

Policy – Wauwatosa Police Department

POLICY: Social Media

CHAPTER & SECTION: 2.1.2

DISTRIBUTION: All Department Personnel

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POLICY #: 23-15

I. INTRODUCTION

The Wauwatosa Police Department will use social media in a thoughtful, purposeful manner to further our commitment to community outreach, transparency, and crime investigation, information and prevention.

The Department also recognizes and respects the rights of its employees to participate in social media platforms. However, employees must ensure that their online content is consistent with the Department's standard of conduct.

This policy rescinds policy #21-20 and any other memorandums or correspondence regarding Social Media.

See also the City of Wauwatosa's Employee Policy: Communications which supersedes this policy.

II. DEFINITIONS

A. Page: The specific portion of a social media website where content is displayed, and managed by an individual or individuals with administrator rights.

B. Post: Content that an individual share on a social media site or the act of publishing content on a site.

- C. **Profile:** Information that a user provides about himself or herself on a social networking site.
- D. **Social Media:** A category of Internet-based resources that integrate user-generated content and user participation. This includes, but is not limited to, social networking sites (Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Snapchat, TikTok), microblogging sites (Twitter, Reddit, Tumblr), and photo- and video-sharing sites (Flickr, YouTube, Dropbox).
- E. **Social Networks:** Online platforms where users can create profiles, share information, and socialize with others using a range of technologies.
- F. **Speech:** Expression or communication of thoughts or opinions in spoken words, in writing, by expressive conduct, symbolism, photographs, videotape, or related forms of communication.
- G. **Public Information Officer (P.I.O):** A supervisory member of the Department designated by the Chief of Police to assist with prepare and distribute news releases, arrange for and assist at news conferences, assist in crisis situations, and coordinate the release of authorized information concerning confidential department investigations and operations. The P.I.O. is also responsible for the operation of the Public Information Team and managing the Department's social media presence in accordance with the Social Media policy.
- H. **Public Information Team (P.I.T.):** A group of Department members assigned to assist the P.I.O. with function of public information. The members of the group will be appointed by the P.I.O. based upon their merit.

III. PROCEDURE

A. Department Use

1. Department Sanctioned Presence
 - (a) All Wauwatosa Police Department social media pages/platforms shall be approved by the Chief of Police and shall be administered by the Social Media Manager.
 - (b) Social media platforms shall clearly indicate that they are maintained by the Wauwatosa Police Department and shall have Department contact information prominently displayed.
 - (c) Content published or posted to the Department's social media platforms shall adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including all information technology and records management policies.

➤ *Content is subject to public records laws.*

- (d) Content must be reviewed and approved by the P.I.O. or a member of the P.I.T. prior to its posting/publishing to the Department's social media platforms.
- (e) When possible, social media platforms should indicate/state that the opinions expressed by visitors to the page(s) do not reflect the opinions of the Wauwatosa Police Department or the City of Wauwatosa.
 - i. Pages/platforms shall clearly indicate that the Wauwatosa Police Department respects the public's concerns regarding Freedom of Speech issues, however, posted comments will be monitored and that the Department reserves the right to hide or remove comments that contain obscenities, are off-topic, or constitute harassment.
 - ii. Pages/platforms shall indicate that any content posted or submitted is subject to public disclosure.
- (f) Wauwatosa Police Department personnel that are authorized to represent the Department via social media outlets shall:
 - i. Conduct themselves at all times as representatives of the Wauwatosa Police Department and, accordingly, shall adhere to all Department standards of conduct as outlined in this policy and the Rules and Regulations manual.
 - ii. Identify themselves as members of the Wauwatosa Police Department.
 - iii. Not conduct political activities or private business.
 - iv. Not use department computers or devices to access social media without authorization.
 - v. Observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and service mark restrictions in posting materials to electronic media.
 - vi. Not make statements about the guilt or innocence of any suspect or arrestee, or comments concerning pending prosecutions, nor post, transmit or otherwise disseminate confidential information, including photograph or videos, related to department training, activities or work-related assignments without the express permission of the Chief of Police or the P.I.O.
- (g) Social media is a valuable tool when seeking input from and/or providing information to our community. Department personnel posting to the social

media pages/platforms should keep the content related to the following subject matter (note: *this is not an all-inclusive list*):

i. **Community outreach**

- (a) Displaying police community engagement
- (b) Crime prevention tips (Crime Stoppers, Tosa Watch Newsletter)
- (c) Sharing crime data (crime mapping - burglaries, thefts, etc.)
- (d) Employment and/or volunteer opportunities
- (e) Grant Promotions (OWI Task Force, Click -It-or-Ticket, Speed Grants, etc.)

ii. **Time-sensitive notifications**

- (a) Road closures
- (b) Special events (Tosa Night Out, Tosa Fest, ToAD, etc.)
- (c) Weather emergencies
- (d) Missing or endangered persons
- (e) Any other notification deemed necessary by the Public Information Team (P.I.T.)

iii. **Soliciting Crime tips/information** – Information that will be posted on social media platforms, with the sole intent of asking the public to assist in identifying suspects (retail theft suspects, robbery suspects, any other active crime suspects, etc.) must be approved by the Detective Lieutenant, or his/her designee. The approved content must be provided to the Social Media Manager or a Social Media Contributor.

iv. **Warrants/Wanted Persons** – The Wauwatosa Police Department may utilize social media pages/platforms to alert the community of persons that have outstanding warrants.

v. **New Releases** – Any press releases that will be displayed on a social media platform are to be approved by the P.I.O. or spokesperson on-call in accordance with the Public Information/News Media policy.

- vi. **Department Photos** – Officers that are presented an opportunity to capture a photo image of our officers serving the community are encouraged to take the picture and send it to the P.I.T.

2. Investigative

Department personnel, as assigned by the Chief of Police or his/her designee who investigate online crimes may use social media to seek evidence or information about:

- (a) Missing persons
- (b) Wanted persons
- (c) Gang participation
- (d) Crimes perpetrated online (i.e., cyberbullying, cyberstalking)
- (e) Photos or videos of a crime posted by a participant or observer.
- (f) Situations or planned events that are created to promote unlawful gatherings or unrest (i.e., flash mobs).
- (g) Personnel authorized to use social-media outlets as an **investigative**^[JM1] tool may use pseudonyms for user name(s), locations, etc. in order to gain access to electronic communication(s) or information relevant to an investigation

B. Personal Use

Wauwatosa Police Department personnel are reminded that their speech and related activity on social media sites can reflect upon their office and this Department.

1. Wauwatosa Police Department personnel are prohibited from posting to, commenting on or disseminating information via any personal social media account during their working hours except:
 - (a) As authorized above in Section III. A. Department Use.
2. Wauwatosa Police Department personnel shall not post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate any official police record, information, image, video, or other media which they have obtained or gained access to as part of their employment in any electronic format, including text message, social media websites and phone applications, that is not part of their official employment

capacity without written permission from the Chief of Police or his or her designee.

3. Wauwatosa Police Department personnel, during their non-working hours, are expected to maintain professionalism and appropriate conduct online. Employees are advised that their actions online are subject to the standards of conduct as outlined in the Wauwatosa Police Department Rules and Regulations manual.
4. Personnel who work in an undercover capacity, or may reasonably be expected to work in an undercover capacity, shall not post any form of visual or personal identification online.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'J. MacGillis', with a stylized, cursive script.

James H. MacGillis
Chief of Police

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