

## **Administrative Policy – Social Media**

1. **POLICY:** The Kent County Board of Commissioners authorizes the use of Social Media by County departments to support the mission of the County in the delivery of efficient and effective services.

This policy governs the use of social media by Kent County employees and any designee authorized as an administrator of Kent County’s social media pages. Employees or designees that are authorized to use social media on behalf of Kent County must comply with this policy and all other applicable County policies and procedures.

All information posted on social media shall be factually accurate, respectful, fair, and courteous to internal and external stakeholders.

2. **PRINCIPLES:**

- a. **Statutory References:** The Kent County Board of Commissioners may establish rules and regulations in reference to managing the interests and business of the County under Public Act 156 of 1851 (MCL § 46.11(m)).
- b. **County Policies:** This policy is intended to be read in conjunction with all other applicable County policies including Information Technology and Human Resources policies.
- c. **Compliance with federal, state, and local laws:** Kent County social media site usage shall comply with all federal, state, and local laws.

3. **OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES – GENERAL:**

- a. The County’s use of social media is intended to broaden the reach of communication and engagement with the community.
- b. Kent County’s official website, [www.accesskent.com](http://www.accesskent.com), is the primary means of digital communication and all County social media accounts will complement the County’s web presence.
- c. Social media sites include, but are not limited to Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, and all other sites that are similar in content and/or character. The social media platform TikTok is not authorized until national security concerns are resolved unless such use is approved by County Administration and Information Technology.

4. **OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES – ADDITIONAL:**

- a. Prior to opening any social media account, County departments must get approval from the County Administrator/Controller or the Assistant County Administrator or their designee.
- b. A link to [www.accesskent.com](http://www.accesskent.com) will be prominently displayed on all social media sites that accept comments from the public and contain the following disclaimer:

*“Kent County reserves the right remove inappropriate comments including those that promote, or perpetuate hate or discrimination on the basis of any legally protected category or class, threatening, profane, obscene, violent, sexual, racial slur or any other derogatory language, compromises the safety and security of the public, employees, or elected officials, supports or opposes political candidates or ballot proposals, promote illegal activity, violates the intellectual property rights of another party, is blatant spam, including advertising commercial services or products, or is unrelated to the original post, contains random or unintelligible text, or contains posts or links that contain malicious software. Any content removed based on the criteria listed above will be referred to appropriate legal personnel, and will include the time, date, and identity of the user, if available. Requests for public records can be submitted through the Kent County Freedom of Information Act portal. Questions or comments related to County business can be sent to [kentcounty@kentcountymi.gov](mailto:kentcounty@kentcountymi.gov).”*

- c. Social media content posted on behalf of the County shall be managed in accordance with the Michigan Freedom of Information Act, State Records Retention laws and rules, and the County’s Freedom of Information and Record Retention Policies.
5. **EXCEPTIONS:** All portions of this policy except for the portions that apply to personal use does not apply to the five countywide elected offices - Kent County Clerk/Register of Deeds, Kent County Drain Commissioner, Kent County Prosecutor, Kent County Treasurer, Kent County Sheriff – and 17th Circuit Court, 63rd District Court, and Probate Court.
6. **IMPLEMENTATION AUTHORITY:** Upon adoption of this policy, the Board of Commissioners authorizes the County Administrator/Controller to establish any procedures and standards necessary for implementation.
7. **PERIODIC REVIEW:** The County Administrator/Controller will review this policy at least every two years.

**Procedure and Standards for:** *Social Media*  
**Policy Reference:** *Administrative Policy – Social Media*  
**Implementing Entity:** Administrator’s Office  
**Staff Contact:** *Lori Latham*

*County of Kent*

**Standards and Procedures – Social Media**

**I. PURPOSE:** These standards and procedures have been established to support the effective use and implementation of Social Media in accordance with the Social Media Policy.

**II. STANDARDS**

**A.** Kent County’s official website, [www.accesskent.com](http://www.accesskent.com), is the primary means of digital communication and all County social media accounts will complement the County’s web presence.

**B. Activation of County Social Media Accounts**

**B.1.** The Communications Team is responsible for the approval, auditing, and governance of County Departments’ social media accounts.

**B.2.** All requests for new County social media sites must be submitted to and receive approval from the Assistant County Administrator, or their designee, prior to implementation.

**B.3.** A department will have only one account on each of the social networks unless the department can demonstrate a solid strategy for utilizing multiple platforms that further the goals of the County or the department.

**C. Unapproved Account Creation**

**C.1.** If an account is created without prior approval from the Assistant County Administrator or their designee, it is subject to immediate deactivation.

**C.2.** The social media platform TikTok is not authorized until national security concerns are resolved unless such use is approved by County Administration and Information Technology.

**D. Creation and Administration of County Social Media Accounts**

**D.1.** All County social media accounts must be created as organizational or business accounts. Personal email or social media accounts cannot be used to manage County social media accounts unless required by the platform.

**D.2.** Department Directors or their designee must share account login information and provide administrative permissions to the Assistant County Administrator or their designee, after an approved County social media site is established.

**D.3.** Department Directors or their designee, must identify an employee to administer its social media accounts and submit the employee’s name to the Assistant County Administrator or their designee.

**D.4.** Department Directors or their designee, will notify the Assistant County Administrator or their designee, of any account or administrative changes to existing department social media sites.

- D.5.** The Assistant County Administrator or their designee will maintain a list of all authorized County social media sites.
- D.6.** Access to County social media accounts to third parties for advertising purposes must obtain prior approval from the Department Director and the Assistant County Administrator or their designees.
- D.7.** Non-exempt (eligible for overtime) employees who are authorized to manage or post to County social media accounts can only do so during normal office hours, unless pre-approved by the employee’s supervisor.

**E. Deactivation of County Social Media Accounts**

- E.1.** Approved social media accounts may be closed by the Assistant County Administrator or their designee.
- E.2.** Considerations for deciding whether to deactivate a County social media account may include, but are not limited to:
  - E.2.A.** Merging an account into another County social media account.
  - E.2.B.** It is no longer needed to accomplish a department’s goals.
  - E.2.C.** It does not align with the County’s mission, vision, or values.
  - E.2.D.** It is not currently active or is underutilized with no original posts or engagement for an extended period. For purposes of this policy, “active” refers to a page having been posted to at least once weekly; and “engaging” refers to views, reach, and interaction with the posts.
  - E.2.E.** It is not being monitored.
  - E.2.F.** If a decision is made by the Assistant County Administrator or their designee to deactivate a County department/division social media account, the account administrator must:
    - E.2.G.** Contact the Communications Team to assist in preserving all content before the account is deactivated.
    - E.2.H.** Create a final post on the account that includes when the account will be closed and where followers can go for information in the future.
    - E.2.I.** Confirm with the Assistant County Administrator or their designee that the account has been deactivated and no longer a platform for public communication.

**III. PROCEDURES**

**A. Social Media Content**

- A.1.** All County approved social media sites must identify they are maintained by Kent County, MI, and display County or department contact information.
- A.2.** All content must reflect the official position of County policies, programs or practices and be consistent with the County’s Core Values which are established by the Board of Commissioners.

- A.3.** All content must be respectful, fair, and courteous to internal and external stakeholders.
- A.4.** Content must not violate the County’s privacy, confidentiality, or legal guidelines for external communication.
- A.5.** All posts and comments must be factually accurate, and mistakes corrected if found.
- A.6.** Prioritize the use of original multimedia and digital content generated by Kent County. When using another externally generated content, ensure the County has permission to do so and use platform appropriate attribution practices.
- A.7.** When possible, County social media account managers should make every effort to ensure that content posted is accessible to all, including those with visual or auditory impairments, by using available accessibility features.
- A.8.** A current copy of the County or department logo, provided by the Communications Team, must be used where applicable.

**B. Public Engagement Expectations**

- B.1.** Kent County recognizes and welcomes public engagement on content concerning County programs, activities, and initiatives. Online conversations through approved social media accounts promote transparency, customer service, and information exchange.
- B.2.** The County’s social media pages are limited public forums. Kent County does not make its social media accounts available for public discourse, but rather reserves and limits the topics that may be discussed on County social media accounts.
- B.3.** Comments from members of the public should be relevant to the subject matter of the post they are responding to and must adhere to established community guidelines.
- B.4.** Kent County is not responsible for and does neither endorse nor oppose comments placed on approved social media sites by members of the public.

**C. Content and Comment Restrictions, Deactivation and Removal**

**C.1. Content restrictions**

- C.1.A.** The County reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of this social media policy or applicable law.
- C.1.B.** Content and comments posted to County social media accounts including, but not limited to, any of the following is not permitted and subject to removal and/or restriction by County social media managers:
  - C.1.B.I.** Language that promotes, or perpetuates hate or discrimination based on any legally protected category or class,
  - C.1.B.II.** Threatening, profane, obscene, violent, sexual, racial slur or any other derogatory language,

- C.1.B.III.** Compromises the safety and security of the public, employees, or elected officials,
- C.1.B.IV.** Supports or opposes political candidates or ballot proposals,
- C.1.B.V.** Promotes illegal activity,
- C.1.B.VI.** Violates the intellectual property rights of another party,
- C.1.B.VII.** Is blatant spam, including advertising commercial services or products, or is unrelated to the original post,
- C.1.B.VIII.** Contains random or unintelligible text, or
- C.1.b.ix.** Contains posts or links that contain malicious software.

## **C.2. Deactivation of Comments**

**C.2.a.** Kent County is committed to being engaged with the public as much as possible. However, departments/divisions unable to regularly monitor or moderate comments, upon approval by the Assistant County Administrator, Corporate Counsel, Department Director, or their respective designees, may deactivate commenting or other interactive features if the following conditions are met:

- C.2.a.i.** Commenting is deactivated platform-wide,
- C.2.a.ii.** Deactivating comments is due to inadequate staffing or resourcing,
- C.2.a.iii.** Instructions on alternative methods of communicating with the County (i.e. direct messaging, email, etc.) is prominently displayed on the profile or within each post.
- C.2.a.iv.** Deactivation is considered semi-permanent and once turned off will require approval of the Assistant County Administrator, Corporate Counsel, Department Director, or their respective designees to reactivate.
- C.2.a.v.** Under no circumstance should users be blocked from County social media accounts. If suspicious activity is noted, County staff should report it directly to the social media platform.

## **C.3. Content Removal**

**C.3.a.** Content that does not adhere to this policy, community guidelines, or applicable laws may be removed. Any content removed will be referred to the appropriate legal personnel and include the time, date, and identity of user, if available.

#### **D. Social Media Disclaimer**

- D.1.** A link to [www.accesskent.com](http://www.accesskent.com) will be prominently displayed on all social media sites that accept comments from the public and contain the following disclaimer:

*“Kent County reserves the right remove inappropriate comments including those that promote, or perpetuate hate or discrimination on the basis of any legally protected category or class, threatening, profane, obscene, violent, sexual, racial slur or any other derogatory language, compromises the safety and security of the public, employees, or elected officials, supports or opposes political candidates or ballot proposals, promote illegal activity, violate the intellectual property rights of another party, is blatant spam, including advertising commercial services or products, or is unrelated to the original post, contains random or unintelligible text, or contains posts or links that contain malicious software. Any content removed based on the criteria listed above will be referred to appropriate legal personnel, and will include the time, date, and identity of the user, if available. Requests for public records may be submitted through the Kent County Freedom of Information Act portal. Questions or comments related to County business can be sent to [kentcounty@kentcountymi.gov](mailto:kentcounty@kentcountymi.gov).”*

#### **IV. ACCOUNT AVAILABILITY**

- A.** County social media accounts are not monitored 24/7, and as such, posts and responses should not be immediately expected. Accounts are traditionally monitored during normal business hours, designated as weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., excluding holidays. Call or text 9-1-1 for all emergency situations.

#### **V. PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA USE**

- A.** Employees must not use their County email address to register an account on social media platforms, blogs or other online tools used for personal use.
- B.** Employees may list their County title or position on personal social media accounts but are not authorized to speak or comment officially on behalf of the County.
- C.** Employees may share official County posts to their personal social media accounts.
- D.** Within the limitations of subsection C. and to the extent possible, employees should state that the opinions expressed on their personal social media sites do not reflect the official views of Kent County.
- E.** Employees carry an obligation to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the County’s Core Values with their social media presence.

**Procedure and Standards for:** *Social Media*  
**Policy Reference:** *Administrative Policy – Social Media*  
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**Staff Contact:** *Lori Latham*

## **VI. RECORD RETENTION**

- A.** Under the State of Michigan Record Retention rules, many items and documents posted, such as notices of special events or holidays, and copies of documents already retained in the office do not need to be saved permanently. A copy of these materials needs to be saved only until the event has passed, the case is closed, the project is completed, or the information has served its useful purpose. Most posts fall into this category because of their transient and temporary nature and because they do not perform a governmental function or create a County policy.
- B.** If something is posted that is the only record of a County operation or is the only record that a County function has been performed, a copy must be retained in the office file.
- C.** Social media conducted on behalf of the County is subject to the State of Michigan Record Retention Laws and Policies for Local Government, the Michigan Freedom of Information Act, and the County’s Freedom of Information Act and Records Retention Policies

**VII. EXCEPTIONS:** All portions of these procedures except for the portions that apply to personal use does not apply to the five countywide elected offices - Kent County Clerk/Register of Deeds, Kent County Drain Commissioner, Kent County Prosecutor, Kent County Treasurer, Kent County Sheriff – and 17th Circuit Court, 63rd District Court, and Probate Court.

**VIII. VIOLATIONS:** Employees found to have violated these procedures may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from employment pursuant to County policies and procedures and applicable collective bargaining agreements.

**IX. DISTRIBUTION:** Upon adoption, these procedures and standards will be distributed by the County Administrator/Controller’s Office to all County departments and agencies, and to the judiciary.

**X. PERIODIC REVIEW:** The County Administrator/Controller will review this policy at least every two years and make any recommendations for changes to the Legislative and Human Resources Committee.