

## Department Use of Social Media

### 344.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy provides guidelines to ensure that any use of social media on behalf of the Department is consistent with the department mission.

This policy does not address all aspects of social media use. Specifically, it does not address:

- Personal use of social media by department members (see the Employee Speech, Expression and Social Networking Policy 1029).
- Use of social media in personnel processes (see the Recruitment and Selection Policy 1000).
- Use of social media as part of a criminal investigation, other than disseminating information to the public on behalf of this department (see the Investigation and Prosecution Policy 600).

#### 344.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

**Social media** - Any of a wide array of Internet-based tools and platforms that allow for the sharing of information, such as the department website or social networking services.

### 344.2 POLICY

The Beloit Police Department may use social media as a method of effectively informing the public about department services, issues, investigations and other relevant events.

Department members shall ensure that the use or access of social media is done in a manner that protects the constitutional rights of all.

### 344.3 AUTHORIZED USERS

Only members authorized by the Chief of Police or the authorized designee may utilize social media on behalf of the Department. Authorized members shall use only department-approved equipment during the normal course of duties to post and monitor department-related social media, unless they are specifically authorized to do otherwise by their supervisors.

The Chief of Police may develop specific guidelines identifying the type of content that may be posted. Any content that does not strictly conform to the guidelines should be approved by a supervisor prior to posting.

Authorized members consist of sworn personnel at the rank of Sergeant and above, Director of Support Services, Community Service Officers, and the Director of Strategic Communications. Requests to post information over department social media by members who are not authorized to post should be made through the member's chain of command.

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### **344.4 AUTHORIZED CONTENT**

Only content that is appropriate for public release, that supports the department mission and conforms to all department policies regarding the release of information may be posted.

Examples of appropriate content include:

- (a) Promotion of department-community engagement activities, events or announcements.
- (b) Tips and information related to crime prevention, recovered animals or property.
- (c) Investigative requests for information.
- (d) Requests that ask the community to engage in projects or surveys that are relevant to the department mission.
- (e) Real-time safety information that is related to in-progress crimes, geographical warnings or disaster information.
- (f) Traffic information.
- (g) Press releases.
- (h) Recruitment of personnel.

#### **344.4.1 INCIDENT-SPECIFIC USE**

In instances of active incidents where speed, accuracy and frequent updates are paramount (e.g., crime alerts, public safety information, traffic issues), the Shift Commander or designee should work collaboratively with the Director of Strategic Communications and is responsible for the compilation of information to be released to the public, subject to the approval of the Incident Commander. In the event of a critical incident (Officer-Involved Shootings and Deaths Policy 305), the release of information to the public is subject to the approval of the Chief of Police or authorized designee.

### **344.5 PROHIBITED CONTENT**

Content that is prohibited from posting includes, but is not limited to:

- (a) Content that is abusive, discriminatory, inflammatory or sexually explicit.
- (b) Any information that violates individual rights, including confidentiality and/or privacy rights and those provided under state, federal or local laws.
- (c) Any information that could compromise an ongoing investigation.
- (d) Any information that could tend to compromise or damage the mission, function, reputation or professionalism of the Beloit Police Department or its members.
- (e) Any information that could compromise the safety and security of department operations, members of the Department, victims, suspects or the public.
- (f) Any content posted for personal use.
- (g) Any content that has not been properly authorized by this policy or a supervisor.

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Any member who becomes aware of content on this department's social media site that he/she believes is unauthorized or inappropriate should promptly report such content to a supervisor. The supervisor will review the content and if determined to be inappropriate, ensure its removal from public view and investigate the cause of the entry. Such investigation shall be conducted in conformity with the Personnel Complaints Policy 1010.

### **344.5.1 PUBLIC POSTING PARAMETERS**

In order to promote our community policing philosophy and expeditiously acquire investigative assistance from the public, Department social media sites shall be designed and maintained to allow posting of responses to Department content by the public. However, members of the public shall not be allowed to direct post media (photos/video). Although the Department is unable to monitor content on a 24/7 basis, the Department designated social media monitor should work collaboratively with the Director of Strategic Communications to monitor and remove any offensive or inappropriate public postings, as well as respond to legitimate inquiries as soon as practicable.

Department social media should not be used by the public in lieu of calling 911 to report emergency or in-progress crimes.

The Department provides each member with a city email address to allow the public to contact department members directly.

### **344.6 MONITORING CONTENT**

The Director of Strategic Communications should, at least annually, review the use of department social media and report back on, at a minimum, the resources being used, the effectiveness of the content, any unauthorized or inappropriate content and the resolution of any issues.

### **344.7 RETENTION OF RECORDS**

The Director of Strategic Communications should work with the Custodian of Records to establish a method of ensuring that public records generated in the process of social media use are retained in accordance with established records retention schedules.

### **344.8 TRAINING**

Authorized members should receive training that, at a minimum, addresses legal issues concerning the appropriate use of social media sites, as well as privacy, civil rights, dissemination and retention of information posted on department sites.