

# RESOLUTION 2022 093

BEFORE THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF BENTON COUNTY, WASHINGTON

IN THE MATTER OF AMENDING THE BENTON COUNTY SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY & PROCEDURES; RESCINDING RESOLUTION 2017-589

**WHEREAS**, the use of social media presents both opportunity and risk to the County and individual County offices and departments and, in general, the County supports the use of social media to further County and departmental missions and goals; and

**WHEREAS**, the County endorses the use of social media to enhance communication, collaboration, and the exchange of information to the residents, taxpayers, and general public while ensuring that communications made on behalf of the County are properly authorized and in correct form; and

**WHEREAS**, an amendment to this policy is necessary to include additional definitions, clarify professional use, and expand upon the guidelines for removing comments and/or blocking; **NOW THEREFORE**,

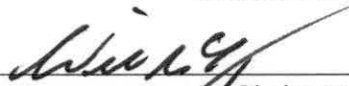
**BE IT RESOLVED**, by the Board of County Commissioners that the attached *Benton County Social Media Policy & Procedures* is hereby adopted, and that Resolution 2017-589 is hereby rescinded; and

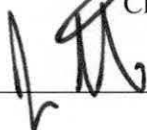
**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that copies of this resolution and policy shall be provided to all employees of Benton County, and that all employees hired after implementation of this policy shall be advised of this policy at the time of hiring or orientation.

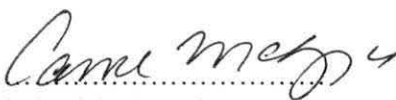
Dated this 25<sup>th</sup> day of January 2022.

**Shon Small**  
**Approved Telephonically**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairman of the Board

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairman Pro Tem

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Member

Attest: .....   
Clerk of the Board

**Constituting the Board of County  
Commissioners of Benton County, Washington**

Orig: Commissioners  
Cc: All Employees, HR

S. Palmus



# **BENTON COUNTY: SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY & PROCEDURES**

**Adopted August 29, 2017  
Revised 2022**

*Policy and procedure for Benton County social media accounts.*

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# POLICY

## PURPOSE

Benton County recognizes that technology, particularly in the area of computer and internet applications, is advancing at a phenomenal pace, making it difficult for any written policy to develop at the same rate of emerging trends and capabilities. The County recognizes that such technology should be made available to its employees and departments to provide opportunities to communicate with the public. With this in mind, the County recognizes that the nature and Content of the message itself should be used to determine its appropriateness and applicability to social media use.

This document defines the Social Media Policy (the “Policy”) for Benton County, Washington (the “County”). To address the fast-changing landscape of the internet and the way residents of Benton County communicate and obtain information online, County departments and elected offices may want to consider using social media tools to reach a broader audience. The County encourages the use of social media to further the goals of the County and the missions of its departments and elected offices, where appropriate. This policy establishes guidelines for the use of social media on behalf of the County and the retention of public records created as a result of such use.

## DEFINITIONS

Account Administrator: Any individual who has access to editing, creating, or deleting Content on any Official County Social Media Account. Account Administrators can add or remove other individuals from Page editing.

Account Editor: Account Editors are present on Facebook, and are similar to administrators, but cannot add or remove individuals from Page editing.

Authorized Agent: A Benton County employee or third-party contractor who has been authorized by an elected official or department manager to Post Content on behalf of a County Agency on Official County Social Media Accounts.

Block: The act of preventing a person from participating on an Official County Social Media Account

Brand and Style Guide Standards: Refers to the design standards that govern the use of Benton County, Washington logos, nameplates, color schemes, and visual identities. The County Brand Guide can be found here: <https://www.co.benton.wa.us/pview.aspx?id=21117&catid=45>

Comments: A response often provided as an answer or reaction to a Post or previous Comments on a Social Media Site.

Content: All text, images, videos, website hyperlinks, and any other information published, Posted, and/or distributed through Official County Social Media Accounts by the public. This includes but is not limited to micro-blogs, status updates, direct messages, and tweets.

County Agency: Any department reporting to the County Administrator’s Office, the Benton and Franklin Counties Department of Human Services, the Benton-Franklin Counties Superior Court, Benton-Franklin Counties Juvenile Justice Center, and the elected Benton County offices of

Assessor, Auditor, Clerk, Commissioners, Coroner, District Court, Prosecuting Attorney, Sheriff, and Treasurer.

Hide: Making a comment on an Official County Social Media Account inaccessible from public view, while preserving the comment.

Official County Social Media Account: Any form of electronic communication through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, messages, and other Content. This includes Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok and/or any other Official County Social Media Account created using an official County email address.

Official County Business: Any communications related to the functions, operations, or messages of a County Agency.

Post: The County's addition of information, photos, video, and other Content to any Official County Social Media Account Page.

Page: A particular portion of a social media website where user-added content is displayed.

Social Media Site: A dedicated website or other application that enables users to communicate with each other by Posting information, Comments, messages, images, videos, etc.

## **APPLICABILITY**

These guidelines are applicable to all County Agencies and third-party contractors who create or contribute to Official County Social Media Accounts. If a County Agency has an addendum that supplements this Policy, employees in said County Agency shall abide by the rules and regulations of that County Agency's addendum in addition to this Policy.

The Benton-Franklin Counties Superior Court has implemented a separate [Benton-Franklin Counties Superior Court Social Media Policy & Procedure](#), which is consistent with the goals and intent of this County Policy.

The Benton County Sheriff's Office (BCSO) has implemented General Order 54.1.6 related to social media that is consistent with the content of this policy, with the exception of the removal of public comment from its Official County Social Media Account, which shall be dictated by the terms of said General Order and not this policy.

## **ACCEPTABLE USE**

All use of Official County Social Media Accounts by County Agencies shall be consistent with applicable state, federal, and local laws, regulations, and policies, including but not limited to:

- Board of Benton County Commissioners' policies and/or Elected Officials' policies and/or General Orders, whichever is applicable;
- First Amendment rights;
- Terms of Service applicable to individual Social Media Sites;

- Applicable records retention schedules or policies; and
- This Policy.

## **PERSONAL USE**

While nothing prohibits County employees from having personal social media accounts, such accounts must remain personal in nature and shall not be tied to County email addresses or passwords. This principle helps to ensure a distinction between sharing personal and County views.

## **PROFESSIONAL USE**

All Official County Social Media Accounts shall remain professional in nature and be conducted in accordance with Benton County's policies, procedures, and expectations. Authorized Agents shall not use Official County Social Media Accounts for personal use, political purposes, to conduct private commercial transactions, or to engage in private business activities.

Authorized Agents may not Post any of the following information on Official County Social Media Accounts:

- Confidential information;
- Violations of copyright, intellectual property or privacy rights;
- Profanity, racist, sexist, or derogatory Content or Comments;
- Partisan political views; and
- Commercial endorsements or spam.

Social media posts made on behalf of Benton County should include no form of profanity, obscenity, or threatening language. Social media posts should be news-worthy, informative, timely, and direct the reader to more information. Be mindful of the images and content you use on social media, and do not violate another's copyright or trademark restrictions.

## **PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY**

It is integral that each Authorized Agent be thoughtful about how he/she presents him/herself in online Social Media Sites, where there are often blurred lines between what is public, private, personal, and professional. The following policy will assist Authorized Agents in appropriately presenting him/herself and the County online:

Confidentiality: Authorized Agents shall not Post to an Official County Social Media Account any information or documentation the release of which would be prohibited by:

- Federal, state or local law;
- County confidential information policy; or

- The confidentiality policy of the employee’s department or elected office.

## **IDENTIFY YOURSELF CLEARLY**

Posting or responding to third party Content on Official County Social Media Accounts may necessitate providing individual identification, such that Authorized Agents should use their full name. However, using your actual name can come with risks, including not assuming privacy. Only Post information that you are comfortable disclosing to the public.

## **TERMS OF SERVICE**

All Authorized Agents should be aware of the Terms of Service (TOS) of the particular form of social media they are utilizing. Each Social Media Site has its own unique TOS that regulate how users interact in that Site. Any Authorized Agent using social media on behalf of the County must consult the most recent Social Media Site TOS in order to avoid violations.

## **CONTENT MANAGEMENT, OVERSIGHT, AND ENFORCEMENT**

Authorized Agents representing the County through Official County Social Media Accounts or participating in social media features on the County website must maintain a high level of ethical conduct and professional decorum. Information must be presented following professional standards for good grammar, spelling, brevity, clarity, and accuracy, and should avoid jargon, obscure terminology, or acronyms.

Authorized Agents should recognize that the Content and messages Posted on Official County Social Media Accounts are public and may be cited, rightfully or wrongfully, as official County statements. Social Media should not be used in place of other County communication channels, including news media policy requirements or newspaper publication.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT AND REVIEWS**

All Official County Social Media Accounts must allow Comments on Posts, and the account must not restrict public comment by deleting or hiding Comments or Posts that are not in violation of this policy, the First Amendment, or the Social Media Sites’ Terms of Service. Comments should be addressed directly and promptly by answering questions where applicable or encouraging commenters to call the phone number associated with that Official County Social Media Account.

All Official County Social Media Accounts must set the profanity filter to “strong,” or the highest possible degree available. This profanity filter will allow the Social Media Site to determine what to block by using the most commonly reported words and phrases marked offensive by the Social Media Site, without the Account Administrator or Account Editor needing to remove content.

No Comments or public feedback may be removed by County Social Media Account Administrators or Account Editors without prior consultation with County legal counsel. Prohibited comments of the type mentioned below (in the “County Social Media Public Comment Policy”) may be removed (hidden or deleted). When a comment is removed, the Authorized Agent removing it will explain that it was removed because it did not comply with our posting guidelines. Any Comments that are removed (hidden or deleted) must be archived in accordance with records retention standards.

If an Authorized Agent believes it is necessary to block an individual from further interactions with an Official County Social Media Account, the Authorized Agent must first consult with County legal counsel. An individual may be blocked from an Official County Social Media Account if he/she continually violates this Policy after repeated warnings from the Authorized Agent. If an individual is blocked, documentation must be kept (such as screenshots of the data/comments that prompted the restriction and the reason for the restriction).

Facebook has the option for Pages to allow the public to review their organization on a scale of zero to five stars. This feature may be enabled or disabled at the Department Manager or Elected Official's discretion.

Twitter Comments or Posts are not able to be directly removed by the Account Administrator or Account Editor but may be reported to Twitter after consultation with County legal counsel for violation of their Terms of Service.

Elected Officials and members of boards whom participate in online discussions are responsible for ensuring that their participation does not violate the Open Public Meetings Act ([RCW 42.30](#)). The County reserves the right to restrict or remove any Content that is in violation of this social media policy.

## **COUNTY SOCIAL MEDIA PUBLIC COMMENT POLICY**

All Official County Social Media Accounts must include the following County Social Media Policy disclaimer:

*The purpose of this site is to present matters of public interest in Benton County to its many residents, businesses and visitors. We encourage you to submit your questions, comments, and concerns, but please note this is a limited public forum and will be monitored by County staff. An individual may be blocked from an Official County Social Media Account if he/she/they continually violate this Policy after repeated warnings.*

*As such, under the Benton County Social Media Policy, the County reserves the right to remove inappropriate Content including but not limited to those that:*

- *Have obscene language or sexual Content;*
- *Threaten or defame any person or organization;*
- *Violate the legal ownership interest of another party;*
- *Support or oppose political candidates or ballot positions;*
- *Promote violence or illegal activity;*
- *Discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation; or*
- *Contain personally identifiable or sensitive information, including medical information.*

## **FACEBOOK PAGE MESSENGER**

All Official County Facebook Accounts must remove Page Messenger permissions, thus removing the ability to “private message” the Page, unless pertinent need can be identified.

## **COPYRIGHT LAW, INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY, AND PRIVACY RIGHTS**

It is critical that Official County Social Media Accounts comply with federal, state and local laws governing copyright, other intellectual property rights, and privacy rights.

## **PUBLIC RECORDS LAW AND APPLICABLE RECORDS RETENTION SCHEDULES**

Official County Social Media Accounts may contain communications sent to and received by the County and its employees, and are therefore public records and subject to public disclosure ([RCW 40.14](#)) under the Washington State Public Records Act ([RCW 42.56.010](#)).

As such, all communications on Official County Social Media Accounts must be retained in accordance with Washington State records retention requirements.

Benton County utilizes an automated archiving service, approved by the Board of Benton County Commissioners, to comply with applicable public records laws and to fulfill the above record retention requirements. All Official County Social Media Account communications are archived, including but not limited to:

- Posts on the main account Page, including any Posts that may be deleted or hidden after original Posting;
- Comments on all Posts, including any Comments deleted or otherwise removed by the Social Media Site due to profane, obscene, or racist language or any other Content deemed inappropriate by the Social Media Site or pursuant to this Policy; and
- All other photos, videos, and audio Content, deleted, hidden, or remaining on the Page.

County communications on Official County Social Media Accounts are subject to applicable retention schedules as outlined by the Washington State Local Government Common Records Retention Schedule (CORE). While it will not always be the case, Content on Official County Social Media Accounts should be treated as Governing/Executive/Advisory Communications and be retained as outlined by Washington State CORE to ensure compliance with retention requirements.

All Content on Official County Social Media Accounts shall be retained for two (2) years after the communication is received or Posted, whichever is later, and then transferred to Washington State Archives for appraisal and selective retention. The County Information Technology (IT) Department must log a record of transference to the state and will then be responsible for proper destruction of the records from the County’s third-party vendor’s storage media.

Once records have been sent to State Archives, the County is no longer legally required to retain those records and they may be destroyed. The IT Department will contact its service provider to request destruction of archived records after receiving confirmation that records have been received

by State Archives, and shall record when records are sent, duration of the retained records, and when the records were destroyed.

## **AMENDMENT & IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY**

The County reserves the right to amend this Policy. All existing employees subject to this Policy shall be advised of their rights and responsibilities under the current policy, upon its implementation. If this Policy is changed, they will be notified of any changes to those rights and responsibilities. All new employees shall be advised of this Policy at the time of hiring or orientation, depending on the preference of the hiring Elected Official or Department Manager.

# # #

# PROCEDURE FOR NEW ACCOUNT CREATION

## NEW SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS


All County employees must fill out an Authorization for Social Media Account form, attached hereto, signed by their elected official/department manager and signed by the County’s Communications Coordinator prior to creating a new Official County Social Media Account. In addition, departments that report directly to the County Administrator will need written approval by the County Administrator and/or Deputy County Administrator before filling out the Authorization for Social Media Account form.

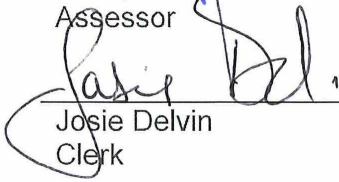
For approval of a new Official County Social Media Account, there must be reasoning provided that explains the purpose, need, and goal of the department having a separate account. If such reasoning cannot be provided, it will be recommended by the Communications Coordinator that the department have someone added as an Account Editor to the Benton County, WA Government (main) account to provide Content rather than creating a separate Page, or send the desired Content to the Communications Coordinator to Post on the County Page.

The Communications Coordinator will set up the new Official County Social Media Accounts upon completion of the Authorization Social Media Account form. The department-approved Authorized Agent will be added as an Account Administrator or Account Editor once the Official County Social Media Account is created.

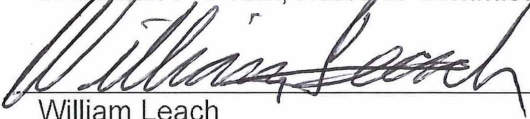
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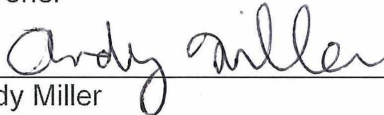
This Social Media Policy is hereby approved and accepted by the undersigned Benton County Elected Officials.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Bill Spencer  
Assessor

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Josie Delvin  
Clerk

\_\_\_\_\_  
Will McKay  
Chairman Pro Tem, Board of Commissioners

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
William Leach  
Coroner

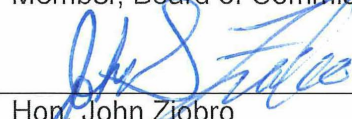
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Andy Miller  
Prosecuting Attorney

\_\_\_\_\_  
Hon. Jacqueline Shea-Brown  
Superior Court, Presiding Judge

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Brenda Chilton  
Auditor

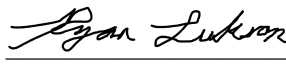
\_\_\_\_\_  
Shon Small  
Chairman, Board of Commissioners

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jerome Delvin  
Member, Board of Commissioners

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Hon. John Ziobro  
District Court, Presiding Judge

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Tom Croskrey  
Sheriff

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Ken Spencer  
Treasurer

Approved as to form:  
  
\_\_\_\_\_

Ryan Lukson  
Benton County Deputy Prosecuting Attorney

# EXHIBIT A

## AUTHORIZATION FOR SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNT

COUNTY DEPARTMENT:	
AUTHORIZED EMPLOYEE:	

The above-named employee is authorized to use the following County services and technologies:

- Facebook
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Account Username/Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Account Password: \_\_\_\_\_

Social Media Cancellation (Requires Elected Official and/or County Administrator approval)

SIGNATURE OF ELECTED OFFICIAL AND/OR COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

DATE

\_\_\_\_\_

I hereby acknowledge that I have received and read the attached Benton County Social Media Policy, and that I understand that policy.

\_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE OF ELECTED OFFICIAL AND/OR COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

\_\_\_\_\_

DATE

\_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED EMPLOYEE

\_\_\_\_\_

DATE

\_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE OF COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

\_\_\_\_\_

DATE

Original:

*Communications Coordinator*

Cc:

*Employee, Information Technology Department, Human Resources Department – Employee File*