

DRAFT
RESOLUTION NO. R25-67

A RESOLUTION OF THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COLUMBUS, NEBRASKA, AMENDING THE SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY BY PROHIBITING PUBLIC POSTS AND COMMENTS ON ALL CITY-OWNED FACEBOOK PAGES: A COPY OF WHICH IS ATTACHED HERETO AND INCORPORATED HEREIN BY THIS REFERENCE; AND TO REPEAL ALL RESOLUTIONS OR PORTIONS THEREOF IN CONFLICT HERewith.

WHEREAS, the City of Columbus, Nebraska (the "City") maintains official Facebook pages for the purpose of distributing public information and engaging with the community; and

WHEREAS, the City recognizes the importance of maintaining a consistent and professional presence on social media platforms; and

WHEREAS, the City has experienced challenges in moderating public posts and comments on its Facebook pages, which may include misinformation, inappropriate content, or violations of applicable laws and City policies; and

WHEREAS, it is the desire of the City to ensure that all official City communications are clear, accurate, and in alignment with the City's communication goals; and

WHEREAS, prohibiting public posts and comments on City-owned Facebook pages will allow the City to continue sharing important updates while maintaining community safety.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL OF CITY OF COLUMBUS, NEBRASKA, that amending the Social Media Policy by prohibiting public posts and comments on all city-owned Facebook pages, a copy of which is attached hereto and incorporated herein by this reference, is approved and the mayor is authorized, directed, and empowered to execute the same on behalf of the City of Columbus.

This resolution shall repeal all resolutions or portions thereof in conflict herewith.

INTRODUCED BY COUNCIL MEMBER _____

PASSED AND ADOPTED THIS ____ DAY OF _____, 2025.

MAYOR

ATTEST:

CITY CLERK

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

CITY ATTORNEY



Accountability– Honesty
Dedication – Integrity – Respect

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Memorandum

Date: 04/16/2025
To: Tara Vasicek
From: Matt Lindberg
RE: Social Media Policy Update

Recommendation:

To amend the City's Social Media Policy to disable public comments on all of its Facebook pages.

Discussion:

Purpose of City Social Media

The City of Columbus uses social media to expand the reach of city news and updates. Our goal is to provide a clear, trustworthy platform where you can stay informed about the latest city news and happenings.

Since launching our Facebook pages in 2011, we've seen a significant increase in false, negative, and harmful comments. Over time, this has become more frequent and has started to compromise the integrity and purpose of the city's use of Facebook.

City Facebook pages will continue to share news, events, and stories, and we strongly encourage residents to reach out through direct messages, email, or phone—relevant contact information will be included in every post. While these forms of communication remain open and welcomed, comments will be disabled on all future posts.

We thank you for understanding that this change in the city's social media policy is being made in an effort to improve everyone's experience with city Facebook pages.

Fiscal Impact: None

Alternative: Don't approve and continue to allow public comments on the City-owned Facebook pages.

Signature:

By: Matt Lindberg

Approved By: [Signature]

This Social Media Policy is to be read and applied in conjunction with the City of Columbus' Social Media Standards and Procedures, and the City's Personnel Manual (as may be amended from time to time).

I. Purpose

The City will use social media tools and other emerging media platforms in specific ways to reach a broad audience and to increase transparency and citizen engagement. The City encourages the use of diverse communication platforms to further the goals of the City and its departments, where appropriate, through dissemination of information about the City's mission, meetings, activities, and current issues to members of the public.

The City has an overriding interest in deciding what is stated or set forth on behalf of the City on social media sites. The purpose of this policy is to set forth the City's policies and procedures regulating the City's presence on social media websites and guiding the activities of employees who are responsible for maintaining the City's presence on social media websites. This policy does not govern or regulate the use of personal social media sites by City employees or the privacy rights associated therewith.

The goals of City of Columbus social media sites are to increase the public's knowledge, trust, and use of City services; promote the value and importance of City services among and between governing officials, civic leaders, and the general public; and maintain open, professional and responsive communication with members of the public and the news media.

II. Ownership

All social media communications composed, sent, or received on City social media accounts are the property of the City. While the social media accounts are administered by the City, the overall content on actual social media pages/applications is not entirely controlled by the City. The City will do its best to prevent usage of its social media accounts by commercial interests and the City does not endorse any links or advertisements.

III. Comment Policy

A. Facebook

The City of Columbus will not permit public comments on any of its affiliated Facebook pages. City staff immediately after publishing a post will change the comment setting on each post to 'Profiles and Pages You Mention,' which will prevent anyone from commenting on a post besides the City page if it has additional information to share. All Facebook pages will be monitored by City staff.

1. All Facebook posts will have relevant contact information (email address and phone number) and a button at the bottom of them that prompts users to direct message the City's Facebook account

2. If member of the public makes a public comment on a City Facebook page before staff has the chance to disable comments, the person will be notified of the policy and encouraged to contact City staff directly via direct message. The comment will then be removed.

B. Twitter/X and Instagram

All comments posted to the City's social media accounts will be monitored by City Staff. Any of the articles, posts and comments on City social media accounts/pages containing any of the following forms of content will not be allowed and shall be removed by one of several designated employees:

1. Profane, obscene, violent, or pornographic language and/or content;
2. Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, sex, gender identity or expression, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability, pregnancy, covered medical condition, sexual orientation, military or veteran's status, or any other basis protected by federal, state, or local law;
3. Sexual content or links to sexual content;
4. Solicitations of commerce not related to agency business, including but not limited to, advertising of a business or product for sale and other pure commercial speech;
5. Conduct or accusation of or encouragement of illegal activity;
6. Comments in support of or opposition to political campaigns or ballot measures;
7. Information that may compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems or employees;
8. Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party;
9. Content that does not pertain to City business;
10. Defamatory or personal attacks;
11. Threats of violence or any other harmful act directed to any person, or persons, group, or organization;
12. Content not related to the subject being discussed, including random or unintelligible comments;
13. Personal matters; and
14. Conduct that is in violation of any federal, state, or local law.

C. Any content removed from these accounts based on these guidelines must be retained, including the time, date, and identity of the poster (when available) in accordance with the City's policy on the retention of such information.

D. The City reserves the right to deny access to City social media accounts for any individual who violates this Policy, at any time and without prior notice.

E. Users and visitors to the City's social media accounts must also be notified of the City's following "Terms of Use":

1. A comment posted by a member of the public on any City of Columbus social media site is the opinion of the commentator or poster only, and the publication of a comment does not imply endorsement of, or agreement by, the City of Columbus, nor do such comments necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of the City of Columbus.
2. The City reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of its Social Media Policy or any applicable law. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the City of Columbus is not obligated to take such actions, and the City disclaims any and all responsibility and liability for any

materials that the City deems inappropriate for posting, which cannot be removed in an expeditious and otherwise timely manner.

3. By posting a comment, users agree to indemnify the City of Columbus, its officers and employees from and against all liabilities, judgments, damages, and costs (including attorney's fees) incurred by any of them which arise out of or are related to content posted by users. If a user does not agree to these terms, the individual should not use the City of Columbus' social media sites as a violation of these terms may lead to legal liability.

4. The City does not guarantee the authenticity, accuracy, appropriateness, or security of external links, websites, or any content linked thereto.