

**BEFORE THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
FOR COLUMBIA COUNTY, OREGON**

In the Matter of Adopting the Columbia County     )  
Social Media Policy                                     )     **ORDER NO. 41-2011**  
\_\_\_\_\_ )

**WHEREAS**, social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, are becoming more common communication tools for business and government to reach targeted audiences; and

**WHEREAS**, some County departments have expressed an interest in utilizing social media to meet service demands; and

**WHEREAS**, the Board of County Commissioners recognizes that social media can be an effective and efficient means to communicate with public as information can be widely and quickly disseminated to those in the community who are interested in receiving such information; and

**WHEREAS**, the Board also recognizes that using social media in a government setting presents risks that must be considered and addressed; and

**WHEREAS**, a social media policy is necessary to establish criteria and procedures to ensure that County departments use social media in a manner that serves the public, protects the integrity of information, meets public records retention requirements, and is consistent with the County's personnel policies, among other things.

**NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED** that the Columbia County Social Media Policy as shown in Exhibit "A" which is attached hereto and incorporated herein by this reference be adopted; and

**IT IS HEREBY FURTHER ORDERED** that the Columbia County Social Media Policy shall become effective June 1, 2011.

**DATED** this 1st day of <sup>June</sup> ~~May~~, 2011.

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
FOR COLUMBIA COUNTY, OREGON**

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Anthony Hyde, Chair

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Earl Fisher, Commissioner

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Henry Heimuller, Commissioner

Approved as to form  
By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Office of County Counsel

**Social Media Policy**

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**SECTION 1. PURPOSE**

The Columbia County Board of County Commissioners (“County”) recognize the value of social media in furthering the County’s mission and goals of public outreach and open government, and as a means of connecting with the County’s constituents. The County also recognizes that there is a measure of risk to address and mitigate in the use of such tools.

*Social media* is an umbrella term that encompasses various activities that integrate technology, social interaction and content creation. This involves many technologies and formats, such as blogs, wikis, photo and video sharing, podcasts, social networking and virtual worlds.

This administrative policy and procedure establishes guidelines for the use of social media by County officials and employees.

**SECTION 2. SCOPE**

This policy applies to social media activities by all County officials, employees and agents acting on behalf of the County or in their official capacity.

**SECTION 3. POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

In realizing the value of social media for the County, the most appropriate use of social media generally falls into one of the following two categories:

- As a channel for disseminating time-sensitive information as quickly as possible (example: emergency information).
- As a channel for marketing/promotions which increase the County’s ability to broadcast its message to the widest possible audience.

Notwithstanding the County’s use of social media, the County’s website, [www.co.columbia.or.us](http://www.co.columbia.or.us), shall remain the County’s primary web-based means of communicating with the public.

The number of social media sites will be kept to a minimum and, whenever possible, departments should share a social media site that has a common purpose.

Department Social Media sites shall not allow for the posting of comments. See Section 3.G. below. The County does not have the resources to properly address its obligation to monitor and moderate posting. Posting can lead to negative, profane, crude and even threatening comments. It can also allow participants to attempt to circumvent required processes related to hearings, appeals, complaints, etc.

All County social media sites are allowed only through approval by the Board and are the property of Columbia County. The Board may remove or shut down a County social media site at any time and for any reason.

### **Section 3.A. Approval Process**

To obtain approval, a Social Media Site Application form shall be submitted by the Department Director to the Board of County Commissioners ("Board").

In deciding to establish a social media site, the department proposing the social media site should define its objectives, in writing, by reviewing the information in Appendix B and by considering the following:

- Reasons for using social media.
- Target audience.
- Time necessary for monitoring and upkeep to remain current.

The department shall conduct a formal risk assessment of the proposed connections which shall, at a minimum, including the analysis of the following risks:

- Employee productivity
- Network bandwidth requirements and impacts
- Reputational risk to personnel, the department and the County
- Potential avenue for exposure or leakage of sensitive or protected information, such as copyrighted material, intellectual property, personally identifying information, etc.
- Potential avenue for malware introduction into the County's IT environment

The department must specifically identify the position(s) responsible for gaining the expertise in how to use the proposed Social Media site in a safe and secure manner as well identifying the position(s) responsible for monitoring and maintaining the site. The Information Technology Department will not provide assistance in setting up or maintaining Social Media sites.

Departments should not propose Social Media sites that simply duplicate the information provided on the County's web site.

If approved, the social media site name, username and password for all social media shall be provided to the Information Technology Department so that access is available if needed, for instance, to shut down the site because of hacking or malware.

### **Section 3. B. Host Department Responsibilities**

**Procurement:** Upon approval for the creation of a social media site by the Board, the host department may establish a social media account with a provider. Accounts may be either free or require payment of a fee. If the social media account requires the payment of a fee, the host department must follow the County's Purchasing Rules in establishing the social media account.

**Record Retention:** All posts and other documents created as part of a social media site are public records under Oregon's Public Records Law. Each host department shall maintain and preserve the public records produced through the use of a social media account for the periods required by the Oregon State Archivist's records retention rules. The Director of the host department shall acquire familiarity with the applicable retention schedules and ensure that persons responsible for the social media site preserve the records created through social media in accordance with those schedules.

Under the State Archivist's records retention rules, it is not the form of record, but the content of the record that determines the retention period. Many posts and other documents may have short retention periods; however, other posts and documents may have longer retention periods, including permanent retention. The posts and other documents must be preserved even if the social media site is hosted by a third party. In fulfilling the duties under records retention schedules, posts and other documents created as part of a social media site shall be preserved as follows:

- (1) The Host Department shall create an index of documents that are posted on the social media site. The index shall include the date and time the material was posted, along with a brief indication of its content.
- (2) Ideally, posts should be retained in the application format in which they are received or created.
- (3) Any post that is not preserved and/or retained elsewhere in compliance with the applicable retention schedule must be captured by the host department and retained according to the applicable retention schedule.
- (4) Any posted content that is a duplicate copy of a public record that exists in another location does not need to be preserved, so long as the original copy is retained according to the applicable retention schedule.
- (5) When the period of time the content must be preserved under the applicable retention schedule has passed, the record may be deleted or otherwise destroyed.

**Editorial Responsibility:** The Department Director of the host department has editorial responsibility for any material posted on the host department's social media site and for the upkeep of the site.

The County may restrict or remove any host department's content that violates this Policy or any other applicable law.

### **Section 3. C. User Requirements**

County employees who have approval from the Department Director to use the department's social media site are Designated Users. Each Designated User shall, before posting to a social media site, review this policy and undergo social media publishing training located by the Department Director.

County users shall connect to and exchange information with only those social media sites that have been authorized by the County in accordance with this and other County policies.

Users shall minimize their use of "other than government" sections of Social Media sites.

Users shall not post or release proprietary, confidential, sensitive, or personally identifiable information.

Users who connect to Social Media sites through County systems, who are authorized to speak officially on behalf of a department or the County, or who may be perceived as speaking on behalf of a department or the County are subject to all County requirements addressing prohibited or inappropriate behavior in the workplace, including acceptable use policies, users agreements, sexual harassment policies, etc.

Users shall not speak in Social Media sites or other online forums on behalf of a Department or the County, unless specifically authorized by the department head or the Board of County Commissioners.

Users who are authorized to speak on behalf of a department or the County shall identify themselves by: 1) Full name, 2) Title, 3) Department, and 4) contact information, when posting or exchanging information on Social Media forums and shall address issues only within the scope of their specific authorization.

Users who are not authorized to speak on behalf of a department or the County but are posting personally on Social Media sites shall clarify that the information is being presented on their own behalf and that it does not represent the position of the County or any department.

Users shall not utilize tools or techniques to spoof, masquerade, or assume any identity or credentials except for legitimate law enforcement purposes.

Users shall avoid mixing their professional information with their personal information.

Users are not authorized to access Social Media sites during County work hours or on County systems for personal reasons.

### **Section 3.D. Elected Officials**

If County elected officials wish to have their own Social Media sites, they should be used for informational purposes.

Care should be taken by County Commissioners to avoid position statements on quasi-judicial issues that may come before the Board. If a quorum of Commissioners exchange postings and/or have an interactive discussion on a social network site, this could be construed as a meeting under ORS 192.610(5).

It is possible that public records law will be applied to communication between County officials relating to official County business, even on non-County sites.

### **Section 3.E. Interactive Uses of Social Media**

Unless explicitly provided in the approval of the social media site by the Board, the public/visible

“comment” feature on a social media site shall be turned off. The social media site should provide users guidance to provide feedback via regular email. If visible comments or email comments are allowed, the site should include a disclaimer that such communications are public records subject to disclosure.

If the Board explicitly provides an exemption from this policy and allows a particular department to allow the posting of comments from the public, then that department shall adopt and post a Terms of Use policy for its social media site that states the objective of the social media site. The appropriate language to use for Terms of Use will be provided by the Board if a special exemption is allowed.

**Section 3.F. Disclaimer.**

The following disclaimer shall be included in all Columbia County social media sites: “Columbia County makes no warranty or guarantee concerning the accuracy or reliability of any information available at this or any other social media site to which this site is linked. Links or references to other information or organizations to not constitute an endorsement.”

**Section 3.G. Guiding Principles.**

See Appendix B for guiding principles in relation to Social Media sites.

**SECTION 4. CONSEQUENCES FOR VIOLATION OF THIS POLICY**

Any violation of this Policy will subject the employee to discipline up to and including dismissal.

**Change History**

Version #	Approval Date	Effective Date	Brief Description
1			Reviewed by BOCC and approved by Order #

**Social Media Site Application**

This form must be filled out and returned to the Board of County Commissioners. Please allow two weeks for response.

Date:

Host department:

Names of designated social media publisher(s):

Name of social media site (desired):

Intended audience:

Intended duration of use of social media site (temporary/permanent):

Purpose of social media site:

Description of content that will be posted on site:

Position identified to act as the Social Media site use expert:

Position identified to maintain and monitor the site:

**Department Director Approval**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Department Director                      Date

**Final Action**

Approved / Denied (circle one)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Board Chair                                      Date

## **Social Media Site Approval**

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Congratulations! You have been approved to be a Designated Social Media User for your department with the County.

You may proceed with setting up the \_\_\_\_\_ account referenced in your Social Media Site Application.

Once you have set up this account, please fill out the information on this page and return to the Information Technology Department for County records.

Please do this **AS SOON AS POSSIBLE**.

Your Name:

Department:

I have read the County Social Media Policy. I understand how to proceed with maintaining and managing this social media account, including information related to:

Appropriate content

Inappropriate content

Records retention for Public Records Requests

Procedure for setting up my social media site

Furthermore, as a Designated Social Media User, I acknowledge that I represent the County in regards to my department in these social media communications. I will abide by County Social Media Policy guidelines.

IT Notified and Provided with the site information including user names and passwords?

Yes    No

I am responsible for the posting and upkeep of content on my County departmental social media site.



## **Appendix B Guiding Principles**

### **Challenges of Social Media:**

Rapid communicating in “real time scenarios”

Frequent changes in format that require new processes and training for users

Multiple formats featuring unique benefits and challenges

**Who are you?** Your voice must accurately reflect your department, the County and its mission. Answer these questions to ensure that your voice is authentic and deliberate:

Do you represent an agency or program?

What is your mission? What are you trying to accomplish?

What unique information do you have to offer?

Why are you speaking? (To persuade? To educate?)

Why do you want people to subscribe to your updates?

How long will your department or program exist?

**Who is your audience?** Your language, content and tone should flow from knowledge of your audience. Answer these questions

Whom do you want to reach?

Who wants to hear from you?

What are your audience’s top tasks?

How does your audience prefer to communicate?

What do people expect from you? (Humor? Knowledge? Professionalism?)

Why do people subscribe to your update?

**Use plain language.** Always write clearly. Use language and terminology that means something to your audience. Clear and direct language is always good.

Focus every update on a single topic.

Social Media updates must compete with a lot of other information; make yours clear and valuable.

Short form communication is here to stay.

Posting too often annoys users, posting too little loses audience. Find a balance in how often you post.

**Match your language to your voice.** Strengthen your content with clear and explanatory titles and descriptions. Remember your audience when writing titles and descriptions.

What do they need to know about your content?

Why does your content matter to them?

Seek to use keywords in titles and descriptions to facilitate discovery through search.

**What do you talk about?** Communicate value by providing useful information to your audience. Communicate original information. Common types of content include:

New updates

Research findings

Public service announcements

Emergency notifications

**How often do you communicate?**

Which activities merit official communication?

How long does it take to create an official communication?

How many people have to edit and approve official communication?

**Your social media voice allows you to communicate faster, more personally, and more directly with your audience.**

Be authentic. Stay true to your mission and audience.

Be timely and relevant. Social media operates in real time.

Be social. Get to the point quickly.

Speak directly to your audience. Don't speak about them; speak to them.

Be consistent and flexible.

Avoid social media jargon. Keep acronyms to a minimum.

Be original. Do not simply repeat information that is available elsewhere.