

## **Social Media Policy/Guidelines Report**

**Purpose:** This research was completed to help develop policy and guidelines for County employee social media usage. It is meant to define expectations and ensure appropriate use. This research includes legislative body social media policies and observing those bodies social media accounts.

**Importance:** Social media has become an integral way in which people communicate with each other. It will be beneficial for the Dane County government to update to these new social standards of communicating. Social media can be used to further the county's goals, enhance collaboration, foster productivity. However, there are risks involved, and this research works to mitigate those risks.

### **Findings:**

The Facebook and Twitter pages of Kenosha County, Marin County, Rock County, Dunn County, the City of Janesville, the National Counties Association, and the Wisconsin Counties Association were examined.

### **Policy/guidelines**

The social media policies researched included many similarities across policies. They are listed below.

### **Best practices**

- Social media posts need to be archived in the event of an open records request. Everything posted by a government body on social media is subject to an open records request. It can be done manually or an archive system can be purchased, although use of an archive system is recommended.
- The social media policy must be posted on the county website so that it can be referred to by social media users. It should also be posted on all the county's social media pages.
- Use of all social media platforms must adhere to state, federal and local laws.
- All accounts must be approved.
- When an admin leaves the job, they have to surrender all login information.
- Users should be aware that what they post is subject to public disclosure in the case of an open records request. This should be posted along with social media policy on sites unless it is included.
- All social media moderators should be trained. Some legislative bodies provided forms for trained employees to sign off.
- Use of county social media platforms should be professional in nature.
- Be upfront and honest about any necessary corrections and apologize.
- Whenever probable, content posted on social media should also be posted on the county's website.
- Content should be accessible to all residents. Caption videos and photos. Content should be available in other ways, such as PDFs, if necessary.

- A link to the county website and phone number should be posted on all social media accounts.
- Include links when posting about resolutions, law or policy, or link back to website for more in-depth information.
- Admins must be approved by social media coordinator/head admin.
- Authorized users are responsible for upkeep and maintaining social media sites.
- Accounts shall be created using an official county email account. Furthermore, official county email accounts shall not be used to create personal social media accounts.
- The official county logo must be displayed. The logo should not be used for non-county related purposes.
- Social media platforms are a moderated online discussion not a public forum.
- If any content is borrowed, it should be credited to the original creator.
- Some legislative bodies provide social media request forms for creating a new account.
- Social media use should comply with county administrative policies and procedures already in place.
- Private messages on social media are considered public record.

Some comments received may be inappropriate. When removing these comments, the commenter shall receive a message explaining why their comment was removed. If the commenter violates the social media policy again, they shall receive a message again and be blocked. If the comments are rants, a joke, or satirical in nature, monitor them rather than respond. If there are erroneous facts in the post, they may be corrected or guided to relevant information. If the user is commenting out of a negative experience, it may be rectified using appropriate means.

Some commenters may be looking for more information. If so, the admin may respond to their comments directing them towards the information they seek.

When responding to comments, respond in a way that positively reflects Dane County.

### **What not to do**

- Under the HATCH Act, the county may not endorse political candidates or express political views.
- Pictures of minors cannot be posted online without parental or guardian consent.
- Pictures of individuals may not be posted online unless it was taken at a public event.
- Content and comments containing the following shall not be allowed and are subject to removal:
  - Non-topically related content
  - Profane language or content
  - Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation

- Sexual content or links to sexual content
- Solicitations of commerce
- Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity
- Content that may compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems
- Content that violates legal ownership interest of any other party
- External links constituting official endorsement or representative views on behalf of the County, or
- Content promoting political purposes, a political candidate, or party
- Content promoting or endorsing any religion religious organization
- Content regarding or relating to any private commercial transactions or engagement in private business activities
- Other non-topically related content outside the limited public forum established to discuss County issues, operations and services

**Content to post/share**

Most of the legislative bodies researched have a Facebook account, some have a Twitter, and very few have a LinkedIn. The purposes for all three are outlined below. None of the legislative bodies researched had an Instagram account, which is primarily used for sharing images.

Facebook and Twitter are both used to update county residents. Most of the content posted/shared on the county’s Facebook was also shared to its Twitter. However, Twitter is generally used more for updates and announcements due to the limited number of characters that can be used to write a post (up to 140). The counties that use LinkedIn post job announcements, which are also posted on its Facebook and Twitter.

The frequency of use for Facebook and Twitter was almost daily or multiple posts a day. Most posts included photos, and only didn’t when there was an attachment.

In order to better make sense of the legislative bodies posts, items are divided into four categories below.

Category	Items	Examples
Updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Updates on current projects</li> <li>● Announce new projects</li> <li>● Announce budget, investment</li> <li>● Press releases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Weather awareness: road closures, storm snowfall forecast, etc.</li> <li>● A new release on a new county clerk, including quotes</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Partnerships/collaborations</li> <li>● Office and road closures</li> <li>● Weather advisories</li> <li>● New appointees</li> <li>● Changes in legislation</li> <li>● Retirees/resignees</li> </ul>	<p>made upon the acceptance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Developments in affordable housing.</li> <li>● Developments in equity policy.</li> </ul>
<p>Events</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Meetings</li> <li>● Community events</li> <li>● County sponsored events</li> <li>● Annual activities</li> <li>● Training workshops</li> <li>● Webinars</li> <li>● Meetings can be streamed through Facebook Live, or include viewing link</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Thanking a speaker for speaking and presenting information at an event.</li> <li>● Upcoming elections and necessary information.</li> </ul>
<p>Who We Are</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Feature supervisors</li> <li>● Feature committees and their work or purpose</li> <li>● How chairs are selected</li> <li>● How task forces are created</li> <li>● Budget process</li> <li>● Share information from county departments that are currently important/relevant</li> <li>● Humanize the board. Example: posting pictures from potlucks and events.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A post shared from a council that held a meeting involving community members. The post's pictures show the community members participating in activities.</li> <li>● Awards received and what it means.</li> <li>● Promoting programs, such as Youth in Governance.</li> <li>● New partnerships, for example a partnership with an organization that works to reduce water pollutants.</li> <li>● Highlight training and workshops. For example, a LGBTQ Community</li> </ul>

		<p>Awareness training for local law enforcement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing a post from the sheriff's office introducing new deputies.</li> </ul>
<p>Other Information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special guests at meetings</li> <li>• Promoting parks</li> <li>• Information relevant to that time of year. Example: how to cope with grief during the holidays</li> <li>• Observances/appreciation days</li> <li>• Public safety and health tips</li> <li>• Election information</li> <li>• Relevant news articles</li> <li>• Highlight different issues, such as flooding, mental health, sustainability, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AARP flyer for tax preparation.</li> <li>• A chart to identify the flu, cold and whooping cough, shared from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services.</li> <li>• Job openings.</li> <li>• Radon Action Month, includes information on how to protect yourself and test the home.</li> <li>• Thank an organization for a donation, in this case Fleet Farm donated ice fishing equipment to the Department of Human Services youth mentoring program.</li> <li>• Press release from the sheriff's office regarding train derailment.</li> <li>• Flyer for a job fair.</li> <li>• Thanking local law enforcement on Law Enforcement Appreciation Day (Jan. 9).</li> <li>• Flyer for National Blood Donor Month emphasizing</li> </ul>

		<p>importance and need for donations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Information on the census.</li> <li>● Tips and resources for coping with grief during the holidays.</li> <li>● Benefits of renewable power sources.</li> <li>● Scam alerts.</li> <li>● Volunteer opportunities.</li> </ul>
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Departments or individuals may be tagged in a post, although this did not seem common. When tagging employees or individuals, tag their professional account.

Here are some example posts taken from other county’s Facebook and Twitter accounts, respectively. A lot of the posts relate to public safety, but others relate to promoting or explaining county items.

**Definitions**

The following is a list of definitions of words that may be used in writing a social media policy. They are taken from dictionary.com and legislative body policies. They may need to be tailored to our county’s purposes and needs.

Social media	Websites and other online means of communication that are used by large groups of people to share information and to develop social and professional contacts. This policy covers all social media tools, both current and future.
Facebook	Brand and name of a social media website and service, found at Facebook.com.
Twitter	Brand name of a social media website and service, found at Twitter.com.
Official county email account	Email account provided by a department mail system or approved external mailbox that is used for official county business.

<p>Approved county social networking site</p>	<p>Social networks the County Administrator’s Office and Information Services and Technology Department have assessed and approved for use by County departments.</p>
<p>Post</p>	<p>Any email, message, picture, graphic, image, advertisement, notification, feed, stream, transmission, broadcast, podcast, video, instant message, text message, blog, microblog, status update, wall post, comment, and any and all other forms, means, or attempts at collaboration or communication that is uploaded, posted to, or otherwise displayed on or transmitted by, any social media account or network.</p>
<p>Comment</p>	<p>A user submitted response to a post.</p>
<p>Spam</p>	<p>Unsolicited bulk messages, especially advertising, indiscriminately sent to any number of recipients.</p>
<p>Record</p>	<p>Any material on which written, drawn, printed, spoken, visual, or electromagnetic information or electronically generated or stored data is recorded or preserved, regardless of physical form or characteristics, which has been created or is being kept by an authority. Must be created or kept in connection with official purpose or function of the agency. Content determines whether a document is a “record,” not medium, format, or location. Not everything a public official or employee creates is a public record.</p>
<p>Requester</p>	<p>Generally, any person who requests inspection or a copy of a record.</p>
<p>Authorized user</p>	<p>Any employee, and all persons acting on their behalf, who has been authorized by their Department/Division/Office Director to establish, create, edit, or maintain any social media account and the posts it may contain in the transaction of official business of the County.</p>

Content	Including, but not limited to: comments, text, graphics, video, icons, images, and avatars.
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### **Boosting and promoting posts**

On Facebook, there is an option to ‘boost’ a post. This option essentially turns a post into an ad in an attempt to increase reach and therefore increase following and likes. It will appear in a user’s newsfeed with the word ‘sponsored’ on it so the user is aware that it is an ad. It is unclear if other legislative bodies do this because an ad doesn’t appear in the feed of the booster. However, this feature was created for and is tailored to businesses. Furthermore, there are limited targeting options, meaning only a certain audience may see the post. The booster doesn’t have control over ad placement. Cost depends on people reached and how many days the ad runs.

### **Schedule of posts**

January	Annual report	Martin Luther King Jr. Day (1/15), Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month, National Mentoring Month
February		Black History Month, American Heart Month, National Bird-Feeding Month, Abraham Lincoln Day (2/12), Susan B. Anthony Day (2/15), George Washington Day (2/22), Ash Wednesday
March		Irish-American Heritage Month, Women’s History Month, International Women’s Day (3/8), Youth Art Month, Casimir Pulaski Day (3/4), “The Great Hunger” in Ireland (3/17)
April	Election information, legislative agenda	Work zone awareness week, Arab American Heritage Month, Autism Awareness



		<p>Month, National Child Abuse Prevention Month, Sexual Assault Awareness Month, Prisoners of War Remembrance Day (4/9), American's Creed Day (4/13), Patriots' Day (4/19), Environmental Awareness Day (4/22), Earth Day (4/22), Arbor Day (4/24), Good Friday, Passover, Maundy Thursday</p>
May		<p>Memorial Day (5/27), EMS week, Asian Pacific American Heritage Month, Mental Health Awareness Month, National Bike Month, National Foster Care Month, World AIDS Vaccine Day (5/18), Eid-al-Fitr (changes yearly)</p>
June		<p>LGBT Pride Month, Robert La Follette Sr. Day (6/14)</p>
July		<p>Independence Day, Eid-al-Adha (changes yearly)</p>
August		
September		<p>Labor Day (9/2), National Hispanic Heritage Month, National Preparedness Month, Mildred Fish Harnack Day (9/16), U.S. Constitution Day (9/17), Wisconsin Day (9/18), POW-MIA Recognition Day (Friday of third week), Bullying Awareness Day (9/25), Frances Willard Day</p>

		(9/28), Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur
October	Budget information	German-American Day (10/6), Leif Erickson Day (10/9), Christopher Columbus Day (10/12), Filipino American History Month, Italian-American Heritage and Culture Month, National Bullying Prevention Month, Polish American Heritage Month, National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, Sukkot (changes yearly)
November	Budget information, winter safety tips	Native American Indian/Alaska Native Heritage Month, Veterans Day (11/11), Thanksgiving Day (11/28)
December	Winter safety tips	World Aids Day (12/1), Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Hanukkah

\*Include Board meetings.

**Takeaways**

- Having a schedule makes sure everyone is on the same page
  - Press releases are posted as soon as they come out, so this is the only thing that isn't part of the schedule
- Using the scheduling tool on Facebook has been effective, it ensures the posts are not forgotten and can be completed at one time (excluding shared posts as they cannot be scheduled).
- Since posting more, we have more traffic on our page. Especially during the weeks we post every day. (To see this you have to look at the page analytics, because we don't have a lot of people interacting with our posts)
- We haven't interacted with any comments, which isn't always necessary, but maybe we should figure out when we think it's necessary and appropriate to respond to comments. There have been many comments as of late about COVID-19, and maybe not responding<sup>[KL1]</sup> to our constituents concerns doesn't always reflect well on us? Especially if they ask for more information or spread false information.

- Our page gets the most views/interaction between 6 A.M. and 6 P.M., but I have been posting things anywhere between noon and 5 P.M. (sometimes I forget to do it earlier, but I also don't know what the "perfect" time is)

## **References:**

Social media policy taken from Kenosha County's Facebook page (Note: it was removed):

This page is not monitored 24/7. The purpose of this site is to present matters of public interest in Kenosha County, including information regarding its many residents, businesses and visitors. We encourage you to submit comments, but be advised this is not an open public forum. Once posted, the County reserves the right, but assumes no obligation to delete submissions that are illegal, obscene, defamatory, threatening, invade privacy, or which are considered to be offensive to anyone or may infringe upon the intellectual property or copy rights of others. The County does not necessarily review all posted comments on a regular basis. Furthermore the County reserves the right to delete any comment for any reason and will immediately delete any comments that include: spam or links to other sites; are clearly off topic; advocate illegal or illicit activity; promote particular products, services or vendors; infringe on copyrights or trademarks; or advocate for a particular political organization, party, candidate or point of view; or contain threats, propane or discriminatory language or other confidential, obscene or repetitive information. Comments expressed on this site do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Kenosha County or its employees. The County takes no responsibility nor assumes any liability for any content posted on this site. Please contact the site administrator for assistance with a comment you believe violates the above policy.

# Should I Respond Online to Comments Posted on a Marin County Social Media Site?

## ASSESSMENT

**COMMENT POSTED**  
Is it positive or balanced?

Yes

No

**CONTACT INFORMATION**  
County Administrator's Office  
cao-socialmedia@marincounty.org  
415 473 6505 T

## EVALUATE

**CONCURRENCE**  
A factual and well cited response, which may agree or disagree with the post, yet is not negative.  
You can concur with the post, let stand or provide a positive review.  
Do you want to respond?

No

Yes

**LET STAND**  
Let the post stand -- no response.

**"TROLLS"**  
Does the comment violate policy?

Yes

Remove comment from site and archive. Warn user.

No

**"RAGER"**  
Is the comment a rant, rage, joke or satirical in nature?

Yes

**MONITOR ONLY**  
Avoid responding to specific posts, monitor the site for relevant information and comments.

No

**"MISGUIDED"**  
Are there erroneous facts in the posting?

Yes

**FIX THE FACTS**  
Do you wish to respond with factual information? (See Response Considerations)

No

**"UNHAPPY CUSTOMER"**  
Is the posting a result of a negative experience?

Yes

**RESTORATION**  
Do you wish to rectify the situation and act upon a reasonable solution? (See Response Considerations)

No

## RESPOND

**SHARE SUCCESS**  
Do you wish to proactively share the County's perspective? (See Response Considerations)

Yes

**FINAL EVALUATION**  
Write response for current circumstances only. Will you respond?

Yes

## RESPONSE CONSIDERATIONS

**TRANSPARENCY**  
Disclose your County connection.

**CITE YOUR SOURCES**  
Provide a link, where possible, when you make a reference to a law, regulation, policy or other website.

**RESPECT YOUR TIME**  
Do not spend more time than the response is worth.

**TONE**  
Respond in a tone that reflects positively on Marin County.

Yes