

Resolution No. 2026-02

City of Medicine Lodge, Kansas

Social Media Policy

Background: The City of Medicine Lodge has developed social media accounts as tools to inform the public about the city's work and mission. The city has an important interest in assuring compliance with legal requirements and the accuracy and consistency of information associated with our social media accounts. It is the intent of the Governing Body of the City of Medicine Lodge to establish a policy to ensure the appropriate use of social media to further the goals of the city.

Scope: This policy shall apply to all city employees, elected city officials, and appointees to city boards. Nothing contained in this policy should be interpreted as conflicting with any person's rights under the Constitution of the United States, state law, or any other written regulation or policy of the City of Medicine Lodge.

Purpose: This policy provides guidance for the appropriate use of social media technologies and the mitigation of risks inherent in using these services. This policy also establishes guidelines for the public's use of our social media accounts.

Internal Policy.

A. Approval and Registration. All city social media sites must be approved by the City Administrator and administered by authorized individuals. Sites shall be published using approved social media platforms and tools.

B. Acceptable Use. City staff, appointees, or elected officials posting content to social media sites in their official capacity are speaking on behalf of the City and should take appropriate steps to ensure the information they provide meets the following guidelines:

1. All social media posts, comments, and other communications shall be conducted in accordance with the City's communications policy and branding guidelines.
2. Official city content may only be posted to approved city social media sites.
3. Posted information should be accurate and factual.
4. Usage of photos and videos must comply with City photo policies and applicable intellectual property laws.
5. All content on City social media sites is considered public record and must be retained in accordance with city record retention policies.
6. All city posted content shall comply with accessibility requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.
7. Professional standards for good grammar, spelling, brevity, clarity, and accuracy should be followed. The use of jargon, obscure terminology, and acronyms should be avoided.
8. All content and communications through social media platforms should remain professional and courteous in nature.

C. Prohibitions. Individuals may not publish content on city social media sites that includes:

1. Confidential information of any person, governmental agency, business, or organization.
2. Improper use of materials protected by copyright, trademark, or other intellectual property protections, including the use of images and graphics that the City has not legally acquired the right to use
3. Promotion of a political party or a candidate running for office.
4. Any content endorsing, promoting, or favoring a specific religion or religious belief.
5. Vulgar or abusive language, personal attacks of any kind, offensive terms targeting individuals or groups, or any content that may be perceived as discriminatory.
6. Commercial advertising for products or services of businesses or other organizations.
7. Surveys, polls, or questionnaires or similar requests for information without prior approval by the Governing Body.

D. Public Forum. Government social media accounts are considered limited public forums under federal caselaw. Members of the public have certain free speech rights in limited public forums. City social media administrators shall not block or ban users and shall not hide or delete user content except as specified in Section V(D)(2). Any action taken to limit user content or interaction shall be immediately reported to the City Administrator.

E. Personal Accounts. Personal social media accounts of public officials may be considered government accounts when the account holder has the authority to speak on the government's behalf and exercises that authority through speech on a social media platform. If the city determines that a personal social media account maintained by a city official meets the criteria to be considered a government account, such account shall be maintained in accordance with this policy.

F. Violations. Violation of this policy by employees or board appointees may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment or removal from board membership.

External Policy.

The following terms and conditions shall be provided as a hyperlink or posted as text on city social media accounts when possible:

A. General Guidelines.

1. These terms and conditions apply to all City of Medicine Lodge social media accounts.
2. All social media content on city social media sites, including comments, replies, and posts by users, may be public records subject to applicable public records release law.
3. All content published on city social media accounts, including city posts, comments and replies to those posts, and any direct or private messages sent to us, may be considered public records subject to applicable public records release.

4. Our social media accounts are not monitored 24/7 and no one should utilize our social media accounts to seek emergency services. Anyone in need of emergency help should call 9-1-1.

5. We do not guarantee we will respond to comments or messages sent on our social media accounts.

B. Definitions.

1. “Social media” means content (text, images, audio, links, or video) created or shared by us and communicated on our online accounts. The platforms on which we have created these accounts allow sharing, commenting, and other engagement. Examples of social media accounts we may use are Facebook, X, Instagram, YouTube, and LinkedIn.

2. “Comments” include any content (text, images, audio, links, or video) posted to one of our social media accounts by a user.

3. “User” means a person who views or interacts with one or more of our social media accounts.

C. Expectations

We believe that honest, civil, and productive discussions provide the best environment for citizens to understand the work of their government and participate in constructive engagement. That’s why we ask users to consider that our social media accounts may be viewed by children and other impressionable people. Please avoid profanity, personal attacks, bullying, or use of incorrect information.

D. Content Moderation

1. Limited Public Forum. Our social media accounts are created and maintained as limited public forums under federal caselaw pertaining to the First Amendment to the U.S Constitution. We invite members of the public to view and engage with our social media accounts.

2. Prohibited Content. Relevant First Amendment caselaw permits us to hide certain comments on our social media accounts. We will not hide comments solely because such comments are critical of our organization, its officials, or its employees. The following comments may be hidden:

a. Comments advocating violence or illegal activity.

b. Comments containing threats of violence.

c. Comments containing sexually explicit content.

d. Comments that directly promote or advocate for our organization to illegally discriminate against any person or group of people.

e. Comments containing links to malware and/or malicious content that affects the normal functioning of a computer system, server, app, or browser.

f. Duplicate comments posted repeatedly by a user within a short period of time.

g. Comments containing defamatory or fraudulent content.

- h. Comments that contain images or other content that violate the intellectual property rights of someone else.
- i. Comments that contain a hyperlink to any website not controlled by the city.
- j. Content that promotes or campaigns for an elected official or a candidate running for office.
- k. Comments that include confidential information of a person, business, organization, or agency.
- l. Comments that are not related to City business.

3. Retention. When a comment containing any of the above content is posted to one of our social media accounts and we proceed to hide the comment, a copy or electronic record of that content may be retained pursuant to our records retention policy, along with a brief description of the reason the specific content was hidden.

4. Right of Appeal. If we hide or delete a user comment pursuant to these terms and conditions, that user has the right to appeal that decision by sending an email or letter to the City of Medicine Lodge within five business days of our action.

Upon receipt of an appeal, our attorney will determine whether the comment at issue contained content protected by the First Amendment. If the appeal is successful, the comment may (if possible) be restored for public view. Upon a determination that the comment was not protected by the First Amendment, the user will be notified that the appeal was denied. The return correspondence, sent within a reasonable amount of time, will provide the user with a brief legal explanation for the action taken.