

**CITY OF MONROE
RESOLUTION NO. 2024-023**

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF
MONROE, WASHINGTON, ADOPTING THE SOCIAL MEDIA
POLICY

WHEREAS, the City of Monroe recognizes the importance of social media channels for engaging with the community, sharing information, and promoting transparency; and

WHEREAS, the use of social media by public agencies must comply with legal standards, including the First Amendment, public records laws, the Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA), and accessibility laws, while minimizing risks such as unauthorized disclosures, discrimination, and damage to the City's reputation; and

WHEREAS, the City is committed to maintaining the integrity of its social media channels and ensuring staff follow best practices and legal requirements to protect the City's mission and public trust; and

WHEREAS, the social media policy establishes clear guidelines specifically governing the management and content of the City's official social media channels.

NOW, THEREFORE, THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MONROE, WASHINGTON, HEREBY RESOLVES AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. Adoption of the Social Media Policy. The Social Media Policy establishes guidelines for the operation and management of the City's official social media channels, as defined within the policy. The policy includes provisions on authorized use, content management, security protocols, and legal compliance. The policy, attached hereto as Exhibit A and incorporated herein by reference as if set forth in full, is hereby approved.

Section 2. Effective Date. This resolution shall take effect immediately upon passage.

ADOPTED by the City Council of the City of Monroe, at its regular meeting thereof, and APPROVED by the Mayor this 10th day of December, 2024.

Resolution No. 2024-023
Approved: 12/10/2024
Effective: 12/10/2024

ATTEST:


Jodi Wycoff (Dec 11, 2024 12:20 PST)

Jodi Wycoff, City Clerk

CITY OF MONROE, WASHINGTON:


Geoffrey Thomas (Dec 11, 2024 11:50 PST)

Geoffrey Thomas, Mayor

APPROVED AS TO FORM:


Zach Leil (Dec 11, 2024 10:26 PST)

J. Zachary Leil, City Attorney



EXHIBIT A

**Administrative Policy
Social Media Policy
(Staff)
Operational**

Policy Record

Approval Date	Effective Date	Resolution No. 2024-023
12/10/2024	12/10/2024	

Last Review: N/A	Policy Number: 2024-023
Next review:	Replaces:
	Superseded By:
Official Responsible for Review: Human Resources Director	

Related Procedures

- City of Monroe Elected Officials Social Media Policy (2015-01)
- City of Monroe Media Relations Policy (2023-001)
- City of Monroe Website Policy
- City of Monroe Public Records Act (PRA) Policy (Resolution 007/2019)
- City of Monroe Electronic Media Policy (HR2014-001)
- City of Monroe Brand Style Guide
- Washington Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA), RCW 42.30
- Use of public office or agency facilities in campaigns-prohibition - exceptions, RCW 42.17A.555

Policy Statement

The City of Monroe has an interest in engaging and informing its community partners using traditional and social media communications outlets. The City understands that social media can be an effective way to share information, participate in interactive discussions and enhance its transparency of decision-making and policy implementation. However, public agencies, like the City of Monroe, are required to adhere to laws and standards when communicating through social media that may not apply to private sector social media use. Such laws and standards include, but are not limited to, First Amendment rights, public records requirements, the Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA), and accessibility laws.

The use of social media by the City and its employees should be undertaken in a manner that complies fully with applicable legal standards and that minimizes the potential for unauthorized disclosure of confidential information, exposure to discrimination and harassment claims, and activity detrimental to the City’s mission and functions. This policy is designed to address these issues while establishing a framework for effective use of social media for city communications. Effective management of city-maintained social media accounts establishes and sustains the City as a trusted source of city information, especially in an emergency or disaster.

Scope

To assist in making responsible decisions about the use of social media, the City has established these guidelines which apply to all City of Monroe staff. A separate policy exists for Monroe's elected officials (2015-01).

Purpose; Construction

The purpose of this policy is to establish clear and concise guidelines for the use of the City of Monroe's social media channels, the use of social media for business purposes, and the personal use of social media by city staff.

This policy is established as a discretionary undertaking of the City. This policy may be amended or terminated at any time in the City's sole discretion, subject to any collective bargaining rights employees may have under the law. Nothing in this policy is intended to vest any right of enforcement or cause of action in any third parties. The City expressly reserves all rights.

This policy shall be reasonably construed and administered in a manner consistent with applicable federal and state law, including without limitation applicable First Amendment standards.

Definitions

Blocking refers to the act of using the tools of a social media platform to prevent a specific site visitor from interacting with a city-sanctioned social media site.

Blogs are regularly updated website articles or web pages written in a less formal or more conversational style than a news release.

Chat is a feature that allows instant messages to be sent through the platform.

City staff is defined as regular and temporary employees of the City of Monroe and city-sanctioned volunteers, interns and contractors.

City Departments include Community Development, Executive, Finance, Parks and Recreation, Police, Public Works, City Clerk/Records' Office, Human Resources, and Information Technology, as well as any other department that may be established by the city in the future.

Comment is a message posted by site visitors, either in response to an existing topic or introducing a new topic. In general, the content of comments is controlled by the user, but a comment can be deleted, accepted, filtered, hidden, rejected, or reported prior to or after publishing by the site or page administrator.

Content refers to any posts, writings, material, documents, photographs, graphics, video, links, or other information that is created, posted, distributed, or transmitted via social media.

Connections is a deliberate link between a user and a social media channel or page, whether it is initiated by the individual user or by the site manager. Terms used by various sites to describe a connection include fan, follower, or subscriber.

Deleting a comment is the act of permanently removing a comment posted by a site visitor. The comment will no longer be visible to the site visitor who posted on the site, people connected to that site visitor, or other site visitors.

Filtering comments refers to using the tools of a social media platform to automatically hide comments based on specific criteria so that comments can be reviewed before they are visible on a social media site.

Hashtag is a word or phrase preceded by a hash sign (#), used on social media sites and applications, to identify digital content on a specific topic.

Hiding a comment refers to the option provided by some social media platforms to remove a comment from a site while the comment may remain visible to the site visitor who posted the comment and those connected to that site visitor. This is typically a temporary action that can be reversed.

Hyperlink is a link from a hypertext file or document, typically activated by clicking on a highlighted word or image.

Like is a feature that allows social media users to show their support for a specific comment, pictures, wall posts, statuses, or fan pages. The “Like” option (or similar, depending on the social media platform) allows users to show their appreciation for content without having to make a comment.

Mentions are social media posts that include a reference to another individual or organization. This includes posts in which the individual or organization is tagged (often referred to as @mentions) or simply mentioned by name in the caption.

Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA) as codified in chapter 42.30 Revised Code of Washington (RCW), requires that all meetings of governing bodies of public agencies, including cities, counties, and special purpose districts, be open to the public. For the purposes of social media, if a discussion includes comments from a majority of the members of the City Council, that discussion could, under certain circumstances, potentially constitute a “meeting” under the OPMA.

Paid Advertising refers to services offered by social media platforms to pay for advertising or “boost” posts.

Post is an original entry onto a social media site by the user of the site.

Reporting refers to notifying a social media platform of a potential violation of its published rules or community guidelines.

RSS Feed, or Really Simple Syndication, is a file that contains a summary of updates from a website, often in the form of a list of articles with links.

Sensitive, Controversial and Emergency Issues, as that term implies, may include, but are not limited to:

- Personnel issues related to any city employee, such as performance evaluations, reasons for termination, reasons for not hiring, and harassment claims.
- Legal claims or lawsuits filed against the City of Monroe or any of its employees or agents.
- Existing or potential threats to public safety, welfare, or property.
- Issues that may affect the city's public image or community confidence.
- Critical injury or death of a city official or employee.
- Critical injury or death of a person(s) that involves city services, facilities or property.
- Major disruption of public services.
- Significant actual or potential damage to city property, facilities, or equipment as a result of natural or manmade circumstances.
- A violent crime, an arrest or high-profile court hearing or other public safety incident that is expected to garner or is garnering local or national television, newsprint, radio, or social media interest.
- Accident, collision, or collapse resulting in multiple deaths.
- Public health threat.

Sharing is to relay a previously created post onto a different social media site.

Short Message Service (SMS) is a technology for sending short text messages to mobile phones.

Site Manager, for purposes of this policy, is the city staff member(s) authorized and responsible for posting content to, monitoring, filtering, and deleting comments as appropriate, and gathering analytics from a city-sanctioned social media site.

Social Media are third-party hosted online technologies that enable users to interact and share information publicly or privately with one another in a virtual community (environment). Social media offers a participatory environment and includes, but is not limited to, networking sites photo and video sharing, live streaming applications blogs, wikis, and news sites.

Social media account shall mean for purposes of this policy, a social media account is one created and managed by the City of Monroe in which a profile has been created.

Social media site shall mean, for purposes of this policy, the platform (e.g. Facebook) that allows users to engage with one another.

Tagging is a mechanism of linking a person, page, or place to a post.

Thread is a series of replies or comments on a social media post, typically focusing on a particular topic or idea, resulting in a structured conversation. A thread on specific social media platforms also refers to a series of posts on the same subject, published sequentially.

URL stands for Uniform Resource Locator and is the address of a specific resource on the web.

User means a person using a social media site or service.

Visitor is a person who views a social media site.

Policies and Procedures

1. Managing city social media

The City of Monroe manages several official social media accounts as part of its communications program. The city's official website (www.monroewa.gov) serves as the primary and predominate internet presence for the city. Social media sites augment this presence to quickly post time sensitive and "real time" information. Social media sites also allow for the city to promote its events and programs.

- a. A list of city-approved, active social media accounts identifying site managers and log in information shall be maintained by the Executive Department City Administrator or designee. The list shall be accessible by the I.T. Director, Information Technology (I.T.) Manager and Human Resources (H.R.) Director and site managers. See Exhibit A.
- b. Each department using social media sites will be responsible for the content and upkeep by designating a site manager (lead) and designee (back up). The site manager is responsible for updating the social media list with updated log in information (e.g., passwords).
- c. Posts should include a hyperlink to the city's website for detail information. When possible, hyperlinks should be displayed as a shortened URL.

2. Creating city social media accounts

To address the ever-changing landscape of social media and the way residents, businesses and media communicate and obtain information online, City of Monroe departments may consider using social media tools to engage in two-way communication. (These guidelines may be updated as social media platforms change features and policies.)

- a. Written requests to create social media accounts are to be submitted to the City Administrator, H.R. Director, I.T. Director and Manager, Department Director, or their respective designees. Written approval will be provided by the City Administrator or designee.
- b. Requests shall include:
 - i. Name of platform
 - ii. Purpose of account
 - iii. Cost, if applicable
 - iv. Media display name
 - v. Explanation of how account will be maintained with current content
 - vi. Primary and secondary contacts who would have access to the account

- c. New accounts will be considered if:
 - i. The account or platform is not duplicative of any other existing city account or platform.
 - ii. The account request is for a current city-approved social media platform.
 - iii. The requesting department can dedicate adequate staff time to meet minimum best practice expectations regarding consistency, monitoring and responding, records retention, and transitioning accounts.
 - iv. The platform functions within the current records retention guidelines and policies.

3. Setting up a social media site

- a. General guidelines
 - i. Each social media account should display a prominent statement identifying the purpose, subject matter, and permissible topic(s) for that site.
 - ii. As there are many cities named Monroe, usernames should include “MonroeWA” where possible.
 - iii. City logos and graphics will be displayed in compliance with the city’s Brand and Style Guide standards, as applicable.
 - iv. Social media accounts must be accessed using the most secure practices specific to the platform. In most cases, this means that accounts would be associated with a City of Monroe email address, not a personal email address.
 - v. City-sanctioned social media accounts shall “follow” all other city-sponsored accounts and content should be appropriately shared among accounts.
 - vi. A hyperlink to the city’s website shall appear in the account profile settings.
 - vii. Where appropriate and available, a disclaimer advising of Washington’s public records laws shall be displayed.
 - a) Suggested language: *“This is a City of Monroe government account. All content is a public record and may be subject to public disclosure.”*
 - viii. Include a ‘comment policy’ box with the following disclaimer: *“Unless otherwise provided, the City of Monroe’s social media accounts are limited public forums with respect to comments posted by members of the public. Comments posted to this page will be monitored. Under City policy, and to the fullest extent allowed by law, the City of Monroe expressly reserves the right to hide, filter, and/or delete the following comments:*
 - Comments or links to material not reasonably and directly related to a city post.*
 - Obscene or explicit comments.*
 - Personal attacks, ad hominem comments, insults, or threatening language.*
 - Plagiarized material, or material that violates intellectual property rights.*
 - Private, personal information published without consent of the referenced person.*
 - Commercial promotions or spam.*

Comments that embed images from external sources.

Comments that violate any law.

A site visitor who posts a comment on a city-managed social media account that is deleted, filtered, or hidden by the site manager may challenge the site manager's action by filing a written objection with the Mayor. Any such written objection shall: (i) Be submitted to the Mayor no later than ten (10) days of the challenged site manager's action; (ii) provide a complete, unedited copy of the deleted, filtered, or hidden comment; and (iii) set forth the site visitor's explanation of why the comment should be allowed on the social media site at issue. The Mayor shall issue a written determination on such challenge within ten (10) days, and such determination shall be final.

For more information view the City's Website policy page on its website.

Responding to comments is encouraged as public engagement. If there is a direct question posted and the answer is complicated, the City's reply can ask the commenter to directly reach the appropriate staff person. If the question is routine in nature, the appropriate site manager should reply. For sensitive, controversial, or emergency issues (see Definitions), responses require approval of the City Administrator or designee.

- b. Image guidelines for social media platforms
Images and video posted to city social media accounts shall comply with the platform's optimal standards in orientation, size, format, and other standards.
- c. Refer to the supplemental procedures for additional "best practices" methods for managing social media platforms. (Exhibit B) The supplemental "best practices" document and subsequent updates are authorized by the City Administrator or designee.

4. Managing content

- a. Content and images should be reasonably accessible to persons with disabilities in accordance with applicable state and federal requirements.
- b. Copyright releases should be obtained for all material protected by copyright from the creators, or indemnification from the entity for which the material is to be posted.
- c. Personality right releases or "model releases" should be obtained for each image (including video) of a person who may have a potential claim to such a right, or indemnification from the entity for which the material is to be posted.
- d. Activity on outside social media sites on behalf of the City of Monroe is limited to sharing posts from City of Monroe social media accounts. Site managers shall not otherwise engage on outside social media sites on behalf of the City of Monroe except to provide a contact phone number and/or City website URL.

5. Monitoring city social media accounts

- a. Social media accounts should, wherever possible, clearly indicate that any articles and content posted or submitted for posting are subject to public disclosure. (See Section 3, "Setting up a social media site.")

- b. City of Monroe site managers are responsible for monitoring their respective social media accounts, including comments posted by site visitors. Such monitoring shall occur regularly subject to the site manager's availability, but in no event less frequently than once per week.
- c. Site managers may delete comments as provided in Section 3 if authorized by the City Administrator or designee. Site managers may hide a comment while seeking authorization to delete the comment.
- d. Site managers may filter comments as outlined in Section 3. It is the responsibility of the site manager to review all filtered comments in a timely manner and delete or publish comments as appropriate and as outlined in this section.
- e. Site managers may report content or users to a social media platform if there is a potential violation of that social media platform's published rules or community guidelines.
- f. Site managers may filter or block users or accounts following consultation with the City Administrator and the City of Monroe's legal counsel.
- g. Monroe City elected officials are responsible for complying with their own social media policy. Site managers should alert the City Administrator or designee if there appears to be the potential for a violation of the Open Public Meetings Act (see Definitions).
- h. As provided in Section 3, objections to the site manager's decision to delete, filter, or hide a comment can be made to the Mayor.

6. Maintaining security of social media accounts

- a. Site managers are responsible for ensuring the I.T. Manager is provided current logins and passwords.
- b. Site managers are responsible for changing passwords to their respective social media accounts at least two times per year.
- c. Passwords are to be changed immediately when a site manager no longer works for the city or is removed as a site manager.
- d. Passwords are to be changed immediately upon a breach or hack to the site.
- e. Site managers are not to share passwords with non-site manager staff.
- f. Two-factor authentication or multi-factor authentication is encouraged.

7. Deactivating city social media accounts

If it becomes necessary to deactivate a city social media account, the following should occur:

- a. Notify the site managers of other city accounts.
- b. Notify the City Administrator, HR/I.T. Director or their designee.
- c. Consult with the City Clerk/Public Records Officer on preserving all content.
- d. Set a timeline for deactivating the account.
- e. Develop a "farewell" message to post on the account that includes when the account will be closed and where followers can go for information in the future.

- f. Reasons for deactivation include, but are not limited to, the site is no longer relevant to the city's goals and objectives, it does not comply with these guidelines, posts are occurring more than 60 days apart, it is not being monitored, or for other reasons as determined by the Mayor or City Administrator.

8. Retaining and disclosing city social media records

City of Monroe social media sites are subject to State of Washington public records laws. Any content contained in a social media format that is related to city business, including a list of subscribers, and posted communication, is a public record.

- a. Under the Public Records Act (42.56 RCW), the city is potentially responsible for responding accurately and completely to any public records request, including records on social media.
- b. The City uses applications to record webpages and most city social media accounts.
- c. Users of, and visitors to, social media sites shall be notified that public disclosure requests must be directed to the city's public records online portal.
- d. All content on social media sites shall be retained in accordance with the applicable records retention schedule, if any, as required by Chapter 40.14 RCW and/or other applicable laws.
- e. The sponsoring (lead) department of a city social media account is responsible for maintaining records required to be retained according to retention requirements.
- f. Any content deleted per the City's Website policy shall be maintained.

9. Use of intellectual and creative property

- a. All information and materials generated by the City of Monroe and provided on City of Monroe social media accounts are the property of the City of Monroe.
- b. Video and photos captured by the City of Monroe and provided on City of Monroe social media accounts should follow the city's protocols for subject matter permissions.
- c. Copyright holders who feel that the City of Monroe did not use an appropriate credit line should notify the City Administrator, HR/I.T. Director or their designee with detailed information about the circumstances, so that the copyright information can be added or the material in question can be deleted.

10. Using personal social media as a city employee

The City of Monroe recognizes that city employees may wish to use social media in their personal life. It is not the intention of this policy to discourage or limit personal expression or online activities or to infringe on employee's First Amendment freedoms. Personal social media posts and comments made by city employees are not representative of the City of Monroe. The City is not responsible for and does not guarantee the validity, accuracy, or security of third-party comments.

Employees using personal social media should recognize the potential for damage to the City in some circumstances where the employee can be identified as a City of Monroe employee. The following guidelines encourage personal use of social media in a way that does not reflect negatively on the City of Monroe.

- a. Personal posts that relate to city business may be a public record and disclosable upon request. For that reason, employees are prohibited from using personal social media accounts to conduct city business.
- b. The disclosure of confidential or proprietary city information is prohibited.
- c. Hyperlinks from personal social media accounts to city accounts that give the appearance of a city-sanctioned site are not allowed.
- d. The use of the City's email and logo or other branding graphics on personal sites is prohibited.
- e. Per the "Electronic Media Policy," de minimus, incidental personal use of city computer resources by employees is allowed. Use of personal devices (e.g., smart phone, tablet) is preferred.
- f. Social media should not be used to unlawfully harass, discriminate against, or retaliate against another employee.
- g. Infringement on the trademark, copyright or patent rights of others or software licensing agreements, is not allowed.
- h. RCW 42.17A.555 does not restrict the right of local government officials and employees to express their own personal views supporting or opposing a candidate or a ballot proposition, so long as that expression does not involve using public facilities (see WAC 390-05-271).

11. Understanding when policy violations occur

- a. Inappropriate use of social media as described in this policy, on or off-work hours can be grounds for corrective action, including disciplinary action.
- b. Retaliation against an employee for reporting violations of this policy or for cooperating in an investigation is prohibited.

EXHIBIT A: List of City of Monroe social media sites

The Mayor or their designee is authorized to supplement this policy with a current list of the City of Monroe's social media sites, and to periodically update the same as appropriate. Such list may be appended to this Policy as Exhibit A.

EXHIBIT B: "Best practices" guide for managing social media platforms

The Mayor or their designee is authorized to supplement this policy with a "Best Practices" guide, and to periodically update the same as appropriate. Such guide may be appended to this Policy as Exhibit B.

Res 2024-023 Social Media Policy

Final Audit Report

2024-12-11

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