



CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION MEETING

AGENDA SECTION	WORK SESSION ITEMS
MEETING DATE	MAY 4TH, 2026

ITEM:	Social Media Policy			
<i>Presenting Item: Will Rottler, Communications and Engagement Coordinator</i>				
DEPARTMENT: Administration		BY/DATE: Will Rottler / April 27, 2026		
<p>CORE CITY STRATEGIES: <i>(please indicate areas that apply by adding an "X" in front of the selected text below)</i></p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Community that Grows with Purpose and Equity <input type="checkbox"/> High Quality Public Spaces <input type="checkbox"/> Safe, Accessible and Built for Everyone </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Engaged, Effective and Forward-Thinking <input type="checkbox"/> Resilient and Prosperous Economy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Inclusive and Connected Community </td> </tr> </table>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Community that Grows with Purpose and Equity <input type="checkbox"/> High Quality Public Spaces <input type="checkbox"/> Safe, Accessible and Built for Everyone	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Engaged, Effective and Forward-Thinking <input type="checkbox"/> Resilient and Prosperous Economy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Inclusive and Connected Community
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BACKGROUND

The City has a social media policy that was developed in 2012, prior to the addition of Communications staff and more recent case law related to free speech in government social media forums. The policy is outdated and has not been actively followed for many years, as its guidance would raise First Amendment concerns. Communications staff have been operating in accordance with current best practices and standards, but there is no formal policy that reflects this approach.

SUMMARY OF CURRENT STATUS

Recently, staff have noticed an uptick in negative comments on the City’s social media platforms. Government entities and officials are limited in what they can remove from these platforms and cannot selectively delete comments. Even when comments appear off-topic, rude, or even hateful, they are still protected under the First Amendment. Staff actively monitor social media comments but rarely encounter content that meets the criteria for removal.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommend adopting a social media policy that is reviewed by the City Council and City Attorney. Adopting a current policy will formalize current staff practices, and making the policy public on the City’s intranet and website will address transparency and help explain the City’s approach.

Following the April 6th work session, staff consulted with the City Attorney on the best way forward for the City’s social media policy. At this time, staff recommend turning off comments on social media posts on the City’s Facebook page and recommend leaving comments on for other Facebook pages (i.e. fire, police and library). Staff will continue to monitor those accounts for future changes. Limiting the comments on the posts ahead of time limits comments that could be deemed hateful or those that could violate the City’s social media policy.

If the Council is interested in a hybrid approach where some comments are left on for the City’s Facebook page, staff recommend that social media posts that would include comments would be those that are City

service related such as pothole patching, snowplowing, or topics that staff are looking for feedback on such as parks planning, new developments, or general questions of the community. Staff will also defer feedback and/or comments through the City's website or third-party websites through consultant firms.

Additionally, please note in the social media policy, staff included the wording, "at the discretion of the social media manager, comments could be turned off on select posts since social media platforms are used to share content that is purely informational and the City does not tend to seek feedback through social media unless noted otherwise."

Requested Council Action/ Discussion Topics / Key Questions
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<i>(Briefly state the specific action staff is requesting of the City Council, if any. For example: provide direction, discuss options, or review information.)</i>

Staff are seeking feedback on the draft social media policy.
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ATTACHMENT(S)

- City of Columbia Heights Social Media Policy Draft