



Rules Committee Meeting  
Wednesday, May 6, 2026 - 5:00 PM  
AGENDA

1. Call to Order/Roll Call
2. Election of Chair
3. Social Media Policy
  - a. Policy draft
4. Council Rules; Devices
5. Speaker Attention
6. Procedure discussion for contacting city legal counsel
7. Other Business
8. Adjourn

## Social Media Policy

The City of Johnstown, Ohio endorses the secure use of social media to enhance communication, collaboration, and information exchange; streamline processes; and foster productivity. The policy establishes the City's position on the utility and management of social media and provides guidance on its management, administration and oversight.

The City maintains two official social media pages that it owns, oversees, manages, and controls: (1) the Johnstown Government Facebook page; and (2) the Johnstown, Ohio Police Department Facebook page.

### Definitions

- *Account*: The social media account and pages, e.g. Facebook page, Twitter account, etc.
- *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."
- *Page*: The specific portion of a social media outlet where content is displayed and managed by an individual or individuals with administrator rights.
- *Post*: Content an individual shares on a social media site or the act of publishing content on a site.
- *Profile*: Information users provide 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, Instagram, LinkedIn, MySpace, MeWe, WhatsApp, NextDoor, Pinterest, Reddit, TikTok and SnapChat.), microblogging sites (Twitter, Nixle), photo- and video-sharing sites (Flickr, YouTube), podcasts and vlogs, blogs and news sites.
- *Speech*: Expression or communication of thoughts or opinions in spoken words, in writing, by expressive conduct, symbolism, photographs, audio or video file or related forms of communication.
- *Wiki*: Web page(s) that can be edited collaboratively.

### Policy Guidelines

- A. It is the responsibility of all City personnel, including full-time, part-time and temporary associates, and all other individuals granted access to City technology systems to understand and follow this policy.
- B. This policy governs all City-maintained or owned social media sites, all content on City-maintained or owned social media sites, and any conduct that violates this policy or any other City policy.
- C. The use of social media shall adhere to all applicable state, federal and local laws and regulations, including e-discovery laws, as well as all City policies, rules or Administrative Orders, including without limitation the City's policies against harassment and discrimination.
- D. The State of Ohio public records laws and policies apply to most City social media postings and content, therefore, content must be able to be managed, stored and retrieved

to comply with these laws and the City's records retention policy. All official City-maintained and owned social media accounts should clearly indicate that any content posted is subject to public disclosure.

- E. The use of City computers by associates to access social media during work time is prohibited without prior authorization from the individual's supervisor.
- F. Associates shall observe and abide by all copyright, trademark and service mark restrictions in posting materials to social media.
- G. Associates must protect information that is considered confidential in nature. Confidential information does not include information related to the terms and conditions of an associate's employment (e.g. wages, benefits, etc.).
- H. Associates found to be in violation of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.
- I. City associates and employees are responsible for informing City officials of any inappropriate posts on City social media sites.

#### Potential Uses of Social Media

- A. Social media is a valuable tool for police when seeking evidence or information about:
  - Missing persons.
  - Wanted persons.
  - Criminal activity.
  - Crimes perpetrated online (i.e., cyberbullying, cyberstalking).
  - Photos or videos of a crime posted by a participant or observer.
- B. Social media can be used for community outreach and engagement by:
  - Providing crime prevention tips and sharing crime maps and data.
  - Soliciting tips about unsolved crimes (i.e., Crimestoppers, text-a-tip).
  - Sharing City events, services and community emergency information.
- C. Social media can be used to make time-sensitive notifications related to:
  - Road closures.
  - Special events.
  - Weather emergencies.
  - Missing or endangered persons.
  - Persons seeking employment and volunteer positions.

#### City-approved Sites and Users

- A. All City-maintained or owned social media sites or pages shall be approved by the City Manager or a designee, and shall be administered by the City Manager's office.
- B. Authorized users of official City social media accounts include only those authorized by the City Manager or designees.

- C. Only authorized users are permitted to comment publicly, post content or otherwise represent the City on any social media site or page.
- D. Where possible, social media sites or pages shall clearly indicate they are maintained by the City with contact information prominently displayed.
- E. Where possible, City-maintained or owned social media sites or pages should state that the opinions expressed by visitors to the page(s) do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the City or Department.
- F. City or Department associates and employees representing the City via social media outlets shall do the following:
  1. Conduct themselves at all times as representatives of the City and adhere to all City standards of conduct and observe conventionally accepted protocols and proper decorum.
  2. Utilize professional, courteous language.
  3. Identify themselves as a representative or associate of the City.
  4. Not conduct unauthorized political or religious activities or private business.

#### Content Management

- A. All City-maintained or owned social media sites or pages:
  1. Must indicate that posted comments will be monitored and the City reserves the right to remove obscenities, off-topic comments and personal attacks.
  2. Shall clearly indicate that any content posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure.
  3. Shall contain the following disclaimer:

*The purpose of this site is to provide a limited forum for matters of public interest in Johnstown, Ohio. We encourage you to submit your questions, comments and concerns, but please be aware accounts are not monitored at all times. This is a moderated, limited forum and not a public forum. As such, the City of Johnstown reserves the right to delete submissions/postings that contain:*

- *vulgar, bigoted or profane comments and/or language;*
- *personal attacks of any kind;*
- *offensive comments that are threatening, harassing or discriminatory in nature;*
- *solicitations of commerce, spam, links to other sites or any advertisements;*
- *information that is clearly off topic or not topically related to the particular site or blog article being commented upon;*
- *anything implying, promoting or advocating illegal activity;*
- *false or misleading information;*
- *the promotion of particular services, products, or religious or political organizations;*
- *an infringement of copyrights, trademarks or other intellectual property;*
- *personally identifiable medical information;*
- *sexual content (explicit or implied) or links to sexual content;*

- *information that compromises the safety or security of the public or public systems; or*
- *any information, by its nature or content, which may harm the public welfare.*

*The City of Johnstown retains the right to remove posts or block individuals who violate these guidelines. The opinions and/or views expressed on the City of Johnstown's social media sites represent the thoughts of individual followers and not those of the City of Johnstown and its associates.*

- B. Posts or comments that offer thoughtful criticism of the City or its Departments and its initiatives will not be removed or altered except as provided for in this policy or as required by law.

### Personal Use

- A. City associates, employees, and officials have a right to use social media outside of work, but this right comes with added responsibility and an associate's use of such technology constitutes consent to being monitored by the public and the City of Johnstown. While this policy is not meant to infringe upon one's First Amendment rights, it is important to note that an associate enjoys no expectation of privacy to information posted on social media even while off duty. Because of this, an associate should use common sense when posting comments, photos, opinions or any other information related to any associate's employment.
- B. City officials that maintain personal, public, or politician social media accounts should include the following disclaimers:
1. "This is the personal page of [*insert name*]."
  2. "The views expressed are strictly my own. I do not have authority to speak on the City of Johnstown's behalf."
- C. Barring state law or binding employment contracts to the contrary, City associates and employees shall abide by the following when using social media for personal use.
1. City associates and employees should keep personal use of social media while at work to an absolute minimum.
  2. City associates and employees are free to express themselves as private citizens on social media sites to the degree that their speech does not impair working relationships in the City for which loyalty and confidentiality are important, impede the performance of their job duties, impair discipline and harmony among co-workers or negatively affect the public perception of the City.
  3. City associates and employees are cautioned that speech on- or off-duty, made pursuant to their official duties (owing its existence to the associate's professional duties and responsibilities) is not protected speech under the First Amendment and may form the basis for discipline if deemed detrimental to the City.
  4. Associates and employees are encouraged to remember that not every associate or employee chooses to share personal information online and associates should consider the privacy interests of their co-workers before discussing them online. In addition, law enforcement officers are specifically cautioned not to do the following:

- a. Ensure that any display of department logos, uniforms or similar identifying items on personal web or social media pages is consistent with all City policies.
  - b. Law enforcement officers who are, or who may reasonably be expected to work in undercover operations shall not post any form of visual or personal identification.
5. When using social media, City associates and employees should be mindful that their speech becomes part of the worldwide electronic domain. Therefore, adherence to the City's policies and procedures, including but not limited to the City's policy against discrimination and harassment, is required in the personal use of social media.
6. City and Department personnel may not divulge information gained by reason of their authority; make any statements, speeches, appearances or endorsements; or publish materials that could reasonably be considered to represent the views or positions of the City without express authorization.
7. City associates and employees should be aware that they may be subject to civil litigation for:
  - a. Defamation: publishing or posting false information that harms the reputation of another person, group or organization;
  - b. Publishing or posting private facts and personal information about someone without their permission that has not been previously revealed to the public, is not of legitimate public concern, and would be offensive to a reasonable person;
  - c. Using someone else's name, likeness or other personal attributes without that person's permission for an exploitative purpose; or
  - d. Publishing the creative work of another, trademarks or certain confidential business information without the permission of the owner.

Every individual associate and employee is personally responsible for any content published online, no matter the social media platform. Associates and employees should be mindful that what is published online could be public for a very long time. Associates and employees are also cautioned to understand an individual site's terms of service.

### **INSERT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM**

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