



# Social Media For Oconee County Government

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*Internal and external policy guidelines*



## Internal Policy

### Purpose

This document defines the social networking and social media policy for Oconee County Government, the “Agency.” To address the fast-changing landscape of the internet and the way residents communicate and obtain information online, agency departments may consider using social media tools to reach a broader audience. The agency encourages the use of social media to further the goals of the agency and the missions of its departments, where appropriate.

## Personal vs. Professional Guidelines

### Personal Use

All Agency employees may have personal social media profiles. These profiles should remain personal in nature and share personal opinions. While Agency employees may have a First Amendment right to comment on some Agency issues that are of significant public concern, employees should know that posts about Agency issues that are closer to employment complaints or human resources concerns may not be protected. Employees should be mindful of the distinction between sharing personal and agency views.

Agency employees must never use their agency e-mail account or password in conjunction with a personal social media profile. The following guidance is for agency employees who decide to have a personal social media presence or who decide to comment on posts about official Agency business:

- State your name and, if relevant, role, when discussing agency business.
- Use a disclaimer such as: "The postings on this profile are my own and don't reflect or represent the opinions of the agency for which I work."

If social media is used for official agency business, the entire agency profile, regardless of any personal views, is subject to best practice guidelines and standards.

### Professional Use

All official agency-related communication through social media should remain professional in nature and should always be conducted in accordance with the Agency's communications policy, practices and expectations. Employees must not use official agency social media for political purposes, to conduct private commercial transactions, or to engage in private business activities. Agency employees should be mindful that inappropriate use of official agency social media can be grounds for disciplinary action. Only individuals authorized by the Agency may publish content to the Agency's online platforms.

The County Administrator or designee has the authority to discontinue any Oconee County Government social media accounts or remove any content publishers from posting to or managing these accounts.

## Posting

Official social media content needs to be clear, precise and follow industry best practices for posting updates. All content posted to agency social media profiles should be:

### Relevant

Information that engages residents and pertains to their daily lives.

### Timely

Pertains to deadlines, upcoming events, or current news.

### Actionable

Prompts residents to take action.

## What Not to Post

Agency employees may not publish content on agency social media sites that includes:

- Confidential information
- Copyrighted material without permission
- Profane, racist, sexist, threatening or derogatory content or comments
- Partisan political views
- Commercial endorsements or spam
- Any content that would be banned under the section below titled "Content Moderation"

## Social Media Profiles

### Registering a New Page

#### ***All agency social media profiles shall be:***

- approved by the County Administrator or designee
- published using an approved social networking platform and tools
- administered by the contact or their designee

### Deregistering an Existing Page

#### ***If a social media profile is no longer in use:***

- notify the Communications Director
- ensure records have been archived according to agency guidelines
- unpublish and delete the account

## Retention

Social media accounts are subject to **O.C.G.A. §§ 50-18-70 through 77**. Any content produced or maintained on an agency social media account, including communication posted by the agency and communication received from residents, is a public record.

The department maintaining a profile shall preserve records pursuant to the relevant records retention schedule in a format that preserves the integrity of the original record and is easily producible. Furthermore, retention of social media records shall fulfill the following requirements:

- Ⓐ Social media records are captured in a continuous, automated fashion throughout the day to minimize a potential loss of data due to deletion and/or changes on the social networking account.
- Ⓐ Social media records are archived in a system that preserves the context of communications, including conversation threads and rich media, to ensure completeness and availability of relevant information when records are accessed.
- Ⓐ Each employee who administers one or more social networking profiles on behalf of the Agency has self-service, read-only access to search and produce relevant social media records to fulfill public information and legal discovery requests as needed.
- Ⓐ Social media records are maintained in an authentic format (i.e., ideally the native technical format provided by the social network, such as XML or JSON along with complete metadata).
- Ⓐ Social media records are indexed based on specific criteria such as date, content type, and keywords to ensure that records can be quickly located and produced in an appropriate format for distribution (e.g. PDF).
- Ⓐ The Agency utilizes the CivicPlus Social Media Archiving solution to comply with applicable public records law and fulfill the above record retention requirements. The Agency archive is available at [ArchiveSocial.com](http://ArchiveSocial.com), or contact your records coordinator.

# External Policy - Terms and Conditions for Users of Oconee County Government Social Media Sites

## PURPOSE

Because many of our citizens and other stakeholders utilize social media for news and communications, Oconee County Government has developed its own social media accounts, which help us inform the public about our work and mission. We rely on our own free speech rights to communicate our selected messages. Comments left on our social media sites reflect the views of the commenters, not the views of this agency.

Oconee County is committed to fully complying with the freedom of speech clause of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and other similar legal obligations surrounding free speech. Since we follow the law, there may be times when what some people perceive to be offensive comments left by members of the public will remain visible on our social media posts, if such comments are legally protected speech.

Oconee County has an important interest in assuring the accuracy and consistency of information associated with our social media sites. These terms and conditions establish guidelines for the public's use of our social media sites in a way that balances these values.

## DEFINITIONS

1. "Social media" means digital content created by us and communicated on platforms that allow sharing, commenting, and engagement by the public. Examples of social media accounts we may use are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and LinkedIn.
2. "Comments" include any digital content, information, links, images, videos, or any other form of communicative content posted in reply or response to a social media account post posted by us on one of our social media sites.
3. "User" means a member of the public who views or interacts with one or more of our social media accounts.

## EXPECTATIONS

1. The leaders of Oconee County Government believe that honest, civil, and productive discussions provide the best environment for citizens and other stakeholders to understand the work of their government.
2. We ask commenters to consider that our social media feeds may be viewed by children and other impressionable people. Please avoid profanity, slurs, personal attacks, bullying, or use of false information.

## GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. These terms and conditions apply to all our social media sites. Where possible, a link to these terms and conditions will be made available as a hyperlink or posted as text somewhere on our social media accounts.

2. Users should know that social media posts we make, comments and replies to those posts, and any direct or private messages sent to us may be public records subject to applicable public records release.
3. Our social media accounts are not monitored 24/7 and no one should utilize our social media accounts to seek emergency services. Anyone in need of emergency help should call 9-1-1.
4. We do not guarantee we will respond to comments or messages sent on our social media accounts.
5. The County Administrator or designee may disable the commenting feature on all posts.

## CONTENT MODERATION

1. Limited Public Forum. Our social media accounts are created and maintained as limited public forums under the caselaw pertaining to the freedom of speech clause of the First Amendment to the U.S Constitution. We invite members of the public to view and, where possible and permitted, provide comments or other engagement on our social media posts. However, the law permits us to hide and/or delete comments that are not protected speech under the First Amendment and relevant caselaw. As a general rule, we will not hide and/or delete comments solely because such comments are critical of Oconee County Government or its officials.
2. Prohibited Content. As indicated above, we may hide or delete:
  - a. Comments expressly advocating direct violence or other illegal activity
  - b. Comments containing or linking to obscenity, which is defined as sexually explicit and/or pornographic content that is patently offensive, appeals to prurient interest, and lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value
  - c. Comments that expressly encourage or advocate our agency to illegally discriminate based on race, age, religion, gender, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, veteran status, or any other legally protected class
  - d. Comments containing links to malware and/or malicious content that affects the normal functioning of a computer system, server, or browser
  - e. Duplicate comments posted repeatedly within a short period of time
  - f. Comments containing actual defamation against a specifically named person or organization, either as determined by a court or comments that are patently defamatory by easily discovered facts
  - g. Comments that contain images or other content that violate the intellectual property or copyright rights of someone else, if the owner of that property notifies us that the property was posted in a comment on our social media account

- h. Comments that contain a hyperlink to any website other than those controlled by Oconee County Government. This will be done without regard to the viewpoint of the comment containing such a link or the content of the site to which the link redirects.
3. **Retention.** When a comment containing any of the above content is posted to our social media account, a copy or electronic record of that content may be retained or archived pursuant to our records retention policy, along with a brief description of the reason the specific content was deleted. Once documented, the content will be removed, where possible, from our social media account.

## APPEAL

1. If our staff hides or deletes a user's comment pursuant to these terms and conditions, the user has the right to appeal that decision by sending an email or letter to Oconee County Government within five business days.
2. Upon receipt of an appeal, our attorney will determine whether the comment at issue contained content protected by law. If the appeal is successful, the comment may (if possible) be restored for public view, or the user may be permitted to repost the comment. Upon a determination that the comment was not protected by law, the user will be notified that the appeal was denied.
3. **Blocking or Banning a User.** When we determine that a user has violated these terms and conditions on three or more occasions within a twelve-month rolling period, we may block or ban the offending user from the social media account where the violations occurred.

If we block or ban a user, we will (a) reasonably attempt to notify the user; (b) describe the violation(s); and (c) explain the appeal process.

If the appeal is successful and the user has not violated this policy three times within a rolling 12-month period, we will unblock or unban the user from the social media account. If the appeal is not successful, our decision will stand.

## Retention

Any communications sent to or received by the Agency and its employees via social media may be subject to our retention and disclosure requirements. We are required to comply with O.C.G.A. §§ 50-18-70 through 77 to ensure government is open and that the public has access to public records and information of which our agency is the custodian. These retention requirements apply regardless of the form of the record (e.g. digital text, photos, audio, and video). To that end, we automatically collect and store all information posted on this agency social media account. All information posted on this account may be subject to public disclosure under O.C.G.A. §§ 50-18-70 through 77, even if it has been deleted. The department maintaining an account shall preserve records pursuant to a relevant records retention schedule.