Chapter 16 – Social Media Policy

To address the fast-changing landscape of the Internet and the way residents communicate and obtain information online, Mason County departments may 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, where appropriate. This policy is not meant to address one form of social media; rather social media in general, as advances in technology will occur and new tools will emerge. Mason County personnel will approach the use of social media tools as consistently as possible, County Government wide.

All Mason County social media sites shall comply with all appropriate RCW, Mason County policies and standards, including but not limited to:

1. Mason County Electronic Information Acceptable Use Policy (Revision F)

2. Mason County Blogging Policy

3. Mason County Electronic Communications Policy

4. Mason County Personnel Policy

5. RCW 42.52 Ethics in Public Service

6. Mason County Social Media Standards for Facebook and Twitter

7. State of Washington public records laws

Mason County has an overriding interest and expectation in deciding what is "spoken" on behalf of the County on social media sites. This policy establishes guidelines for the use of social media.

16.1 Definitions

Blog: A self-published diary or commentary on a particular topic that may allow visitors to post responses, reactions, or comments. The term is short for "Web log."

Blog article: An original posting of content to a Mason County blog site by a Mason County blog author.

Blog commenter: A member of the public who submits a comment for posting in response to the content of a particular Mason County blog article.

Blog comment: A response to a Mason County blog article submitted by a blog commenter.

Mason County blog author: An authorized Mason County employee/official that creates and is responsible for posted blog articles (see blog article below).

Mason County blog moderator: An authorized Mason County employee/official, who reviews, authorizes, and allows content submitted by a Mason County blog authors and public commenters to be posted to a Mason County blog site.

Page: The specific portion of a social media website where content is displayed and managed by an individual or individuals with administrator rights.

Post: Contents an individual share on a social media site or the act of publishing content on a site.

Profile: Information that a user provides about themselves on a social networking site.

Social Media: A category of Internet-based resources that integrate user-generated content and user participation. This includes, but is not limited to, social networking sites (Facebook, MySpace), micro-blogging sites (Twitter, Nixle), photo- and video-sharing sites (Flickr, YouTube), wikis (Wikipedia), blogs, and news sites (Digg, Reddit).

Social Networks: Online platforms where users can create profiles, share information, and socialize with others using a range of technologies.

Speech: Expression or communication of thoughts or opinions in spoken words, in writing, by expressive conduct, symbolism, photographs, videotape, or related forms of communication.

Web 2.0: The second generation of the World Wide Web focused on shareable, user generated content, rather than static web pages. Some use this term interchangeably with social media.

Wiki: Web page(s) that can be edited collaboratively.

16.2 Administration of Social Media

The Mason County Information Services Department will maintain a list of social media tools which are approved for use by County departments and staff.
The Mason County Information Services Department will maintain a list of all Mason County social media sites, a list of logins and passwords will be supplied by department / Office directors / managers. (The Mason County Information Services Department must be able to immediately edit or remove content from social media sites.)

The Official Mason County logo must appear somewhere on the "cover page" of the social media site. Mason County personnel use of personally owned devices to manage the County's social media activities or in the course of official duties is prohibited without express written permission by their Department Head.

Mason County personnel shall observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and service mark restrictions in posting materials to electronic media.

For each social media tool approved for use by the County the following documentation and financial planning will need to be developed and adopted by each department/office:

- Standards and processes for managing and administration of accounts.
- Written operational and use guidelines.
- Secured budgeting for the approved retention and archiving program.

The following social media sites and networks have been approved for use by Mason County:

- Twitter – Mason County Twitter Standard
- Facebook – Mason County Facebook Standard

All additional social media tools proposed for County use will be forwarded to Information Services for review and processing for approval.

16.3 Mason County Website

The Mason County website (https://masoncountywa.gov/index.php) will remain the County's primary and predominant internet presences. The best, most appropriate Mason County uses of social media tools fall generally into two categories:

1. As channels for disseminating time-sensitive information as quickly as possible   (example: emergency information).

2. As marketing/promotional channels which increase the County's ability to broadcast its messages to the widest possible audience.

Wherever possible, content posted to Mason County social media sites should contain links directing users back to the County's official website for in-depth information, forms, documents, or online services necessary to conduct business with Mason County.

As is the case for Mason County's web site, assigned department staff will be responsible for the content and upkeep of any social media sites their department may create.

16.4 Social Media Public Records

Mason County's social media sites are subject to State of Washington public records laws (RCW 42.56). Any content maintained in a social media format that is related to County business, including a list of subscribers, and posted communication, is a public record. The Department maintaining the site is responsible for responding completely and accurately to any public records request for public records on social media. Content related to County business shall be maintained in an accessible format so that it can be produced in response to a request utilizing an approved retention and archiving program. Wherever possible, such sites shall clearly indicate that "any articles and any other content posted or submitted for posting are subject to public disclosure". Users shall be notified that public disclosure requests must be directed to the relevant departmental public disclosure officer.

Washington state law and relevant Mason County records retention schedules apply to social media formats and social media content. Unless otherwise addressed in a specific social media standards document, the Department maintaining a site shall preserve records required to be maintained pursuant to a relevant records retention schedule for the required retention period on a County server in a format that preserves the integrity of the original record and is easily accessible through the approved retention and archiving program. Appropriate retention formats for specific social media tools are detailed in the Mason County Social Media Standards for Facebook and Twitter.

16.5 Users and Visitors of Mason County Social Media

Users and visitors to social media sites shall be notified that the intended purpose of the site is to serve as a mechanism for communication between Mason County departments and members of the public. Social media pages should state, where possible, that "Opinions expressed by visitors to the page(s) do not reflect the opinions of Mason County".

Pages shall clearly indicate that posted comments will be monitored and that the department reserves the right to remove obscenities, off-topic comments, and personal attacks. Mason County social media site articles and comments containing any of the following forms of content shall not be allowed:

1. Comments not topically related to the particular social medium article being commented upon.

2. Comments in support of or opposition to political campaigns, ballot measures or pending action items.

3. Profane language or content.

4. Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination based on race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status about public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation.

5. Sexual content or links to sexual content.

6. Solicitations of commerce.

7. Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity.

8. Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems; or

9. Content that violates the legal ownership interest of any other party.

These guidelines must be displayed to users or made available by hyperlink. Any content removed based on these guidelines must be retained, including the time, date, and identity of the poster when available.

Mason County Information Services Department reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of this social media policy, or any applicable law posted on a Mason County social media site.

16.6 Blogging Policy

Mason County departments Facebook and Twitter accounts, commonly referred to as "blog" sites, provide County officials the ability to post short articles, exchanges of information, post status updates and photos, and receive notifications related back to those postings. County blogs facilitate further discussion of those articles by providing members of the public the opportunity to submit comments regarding the articles. Comments submitted by members of the public must be directly related to the content of the article. Submission of comments by members of the public constitutes participation in a limited public forum.

16.6.1 Procedures

All County blogs shall be:

1. Approved and reviewed by the Mason County department/office Elected Official and the Mason County Information Services Manager.

2. Published using the approved County blog sites (see Social Media Policy).

3. Administered by the Mason County Information Technology Department (except Mason County Sheriff's Office).

All Mason County blogs shall adhere to the following Revised Codes of Washington and County policies:

1. Mason County Electronic Information Acceptable Use Policy (Revision F)

2. Mason County Electronic Communications Policy

3. Mason County Personnel Policy

4. RCW 42.52 Ethic in Public Service

5. Mason County Facebook Standards

6. Mason County Twitter Standards

The Mason County department/office or Information Services Department reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of this blogging policy or any applicable law.

1. Mason County blogs are subject to State of Washington public records laws. All blog sites shall clearly indicate that any content posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure. All blog sites shall include a notification on the home page that public disclosure requests must be directed to the department's public disclosure officer. (See Mason County Social Media Policy)

2. Relevant Mason County records retention schedules apply to blogs and blog content. Records required to be maintained pursuant to a relevant records retention schedule shall be maintained for the required retention period in a format that preserves the integrity of the original record and is easily accessible using the approved retention and archiving program. Content submitted for posting that is deemed not suitable for posting on a Mason County Blog by a moderator because it is not topically related to the particular blog article being commented upon or is deemed prohibited content based on the criteria in Section 7 of this policy, shall be retained pursuant to the records retention schedule along with a description of the reason the specific content is deemed not suitable for posting.

3. Each County blog shall include an introductory statement which clearly specifies the purpose and topical scope of the blog.

4. County blog articles and comments containing any of the following forms of content shall not be allowed for posting:

    a. Comments not topically related to the blog article being commented upon.
    b. Profane language or content.

c. Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination based on race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status regarding public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation.
d. Comments that support or oppose political campaigns or ballot measures.
e. Sexual content or links to sexual content.
f. Solicitations of commerce.
g. Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity.
h. Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems.
i. Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party

5. Mason County blog moderators shall allow blog comments that are topically related to the blog article being commented and thus within the purpose of the limited public forum, except for the prohibited content listed above.

6. All Mason County blog moderators shall be trained regarding the terms of this Mason County Blogging Policy, including their responsibilities to review article content submitted for posting to ensure compliance with the Policy.

7. All blog sites shall clearly indicate that they are maintained by a particular Mason County department/office and shall have the Mason County department's/office contact information prominently displayed.

16.6.2 Author and Commenter Identification
All Mason County blog authors shall be clearly identified by entering their name at the end of the post.

Public commenters shall be accompanied by valid contact information including the poster's Facebook or Twitter I.D. Anonymous posting shall not be allowed.

Authentication credentials used for posting blog articles and blog comments by authorized Mason County department/office blog authors shall conform to the County's password standard.

16.6.3 Ownership and Moderation
The content of each Mason County blog shall be the sole responsibility of the department/office producing and using the blog.

Comments submitted to a Mason County blog shall be moderated by an authorized blog moderator that has been trained and assigned by the department/office manager.

16.6.4 Blog Comments and Responses
All blog articles submitted with attached content shall be scanned using antivirus technology prior to posting.

The linked content of embedded hyperlinks within any Mason County blog articles or blog comments submitted for posting shall be evaluated prior to posting. Any posted hyperlinks shall be accompanied by a disclaimer stating that "Mason County guarantees neither the authenticity, accuracy, appropriateness nor security of the link, web site or content linked thereto."

16.7 Facebook Standards Policy

Facebook is a social networking site. Businesses and governments have joined individuals in using Facebook to promote activities, programs, projects, and events. This standard is designed for County departments / Offices looking to drive traffic to the Mason County Web sites (www.masoncountywa.gov) and to inform more people about County's activities. These standards should be used in conjunction with the County's Blogging Policy and Social Media Policy. As Facebook changes, these standards may be updated as needed.

16.7.1 Establishing a Page

When a department determines it has a business need for a Facebook account, it will submit a request through their chain of command to the Elected Official or Division Director. Once approved by their Elected Official or Division Director, the department social media personnel will create the page which will include the official County logo.

16.7.2 Content

1. Type of 'pages'

   a. The County department will create "pages" on Facebook not "groups". Facebook "pages" offer distinct advantages including greater visibility, customization, and measurability. Related community pages are unofficial representations of county business created by Facebook. Community pages will currently be accepted as is unless there is a copyright/trademark issue.
   b. For "type" description, choose "government".

2. Page Design Requirements
   a. The Mason County logo is to be added to the cover photo.
   b. Departments will complete the Page Info section as fully as possible.
   c. If comments are turned on, the Facebook page should include a tab/link to a Comment Policy tab with the following disclaimer:

Comments posted to this page will be monitored. Under the Mason County blogging policy, the County reserves the right to remove inappropriate comments including 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 propositions, promote illegal activity, promote commercial services or products, or are not topically related to the particular posting.

3. Link to the Mason County Website
   a. Link to (www.masoncountywa.gov) will be included on the "Page" information section.
   b. County department and project pages should be page favorites of other County Facebook pages.

4. Page Naming

   a. Page name should be descriptive of the department.
      o Departments will choose carefully with consideration for abbreviations, slang iterations, etc.
      o The Division Director will approve proposed names.

5. Page Administrators

a. A successful page requires "babysitting." Each department communications officer is responsible for monitoring the Facebook page. Posts should be approved by the Division Director or a designated alternate.

b. The department communications officer is responsible for making sure content is not stale. Departments will designate a back-up editor in communications officer's absence.

c. The Information Service department will be provided logins, passwords and editing rights by the Division Director or Elected Official for emergency editing.

6. Comments and Discussion Boards

a. Comments to department / office postings generally will be allowed but will be monitored by department / office communications officer for proper content.

b. Discussion boards will be monitored by the communications officer for proper content.

7. Style

a. County Department Facebook cover page will display the official County logo. The Information Services Department will provide departments with the official county logo.

b. Departments will use proper grammar and standard Associated Press (AP) style, avoiding jargon and abbreviations. Facebook is more casual than most other communication tools but still always represents the County.

8. Applications and Security

a. There are thousands of Facebook applications. Common applications can allow users to stream video and music, post photos, and view. While some may be useful to the page's mission, they can cause clutter and security risks.

b. An application should not be used unless it serves a business purpose, adds to the user experience, comes from a trusted source, and is **approved** by the Elected Official or Division Director.

c. An application may be removed at any time if there is significant reason to think it is causing a security breach or spreading viruses.

d. For security purposes, all Facebook accounts logins and password will be kept by the assigned department communications officers, Division Director / Elected Official, and Information Services.

16.7.3 Archive

Each Facebook page will be set up in conjunction by Information Services to a designated county account. Mason County's social media sites are subject to State of Washington public records laws RCW 42.56.

Content that cannot be retrieved from Facebook via the approved retention and archiving program, but need to be retained as a record, will be printed, and maintained according to the County's records retention policy by that individual department / office utilizing the account.

16.8 Twitter Standards Policy

Twitter is a micro blogging tool that allows account holders to tweet up to 140 characters of information to followers. By procuring and maintaining Twitter accounts, County departments will communicate

information directly to their Twitter followers, alerting them to news and directing them to the Mason County Website (www.masoncountywa.gov) for more information. These standards should be used in conjunction with the County's Social Media Policy.

16.8.1 Content

1. Department communications officer shall hold and maintain their department's Twitter account.

a. Each department will have only one Twitter account, unless otherwise approved by the Elected Official or Division Director. Account information, including usernames and passwords, shall be registered, and updated with the department Communications officer, Division Director, and Elected Official. The Information Service department will be provided logins, passwords and editing rights by the Division Director or Elected Official for emergency editing.

2. All Mason County department's Twitter bio will read: (Department name) Comments, list of followers subject to public disclosure (RCW 42.56). If appropriate the following will be added: This site is not monitored. Call 911 for emergencies.

3. Twitter usernames shall begin with "Mason" (MasonParks, MasonPW and MasonPH). In cases where the username is too many characters, begin with "MC" (MCProsecutor).

4. Department Twitter account backgrounds will share an official Mason County logo provided by the Information Services Department.

5. Twitter accounts shall serve three primary purposes:

   a. Get emergency information in/out quickly.
   b. Promote County-sponsored events.
   c. Refer followers to content hosted at www.masoncountywa.gov

7. Information posted on Twitter shall conform to the policies and procedures of the County Social Media Policy and the department / office posting the information. Tweets shall be relevant, timely and informative.

8. Twitter content is a short synopsis of information presented on the Mason County Website and other existing information dissemination mechanisms. Department communications officer shall ensure that information is posted correctly the first time. Twitter does not allow content editing.

9. Department communications officer shall be responsive to those citizens who communicate via Twitter's @reply or direct message functions. Communication with followers will be timely and consistent with existing protocols.

10. Mason County Information Services Department shall have the right to suspend or close a Twitter account for improper usage in alliance with the Mason County Social Media Policy.

16.8.2 Archive

The Department communications officer shall be responsible for archiving Twitter posts. Initial policy will be to archive Twitter postings with the approved retention and archiving program selected by the Information Services in accordance with RCW 42.56. In the retention and archiving program Twitter archives may not be visible to the public but will be accessible for public document retention purposes.