



Policy Governing County Social Media Administration

Effective Date: January 2020

Owner	Communications Director and Information Services (IS) Director
Reviewer(s)	Communications Director, IS Director, and IS Division Directors
Approver(s)	BOC
Related Policies	(IS) Information Technology Policy Adopted 01/20 Conduct and Performance Policy (BOC Only) Adopted 11/89; Revised 6/92, 12/96, 4/06, 10/15, 01/20 No Harassment and No Discrimination Policy (BOC Only) Adopted 6/92; Revised 4/00; 4/06; 12/11
Related Standards	(IS) Technology Acceptable Use Standards
Related Forms	Social Media Site Account Access Form (located on iCobb)
Storage Location	iCobb
Last Review Date	December 2019
Next Review Date	December 2021
Review Cycle	Every two years

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish rules for the use of social media on official Cobb County (County) social media sites.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to employees and management in BOC Agencies and Departments responsible for maintaining official Social Media sites. If you have questions regarding this policy, please contact the Cobb County Communications Director.

3. DEFINITIONS

Hosted Content – Unless approved by the Communications Director, all County social media sites should link back to the official County website, www.cobbcounty.org for forms, documents and other online services.

Official Content – Publicly available online content created and made public by the County, accessible through our official website www.cobbcounty.org.

Social Media – Social media refers to any Internet-based software or service that allows users to interact with others via the posting of messages, files or other content. Currently, the County (including its Agencies and Departments) maintains social media sites on Facebook, Instagram, NextDoor, Twitter and YouTube. The absence of or lack of explicit reference to a site does not limit the extent or the application of this policy.

Social Media Account – A personalized presence inside a social networking channel, initiated at will by an individual. YouTube, Twitter, Facebook and other social networking channels allow users to sign-up for their own social media account, which they can use to collaborate, interact and share content and status updates. When a user communicates through a social media account, the user's disclosures are attributed to his or her User Profile.

Social Media Administrator – The person designated by a Department Head who is responsible for managing an official County social media site.



Policy Governing County Social Media Administration

4. POLICY

- 4.1 The County supports the use of social media to communicate directly with the public, stakeholders, partners, and the media about County matters of public interest.
- 4.2 Official County use of social media is intended to broaden the reach of communication and engagement with the community.
- 4.3 All official County social media use should be treated as a formal, public communications tool and should be used to:
 - 4.3.1 Enhance and encourage external communications;
 - 4.3.2 Educate the public regarding County services, programs, meetings, and events;
 - 4.3.3 Increase government transparency and efficiency;
 - 4.3.4 Engage the public in community dialogue;
 - 4.3.5 Respond to inquiries regarding County services and government in a timely manner;
 - 4.3.6 Share posts from County Departments' social media sites to help promote their programs, events, and services.
 - 4.3.7 Communicate with the public during inclement weather, emergencies, and man-made disasters; and
 - 4.3.8 Expand public interactivity and participation through online services and resources.

5. SITE CREATION AND ADMINISTRATION

5.1 Coordination with the Communications Department and the Information Services Department

- 5.1.1 Requests for the creation of all County Departmental social media sites representing the County shall be submitted in writing by the Department Head to the County's Communications Department and Information Services (IS) Department.
- 5.1.2 Departments using official social media sites should provide account access (including user names and passwords) to the Communications and IS Departments thirty days prior to the public launch of an official County social media site by submitting the Social Media Site Account Access Form (located on iCobb).
- 5.1.3 Any changes in passwords should be promptly provided to the Communications Department and the IS Department. Social media accounts on behalf of the County should list an appropriate County e-mail address.

5.2 Role of Social Media Administrators

- 5.2.1 Each Department with a social media presence shall designate two employees to serve as social media administrators with primary responsibility for managing official County social media sites.
- 5.2.2 Duties include serving as the lead contact for an account, developing the engagement framework for posting information and responding to comments, adhering to policies, ensuring the social media site is regularly updated, maintaining security of passwords, and maintaining a list of current authorized social media accounts.



Policy Governing County Social Media Administration

5.2.3 The social media administrators must immediately notify a Department Head in the event of a security breach, and the Department Head must then notify the Communications Department and the IS Department.

5.2.4 Department staff may manage day-to-day operations of a social media site, but they must do so in close coordination with the social media administrators.

5.3 Role of Communications Department and Information Services Department

5.3.1 The Communications and IS Departments will provide the umbrella framework for the County's social media presence. In this role, these Departments will:

1. Serve as a silent administrator of all accounts;
2. Coordinate during emergencies;
3. Help post if needed;
4. Provide feedback and continuous training; and
5. Disseminate new guidelines in accordance with changes to social media platforms.

6. SOCIAL MEDIA ADMINISTRATOR GUIDELINES FOR POSTING SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT

6.1 What to Post:

6.1.1 Official social media sites need to be clear, accurate, and in accordance with best practices for posting updates.

6.1.2 Principles that should be followed are that information must be:

1. **Relevant to Cobb County Government:** Information that helps the public and pertains to their daily lives;
2. **Timely:** Information about deadlines or upcoming or current events;
3. **Actionable:** Information to register, attend, go, or do.

6.2 What Not to Post:

6.2.1 Information about matters in litigation or about potential legal claims;

6.2.2 The intellectual property of others without written permission;

6.2.3 Defamatory material;

6.2.4 Personal, sensitive, or confidential information of any kind;

6.2.5 Medical information that violates a person's Health Insurance Portability and Accountability (HIPPA) protections;

6.2.6 Obscene, pornographic or other illegal materials;

6.2.7 Racist, sexist, and other disparaging language about a group of people;

6.2.8 Sexual comments about, or directed to, anyone;

6.2.9 Political campaign materials or comments;

6.2.10 Threatening or harassing comments;

6.2.11 Other information that is not public in nature.



Policy Governing County Social Media Administration

7. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC ON OFFICIAL COBB COUNTY SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

- 7.1 Comments from the public are welcome on social media sites but comments should be routinely monitored during working hours to ensure they meet certain criteria.
- 7.2 County-created social media forums should be structured to focus discussions on a particular interest of the County rather than creating a “public forum.”
- 7.3 County publishers may remove postings based on the guidelines set forth below in section 7.6.
- 7.4 Comments will not be removed solely because a commenter expresses disagreement with a County policy or action.
- 7.5 All sections of Cobb County social media sites that allow public comments must include a link to Cobb County’s Social Media Terms of Use Policy which can be found on the County’s website www.cobbcounty.org.

7.6 Criteria for Removal of Public Comments

Once posted, the Social Media Administrator or his/her authorized designee may remove from public view the following types of public comments:

- 7.6.1 Vulgar language;
- 7.6.2 Personal attacks of any kind;
- 7.6.3 Obscene, pornographic, or other illegal materials;
- 7.6.4 Sexual comments about, or directed to, anyone;
- 7.6.5 Comments or content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, genetics, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or intellectual disability, or sexual orientation;
- 7.6.6 Spam or unrelated links to other sites;
- 7.6.7 Comments that are unrelated to the County topic that is the subject of the post;
- 7.6.8 Comments that advocate illegal activity;
- 7.6.9 Comments that promote particular non-County services or products;
- 7.6.10 Comments that promote political organizations or campaigns;
- 7.6.11 Comments that infringe on copyrights or trademarks;
- 7.6.12 Comments that disclose personally identifiable information that may compromise an individual’s financial or personal security, including social security numbers, passwords, or credit card information; and
- 7.6.13 Comments that contain information that may compromise the safety, security, or proceedings of public systems or any criminal or civil investigations.



Policy Governing County Social Media Administration

7.7 Procedure for Removal of Public Comments

- 7.7.1 Comments that fall within the scope of any of the criteria set forth in Section 7.6 are subject to removal by Cobb County social media administrators. When a social media administrator discovers that a comment has been posted that is inappropriate because it falls within the criteria set forth in section 7.6, he or she will attempt to remove the comment from public view as soon as possible provided the social media platform allows removal of comments.
- 7.7.2 The County Attorney's Office may be consulted with questions concerning the removal of comments and the applicability of the criteria in section 7.6 to a particular comment.
- 7.7.3 Before removing a public comment or post, social media administrators should take screenshots of the post or comment. The social media administrator shall prepare a written description as to the basis for the removal. Each Department is responsible for storing this information in County files.
- 7.7.4 When a commenter repeatedly violates the criteria set forth in section 7.6, the Social Media Administrator may ban such person from participating on platforms that permit organizations to ban users.
- 7.7.5 Social media administrators should be aware that some social media platforms do not allow removal of posts and/or comments, and, therefore, he or she may not have the ability to remove content that is inappropriate as defined in the criteria set forth in section 7.6. Social media administrators may in the exercise of their discretion report any violation of a social media platform's standards, rules or guidelines to such social media entity with the intent that such entity will take appropriate and responsive action to remove the comment.

7.8 Posting Replies to Public Comments

- 7.8.1 A social media administrator may in the exercise of his or her discretion post replies to public comments.
- 7.8.2 Such replies should be made in the same manner that a County employee would reply to an e-mail or phone inquiry from a member of the public. Business decorum must be maintained, and the information provided should be factual in nature, and not argumentative or opinionated.
- 7.8.3 When posting replies to public comments, social media administrators should coordinate with other Departments when necessary to provide the best information.

8. APPLICABLE LAWS AND POLICIES

- 8.1 All County social media sites shall adhere to applicable federal and state laws and regulations and County ordinances, policies, and standards, including, but not limited to, legal requirements governing use of copyrighted materials, retention of records, and compliance with the Georgia Open Records Act, O.C.G.A. § 50-18-70, et seq., federal and state privacy laws, and County Human Resources and IS policies.
- 8.2 Any content posted by a social media administrator on a Cobb County social media site constitutes government speech. Use of a County e-mail address and communication in an official capacity on an official County social media site constitutes the conducting of County business, and as such, these communications shall be in accordance with the IS Information Technology Policy and Technology Acceptable Use Standards.



Policy Governing County Social Media Administration

9. EXCEPTIONS

Exceptions to this Policy may be authorized for good cause. Any exception to the Policy must be approved by the Communications and IS Director.

Version ID	Date of Change	Author	Rationale
v.1.0-2019		County Attorney's Office	