

Village of Rochester

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COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines and community expectations for the Village of Rochester's primary communication tools, including the Village website, newsletter, and social media. The policy outlines roles and responsibilities as well as content standards for each form.

Communication Objectives

The Village of Rochester strives to maintain efficient, effective, consistent, timely, and transparent communication with residents. Using a variety of communications tools, the Village aims to achieve the following goals:

1. Inform residents about the Village's policies, programs, services, projects, and initiatives.
2. Consult and inform stakeholders when establishing or developing priorities, policies, programs, and services where reasonable and practical.
3. Ensure the Village government is accessible and responsive to the citizens it serves.

Review

Village staff will regularly evaluate the stipulations of this policy. Staff, elected officials, and community feedback will be used to determine the effectiveness of each objective.

Related Policies

The "Technology Use Policy" as printed in the Village of Rochester employee handbook governs employee conduct with respect to use of Village technology and electronic communication methods.

Approved by the Village Board: October 9, 2023

WEBSITE

Introduction

The Village website (<https://rochesterwi.gov>) is the Village's primary means for communicating news, events, policy issues, general procedures and laws, public processes, contact information, and more. The Village of Rochester maintains and updates its website regularly to ensure the information is accurate.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Clerk-Treasurer's Office is responsible for overseeing all website activities. This includes (but is not limited to) assigning/deactivating website usernames and passwords, overseeing all website content to assure consistency and accuracy, posting regular news and required legal notices, and working with the website contractor on the design and functionality of the website.

Content Standards

The Village has a responsibility to provide quality, consistent, and user-friendly communication. The following content standards serve as a guide to acceptable content for the Village webpages:

1. Content should provide information reflecting the Village's programs, services, initiatives, and areas of responsibility.
2. Content is deemed relevant to community stakeholders (e.g., residents, businesses, not-for-profit organizations, and government partners).
3. The Village's website may provide links to external websites that also serve the purpose of encouraging citizen participation in government, promoting local businesses and attractions, and informing the public of useful information. The Village is not responsible for and does not endorse the information on any linked website unless the Village's website states otherwise.
 - a. The Village's website may provide links to websites for:
 - i. Government and educational institutions;
 - ii. Organizations with some relationship to the Village (including but not limited to: organizations contracting with the Village, organizations sponsoring Village activities or programs, and organizations participating in Village activities or programs);
 - iii. Organizations providing information about recreational activities in the Village's area; and
 - iv. Businesses physically located within the Village of Rochester
 - b. The Village's websites will not provide links to websites for:
 - i. Candidates for local, state, or federal offices;
 - ii. Political organizations, civic or citizens associations, or other organizations advocating a position on a local, state, or federal issue; or
 - iii. Corporate or other for-profit organizations unless they fit any of the criteria stated above.
4. Village webpages will incorporate all elements necessary to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
5. Copyright compliance must be met for all photographs, music, video, or graphics posted to the Village website. Materials must either be owned, properly licensed, or open source for Village use.
6. Content shall be reviewed regularly by Village staff to ensure its relevance, timeliness, and consistency with other website content.

NEWSLETTER

Introduction

The Village of Rochester publishes and mails to residents a quarterly newsletter. The newsletter includes news and announcements relevant to the community. The following policy outlines roles and responsibilities for newsletter production as well as content standards for articles to be included.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Clerk-Treasurer's Office is responsible for gathering content, writing, and editing each newsletter, with assistance from other staff and trustees as appropriate. The Village Board of Trustees is responsible for final approval of the newsletter prior to publication.

Priorities

Articles to be published in the newsletter will be prioritized in this order:

1. Information that must be communicated to residents concerning subjects such as compliance with ordinances, elections, public safety, or other governmental programs or services.
2. News related to community events or other general community interest stories.
3. Articles from external sources, subject to the conditions listed below.

Articles from External Sources

At the editors' discretion and as space allows, the newsletter may include articles from residents, community groups, and other stakeholders. All article submissions must be sent to the Clerk-Treasurer's Office by the first of the month of publication (3/1, 6/1, 9/1, or 12/1.) Articles must meet the following parameters:

1. The article must be directly relevant to Rochester residents.
2. If promoting an event, the event must be open to the public.
3. Articles must not exceed 300 words.
4. Content must not be religious in nature.
5. Content must not be politically partisan in nature (excepting statements from candidates for municipal offices.)
6. No derogatory, offensive, or disrespectful content; private, sensitive, or confidential information; or content promoting illegal activities.

SOCIAL MEDIA

[Reproduced from the Village of Rochester Employee Handbook]

1. Purpose

The Village of Rochester may use social media to assist with the broad distribution of accurate and timely information regarding Village-related issues. The Village also has an interest in determining what is communicated on behalf of the Village using social media. This policy addresses the responsibilities of employees and officials regarding social media use.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all Village employees, elected officials, appointed officials, contracted individuals and/or consultants. This policy applies to the conduct of employees, both inside and outside of the workplace, if the conduct negatively or adversely impacts the employee's job performance. This policy is not meant to infringe upon an individual's right to engage in personal interaction or commentary online, or upon any right protected by federal or state law.

3. Definitions

"Content" means any writings, audio or video material, documents, photographs, graphics, or other information that is created, posted, shared, distributed, or transmitted via social media.

"Social media" means web-based and mobile technologies that turn communication into an interactive dialogue. Through social media, individuals or groups may create, organize, edit, comment on, combine, and share content.

4. Procedures

A. Village Use of Social Media

Village social media accounts should be used for purposes that align with the Village's communications and outreach goals. Acceptable content includes:

- Promoting Village services
- Sharing news and announcements
- Posting about relevant community issues and events

Content must be professional in tone and carefully checked for accuracy prior to posting. Accounts should not be used to post any content prohibited by the "Technology Use Policy."

B. Employee Personal Use of Social Media

Employees should keep any personal social media accounts separate from Village accounts and should never use their Village email account or password in conjunction with a personal social media account. When posting about Village business on personal accounts, employees should be clear that stated views are their own and not representative of the Village. Employees must not share confidential or proprietary Village information on social media. Any action taken on a personal social media account that adversely affects the employee's ability to function in their position or creates a hostile work environment may result in disciplinary action.

C. Social Media Use by Elected Officials

Elected officials who maintain social media accounts in a way that identifies themselves as elected officials of the Village of Rochester should be aware that their posts may be considered government speech and therefore subject to the First Amendment, records retention requirements, and open meetings and open records laws. Elected officials should:

- Clarify that views expressed are their own and do not represent the official position of the Village.
- Maintain professionalism and adhere to applicable laws and policies.
- Not disclose confidential or proprietary Village information.
- Not block constituents from following them or restrict ability to comment based on viewpoint.
- Not delete posts or communications made as an elected official unless:
 - There are technical issues like the account being hacked.
 - The original post is revised for accuracy.
 - Legal counsel advises removal.

D. Moderation of Third-Party Content

The following guidelines must be displayed to users on all Village social media sites:

“This Village social media site serves as a limited public forum and all content published is subject to monitoring. User-generated posts could be rejected, removed, hidden, or blocked when the content (including links):

- Contains obscenity, personal identifying information or sensitive personal information, information that could reasonably compromise individual or public safety, or material of a sexual nature
- Is clearly not related to the Village government, including comments that:
 - Advertise, solicit, or promote products or services
 - Support or oppose political campaigns, political parties, or political ideology
- Incites or promotes violence or illegal activities”

E. Public Records Laws

Village social media sites are subject to applicable public records laws. Any content maintained in a social media format related to Village business, including communication posted by the Village and communication received from citizens, is a public record. The Village is responsible for responding completely and accurately to any public records request for social media content.

5. Policy Violations

Violating this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment or contract. Appointed or elected officials who violate this policy may be subject to removal in accordance with Wisconsin Statutes Section 17.13.