



**Title:**  
**SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY (For District Managed Accounts)**

<b>Subject:</b> <b>GENERAL OPERATIONS</b>	<b>Page:</b> 1 of 5	<b>Policy Number:</b> 03.80.00
<b>Category:</b> <b>DISTRICTWIDE POLICY</b>	<b>Approval Date:</b> 11/09/2020	<b>Last Revised Date:</b> 02/24/2021

**POLICY STATEMENT:**

In our digital society, social media is a rapidly evolving means of communication and engagement. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter allow government agencies, like the Forest Preserve District of Cook County (the “District”), and elected officials to communicate directly with the communities we serve, exchanging news and information in real-time. Through social media, people and groups can create, organize, edit, discuss, and share content. It is critical for the District to engage with people in the ways used by the communities we serve. By engaging on the same social media platforms as Cook County constituents, government agencies and elected officials can make sure they hear constituents’ feedback, guide the conversation, and help shape the public perception of official District activities, policies and priorities.

**PURPOSE:**

For the District to continue to provide accurate, timely information to residents, visitors, partners, and other stakeholders, it is imperative that social media be integrated into the District’s overarching communications strategy. The District’s official website, [fpdcc.com](http://fpdcc.com), will remain the District’s primary means of digital communication. District-sponsored social media accounts will complement and enhance the District’s long-established web presence. This policy which will be updated to reflect current conditions and best practices, establishes guidelines for the creation, oversight, maintenance, and documentation of social media accounts used by the District.

**AFFECTED AREAS:**

The standards outlined in this policy apply to posts on social media accounts that are operated by the Forest Preserves of Cook County by any District Department or authorized District employee and/or contractor.

**DEFINITIONS:**

**Authorized Agent:** Refers to any District employee or stakeholder who has been authorized to post social media content on behalf of the District.

**Content:** Refers to any posts, writings, material, documents, photographs, graphics, videos, links, or other information that is created, posted, distributed, or transmitted via social media.

**Social Media:** Refers to digital platforms and tools used to engage with residents and other stakeholders, share timely information, gather public feedback, and share the District’s story. (Ex. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.)

**PROCEDURE/PROCESS:**

- 1) **Approved Platforms:** Approved platforms appropriate for official District social media engagement include but are not limited to Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and others as they receive approval and meet the District’s requirements.



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The social media landscape is constantly changing, with frequent additions of features and changes to the algorithms the platforms use to determine which posts receive priority. Over time, the list of platforms appropriate for official District engagement may change due to shifts in audience, accessibility and features, and/or a platform's popularity and usage. The Director of Communications may approve a new or additional platform for official District business or prohibit an existing platform for official District business.

- 2) **Creating a Social Media Account:** Before requesting a District-sponsored social media account, authorized agents must have approval from their Department Head, and/or their designee, to use social media on behalf of their department and the District. Once the Department Head, and/or their designee, has approved the request, authorized agents should seek approval from the Director of Communications. Only social media platforms and accounts approved by the Director of Communications may be used on behalf of the District. The Communications Office will retain password and login information for all District-sponsored social media accounts. Departments are required to communicate the list of authorized agents, any changes to that list and password changes to the Communications Office.
- 3) **Existing Social Media Accounts:** Departments using social media accounts created prior to the publication of this policy shall work with the Communications Office to ensure appropriate compliance with this policy. Authorized agents who administer District-sponsored social media accounts are required to regularly monitor the account to respond to comments and determine whether the comments or any content placed on the site by the public is inappropriate under these procedures. If you have questions, please contact the Communications Office for further information.
- 4) **General Employee Requirements:** District employees may not use a District email address or telephone number when using social media in personal capacities. For example, do not create a personal Facebook or Twitter account using your [cookcounty.gov](http://cookcounty.gov) email address or assigned cell-phone number or desk phone. The sole exception is accounts used to manage social media that have been approved by your Department Head and Director of Communications. These accounts should not be used for personal posting in any way.
- 5) **Deactivating a Social Media Account:** All requests to deactivate a District-sponsored social media account must be approved by the Director of Communications, and be in compliance with County, State and Federal Record Retention laws and related policies.
- 6) **Content Standards:** These standards are designed for Authorized Agents working to disseminate content via social media platforms. Content may be time-sensitive, such as in emergency incidents, or related to marketing or promoting District information, updates, events, etc., as well as topics with a broad community interest or items deemed to be in the best interests of the District. These standards may need to be updated as social media platforms change features and policies.
  - a) Authorized Agents with social media responsibilities are not allowed to post information or comments on District-sponsored accounts that are false, disparaging, confidential, proprietary or could be damaging to the District's reputation.



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- b) While using District social media accounts, Authorized Agents are to comply with all District policies, including the Non-Discrimination Policy, Sexual Harassment related policies, Identity Protection Policy, etc.
  - c) To help prevent errors, official communications should be fact-checked before being posted to social media accounts. If a factual error is made, it should be corrected as soon as possible. Corrections should be up-front and as timely as possible.
  - d) Authorized Agents are to refer to the Communications Office Graphic Standards and Guidelines to ensure the District maintains a consistent image and branding on social media accounts.
  - e) Only Authorized Agents may post content to social media accounts on behalf of a Department or the District.
  - f) Inappropriate use of social media in violation of these professional and personal guidelines can be grounds for corrective action, including disciplinary action.
- 7) **Engaging with the Public:** The District welcomes community/constituent engagement and feedback. However, comments on District Social Media Accounts are subject to public disclosure laws and will be screened, and possibly deleted, for the following:
- Obscene or explicit comments.
  - Personal attacks, insults, or threatening language.
  - Private, personal information published without consent.
  - Commercial promotions or spam.
  - Comments that are off-topic or that link to material that is off-topic.
  - Comments attacking or denigrating any person or group on the basis of their race, color, sex, age, religion, disability, national origin, ancestry, sexual orientation, marital status, parental status, military discharge status, source of income, housing status, gender identity or membership in any group included in the District's Non-Discrimination Policy.
- 8) **Blocking:** In general, Authorized Agents shall not block individuals from interacting with District sponsored social media accounts. If an Authorized Agent feels it is necessary to block an individual from interacting with District-sponsored social media accounts, consult with the Communications Office. If an individual is blocked, documentation must be kept, such as screenshots of the data that prompted the block and the reason for the block.
- 9) **Public Records:** In observance of state records law, the District will ensure that all social media accounts will be accessible to the public to comply with public records law. The District will ensure that all records (*ex. posts, replies, etc.*) on District social media accounts will be saved to a secure District location before such social media account is deactivated.



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**RESPONSIBILITY:**

**Communications Office:** The Communications Office shall: **(1)** Coordinate a process for reviewing all social media accounts, projects and plans; **(2)** Coordinate a process for reviewing, approving and maintaining a list of authorized agents, which will include usernames and passwords in use for the conduct of official District business; **(3)** Provide expert review and authorization of social media platforms prior to their use in the conduct of official District business; **(4)** Ensure that there is clear direction to authorized agents about their responsibilities, social media best practices, and authorized social media tools and websites; **(5)** Maintain a list of all active District-sponsored social media accounts; and, **(6)** Monitor issues, trends and risks in social media, and provide training materials and workshops for authorized agents that use social media.

**District Supervisor:** District supervisors that have authorized staff reporting to them that are allowed to make official District social media related posts shall develop a system to review and monitor related posts.

**District Employees:** All District employees shall comply with this Policy.

**TRAINING REQUIREMENTS:**

- 1) All relevant District Supervisors shall be trained on this policy.

**COMMUNICATION PLAN:**

- 1) This policy should be distributed to all relevant employees/contractors.
- 2) This policy should be added to the District shared drive, website, and intranet.

**REFERENCES:**

**Forest Preserve District of Cook County**  
[Electronic Communications & Technological Use Policy](#)

**POLICY LEAD:** Anthony D. Tindall  
Policy & Sustainability Manager

**APPROVAL:** Eileen Figel  
Deputy General Superintendent

**POLICY HISTORY:**

**Approved:** 11/09/2020  
**Revised:** 02/24/2021 **Revised:**



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**If you have questions, comments, or suggestions concerning District policies, please contact:**

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