

Board of County Commissioners



Social Media Policy



Social Media Policy

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1. County Use of Social Media

1.1. Purpose and Intent

As more and more citizens in our community make the shift towards, or include the use of, social technologies to receive and share information and communicate their opinions, it is imperative that the Board of County Commissioners includes these technologies as part of its efforts to enhance customer service and outreach and increase citizen awareness.

It is the policy of the Board of County Commissioners that a standard for interaction with Social Media tools and their associated technology is hereby established.

The Social Media Policy will be used to establish operational procedures for the use of social media efforts for the Board of County Commissioners. This policy identifies Camden County's social media goals, defines social media platforms and target audiences, and establishes account management rules and procedures. Additionally, a useful means of measurable tracking and evaluation of social media efforts will be set forth in this policy.

Social media will be used to facilitate simple and streamlined two-way community communication between Camden County Board of County Commissioners and the public. All means of communication through social media entered into by any individual officially representing Camden County, as well as any statements posted by community participants of the County's social media, sites shall be subject to public records law.

The objectives of the Social Media Policy are:

- to establish Social Media Platforms;
- to establish Target Audiences;
- to establish Account Management;
- and to establish Social Media Measurement tactics.

1.2. Mission Statement

The mission for the use of social media is to receive and share information regarding matters pertaining to the Board of County Commissioners, to promote the interests of local government while serving the needs of the members of our community, to enhance customer service and outreach initiatives, as well as increase citizen involvement.

1.3. Vision Statement

The vision of the Social Media Policy is to further grow a strong relationship between the community and its County Government through the use of new and modern technology.

1.4. Definitions

Social Media: Generally, "social media" refers to a site or online process designed to facilitate simple and streamlined communication between users. Social media sites differ from conventional communication media such as online newspapers and magazines in that social media sites tend to be less structured and complex as well as more user-friendly, personal, and intimate in nature. Additionally, social media sites tend to offer tools which allow for quick, unfiltered, and often spontaneous communication opportunities.

Social Network: For the purposes of this document, the term "social network" or "social networking"

refers to any interaction between a participant and any site deemed by Camden County to be social media, including, but not limited to: Facebook, GovLoop, LinkedIn, MySpace, Twitter, and YouTube. Interaction is not limited to accessing the above listed social media websites, but also includes the sending to or receiving from such sites any emails, text messages, or other electronic interaction or communication.

Official: In terms of this policy, “official” refers to any social media site account or process established by the County, its employees, agents, or contractors, which serves the purposes of communicating sanctioned County information or engaging citizens in discussion about topics, services, or processes under the auspices of the County.

Social Media Account: “Social media account” shall mean any registration, login credential, tool, forum, website or network that is created or maintained by a Department for the purpose of establishing or perpetuating a social media presence.

Social Media News Release (SMNR): The “Social Media News Release” (SMNR) has significant benefits over the standard press release format. The capability of SMNR’s to embed high resolution images and video, and the potential for sharing across the social web makes news more reader-friendly, accessible, and useful. SMNR’s assists journalists in gaining additional information quickly and easily through the utilization of embedded links, and the ability to download supporting multimedia files without having to request them.¹

Authorized User: “Authorized User” shall mean any employee, or any person acting on their behalf, who has been authorized by their Department Director and registered with and approved by the County Administrator to establish, create, edit, or maintain any social media account, and the posts it may contain, in the transaction of official business of the Board of County Commissioners.

Post: The term “post” shall mean any e-mail, message, picture, graphic, image, advertisement, notification, feed, stream, transmission, broadcast, podcast, video, instant message, text message, blog, microblog, status update, wall post, comment, and any and all other forms, means, or attempts at collaboration or communication that is uploaded, posted to, or otherwise displayed on or transmitted by, any social media account or network.

External Entity: The term “external entity” shall mean any person or party not operating as an authorized representative of the Camden County Board of Commissioners.

External Information: The term “external information” shall mean any social media post by any external entity, and the information or substance it contains.

2. Social Media Platforms [to include but not limited to]

2.1. Facebook

Facebook is a social network service and website that was launched in February 2004, operated and privately owned by Facebook, Inc. As of January 2011, Facebook has more than 600 million active users. As user numbers continue to rise across all demographics, cities and counties across the country are utilizing Facebook to maximize their image on Facebook and promote services.² Facebook is a fully fledged news organization on a scale we have never seen.³ Camden County will develop a customized page for the Board of County Commissioners to promote services, upcoming events, and accomplishments.⁴ Additionally, this outlet will accommodate SMNRs.

A Facebook page will allow Camden County Board of County Commissioners to build a stronger

social connection to the community by taking advantage of unique Facebook features and tools including status updates, wall posts, polling applications, opportunities for discussions, sharing of videos and photos, and much else. ⁵ By utilizing these features to obtain more citizen feedback, input, and opinions, Camden County Board of County Commissioners can connect more readily and easily with citizens.

2.2. Twitter

Twitter is a website, owned and operated by Twitter Inc., which offers a social networking and microblogging service, enabling its users to send and read messages called tweets. Tweets are text-based posts of up to 140 characters displayed on the user's profile page. Tweets are publicly visible by default; however, senders can restrict message delivery to just their followers. Users may subscribe to other users' tweets – this is known as following and subscribers are known as followers or tweeps (Twitter + peeps).⁵ A Twitter account will promote services, upcoming events, and accomplishments of the BOCC. Additionally, this outlet will accommodate SMNRs.

2.3. YouTube

YouTube is a video-sharing website on which users can upload, share, and view videos.⁶ YouTube can be used by the Board of County Commissioners to create videos (i.e., a message from the Chair or County Administrator, a ribbon cutting ceremony, an update on a new or existing service, etc.). Additionally, this outlet will accommodate SMNRs.

2.4. GovLoop

GovLoop is the premier social network for the government community to connect and share information about government services through blogs. Information such as blog postings, photo and video sharing, and job postings are shared through this social network. GovLoop is open to all members of the government community, from federal, state, and local government employees.⁷

2.5. LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a social network within the larger world of social media that focuses on the business community. LinkedIn is utilized by account holders to seek employment as well as expand their network of professional contacts. LinkedIn can also be utilized to market businesses or organizations by connecting with former, current, or potential employees or partners. Additionally, businesses or organizations can connect with former, current, or potential customers by answering questions, participating in discussions, and more.

LinkedIn aims to enhance and assist professional networking efforts and growth. Its mission is to assist in the increase of organizational and personal productivity and success by allowing organizations, businesses, and professionals to connect and network. With many businesses, organizations, and professionals utilizing this social media site, LinkedIn fosters network growth, recommendation sharing, employment opportunities, and discussions. ⁸

3. Target Audience

3.1. Residents

The Board of County Commissioners will use social media efforts to target residents of Camden County. Residents will be able to receive the most current news from their local government by keeping up with posts such as status updates, photos, videos, and links from the official page.

3.2. Visitors

The Board of County Commissioners will use social media efforts to target visitors of Camden County. Those living outside of the community will be able to keep up with current local government initiatives.

3.3. Employees

The Board of County Commissioners will use social media efforts to communicate messages to employees. Employees will receive information in a faster, more efficient, way.

3.4. Community Partners

The Board of County Commissioners will use social media efforts to target community partners, such as other government entities, potential vendors, non-profit organizations, and businesses.

4. Account Management

4.1. Establishment of Social Media

All official Camden County social media site accounts and pages will be established and administered by the Office of the County Administrator. These social media sites shall be used for the limited purpose of informing the public about County business, services, and events. In the absence of staff in the Office of the County Administrator, a designee(s), or other authorized user(s), will administer all official County social media sites.

Individual departments may not establish their own pages, sites, or accounts. Individual departments wishing to add content to official County social media sites may submit a request to the Office of the County Administrator. For social media networks, such as Facebook, individual groups may be established (e.g., all employees, or a single department) to reach a specific target audience to communicate messages that may pertain only to that group of individuals.

4.2. Administration and Employee Access

Any official Camden County social media site or account may be accessed by the Office of the County Administrator and other authorized users, if necessary, to communicate urgent information, or make corrections to inappropriate or inaccurate information, or in accordance with any policy, procedure, or law which requires such access. The County reserves the right to temporarily or permanently disable any social media site, account, or tool which is in violation of any County network security policy or otherwise causes a threat to the security of County systems.

Prior to the discussion of any Board of County Commissioners related matter on social media sites or in the public domain, consultation with the County Administrator must occur. Content posted by authorized users of the County social media accounts must represent the County's point-of-view and not those of individual employees. Further clarification can be obtained through additional consultations with the County Administrator.

The sharing of information that has already been approved by the County Administrator to be disseminated by means of press releases, email, and other traditional means of communication to employees and the public will automatically be pre-approved to be disseminated by means of social media platforms.

County employees should understand the intended perception of the Board of County Commissioners on social media sites as being professional and official. If an employee identifies his or herself as an employee of the Board of County Commissioners or has a public facing position for which an association with the Board of County Commissioners is known to the general public, he or she should ensure that his or her profile and related content (even if it is personal and not an official nature) is consistent with how he or she wishes to present his or herself as a Board of County Commissioners professional, appropriate with the public trust associated with his or her position, and conforming to existing standards that already exist in policies of Board of County Commissioners.

Employees should have no expectations of privacy once they have introduced their association with the Board of County Commissioners publicly.

4.3. Appropriate Use

Because social media sites and tools offer a variety of communication options, the following shall apply to any official social media site or tool to ensure every effort to align with First Amendment rights, public records laws, Freedom of Information Act requests, and others:

- **Advertising.** Third party advertisements are to be disabled on any official social media site or tool.
- **Comments.** Comments on social media sites and tools are to be treated as public comment under open meeting law. It is the policy of the County not to respond directly to public comments. As such, when comments are active, no representative of the County may respond, on the social media tool or site, to any citizen comment placed. County representatives may, and are encouraged to, follow up with any citizen to help answer questions or resolve issues directly. Responses to inaccurate information must be added as a new topic if possible. Comments made by citizens are considered public comment, and may not be removed except as allowed or required by law. There is no requirement that the ability to comment must be turned on, and this decision can be made on a site by site basis.
- **Photos, Videos, and other Multimedia.** No photos, videos, or other multimedia files may be posted to an official social media site or tool unless the County or its agents have expressed permission by the copyright holder to do so, or ownership of said files belongs to the County. Unless properly disclaimed on the official social media site, no such files may be contributed by users without expressed written permission of the copyright holder of said files.
- **Alerts and Emergency Information.** All information of an emergency nature must be approved by a department head, manager, or emergency coordinator before it may be disseminated on an official social media site.
- **Personal Information.** Official social media sites shall not be used to send out or promote any information of a non County-approved nature. All information posted by the County or its agents must be for the purpose of communicating County information or services.
- **Chat.** Chat functions in any social media sites will not be used.
- **External Links.** The appearance of external links on social media sites does not constitute official endorsement on behalf of the Board of County Commissioners.
- **Prohibited Information.** No content may be placed on an official County social media site or tool which violates existing County policies including, but not limited to, sexual harassment, discrimination and harassment, workplace violence, or other adopted County Policies. This includes content that is sexually explicit, that creates a hostile work environment, or that promotes hatred or violence. As allowed or required by law, comments or other materials placed on a County social media tool or site which violate any of these policies must be removed immediately.
- **Disclaimers.** All official County social media sites or tools must prominently display applicable social media disclaimers and legal statements as determined by the County's legal counsel.

4.4. Location of Information

The Camden County website, located at www.co.camden.ga.us, is to be the primary source of information of a County nature. Supplementary sites, such as social media sites and tools, should introduce information, and link to the Camden County website for complete and detailed information. In no case shall a social media site or tool be the exclusive or primary source of information of a County nature.

Each social media site used by the Board of County Commissioners shall include an introductory statement that clearly specifies the purpose of the site and directs the user back to the County's Web site. All social media sites must clearly indicate that all posts are subject to public records laws.

Departments or divisions who have official websites other than www.co.camden.ga.us must use their official site as the primary source of information.

4.5. Security Guidelines

In general, approved users should show caution when interacting with external entities, those both known and unknown to the user. If at all in doubt of the legitimacy of any information received, the said information is to be avoided.

The following security guidelines should be adhered to by authorized users of County social media accounts:

- Employ strong passwords which cannot be easily compromised by brute force attacks.
- Periodically change passwords to social media accounts, and immediately communicate any changes to other authorized users.
- Refrain from adding, installing, attaching or linking to any additional external services or applications that may potentially grant or enable access to the content, information, or posts within the social media account.
- Use caution when accessing links received from external entities.
- Exercise caution when utilizing shortened links (links that have been shortened for ease of relaying the original link), as these may lead to a malicious site. Avoid clicking on shortened links. Consider requesting the link be re-sent in another form.
- Be watchful for spoofed emails and/or websites (seemingly official-looking communications that lead the user to a malicious website or attempt to solicit the user's personal or financial information). Consult the Division of Information Technology regarding any security related matters.

4.6. Applicability of Other Policies

Camden County employees, agents, volunteers, and contractors are bound by all other applicable policies, procedures, and laws pertaining to the creation and maintenance of an official social media site or tool.

For reference:

- Camden County Internet and Intranet Acceptable Use Policy
- Camden County Code of Conduct Policy
- Sexual Harassment Policy

4.7. Effective Date

This policy is effective as of July 01, 2011.

5. Social Media Measurement⁹

5.1. Exposure

Measuring exposure refers to the number of people reached and can be accounted for by identifying the number of fans, friends, followers, or views of social media accounts or content. These measurements highlight the number of people attracted to local government through social media. To mitigate the potential for duplication of users, track growth rate as a percentage of the aggregate totals.

Facebook. Exposure to content on Facebook can be identified by tracking the total number of fans for the page. Additionally, exposure can be measured by reviewing the number of friends from those who became friends during a specified period of time or during a promotion and those who commented on or liked posts to identify the potential monthly Facebook reach. Facebook Insights provides value.

Twitter. By tracking the total number of followers and the number of followers for those who retweeted the message can determine the monthly potential reach. By tracking these separately and then comparing the month-over-month growth rate of each of these metrics, the most growth can be determined. TweetReach is a measurement tool for Twitter that can be employed.

YouTube. To measure exposure on YouTube, identify the number of views for videos for a specific period of time (i.e. one month or one year) as well as the total number of subscribers.

5.2. Engagement

Engagement refers to the number of actions resulting as a response from external entities to content posted by the County. Engagement can be measured through the use of tools such as Radian 6, Biz360, and TweetEffect. These metrics highlight external entities that should be targeted with retention efforts through social media channels.

Facebook. Engagement can be monitored on Facebook by determining the number of times posted links are clicked and messages/posts are commented on. Further analysis can be obtained by identifying the number of people who initiate the above mentioned interactions. It is also beneficial to track wall posts and private messages that can be linked to the activity that is directly tied to a specific social media campaign.

Twitter. Engagement can be measured on Twitter by quantifying the number of times posted links are clicked, number of messages that are retweeted, and number of times that the hashtag is used. Further analysis can be conducted by identifying the number of people responsible for the above mentioned activity. It is also beneficial to track @replies and direct messages that can be linked to the specific campaign activity.

YouTube. Engagement can be measured on YouTube by identifying the number of comments on posted videos, the number of times posted videos are rated, the number of times posted videos are shared, and the number of new subscribers to the YouTube channel.

5.3. Influence

Influence is a subjective metric that relies on perspective for definition. This refers to determining the sentiment of engagement metrics as positive, neutral, or negative in nature.

5.4. Social Media Return on Investment

Investment in social media efforts should be justified and reported on a semi-annual basis by means of documentation using metrics such as exposure, engagement, and influence to determine the value of this online community outreach initiative.

This policy was officially approved by unanimous vote and adopted by the Board of County Commissioners on Tuesday, June 21, 2011.

References:

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- ⁸ Duermyer, Randy. "LinkinIn." *Home Business*. <http://homebusiness.about.com/od/homebusinessglossar1/g/linkedin-what-is-linkedin.htm>, accessed 09 June 2011.
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