

**City of Stoughton  
Social Media Policy  
Adopted June 25, 2019**

**BACKGROUND**

The City of Stoughton authorizes the Mayor, Common Council, and City departments to communicate, collaborate, and exchange information to support the City’s mission, using social media technologies. Interactive social media platforms offer opportunities to City residents to interact directly with their City government. Using these tools, constituents may request services, report problems in their neighborhoods, or express opinions to elected officials and policymakers. Moreover, by opening more direct channels of communication with residents, the City will enhance its ability to respond more quickly to their needs.

The use of social media platforms, however, gives rise to administrative legal responsibilities. The City has established this Social Media Policy to facilitate the use of social media and address related challenges and responsibilities.

**DEFINITIONS**

**“Authorized User”** – City Employees authorized by the Mayor, the Common Council or their Department Head, pursuant to this Policy, to establish, create, edit or maintain any City-supported Social Media Site.

**“City Employee”** – any individual employed by the City of Stoughton, as well as any contractor, vendor or agent working for or representing the City but no in City employ.

**“City Official”**- any individual holding an elected City office.

**“City-related Content”**- social media content related to City activities; determined on the substance of the information or materials posted, rather than the identity of the poster, the equipment used, or the Social Media Site on which it is posted.

**“City-supported Social Media Site”**- a Social Media Account created or Social Media Site approved for use by City Officials or Authorized Users pursuant to this Policy.

**“City Website”**- <https://www.ci.stoughton.wi.us>

**“Department Head”**- the head of any City Department, or their designee.

**“Inappropriate Content”**- as defined in the User Responsibilities section of this Policy.

**“Social Media Account”**-any registration, login credential, tool, forum, website, or network that is created or maintained by a department to establish or perpetuate a social media presence.

**“Social Media Sites”**- interactive online pages or web applications that allow for multiple postings or interactions and whose information is constantly altered by its readers and producers. Examples of these sites include, but are not limited to, blogs, wikis, RSS feeds, and web sites and applications such as Facebook, Twitter, GovLoop, YouTube, LinkedIn and Flickr.

**“Social Media Content”**- any information or materials posted to Social Media Sites.

## AUTHORIZATION AND ACCESS

No City-Supported Social Media Site may be created or used without the approval of the Mayor, the Common Council or a Department Head.

Any Social Media Account or Social Media Site in use by any City Official or City Employee for City-related Content (excepting personal accounts or sites) on the date this Policy is adopted shall be discontinued unless use of the account or site is approved by the Mayor, Common Council or a Department Head within 45 days after the date this Policy is approved by the Common Council.

Department Heads who authorize the creation or use of social media must designate an Authorized User (who may be the Department Head) who shall be responsible for monitoring and administering the Social Media Site, and who shall serve as the legal custodian of the Social Media Content on the Social Media Site. Before approving the creation or use of a Social Account or Social Media Site, the Department Head must: (1) determine that their Department can effectively administer the Social Media Site in accordance with the Policy and comply with Wisconsin laws governing the retention of and access to public records; (2) determine how often the Authorized User should monitor the Social Media Site; and, (3) notify the City Director of Information Technology of the social media site. City Employees must have prior authorization from their Department Head before creating City-related Content on a City-supported Social Media Site.

Department Heads should routinely review access privileges for City Employees to determine if continued access to City-supported Social Media Sites remains appropriate. Decisions on allowing continued access should be based on the need of the department and the City Employee’s job responsibilities. The City of Stoughton reserves the right to deny access to post information of City-sponsored Social Media Sites to any City Employee who violates this Social Media Policy.

If the Mayor authorizes the creation or use of a Social Media Account or Social Media Site, the Mayor must designate an Authorized User (who may be the Mayor) who shall be responsible for monitoring and administering the Social Media Site, and who shall serve as the legal custodian of the Social Media Content on the Social Media Site. Before approving the creation or use of a Social Media Account or a Social Media Site, the Mayor must determine that the Authorized User can effectively administer the Social Media Site in accordance with this Policy and comply with Wisconsin laws governing the retention of and access to public records.

If the Common Council authorizes the creation or use of a Social Media Account or Social Media Site, the Common Council must designate an Authorized User who shall be responsible for monitoring and administering the Social Media Site, and who shall serve as the legal custodian of the Social Media Content on the Social Media Site. Before approving the creation or use of a Social Media Account or Social Media Site, the Common Council must determine that the Authorized User can effectively administer the Social Media Site in accordance with this policy and comply with Wisconsin laws governing the retention of access to public records.

The City Clerk is an Authorized User of the City Website, is responsible for monitoring and administering the City Website, and is the legal custodian of public records on the City Website. City Employees other than the City Clerk must be approved by the Mayor as additional Authorized Users of the City Website before they may post to or otherwise modify the City Website.

#### OFFICIAL AND ACCEPTABLE EMPLOYEE USE

Once granted access, City Employees may post to City-supported Social Media Sites in an official capacity only information that pertains to City of Stoughton business or operations. City Employees, in their role as designated representatives of the City, must never post personal information to a City-sponsored Social Media Site.

City employees must use strong passwords for all City-supported Social Media Sites. City employees are encouraged to use 2 factor authentication for all City-supported Social Media Sites, if allowed by the platform.

The same principles and policies that govern interactions with the public generally apply to City-sponsored social media. City Employees representing the City of Stoughton on Social Media Sites must, at all times, conduct themselves in accordance with all state and local laws and all existing City policies. The City requires all employees who participate in social media on behalf of their departments to adhere to and follow all existing work rules and the City's Code of Ethics.

City Employees posting official information to City-supported Social Media Sites generally do so only for the department they represent. They may post information or links to information already published on existing City web pages or Social Media Sites, but may not post any new or original materials relating to the activities or operations of other City departments, governments, organizations, or individuals without prior approval from the group or person discussed. City Employees should refer any questions, comments, or discussion outside of their department's responsibility or their personal expertise to an appropriate responder within their own or another City department.

City Employees posting on City-supported Social Media Sites should act as they would if interacting with citizens or other employees in person. City Employees must respond honestly to appropriate questions, and should not become hostile or argumentative. City Employees should

always exercise good judgement regarding how to maintain confidentiality (omitting addresses, phone numbers, and other personal data) of posted information.

City Employees and Elected Officials must refrain from using social media tools to express personal opinions or concerns. They may never use their access to City-sponsored Social Media sites for personal gain, or to promote private endeavors of others. City Employees and Elected Officials also may not post information on City-sponsored Social Media Sites that constitutes defamation, obscenity, publication of private facts, or speech that violates copyright or trademark laws.

Notwithstanding other provisions of this policy, this policy does not restrict the ability of City Employees or City Officials to speak as private citizens on matters relating to City business. City Employees and City Officials may post comments, questions, or opinions on social media sites, including City-sponsored Sites, so long as they make clear that they are acting as private citizens and that their statements in no way represent the official position of the City.

When appropriate, Social Media Content should direct users to relevant information and resources on the City Website.

Authorized Users assigned responsibility for monitoring City-Supported Social Media Sites must periodically monitor material posted to Social Media Sites as directed by the authorizing Department Head to:

- Respond promptly to questions or replies;
- Replace stale, outdated, and/or incorrect information; and
- Remove Inappropriate Content.

## USER RESPONSIBILITIES

The City of Stoughton participates in and provides information through City-supported Social Media Sites as a public service. The City anticipates that users will use such sites to convey useful information to and engage in productive discourse with Elected Officials and City Employees.

The City expects that all participants on City-sponsored Social Media Sites will display respect and civility when posting comments or information. The City of Stoughton reserves the right to remove Inappropriate Content at its sole discretion. For purposes of this Policy, Inappropriate Content is defined as comments or materials that:

- Are profane, advocate violence, or are pornographic;
- Promote, foster, or perpetuate discrimination on the basis of gender, race, creed, color, national origin or ancestry, age, disability, lawful source of income, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, past or present membership in military service, or familial status;

- Unlawfully defame or attack an individual or group;
- Make direct or indirect threats against any person or organization;
- Advertise or solicit business for a personal or private business or endeavor;
- Promote or endorse a specific financial or commercial entity;
- Defraud or defame any financial, commercial, or non-governmental agency;
- Violate any federal, state or local law or encourage any illegal activity;
- Violate any existing copyrights, trade secrets, or legal ownerships;
- Compromise the safety and/or security of the public or public systems

## LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

Under Wisconsin law, Social Media Content that is created by City Employees or City Officials, or that is kept on a City-supported Social Media Site, constitutes a public record subject to record retention and public access requirements. Designated legal custodians of public records on City-Supported Social Media Sites will be responsible for compliance with record retention requirements and requests for access to public records.

Communication among members of governmental bodies using social media may constitute a “meeting” under the Wisconsin Open Meetings Law. Such “meetings” would trigger a host of legal requirements and expenses for the City. For this reason, members of the Common Council and City Committees, Boards and Commissions should avoid interactions among one another on topics related to City business.

Various social media sites adhere to their own policies regarding the privacy of site users. The City of Stoughton makes no claim to protect or preserve the privacy of social media users. Further, the City of Stoughton retains the right to review all information or materials written or contributed by City Employees on City-supported Social Media Sites; therefore, City Employees should have no expectation of privacy when posting to City-supported Social Media Sites.

The content of all communications posted by City Employees on City-sponsored Social Media Sites is the sole property of the City of Stoughton. Subject to the terms of service enforced by social media sites that the City uses, posting made by other user may also be considered City property.

Violation of this policy by a City Employee may result in discipline up to and including discharge. Violation of this policy by a citizen posting on City-supported Social Media Sites may result in the removal of that citizen’s comment from a City-supported Social Media Site. Subsequent violation by a citizen may result in the banning of that citizen from all City-supported Social Media Sites.

Users should be aware that the information made available by the City of Stoughton Social Media Sites may not be timely, accurate or complete. Any communication from or to the City through these sites will not be considered legal or official notice for any purpose.

The City of Stoughton reserves the right to revise or modify this policy at any time, without prior notice.