



SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

August 3, 2016

1. Summary

Erie County recognizes the vital importance of engaging online with the public. Erie County is committed to participating and listening in meaningful ways by using social media. Outreach through social media sites is intended to supplement traditional communication methods. Erie County encourages the secure use of social media technology to enhance communication, collaboration and information exchange with the public; and fostering a culture of engagement. Social media tools should be used for only the following purposes:

- To deliver public information and public relations to Erie County residents
- To communicate directly to the public especially during emergencies
- To increase government transparency

This document establishes Erie County-wide social media use policies, protocols and procedures. This policy applies to all Erie County employees, interns, volunteers and contractors performing business on behalf of an Erie County department, agency, or office of elected official. Erie County departments, agencies, or offices of elected officials using social media technology prior to the implementation of this social media policy shall achieve full policy compliance within 90 days of the effective date of this document.

Wherever possible, all Erie County social media sites shall comply with all appropriate existing Erie County policies and standards, including but limited to:

- Erie County IT Policy
- Erie County Personnel Policy

2. Authorized Use

Erie County employees, interns, volunteers and contractors using social media sites for Erie County business must adhere to the following as authorized social media administrators:

- Department heads and/or elected officials are responsible for determining who is authorized to use social media on behalf of the department, agency, or office of elected official.
- All Erie County employees, interns, volunteers and contractors using social media for a department, agency, or office of elected official must register with the Division of Information & Support Services as an approved social media administrator.
- Authorized administrators shall be provided with a copy of Erie County's Social Media Policy and are required to acknowledge their understanding and acceptance of this document with a signature.
- Departments shall only utilize Erie County-approved social media networks detailed in this document for hosting official social media sites.

3. Approved Social Media Sites & Standards

The Erie County Division of Information & Support Services has approved the following social media sites for department, agency, or elected official use:

- Facebook
- Twitter
- YouTube
- LinkedIn
- Instagram

For each approved network, usage standards are included in this document. A department may request review and approval of additional social media networks as needed. Social media networks are subject to change.

Social Media Account Standards

By developing and maintaining social media accounts, Erie County departments, agencies, and offices of elected officials will communicate information directly to their platform followers, alerting them to news and directing them back to the appropriate page on www.erie.gov for more information. Erie County employees, interns, volunteers and contractors who are designated as approved administrators of department, agency, or elected official social media accounts must adhere to the following standards:

- Any new department social media accounts should be created under the supervision of the Erie County Division of Information & Support Services. Only those employees, interns, volunteers or contractors who have been designated as administrators may post on behalf of that department's Facebook account.
- Each department, division, agency, or office of elected official shall have only one Facebook page.
- Erie County departments, agencies, or offices of elected officials must create public facing "pages," not groups or personal accounts. Social media accounts should be designated as "official accounts" and marked as "government" when such option to specify exists.
- Account information, including usernames and passwords, shall be registered with the Erie County Division of Information & Support Services. Changes to usernames and passwords shall be provided to the Erie County Division of Information & Support Services.
- Each department, division, agency, or office of elected officials shall have unique email accounts for each social media account {[DEPT](mailto:DEPT@erie.gov)}SocialMedia@erie.gov which will be set up and maintained by the Erie County Division of Information & Support Services
- Social media accounts shall serve three primary purposes:
 1. Get information out quickly
 2. Promote Erie County-sponsored events
 3. Refer followers to informational content hosted at www.erie.gov
- Erie County's Comment Policy disclaimer should be included in the description page: "Comments posted to this account will be monitored. Erie County reserves the right to remove inappropriate comments including, but not limited to, 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.”

- Departments, agencies, and offices of elected officials should affiliate with other Erie County social media accounts and agencies that the department, agency, or office of elected official may work with. Special attention should be paid that Erie County is not promoting non-profit and for-profit businesses that do not have Erie County contracts or business.
- Add-on applications should not be used unless they serve a government purpose.
- Comply with each platform’s user terms and conditions
- Information posted on social media shall conform to the policies and procedures of the department, agency, or office of elected official posting the information. Content shall be relevant, timely and informative.

4. Social Media Use

Erie County’s website will remain the primary and predominant source for online information about Erie County. The goal of social media is to give short pieces of news and information and link users back to www.erie.gov.

Department, agency, or offices of elected official social media administrators are responsible for establishing and maintaining content posted to their social media sites. The Division of Information and Support Services will oversee the department, agency, or office of elected official personnel’s social media usage. The following standards apply for social media use:

- Employees, interns, volunteers and contractors must not use official Erie County social media sites for political purposes, to conduct private commercial transactions or to engage in private business activities.
- Employees, interns, volunteers and contractors must never use their personal or Erie County email account or password in conjunction with a social media site.
- Account usernames and passwords must be registered with the department head or elected official and the Division of Information & Support Services. Changes to usernames and passwords must be provided to the Erie County Division of Information & Support Services.
- Department heads, elected officials, and the Division of Information & Support Services will monitor social media activity and content daily.

Employees, interns, volunteers and contractors representing Erie County through social media outlets must maintain a high level of ethical conduct and professional decorum. Information must be presented following professional standards for good grammar, spelling, brevity, clarity and accuracy. Employees, interns, volunteers and contractors may not publish information on social media sites that include:

- Confidential information
- Copyright violations
- Profanity, racist, sexist or derogatory content or comments
- Partisan political views
- Commercial endorsements or spam

5. Sharing Posts & Links

Sharing or posting content owned by others shall be performed in accordance with copyright, fair use and established laws pertaining to materials owned by others. This includes, but is not limited to,

quotes, images, documents, links, etc. Social media content from select partners may be shared. Content from agencies that do business with Erie County is permitted, but content from any agency or business that does not do business with Erie County should not be posted.

Acceptable sources for sharing posts and information:

- Partners in state and federal government
- Non-profit or public organizations that have some relationship to Erie County, usually contractual
- Tourist information, principally from Visit Buffalo Niagara

Unacceptable sources for sharing posts and information:

- Any agency or business that does not work with Erie County government
- Candidate sites or sites advocating a position on Erie County or ballot issues
- Corporate commercial sites
- Individual personal home pages

6. Comment Policy

Any social media accounts should post the following disclaimer to their pages when possible:

“Comments posted to this page will be monitored. Erie County reserves the right to remove inappropriate comments including, but not limited to, 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.”

Social media administrators may choose to reply to comments and engage residents in the same way one would reply to phone or email inquiries. In most cases, it will be appropriate to reply to the resident with contact information for the department that may be able to assist him or her.

7. Video and Images Policy

When posting images to social media, be sure copyright laws are not being violated. Administrators should not simply search the Internet for an image without first obtaining a release to do so because that could violate copyright law. Images should be appropriate to the subject matter being posted about at all times.

- The department must have secured rights to stream the videos by certifying that the video was produced by the department or with written permission for Erie County to host and stream the video.
- Copyright restrictions on graphics must be adhered to and noted when appropriate (i.e., attribution required as specified for any non-public domain/Creative Commons 0 files).
- Video content from sources other than Erie County or Erie County departments may not be embedded on www.erie.gov webpages. Links to external videos are permitted.

8. Oversight

The Division of Information & Support Services reserves the right to remove material that does or appears to:

- Contain anything vulgar, incites violence or is sexually explicit
- Be misleading or false
- Be spam

- Advocate or depict illegal activity
- Target, disparage or discriminate against any ethnic, racial, religious, gender or other type of group
- Contain threats or personal attacks of any kind
- Promote or endorse private business ventures, services or products
- Campaign for public office or promote a political organization or candidate
- Infringe on copyrights or trademarks or intellectual property rights of others
- Be off-topic or otherwise in violation of this social media policy
- Contain computer viruses, code or which otherwise may disrupt, damage or restrict the use of any computer software, hardware or telecommunications equipment

Archiving

Any content maintained in a social media format that is related to County business may be a public record subject to disclosure under the New York Freedom of Information Law (FOIL). Such content must also be retained in accordance with the New York Records Retention and Disposition Schedule CO-2. Designated social media administrators shall routinely, weekly or more frequently as needed, backup and/or extract data from social networking sites as such sites allow. In addition, designated social media administrators, may print and scan or print to pdf, webpages for archiving purposes. All archiving records shall be maintained in a central Department database and accessible to the Department’s FOIL officer.

Signatures

As a designated social media administrator for my department, I understand and agree to adhere to the standards outlined in this Erie County Social Media Policy.

Signature

Print name

Department

Job title

Social media sites used

Date