, transportation, and entertainment provided by other levels of governments or by other local government, boards or commissions;
- (f) a reimbursement of expenses incurred in the performance of duties or office;
- (g) token gifts such as souvenirs, mementos, and commemorative gifts that are given in recognition of service or for attending an event;
- (h) gifts that are received as an incident of protocol or social obligation that normally and reasonably accompany the responsibility of office.

16. External Meeting Protocols

- 16.1 The County recognizes that Members may be invited to attend External Meetings, outside of Organizational, Regular or Special Council meetings as outlined in the *Municipal Government Act*, including internal or external committees or boards the Member is appointed.
- 16.2 Invitations from the following shall be reserved for Members consideration:
 - Invitations from governance officials (inclusive of indigenous organizations);
 - Invitations from provincial and federal ministers, or Members of the Legislative Assembly, or Members of Parliament;
 - Invitations from Agencies, Boards and Commissions (referred to as the ABC's).
- 16.3 Any Member who receives an External Meeting request, as mentioned in section 16.2, is to direct the request to the Mayor. The Mayor may then:
 - (a) Attend the External Meeting on behalf of Council, or
 - (b) Request that the Deputy Mayor represent Council at the External Meeting, or,
 - (c) Authorize the Member who received the request to act as Council's official representative.
- 16.4 Invitations relating to County Operations are to be forwarded to the Chief Administrative Officer to assign appropriate representation.

17. Election Campaigns

- 17.1 No Member shall use any facilities, equipment, supplies, services, municipal logo or other resources of the Municipality for any election campaign or campaign-related activity.

18. Informal Complaint Process

- 18.1 Any Member who has been advised by a person or has identified or witnessed conduct by a Member (the "Other Member") that the Member reasonably believes in good faith is a

contravention of this Bylaw, may address the prohibited conduct by either one or both of the following,:

- (a) advising the Other Member that the conduct violates this Bylaw and encouraging the Other Member to stop;
- (b) requesting the Mayor to assist in informal discussion of the alleged contravention with the Other Member in an attempt to resolve the issue. In the event that the Mayor is the subject of, or is implicated in an alleged contravention of this Bylaw, the Member may request the assistance of the Deputy Mayor.

18.2 Members are encouraged to pursue this informal complaint procedure as the first means of remedying conduct that they believe violates this Bylaw. However, a Member is not required to complete this informal complaint procedure prior to pursuing the formal complaint procedure outlined below.

19. Formal Complaint Process

19.1 Any person who has identified or witnessed conduct by a Member that the person reasonably believes in good faith is a contravention of this Bylaw, may address the prohibited conduct by submitting a formal complaint. Formal Complaints under this Code of Conduct must be made either:

- (a) by a Member of Council;
- (b) by the Chief Administrative Officer; or
- (c) by a member of the public.

19.2 Formal Complaints shall be considered in accordance with the following procedure:

- (a) All complaints shall be made in writing and shall be dated and signed by an identifiable individual. Written complaints must include the following:
 - (i) the name of the Member alleged to have contravened this Bylaw;
 - (ii) reasonable and probable grounds for the allegation that a Member has contravened this Bylaw, including a detailed description of the facts, as they are known, giving rise to the complaint, including witnesses;
 - (ii) the Complainant's name and contact information
- (b) All complaints shall be forwarded to the Investigator;
- (c) If the complaint is properly under this Bylaw and the facts, as reported, include the name of one or more Members who are alleged to be responsible for the breach of this Bylaw, the Member or Members concerned shall receive a copy of the complaint, redacted if reasonable to do so. Names of complainants and witnesses may be provided to the Member(s) concerned if an investigation proceeds and:

- (i) the investigation cannot be completed without releasing the complainant's name; or
 - (ii) the Member(s) concerned require the names(s) to properly respond to the allegations.
- (d) On receipt of a complaint, the Investigator will complete an initial assessment. Complaints that:
- (i) are not about a current Member;
 - (ii) allege criminal activity;
 - (iii) allege a violation of the *Municipal Government Act* or the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*; or
 - (iv) are more properly covered by other applicable legislative appeal, complaint, or court processes

will be immediately refused and the Complainant will be advised in writing, with reasons, and provided information regarding other forums, if applicable.

- (e) If the Investigator is of the opinion that a complaint is frivolous or vexatious or is not made in good faith, or that there are no grounds or insufficient grounds for conducting an investigation, the Investigator may choose not to investigate or, if already commenced, may terminate any investigation, or may dispose of the complaint in a summary manner. The Complainant and Member(s) shall be advised in writing of any such decision;
- (f) If the Investigator decides to investigate the complaint, all proceedings regarding the investigation shall be confidential;
- (g) Upon completing an investigation of a complaint, the Investigator shall provide a report to Council and the Member, which may include recommendations as to sanctions, if any, to be imposed by Council after consideration of the Investigator's report;
- (h) A Member who is the subject of an investigation shall be afforded procedural fairness, including an opportunity to provide input to the Investigator and to respond to the Investigator's report before Council deliberates and makes any decision or any sanction is imposed;
- (i) The Investigator shall take reasonable steps to conclude any investigation within 60 days of the date upon which a complaint is submitted to the Investigator.

19.2 The Investigator shall, unless Council specifically directs otherwise, be a third party Investigator, identified by Council direction.

20. Compliance and Enforcement

20.1 Members shall uphold the letter and the spirit and intent of this Bylaw.

20.2 Members are expected to co-operate in every way possible in securing compliance with the

application and enforcement of this Bylaw.

20.3 No Member shall:

- (a) undertake any act of reprisal or threaten reprisal against a Complainant or any other person for providing relevant information to the Investigator, Council or to any other person;
- (b) obstruct the Investigator or Council, or any other person, in carrying out the objectives or requirements of this Bylaw.

20.4 Sanctions that may be imposed on a Member, by Council, upon a finding that the Member has breached this Bylaw may include:

- (a) a letter of reprimand addressed to the Member;
- (b) requesting the Member to issue a letter of apology;
- (c) publication of a letter of reprimand or request for apology and the Member's response;
- (d) a requirement to attend training;
- (e) suspension or removal of the appointment of a Member as the Deputy Mayor or acting Mayor under section 152 of the Act;
- (f) suspension or removal of the Mayor's presiding duties under section 154 of the Act;
- (g) suspension or removal from some or all Council committees and bodies to which Council has the right to appoint Members.
- (h) reduction or suspension of remuneration as defined in section 275.1 of the Act corresponding to a reduction in duties, excluding allowances for attendance at council meetings;
- (i) any other sanction Council deems reasonable and appropriate in the circumstances provided that the sanction does not prevent a Member from fulfilling the legislated duties of a councillor and the sanction is not contrary to the Act.

20.5 Once Council has received and considered the Investigator's report, it will be reviewed in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and will be posted, to the extent possible, on the County's website.

21. Review

21.1 This Bylaw shall be brought forward for review at the beginning of each term of Council, when relevant legislation is amended, and at any other time that Council considers appropriate to ensure that it remains current and continues to accurately reflect the standards of ethical conduct expected of Members.

22. Effective Date

22.1. This Bylaw will come into force and effect upon the date of final readings and signing thereof.

23. Repeal

23.1 This Bylaw repeals Bylaw 19-019.

THAT BYLAW 22-026 BE GIVEN FIRST READING THIS 27th DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2022.

THAT BYLAW 22-026 BE GIVEN SECOND READING THIS 27th DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2022.

THAT BYLAW 22-026 BE GIVEN THIRD AND FINAL READING THIS 4th DAY OF OCTOBER, 2022.

"Original Signed"

Mayor

"Original Signed"

Chief Administrative Officer

Bylaw 22-026
SCHEDULE "A"

Council Members' Code of Conduct

Statement of Acknowledgement

I, _____, acknowledge that I understand and support the standards of conduct outlined in the Lac La Biche County Council Code of Conduct Bylaw.

Signed this _____ day of _____, 20_____.

Signature of Council Member

Signature of Chief Administrative Officer