

RESOLUTION

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Adopting the City of Watertown Social Media Policy

Council Member GARRABRANT, Shane A.

Council Member KIMBALL, Robert O.

Council Member OSBORNE Jr, Douglas E.

Council Member SHOEN, Benjamin P.

Mayor PIERCE, Sarah V.C.

Total

YEA	NAY
X	
X	
X	
X	
X	
5	0

Introduced by Council Member Robert O. Kimball

WHEREAS, on January 21, 2020, the City Council adopted Resolution No. 8, authorizing the establishment of an official Citywide Facebook page and directing the City Manager to develop rules and regulations governing postings, public comments, and administration of the page; and

WHEREAS, the City desires to establish a comprehensive Social Media Policy governing City-created and City-managed social media accounts, including their administration, content, public participation, security, and records retention; and

WHEREAS, the proposed Social Media Policy was provided to the City Council on October 5, 2026, for review and consideration;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby adopts the City of Watertown Social Media Policy; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the policy is attached hereto and made part of this Resolution and shall take effect immediately upon adoption.

Seconded by Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen

RESOLUTION

By: Council Member Robert O. Kimball

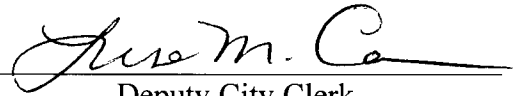
Date: October 19, 2026

Title: Resolution 8 - Adopting the City of Watertown Social Media Policy

STATE OF NEW YORK
JEFFERSON COUNTY
CITY OF WATERTOWN } ss:

I, Lisa M. Carr, Deputy City Clerk of the City of Watertown, hereby certify that the within Resolution was adopted at a meeting of the City Council of said City, held October 19, 2026 and that the same is the whole of said Resolution.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto
set my hand and affixed the seal of said City
of Watertown, New York


Deputy City Clerk

City of Watertown Social Media Policy

Purpose & Scope

On January 21, 2020, the City Council adopted Resolution No. 8, establishing one official Citywide Facebook page and authorizing the City Manager to develop rules and regulations governing its content, administration, and public comments. This policy builds upon that authorization and establishes updated standards for the City's official social media accounts.

The City of Watertown uses its official social media to provide residents with information about City services, programs, emergencies, and events. This policy applies to all City-created or City-managed social media accounts and anyone authorized to post on the City's behalf. This policy does not apply to third-party organizations, volunteer organizations, contractors, or independent entities.

Social media includes Facebook, X (Twitter), Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Threads, and other similar platforms. All official social media accounts are for City business only.

To ensure that the City's social media accounts are used for these intended purposes, it is necessary to establish rules of procedure for usage of such sites by City personnel and the public. Utilization of City-approved social media sites must adhere to this policy. The guidelines may be supplemented by administrative rules and regulations issued by the City. Other City policies, including the Use of Communication Systems and Equipment, remain applicable.

The City website shall remain the City's primary and predominant internet presence. Wherever practicable, content posted to official social media shall link back to the City website for more in-depth information, forms, documents, or online services.

This policy governs official City-created or City-managed social media accounts and persons authorized to post on behalf of the City through such official accounts. This policy does not regulate, restrict, or control the personal, campaign, political, constituent-service, or elected-official speech of the Mayor or any Councilor when such individual is speaking in an individual capacity and not posting on behalf of the City through an official City-created or City-managed account. The use of an elected official's title, photograph, or identification as a City official on a personal social media account does not convert the account into an official City account. Elected officials are encouraged to clearly distinguish personal, political, campaign, and constituent-service communications from official City communications issued through City-managed accounts. Statements made through such personal accounts represent the views of the account holder and not the City.

Accounts independently established or maintained by the Mayor or individual Council Members are not City-authorized social media accounts unless expressly approved under this policy. An official's title, photograph, or identification as a City official does not, by itself,

establish City authorization. This designation does not determine whether particular content is subject to FOIL, records retention requirements, or other applicable law.

Section 1 – Use of City Social Media by City Employees

Ownership & Administration

- All official accounts, content, and messages are property of the City.
- Posts to official City social media accounts must receive prior approval from the City Manager, or their designee, unless specific personnel have been granted authority to post without individual approval.
- Employees have no expectation of privacy regarding information posted on City social media.
- Creation of any official social media account requires prior approval by the City Manager, or their designee. Use strong, unique passwords and multi-factor authentication where possible.
- The IT Manager shall maintain a current inventory of all official accounts, including usernames and passwords, and must be notified of any new accounts or administrative changes. The City must be able to immediately edit or remove content from all official accounts.
- The City Manager, or their designee, shall approve the establishment and continued operation of official City social media accounts and may direct their consolidation or discontinuance, subject to applicable records retention requirements. Administrative procedures shall identify authorized accounts and the personnel responsible for their operation.
- Before an official account is discontinued, the City shall preserve its records in accordance with applicable retention requirements.

Posting Guidelines

Employees managing official accounts must:

- Keep posts factual, timely, and relevant to City business.
- Post only official City information, including but not limited to:
 - Legal notices
 - Public meeting notices and virtual links
 - Announcements of City events or closures
 - Emergency alerts

- Environmental or community engagement updates
- Not post confidential, personal, or legally restricted information.
- Obtain appropriate permissions, including copyright licenses and individual consent, for all media (images, videos, quotes). Prior to posting photos or video of members of the public, obtain appropriate consent/waivers when required by law or policy.
- Protect the identity of citizens; content shall not contain malicious, intimidating, harassing, discriminatory, sexual, profane, or defamatory remarks.
- Use plain, professional language; correct errors transparently.
- Nothing in this Policy will be construed or applied to limit employees' rights under the New York State Public Employees' Fair Employment Act (Taylor Law) or other applicable law, including the right to engage in protected concerted activity. The City prohibits retaliation against any employee who in good faith reports or participates in an investigation of a suspected policy violation.

Security

- Limit access to login information to authorized staff; remove access immediately when roles change.
- City email addresses shall be used to register and administer official pages. Personal profiles should not administer City pages unless expressly approved by the City Manager, or their designee. Employees shall not use City resources to cause the City to incur fees or charges without prior written authorization.
- Avoid logging in through unsecured devices or third-party apps.
- Minimize external links to non-City websites to reduce risk.
- Report suspected security breaches immediately.
- All content created, received, or maintained on official social media that relates to City business, including comments, direct messages, and removed content, may constitute a public record subject to the New York Freedom of Information Law (FOIL). Departments are responsible for preserving records in accordance with applicable retention schedules.
- Use of third-party social media platforms is subject to those platforms' terms of service, which may include indemnification and venue provisions. Departments shall consult the City Manager, or their designee, before agreeing to any terms that bind the City, and should use any government terms offered by the platform where available.

Use of Personal Social Media Accounts

- Employees may not speak on behalf of the City on personal social media.

- Employees must make clear they are speaking for themselves if their personal social media activity could reasonably be mistaken for an official City statement.
- Do not use City logos or imply endorsement by the City when using personal social media accounts.

Elections & Advocacy

- City accounts must remain strictly nonpartisan.
- No campaign content, electioneering, or fundraising for candidates or ballot questions.
- Routine, factual election information (e.g., deadlines, polling info) may be shared.

Section 2 – Public Use and Comment Policy

Purpose

City social media pages are intended for official information sharing and limited discussion relevant to City business. They are not forums for general debate or correspondence with the City. Comments on social media are not official communications and do not constitute formal correspondence.

The existence and/or provision of any links posted by the City neither constitutes nor implies endorsement of the destination websites or of the content, viewpoint, accuracy, opinions, policies, product, accessibility, or privacy policy of said destination website. Nor does any link between the City website and a third-party website imply sponsorship of such website, or the creator of such website.

These rules shall be displayed on or linked from each official City social media page.

Comment & Participation Rules

On official City social media pages where commenting is enabled, comments or posts may be removed — and repeat violators may be blocked — if they include:

- Profanity, slurs, or personal attacks
- Threats, harassment, or illegal activity
- Spam, scams, or commercial ads
- Off-topic or irrelevant content
- Explicit, obscene, or sexual material
- Personal or sensitive information (addresses, medical data)
- Misinformation or disinformation

- Political or personal agenda content
- Disrespectful or discriminatory remarks

The City reserves the right to restrict or disable public commenting entirely and to block individual users if deemed necessary to preserve the purpose and integrity of its communications. All removal or blocking actions will be documented and retained according to the City's records policy. A comment posted by a member of the public is the opinion of the commenter only and does not imply endorsement by the City.

Response Guidelines

- The City may respond to informational questions (e.g., about services, hours, or events).
- The City will not respond to opinions, debates, or non-informational questions.
- For formal feedback, residents should use public meetings, hearings, or official contact channels.

Public Records

All content (including comments and removed material) may be considered public records and subject to the New York Freedom of Information Law (FOIL).

Contact & Appeals

If a user believes a comment was removed or a user was blocked in error, they may email the City Manager's Office at citymanagersoffice@watertown-ny.gov with the date, link, and description. The City will review within a reasonable timeframe.

Use Proper Channels

Social media should not be used to report emergencies or service requests. Nor will comments by the public on City social media sites be considered, for regulatory purposes, as official correspondence with the City.

- **Emergencies:** Call 911.
- **Routine issues:** Contact the City via phone, email, or the official website.

Policy Updates

The City Council may amend, suspend, or discontinue this policy or its social media accounts at any time to comply with law and best practices.