

City of Orono Social Media Policy & Guidelines

Updated February 13, 2023

Section I: Purpose & Policies

Section II: Guidelines for City of Orono Departments

Section III: Examples of Social Media Platforms and Potential Usage

Section I: Purpose & Policies

Purpose

The City of Orono encourages the use of social media to further the goals of the city and the missions of its departments where appropriate.

The City Council and the City Administrator have an overriding interest and expectation in deciding who may “speak” and what is “spoken” on behalf of City of Orono on social media sites. This policy establishes guidelines for the use of social media.

The City of Orono’s City Clerk will approve what social media outlets may be suitable for use by the city and its departments. The city’s communications division will post to and monitor city social media outlets, and serve to educate departments on how to best use various outlets to achieve their goals.

Social Media Policy

- A. All official City of Orono presences on social media sites or services are considered an extension of the city’s information networks and are governed by the Personal Communications and Use of Social Media and City Technology sections contained in the City of Orono Personnel Policy.
- B. The City Clerk will review department requests to use social media sites.
- C. The communications division will advocate using social media to help departments reach their stated goals by assisting departments in developing appropriate uses for social media, assisting in the selection of appropriate social media outlets and helping departments define a strategy for engagement using social media.
- D. Departments that use social media are responsible for complying with applicable federal, state, and city laws, regulations, and policies. This includes adherence to established laws and policies regarding copyright, records retention, Freedom of Information Act and Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, First Amendment, privacy laws and information security policies established by City of Orono.
- E. Wherever possible, links to more information should direct users back to the city’s official website for more information, forms, documents or online services necessary to conduct business with the City of Orono.
- F. Employees representing the city government via social media outlets must conduct themselves at all times as representatives of the City of Orono. Employees who fail to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner shall be subject to the Disciplinary Procedures outlined in the City of Orono Personnel Policy.
- G. The communications division will monitor content on each of the department social media sites to ensure adherence to the Social Media Policy for appropriate use, messaging and branding consistent with the goals of City of Orono.
- H. Violation of these standards may result in the removal of department pages from social media outlets. The City Clerk will retain the authority to remove information.

Section II: Guidelines for City of Orono Departments

Authorization to Use Social Media

The City of Orono delegates the review and approval of social media usage to the City Clerk and Management Assistant, who may then authorize individuals to represent the City of Orono departments on social media to support the mission and overall goals of the city.

Notice Regarding Use

This policy regarding social media specifically points out that the City Council and the City Administrator have an overriding interest and expectation in deciding who may “speak” and what is “spoken” on behalf of City of Orono through social media sites.

- All official City of Orono presences on social media sites or services are considered an extension of the city’s information networks and are governed by the Personal Communications and Use of Social Media and City Technology sections contained in the City of Orono Personnel Policy.
- Employees representing the city government via social media outlets must conduct themselves at all times as representatives of City of Orono.
- The communications division will monitor content on each of the department social media sites to ensure adherence to the Social Media Policy for appropriate use, messaging and branding consistent with the goals of City of Orono.

Commenting Policy

The City of Orono social media comment policy is below, and is posted on its social media sites:

City of Orono Social Media Comment Policy

The City of Orono uses social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, to provide two-way communication with the public about matters of public interest identified and raised by the City for discussion.

The City of Orono welcomes participation and comments that are on topic from the public on its social media sites. However, these sites are limited public forums limited to specific topics identified and raised by the City. City staff monitor these social media sites and the city reserves the right to hide posted content on Orono social media sites, including but not limited to the following:

- Posts and comments that contain obscene, indecent, or profane language or pornographic images or links to obscene or pornographic content and Direct threats
- Prejudiced or harmful comments that encourage discrimination or discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, sex, age, religion, gender identity, ethnicity, marital status, national origin, physical or mental disability, or sexual orientation
- Solicitation, promotion or endorsement of specific commercial services, products or entities
- Links to any site or content posted by automatic software programs (i.e., “bots”)
- Posts and comments that advocate illegal activity
- Personally identifiable information or sensitive personal information that if released violates federal or state law
- Political statements that endorse or oppose political campaigns or candidates
- Information that could compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems

- Information that directly interferes or compromises ongoing investigations, public safety tactics, or the safety of public safety officers
- Confidential or private information or data in violation of state or federal law
- Information that appears to violate the intellectual property right of the City or a third party under federal or state law
- Comments that are not directly related to the topic of the Facebook or Twitter discussion to which the comment is responding.

We also reserve the right to delete spam, posts that advocate illegal activity and posts that infringe on copyright.

Please note: Comments expressed on the city’s social networking sites do not reflect the opinions or positions of the City of Orono, its employees or elected officials. The city’s following of a particular social networking user does not equal endorsement or support.

In the event of an emergency, call 911 for a police, fire or EMS response. The City of Orono cannot guarantee a timely emergency response to comments posted on social media sites.

Uses for Social Media

Uses for social media includes:

1. Sharing news from the City of Orono, including services, holiday closings and other information normally found on the city website.
2. Publicizing events and programs sponsored by the City of Orono or by other government entities, local utilities necessary for Orono residents, or nonprofit agencies or organizations that receive funding from the City of Orono.
3. Issuing emergency alerts, road closures or weather alerts affecting large numbers of residents.
4. Engaging with residents, local businesses and other relevant local groups and organizations, and responding to questions and inquiries.

Social Media as Public Record

Social media is a public record and the city’s social media accounts are subject to the Freedom of Information Act and the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act. The City of Orono uses ArchiveSocial for backup of social media. Responses to data practices requests received for social media posts or comments should be coordinated with the city clerk’s office, which is responsible for responding to data practices requests.

Guidelines for Following Others on Social Media

1. City of Orono departments using social media should follow other City of Orono departments using social media.
2. City of Orono departments using social media may follow other groups and organizations of local relevance, including local businesses, area nonprofits, other government entities and news media.
3. In order to limit the appearance of favoritism or bias, the city’s social media accounts include a statement that following a particular social networking user does not equal endorsement or support (see the City of Orono Social Media Comment Policy referenced earlier in this section).

Naming Conventions

City of Orono departments should use account names that maintain the city's branding and consistent identification with City of Orono. Account names should also include "Minnesota" after City of Orono wherever possible to differentiate the city from similarly named cities.

Legal Considerations

The Freedom of Information Act and the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act guarantees citizens of the State and representatives of the media access to public records held by public bodies, public officials, and public employees. *A public record is any writing or recording - regardless of whether it is a paper record, an electronic file, an audio or video recording, or any other format - that is prepared or owned by, or in the possession of a public body or its officers, employees or agents in the transaction of public business.* All public records are presumed to be open, and may only be withheld if a specific, statutory exemption applies. In consideration of the Freedom of Information Act and the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, see *Backup Policy* above.

Note on Tone and Presentation

The City of Orono should be as personable and approachable as possible when using social media, as this registers best with users. Messages should generally be conversational and concise. City of Orono social media pages should also have brief descriptions that include details on the city and are consistent with the city's brand. These descriptions should include comment policies. They should also explain the city's policy on following or otherwise engaging with other entities on the social media site, when applicable. See "Guidelines for Following Others on Social Media" above for more details.

Appeal

City of Orono social media sites are not intended to operate as traditional open public forums. When the City opens a site for public comment it does not intend to open the site for all purposes but to open the site for limited discussion of only those topics specified by the City on that site. In some cases sites may be non-public forums, that is, not open to public comment at all, and in other instances, sites may be designated limited public forums.

When the City Clerk determines to remove content of a person who is not an employee and who was not acting on behalf of the City, the person may appeal the decision. When a post or comment has been removed, anyone aggrieved other than a City employee may seek to have the City Clerk reconsider the decision to remove a comment by providing the City Clerk with a written request stating the reason or reasons why the comments do not fall within those limitations established in this policy or offer other bases to establish a right to publish the comments or other communications on the City social media site. The City Clerk or other appropriate official must render a written decision on the request within one business day (excluding official City holidays) of receipt of the request noting the basis for the decision. The decision of the City Clerk or other appropriate official shall be the final administrative decision of the City.

When a person other than an employee believes this policy violates their rights in ways other than removal of personally posted content from the City's social media sites, that person may seek to have the City Clerk review all or part of the policy as applicable to that person by providing the City Clerk with a written request stating the reason or reasons why the policy violates the persons rights. The City Clerk must render a written decision on the request within five (5) business days (excluding official City holidays) and give the bases for the decision. For good cause, the City Clerk may extend the time for rendering a decision by five (5) additional days. The decision of the City Clerk shall be the final administrative decision by the City.

The rights to appeal created in this section do not apply to an employee when the employee is acting in an official capacity or as a representative of the City and may only apply when the employee is acting in the Employee's personal capacity as a private party and when exercising rights accorded a person under the Constitution and the laws of the United States. An employee who feels aggrieved by any action under this policy not covered by this section should seek review through established grievance procedures, if applicable, or through the employee's chain of command.

Approved by: Anna Carlson
City Clerk

Date Updated: February 13, 2023