

Common Council Social Media Policy – Phase 1

For purposes of this policy, “social media” is defined as an internet platform that allows users to create a page, account or similar presence for the user to post and share information, photos and other digital content for viewing, sharing, commenting and interaction with other users or subscribers to the platform, who may have to take steps to connect, join or follow the user, resulting in a connected social network.

Examples: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Reddit, Tik Tok, What’s App, Nextdoor, LinkedIn.

What is not social media: a blog site without a comment feature (whether or not the blog offers an email subscription to receive updates), any of the City of Madison’s official websites, a personal or business website, shopping websites, news websites.

During Phase 1, only Facebook and Twitter can be used by alders, at their option. Alders may have an official City Facebook page and/or Twitter account to be used solely for official council business of that alder. No other City-supported social media accounts will be allowed.

A social media page or account¹ is an “Official City Account” if:

- The account is set up directly by City staff, with the account ownership / contact person being a City employee.
- The password for the account is managed by City staff.
- The page or account is capable of being transferred to future elected officials in the same aldermanic district by a City employee, OR renamed for a newly-elected official in the same district.
- The name of the page/account follows an official naming convention established by the City.
- The public-facing portion of the alder’s social media page directs visitors to their official City of Madison email address, City website, etc. (not the alder’s personal email address) using standards to be established by the City.
- Setting up a social media account requires agreement with legal terms and conditions of the social media platform. Only the IT Director can authorize City employees to click to agree to those terms. (See APM 3-20, Resolutions [47764](#) and [59191](#)). Protocols for setting up and managing accounts will be established by City IT and the Council office.
- Examples of what is NOT an Official City account: any social media account/page/presence created by the alder on their own, not created through the City of Madison, and not managed by City staff using the steps above. Alders’ personal accounts and pages must be kept separate.

Phase 1 eligibility and expectations:

- Eligibility for Phase 1: for Facebook, alders must already have or will set up a personal User Account. For Twitter, no pre-existing presence is needed.

¹ Depending on the platform, the word “account” and “page” mean different things. On Facebook, a user must set up an account before they can have a Page. On Twitter, the user only has an account. This policy will distinguish them when necessary, and otherwise use “account” generically to refer to the alder’s social media presence.

- Phase 1 Expectations for support: alders will be expected to generate and post their own content; City IT and Council Office staff are not able to publish content on behalf of alders or monitor their pages/accounts.

Alders' Official Facebook pages and Twitter accounts – Phase 1 POLICIES

1. An alder may have an Official City Facebook page and/or Twitter account to be used solely for official council business of that alder.
2. The alder shall not allow anyone else to access their account, shall not share login or passwords to the alder's official page or account, other than with designated city staff per this policy.
3. Pages/accounts will be public, with no restrictions on who may join, like, follow or view the alder's page or account (other than requirements of the social media platform itself.)
4. The account/page must disable the ability of visitors to make posts, so that only the alder (or designated city staff) will have the ability to post content to the alder's page/account.
5. **Page/account design:**
 - a. **Facebook functionality choices:** City IT and Council Staff will develop **technical guidelines for staff**, where many of these details will be found. Alders must adhere to the following:
 - i. Alders' official City of Madison Facebook presence will be in the form a "Page," (not a "People" profile) in the category of "Government Official".
https://www.facebook.com/help/135275340210354/?helpref=hc_fnav
 - ii. **Turn off Reviews.**
 - iii. Do not **connect** your Page to other, non-official City social media accounts you might have such as Instagram.
 - b. **Twitter accounts** will be set up according to standards defined in the staff technical guidelines and alders shall not change the account settings.
 - c. Page configuration changes will be made by City staff according to staff technical guidelines from City IT.
6. **Naming conventions:** Staff will set up the page/account according to the technical guidelines, including these minimum requirements:
 - a. Facebook Page name format: City of Madison Alder District 15 (no personal names)
 - b. Twitter handle and display name format: naming convention must incorporate district number, not use personal names, and should be standard for each alder's twitter account.
 - c. Make sure any separate account for campaign purposes can be easily distinguished, does NOT follow the above naming conventions, is clearly identified as an account for campaign or election purposes, and follows any further guidance issued by the City. Any personal account must NOT use the alder or council member title, or district number.
7. **Mandatory content.** The alder's social media page must include:
 - a. Link to the alder's official City district webpage.
 - b. Alder's official City email address.
 - c. A link to any current, **approved** "Social media comment policy" of the City of Madison or of the Common Council. **Confirm the status of any policy with IT and City Attorney.**
 - d. Approved, standardized disclaimer approved by the City Attorney to inform visitors that:
 - i. it is a public page/account

- ii. City and Alder are NOT responsible for the content of any comments made by others.
 - iii. Comments by others do not reflect the official views of the alder, the Common Council, the City of Madison or any of its officials or employees.
 - e. Any other mandatory content required by the City for that social media platform.
 - f. The page shall follow any other formatting or style conventions established by the City for the applicable social media platform (to be put in the technical staff guide.)
8. **Operation of the page.**
- a. **Comments:** On Facebook Pages, commenting cannot be turned off. Therefore, the alder will have no control over what others say in the comments beneath their post.
 - b. **Responding to comments:** See Guidelines, below.
 - c. **No deleting or hiding of comments** until / unless the City Attorney approves a policy for the same, and then only in compliance with such policy.
 - d. **No blocking of users** (i.e. blocking a person from viewing/accessing your account or page) until / unless the City Attorney approves a policy for the same, and then only in compliance with such policy.
 - e. **PM and DM** - see Guidelines, below.
 - f. **Page moderation / enforcement of any social media comment policy.** Any policy for moderation of comments and visitor content shall be consistent with the City's approved social media comment policy, if any.
9. **No misuse of City resources.** Use of an Official City social media account under this Policy, whether accessed on a personal device or City-owned computer, constitutes use of City resources and [MGO 3.35](#), the Code of Ethics, applies. Pay attention to sec. 3.35(5)(a) and (b). Alders participating in this program also agree to follow the following APMs:
- a. [APM 3-9](#) Appropriate Use of Computer Network Resources
 - b. [APM 3-13](#) Web Linking Policy
 - c. See FAQ to be developed.
10. **No campaign activities** for the alder on their official City social media page, or promotion or endorsement of any other political candidate for office or cause on the ballot, because City resources cannot be used for this. **See MGO 3.35(5)(b).**
11. **No promotion of commercial businesses**, whether yours or others, or use of the page for personal financial gain, as stated in the City's Code of Ethics:
- a. [MGO 3.35](#) (5)(b)1.
<https://www.cityofmadison.com/attorney/documents/EthicsCodeSimplified.pdf>
 - b. See also paragraph 5 of [APM 3-13](#)
12. **No solicitation of donations in violation of Code of Ethics.** Because an Official City social media account is a City resource, MGO sec. 3.35(5)(a)2. applies when seeking donations on behalf of a group, including a non-profit, *except* when each of the following steps are taken:
- a. The funds are for a City project or conference held in the City of Madison,
 - b. The solicitation is approved by resolution,
 - c. The alder is not "associated" with the entity receiving the funds, AND
 - d. A report is filed with the City Clerk as required by MGO 3.35(5)(a)2.d.
- * See also MGO 4.29 for Affiliated Organizations, consult City Attorney's Office with questions.
 **Note that the Code of Ethics supersedes the Weblinking Policy in APM 3-13. A link might be OK under that policy but if sharing the link on your official social media results a solicitation for donations or other ethics code violation, the ethics code controls.

13. **Open meetings.** Alders may follow, like, or join another alder’s page. Do not engage with another alder or City Board, Committee or Commission (BCC) member on your page, or take any other actions interacting with another alder or BCC member’s social media that would create a walking quorum, negative quorum or other open meetings law violations.
14. **Public Records.** Records will be maintained by City staff as required by law and applicable retention schedules, by virtue of the page being an Official City Page or Account. If an alder deletes or edits their own post or content, the alder must take a screen shot of the original version and retain a copy as part of their duties as Records Custodian of their own records. If an applicable, approved social media policy of the City allows for editing or deleting comments of visitors to the page, the alder must take a screenshot and store the original version(s) before editing or deleting, and retain a copy. This policy may be revised as needed to comply with public records laws, retention schedules, and any changes in the retention practices of the platform.

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Alders' Facebook and Twitter Use – Phase 1 GUIDELINES

Alders should keep these guidelines in mind when using their Official City social media account(s):

1. **Maintain clear lines between your personal, official alder, and campaign social media:** Alders should make sure there is a clear distinction between their official City of Madison social media site and any other social media the alder chooses to use for personal or campaign purposes. It is strongly suggested that alders name their personal profile and any campaign pages in a way that makes it very clear it is NOT their City Council alder page (i.e. do not use “alder” or district number in the name.) It is a best practice to include disclaimers in the “ABOUT” section on Facebook, such as “This is my personal account. Looking for my alder account? Go here: (insert link.)” Likewise, content on personal or campaign pages should reflect that separation.
2. **Commenting:** Alder pages are intended as a medium to deliver communications and share information about topics of interest and relevance to the alder, their constituents, and City business, rather than a forum for back and forth discussion among visitors to the page. During Phase 1 alders will use their best judgment in participating in the comments.
 - a. Alders may choose not to engage in comments at all, and instead provide a canned response such as: “Thank you for your comment. Comments on this page are not monitored. Please feel free to email me at: _____” or call at “_____”.
 - b. A decision not to use comments must be consistently applied by that alder.
3. **Promoting or sharing a post, event or other content from a nonprofit organization.** See item 12 in the attached Policy. Alders should make decisions according to the City’s Code of Ethics ([MGO 3.35](#)) and **web linking policy**. [APM 3-13](#). This is because the alder’s official social media page is a City resource. It is a best practice to avoid sharing, linking or retweeting any content that directs people to a donation link unless you’re sure it does not violate the ethics code. Consult the City Attorney to learn if the donation is for an Affiliated Organization under MGO 4.29 or meets the criteria of MGO 3.35(5)(a)2. If unsure, consult the City Attorney for ethics advice or instruction to pursue an Advisory Opinion of the Ethics Board.
4. When **sharing** any other posts or **retweeting**, keep in mind the source. If unsure whether to share or retweet something, refer to the Web Linking policy, **APM 3-13** and the **Ethics Ordinance, 3.35**.
5. **Tagging, mentioning, following, etc.** Become familiar with how these features work and be aware that your page or account might be tagged, mentioned, shared, etc. without your permission.
6. **Private messaging (PM) and Direct messaging (DM):** Alders should avoid using the PM or DM features on these platforms. If these features cannot be disabled, Alders should set up an automatic response similar to that used for comments (directing people to the alder’s

city email where records can be maintained for public records purposes.) If automatic responses cannot be set up, decide whether to ignore all private messages or respond manually to all messages with a canned response instructing the sender to contact the alder via email or phone.

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7. **Interaction with other platforms:** Be aware that some websites, including news sites, payment processors and other web-based services offer the option to log in or leave comments using your social media account. Be careful not to log-in or comment on any site with your Official City of Madison page/account. Likewise, when logged into a social media platform, be aware of whether you are using your Official City Page or your personal account or page.
8. **Decorum and civility:** Alders shall ensure their own social media posts and content follow:
 - any policies for decorum and professionalism applicable to members of the City of Madison Common Council
 - any applicable, **approved** social media comment policy* of the City of Madison.

*make sure the social media comment policy is up to date and approved by the City Attorney's office
9. **Tips for effective use of social media:** Alders may refer to guides prepared by City IT for effective use of social media (designed for City departments.)
10. **FAQ and Technical Guidelines:** Staff may prepare an alder "FAQ" for this Policy and Guidelines, and technical guidelines for staff to assist with implementing this Policy.