



## **Weber County Policy \_\_\_\_\_**

### **Governing Social Media Use**

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#### **I. Purpose**

Weber County (“County”) has an overriding interest and expectation in deciding what is spoken on behalf of the County through the use of social media. The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for the use of social media by County employees, contractors, and volunteers to ensure responsible and effective communication with the public while protecting the County's reputation and legal interests.

#### **II. Scope**

This policy applies to all County employees, contractors, consultants, elected officials, department heads, and volunteers (“Personnel”) who use social media on behalf of the County or in relation to their work for the County.

This policy does not apply to purely personal social media accounts owned or controlled by County Personnel including an elected county official in his or her personal and private capacity, nor does it apply to any campaign election or re-election account owned and controlled by a campaign election or reelection committee or person campaigning for public office.

#### **III. Definitions**

- A. “Authorized Personnel” are Personnel who have been authorized and directed to manage a department or office’s social media account.
- B. “Content” means comments, photos, links, or other material that is posted or otherwise shared on County social media sites.
- C. “County” means Weber County, its elected officials and other departments, divisions, committees, commissions, and boards.
- D. “Personnel” includes all County employees, contractors, consultants, elected officials, department heads, and volunteers.
- E. “Social Media” is an umbrella term that defines the various activities that integrate technology, social interaction, and content creation. Through social media, individuals or collaborations of individuals can create web content, organize content, edit, or comment on content, combine content, and share content. Social media

## **Weber County Policy \_\_\_\_\_: Governing Social Media Use**

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services use many technologies and forms, including but not limited to RSS and other syndicated web feeds, blogs, wikis, photo sharing, video sharing, podcasting, social bookmarking, mashups, widgets, virtual worlds, and micro-blogs.

- F. “Takeover” occurs when an Authorized Personnel allows a social media influencer or other popular or influential person to post to County social media sites for a limited period of time (typically for a 24-hour period or less).
- G. “Terms” means the Social Media Terms of Use found in this policy.
- H. “User” means a member of the public or Personnel acting in their personal capacity who accesses or uses a social media account owned or controlled by the County.

### **IV. Policy**

- A. **Official Accounts:** All County social media accounts must be approved by the County Commission, department head, or elected official who is over the department or office that creates the account.
- B. **Management and Control:** County social media accounts shall be managed by the department or office that created them. It is the responsibility of the managing department or office to designate an individual to manage the department or office’s social media accounts (“Authorized Personnel”) and to ensure that unauthorized persons are not allowed to make changes to the social media accounts.
- C. **County Public Relations Manager:** The County Public Relations Manager shall be notified within two weeks whenever there is a change in Authorized Personnel. Authorized Personnel may collaborate with the County Public Relations Manager in creating Content and managing their social media sites.

The County Public Relations Manager may monitor the Content on each County social media site to ensure a consistent countywide message is being conveyed and adherence to this Social Media Policy. The County Public Relations Manager may request that departments and offices modify social media Content based on County policy, best practices, and industry norms.

- D. **Conduct of Authorized Personnel:** Authorized Personnel must adhere to the following:

## **Weber County Policy \_\_\_\_\_: Governing Social Media Use**

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1. **Conduct:** Authorized Personnel are expected to communicate at all times in a manner consistent with the County's standards of conduct and professionalism. This includes being respectful, truthful, and professional in all online interactions.
  2. **Confidentiality:** County Personnel must maintain the confidentiality of sensitive or proprietary information related to the County, its operations, and its Personnel. Personnel must respect the privacy of other individuals and entities when using social media and must not post personal information about others without their consent.
  3. **Endorsements:** Personnel must not endorse or promote any product, service, or political candidate on behalf of the County on County social media sites unless endorsement or promotion of the product or service is authorized by a signed sponsorship agreement, vendor agreement, or venue use agreement.
  4. **Compliance with Laws:** Personnel must comply with all applicable laws, regulations, and policies when using social media, including but not limited to copyright laws, data privacy laws, the County's records retention policy, IT policies, and Human Resource conduct policies.
  5. **Disabling Comments:** Any time prior to the public making comments on a post, Authorized Personnel may choose to disable comments for that post.
  6. **Third-Party Control:** Authorized Personnel may allow volunteers to stream live events on YouTube or other streaming services or allow for a temporary Takeover of the account. Authorized Personnel are responsible to ensure that content streamed or posted to the County's social media sites is in compliance with this and other County policies.
- E. **Personal Accounts:** Personnel may have personal social media accounts, but they must not make statements on behalf of the County, their department, or office on their personal accounts. Personal accounts must not contain confidential or proprietary information or violate the County's Human Resource policies or standards of conduct.

## **Weber County Policy \_\_\_\_\_: Governing Social Media Use**

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- F. **Information Technology:** County IT Policies shall apply to all County social media accounts.
- G. **Training:** The County Public Relations Manager shall provide training to new Authorized Personnel within 30 days of their being assigned responsibilities over a County social media site and shall provide ongoing training on an annual basis.
- H. **Limited Public Forum:** County social media sites shall be limited public forums. Content from the public may be allowed on County social media sites in the comment section of County posts; however, Content may be monitored to ensure the Content stays on topic, furthers the sponsoring department's or office's mission, and otherwise complies with County policy. Content that violates the law or County policies may be removed.
- I. **Appropriate Public Use:** The County promotes healthy public discourse and will tolerate a level of decorum that is conducive to orderly government processes. The County does not discriminate based on viewpoint, nor because a comment is posted anonymously or expresses disagreement with County action, policy, custom, or practice. Any such Content will not be flagged, minimized or removed and no user blocked so long as the Content does not violate the law or the Social Media Terms of Use.
- J. **Prohibited Public Use:** The Social Media Terms of Use included in this policy outline the standards that public users must follow when posting Content on County owned and controlled social media sites. If a public user's posted Content violates the standards outlined in the Social Media Terms of Use, the County may remove the offending Content and may block the user.
- K. **Removing a Post or Blocking a Public User:**
  - 1. When a public user has violated the Social Media Terms of Use, Authorized Personnel will attempt to contact the social media user through direct messaging or other available means, describe the violation, and request voluntary removal or edit of the Content.
  - 2. If the user cannot be contacted or fails to voluntarily remove or edit the Content within 24 hours, the Authorized Personnel may minimize, hide, or delete the Content.

## **Weber County Policy \_\_\_\_\_: Governing Social Media Use**

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3. Before hiding or deleting Content, Authorized Personnel must make a copy for County records (i.e., taking a photograph, taking a screen shot, printing, etc.).
  4. If a public user repeatedly violates the Social Media Terms of Use, or if the initial violation is deemed egregious, Authorized Personnel may block the user and immediately hide or delete the Content.
  5. If Content is hidden or deleted or a user is blocked, Authorized Personnel must attempt to notify the public user through a direct message or other available means that the user may appeal the decision by sending an email within five business days to the pertinent elected official or department who controls the social media account. Upon timely appeal, Content may be restored for public view or a public user's access may be restored upon a determination that the Content does not violate the law or the Social Media Terms of the Use.
  6. A public user whose access has been blocked may, after a period of one year after the user was blocked, submit a written request to the elected official or department who owns or controls the pertinent social media account, to unblock the user.
  7. Authorized Personnel may use Facebook Moderation Assist as a tool to decrease bot and spam activity on County Social Media Accounts. Users who are wrongfully blocked by Facebook Moderation Assist should notify the County, and the Authorized Personnel shall enable comments from the Users.
- L. **Disclaimer:** Public users or visitors to County owned and controlled social media sites should be aware that the intended purpose of County social media accounts is to serve as a means of communication between the County and members of the public. The County disclaims responsibility for Content posted to its social media sites.
- M. **Enforcement:** Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or contract, as well as legal action if warranted. Complaints or concerns related to social media use should be reported to the office or department that manages the social media account complained of.

## **Weber County Policy \_\_\_\_\_: Governing Social Media Use**

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- N. **Public Records:** Social media accounts owned or controlled by the County, including any personal social media account used by County Personnel or an elected official to conduct County business, constitute public records subject to the Utah Government Records Access and Management Act (“GRAMA”). Any Content placed or maintained on a social media site constitutes public records.
- O. **Review:** This policy will be reviewed and updated as needed by the Board of Weber County Commissioners in consultation with legal counsel and other relevant departments.
- P. **Links to County Website:** All County social media sites must, whenever feasible, include a link to the official County website for original Content, forms, documents, and other information. Sites must also, whenever feasible, prominently display County agency contact information and the County, department, or office logo.
- Q. **Verification:** Where allowed and practicable, County social media sites shall receive verification from the approved social media service.
- R. **Elected Officials:** County social media accounts associated with elected offices should be maintained by the incumbent during their term of office and are to be transitioned to successors in office consistent with policy and applicable law.
- S. **Social Media Terms of Use:**
1. An individual who accesses or uses a social media account owned or controlled by the County (“User”) accepts, without limitation, the following terms of use (“Terms”). The County maintains the right to modify these Terms without notice. Any change is effective upon posting.
  2. A User is also subject to any terms of use of the social media platform provider, over whose terms of use, Content, commercial advertisements or other postings, the County has no control.
  3. Posted Content (comments, photos, links, or other material) must relate to discussion of County programs, services, projects, issues, events, or activities. Content posted on County social media accounts by a User will not be edited by the County. The County reserves the right to hide or

## **Weber County Policy \_\_\_\_\_: Governing Social Media Use**

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remove Content that does not relate to the County business, including but not limited to, Content that:

- a. Promote, foster, or perpetuate discrimination based on race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, national origin, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or other form of discrimination as defined by state or federal law or County ordinance;
  - b. Use slanderous, or defamatory attacks;
  - c. Threaten, harass, or use foul or profane language;
  - d. Encourage or condone illegal conduct or activity;
  - e. Use obscene or sexual content, or include links to obscene sexual content, including indecent or pornographic material;
  - f. Disclose private, protected, or confidential material as defined by state, federal law, or County ordinance;
  - g. Compromise public health or safety, or the health, safety, and security of public systems;
  - h. Advertise, promote, or solicit any service or products;
  - i. Use spam, including links to external online sites;
  - j. Violate a legal ownership interest of any person, including improper use of trademark or copyrighted material;
  - k. Contain multiple off-topic posts by a single User;
  - l. Contain repetitive posts copied and pasted by multiple Users;
  - m. Promote or oppose the candidacy of any person, petition, or referendum; and
  - n. Are repetitively disruptive.
4. Content posted by a public user is the opinion of the User and does not necessarily reflect the opinion or policy of the County.
  5. Content posted online - to the extent it does not contain information that discloses private, protected, or confidential material in violation of these Terms - are considered a public record subject to public disclosure under GRAMA.
  6. Content made on a social media site does not constitute a legal or official notice or comment to the County and will not be regarded as a request for service or official notice.

## **Weber County Policy \_\_\_\_\_: Governing Social Media Use**

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7. Content posted online and that requests a copy or copies of public records will not be considered or answered. Public records requests should be made in accordance with GRAMA.
8. A social media account owned or controlled by the County may contain links to websites that are not owned or controlled by the County. The County is not responsible for Content that appears on those websites and may provide links as a convenience only.
9. The County reserves the right to hide, remove, mute, or delete information posted by a User that violates these Terms, or to report to a Provider any User whose conduct may constitute a violation of the Provider's terms of use. Repeated or egregious violations of these Terms may result in denial of access to the particular social media account.
10. The County does not guarantee that Content on County social media sites are monitored regularly; thus, Users should not use such an account to contact or provide notice to the County of dangerous conditions on public property. If a dangerous condition exists, contact the appropriate law enforcement department, the fire department, public utilities, or other relevant department.
11. The County does not guarantee the completeness or accuracy of any information posted on a social media account or site. Information posted by the County is provided on an "as is" basis and the User assumes the risk of use or reliance on such information.
12. Neither the County, nor its elected officials, or other departments, divisions, committees, commissions, or boards are liable for any injury or damages resulting from viewing, distributing, or copying materials on this account, including without limitation, liability for indirect, special, incidental, or consequential damages.