

## **ST. JOSEPH COUNTY, INDIANA SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

### **1. Purpose**

This Social Media Policy (“Policy”) establishes guidelines for the establishment and use by St. Joseph County, Indiana (“County”) of social media sites as a means of conveying information to members of the public.

The intended purpose of County social media sites is to disseminate information from the County about the County’s mission, meetings, activities, and current issues to members of the public.

The County has an overriding interest and expectation in protecting the integrity of the information posted on its social media sites and the content that is attributed to the County and its officials.

### **2. Definitions**

“Social media sites” means content created by individuals, using accessible, expandable, and upgradable publishing technologies, through and on the internet. Examples of social media include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Blogs, RSS, YouTube, LinkedIn, Delicious, and Flickr.

“County social media sites” means social media sites which the County establishes and maintains, and over which it has control over all postings, except for advertisements or hyperlinks by the social media site’s owners, vendors, or partners. County social media sites shall supplement, and not replace, the County’s required notices and standard methods of communication.

“Posts” or “postings” mean information, articles, pictures, videos or any other form of communication posted on a County social media site.

“Comments” or “commenting” in this Policy shall also encompass tweets directed at a County Twitter account, social media posts that “tag” or link to a County social media account, and any post or comment that may appear on the home page of any County social media site.

### **3. General Policy**

3.1 The County’s official website at [sjcindiana.com](http://sjcindiana.com) (or any domain owned by the County) will remain the County’s primary means of internet communication.

3.2 The County social media sites encompassed by this Policy include all sites and accounts authorized and/or created by the County and any of its agencies or departments. All official County presences on social media sites or services are considered an extension of the County’s information networks and are governed by County policies, including e-mail, Internet usage and portable computer

policies. All official County presences on social media sites or services shall be clearly identified as a “limited public forum”.

- 3.3 The establishment of County social media sites is subject to approval by the department head or his/her designee, except for the official County-wide social media site, which is subject to approval by the Project Manager to the Board of Commissioners. Upon approval, County social media sites shall bear the name and/or official logo of the County.
- 3.4 All content on County social media sites shall be reviewed, approved, and administered by the department head or his/her designee or the Project Manager to the Board of Commissioners, as applicable.
- 3.5 County social media sites shall clearly state that such sites are maintained by the County and that the sites comply with the County’s Social Media Policy.
- 3.6 County social media sites shall link back to the County’s official website for forms, documents, online services and other information necessary to conduct business with the County.
- 3.7 The department head and/or his/her designee or the Project Manager to the Board of Commissioners, as applicable, shall monitor content on County social media sites to ensure adherence to both the County’s Social Media Policy and the interest and goals of the County. The County reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of this policy or any applicable law.
- 3.8 County social media sites shall be managed consistent with the State of Indiana Open Door Law. Members of the County Council, Commissioners, and/or other bodies shall not respond to, “like”, “share”, retweet or otherwise participate in any published postings, or use the site or any form of electronic communication to respond to, blog or engage in serial meetings, or otherwise discuss, deliberate, or express opinions on any issue within the subject matter jurisdiction of the body.
- 3.9 The County reserves the right to terminate any County social media site at any time without notice.
- 3.10 County social media sites shall comply with usage rules and regulations required by the site provider, including privacy policies.
- 3.11 The County’s Social Media Policy shall be displayed to users or made available by hyperlink. Each department shall also make post on the site or service in an accessible location, ideally being posted on the social media site or service itself

or, if that is not possible, via a link on the site/service to a copy of the following, which can be posted on the department's public internet site:

*Limitations on Use:* It is the intent of [Department name] to create a limited public forum with its use of this site/service. The purpose of the [Department name] use of this site/service is to [insert detailed description, listing each purpose and being as specific as possible]. As part of the [Department name] efforts to further these purposes, the comments section of this site/service is being offered as a limited public forum intended to serve as a mechanism for communication between the public and the department with respect to [list purposes].

With respect to such comments, the [Department name] reserves the right to remove inappropriate comments, including those that have obscene language or sexual content, involve ad hominem personal attacks on another user, threaten any person or organization, violate the legal ownership interest of another party, promote illegal activity, promote or solicit commercial services or products, or are not topically related to the particular posting/permitted subject matters. The [Department name] believes these restrictions to be reasonably necessary to encourage public participation and foster discussion of the issues for which the forum was created by maintaining a civil discourse and permitting all differing viewpoints on the approved topics.

[Department name] will routinely monitor the comments posted by other users of this site/service, and any comments that are not in line with these restrictions will be removed. To the extent that any user believes the comments of another user are not in line with these purposes and restrictions, they are welcome to notify [Department name] by messaging the department using this site/service's messaging system or through e-mailing the Department. [Department name] will make a determination about the appropriateness of such comments based on its application of these purposes and restrictions, and that determination is final and not subject to outside review. [Department name] intends its application of these purpose and restrictions to be made in a manner that is viewpoint neutral and is consistent over time. [Department name] does not intend for this forum to become a fully-open avenue for public discourse but rather is using this site/service for discussion of a limited nature. Please note as well that any terms of service that this site/service places on user participation still apply to comments made by any user, and this site/service may enforce its own terms of service. To the extent that any user believes a comment has been made in violation of the terms of service of this site/service, that person should contact the site/service rather than contacting [Department name], as [Department name] has no obligation to enforce the terms of service of this site/service.

*Statement Regarding Terms of Use and Privacy.* Use of this site/service is subject to the terms of use of the site/service, including the privacy policies of the site/service, which can be found here: [insert link to terms of use]. Anyone posting comments or submitting information to [Department Name] on this site/service should keep this in mind. In addition, the poster of comments or information to this site/service agrees that his or her comments may be treated by St. Joseph County as a public record subject to disclosure by the Access to Public Records Act, regardless of whether such comments actually constitute a public record. Posters are urged to protect their privacy and should consider refraining from posting personally identifying information, including but not limited to: last name, address, age, and phone number. To the extent this site/service is open to the public, the public has access to its content and can access that content without the assistance of the department or St. Joseph County.

*Responsibility for Content.* Except for information disseminated by the owner/manager of this [blog, fan page, etc.], any information posted or submitted by others expresses the views of the person submitting such information and not necessarily the views of the County or the department, and neither the County nor the department is responsible for the opinions and information shared by others.

*Disclaimer of Notice.* Communications made through this site/service shall in no way be deemed to constitute legal notice to St. Joseph County or any of its agencies, officers, employees, agents, or representatives with respect to any existing or potential claim or cause of action against the County or any of its agencies, officers, employees, agents, or representatives where notice to the County is required by any federal, state, or local law, rule, or regulation.

*Advertising.* Users of this site/service should understand that contextual advertising as appears on this site/service is byproduct of use of the site/service. [Department name] does not control the site or service's placement or use of such advertising, and in no way does the use by [Department name] of this site or service constitute any endorsement or support of any such advertisements. Reference in such advertisements or in any user-generated content herein to any specific commercial products, process, or service by trade name, trademark, manufacturer, or otherwise does not constitute or imply endorsement, recommendation, or favoring by St. Joseph County and shall not be sued for advertising or product endorsement purposes.

*Contact Person.* You may contact [Department name] via [insert preferred method, whether through the message option of the site/service or other option, listing a name or position title as appropriate]. In addition, [Department name] may be contacted by telephone at [add main department number].

- 3.12 All County social media sites shall adhere to applicable federal, state and local laws, regulations and policies, including the all applicable conflict of interest and ethics rules and policies.
- 3.13 County social media sites are subject to the Access to Public Records Act. Any content maintained on a County social media site that is related to County business, including a list of subscribers, posted communication, and communication submitted for posting, may be considered a public record and subject to public disclosure. All postings on County social media sites shall be sent to an official County email account and maintained consistent with the Access to Public Records Act.
- 3.14 Employees representing the County on County social media sites shall conduct themselves at all times as a professional representative of the County and in accordance with all County policies.
- 3.15 All County social media sites shall utilize authorized County contact information for account set-up, monitoring and access. The use of personal email accounts or phone numbers by any County employee is not allowed for the purpose of setting-up, monitoring, or accessing a County social media site.
- 3.16 County social media sites may contain content, including but not limited to, advertisements or hyperlinks over which the County has no control. The County does not endorse any hyperlink or advertisement placed on County social media sites by the social media site's owners, vendors, or partners.
- 3.17 The County reserves the right to change, modify, or amend all or part of this policy at any time.

#### **4. Content Guidelines**

- 4.1 The content of County social media sites shall only pertain to County-sponsored or County-endorsed programs, services, and events. Content includes, but is not limited to, information, photographs, videos, and hyperlinks.
- 4.2 Content posted to the County's social media sites must contain hyperlinks directing users back to the County's official website for in-depth information, forms, documents or online services necessary to conduct business with St. Joseph County, Indiana, whenever possible.
- 4.3 The County shall have full permission or rights to any content posted by the County, including photographs and videos.

- 4.4 Postings shall be made during normal business hours. After-hours or weekend postings shall only be made with approval of the department head or his/her/its designee or the Project Manager to the Board of Commissioners, as applicable.
- 4.5 Any employee authorized to post items on any of the County's social media sites shall review, be familiar with, and comply with the social media site's use policies and terms and conditions.
- 4.6 Any employee authorized to post items on any of the County's social media sites shall not express his or her own personal views or concerns through such postings. Instead, postings on any of the County's social media sites by an authorized County employee shall only reflect the views of the County.
- 4.7 Postings must contain information that is freely available to the public and not be confidential as defined by any County policy or state or federal law.
- 4.8 Postings may NOT contain any personal information, except for the names of employees whose job duties include being available for contact by the public.
- 4.9 Postings to County social media sites shall NOT contain any of the following:
  - 4.9.1 Comments not topically related to the particular social medium article being commented upon;
  - 4.9.2 Profane language or content;
  - 4.9.3 Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination of protected classes;
  - 4.9.4 Sexual content or links to sexual content;
  - 4.9.5 Solicitations of commerce;
  - 4.9.6 Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity;
  - 4.9.7 Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems;
  - 4.9.8 Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party;
  - 4.9.9 Violent or threatening content; or
  - 4.9.10 Disclosure of confidential, sensitive or proprietary information.

Users shall be informed by posting to the County's social media sites that the County disclaims any and all responsibility and liability for any materials that the

County deems inappropriate for posting, which cannot be removed in an expeditious and otherwise timely manner. Unacceptable content should be removed as soon as possible after consultation with County Counsel. Deleted records should still be retained for public record.

Individuals—friends, fans, or followers—shall be removed if they continue to post inappropriate content. One warning should be given. If the individual posts inappropriate content a second time, he/she shall be removed or blocked. The following verbiage can be used to warn individuals about their content:

“Your recent post is in violation of St. Joseph County’s Social Media Policy. Refrain from posting inappropriate content in the future. If you do not refrain from posting such content, we will regretfully have to block you from further posts. Thank you for understanding.”

Again, it is best to consult with County legal Counsel before removing member of the public.

Tagged Material—Material that is tagged to departmental accounts should be monitored to ensure appropriateness. If the tag is inappropriate, moderators or designees shall remove the tag promptly.

- 4.10 These guidelines shall be displayed to users or made available by hyperlink on all County social media sites. Any content removed based on these guidelines must be retained, including the time, date and identity of the poster, when available.
- 4.11 The County reserves the right to implement or remove any functionality of its social media site, when deemed appropriate by the department head or his/her designee or the Administrative Assistant to the Board of Commissioners, as applicable. This includes, but is not limited to, information, articles, pictures, videos or any other form of communication that is posted on a County social media site.
- 4.12 Except as provided in this Policy, accessing any social media site shall comply with all applicable County policies pertaining to communications and the use of the internet by employees, including email content.
- 4.13 All of the content on County social media sites must be provided to the department head or his/her designee or the Project Manager to the Board of Commissioners, as applicable, for review, approval and subsequent posting to the social media site.