

# Washington Township Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy

3/23/2026

## Purpose:

Washington Township's (The Townships) presence on social media sites is intended for informational purposes only. Washington Township believes that the use of social media platforms can effectively broaden the reach of government communication to its constituents and foster a dynamic environment for social discourse. The use of social media by Washington Township is to convey or obtain information that is useful to the public and/or will further the goals of this local government. If you wish to contact Washington Township, please visit our official website at: <https://www.washingtontownshipil.com> or call the office at 708-946-2026.

## Administration of Accounts

The Townships official website is maintained and monitored by Township staff to ensure that posted content is constructive and suitable for all readers while respecting a range of opinions and points of view. Content posted on this site does not imply the endorsement, agreement, or necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of the Washington Township.

## Public Content Policy

Social media platforms not only provide the government with a communications venue but often allow for public comments to be posted to the Township site. Any comment made by a member of the public as a social media user is that user's opinion only. Publication of the comment does not imply endorsement or agreement by the Township nor reflect the opinions or policies of the Township.

Township media sites are not public forums. This site may or may not allow the public to post comments or otherwise add content to the Townships page. If this site allows comments, it is considered a "limited public forum" and the Township may place reasonable restrictions in light of the purpose served by the forum. The following enumerated list of the content **shall not be permitted** on the Townships social media platforms, and such content is subject to removal and/or restriction by the administrator. Content that:

1. Obscene, libelous, malicious, offensive, threatening, profane, or defamatory language, symbols, videos, or images.
2. Personal attacks, threats, or hate speech.
3. Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination in violation of the Townships Code of Ordinances or applicable law.
4. Advertising or promotion of a commercial business or enterprise.
5. Comments falling outside the scope of the topic under discussion.
6. Content containing personal information (i.e. birthdates, social security numbers, personal phone numbers, etc.), confidential, or other sensitive information.
7. Content of a sexual nature.
8. Content that breaches any law, confidentiality, copyright, or intellectual property rights.
9. Comments in support of, or opposition to, any political campaign, candidate, or ballot measure.
10. Content promoting or encouraging any illegal activity.
11. Content promoting or denigrating religion, atheism, or any spiritual belief.
12. Content exchanges between public officials in violation of the Illinois Open Meetings Act.

Each particular private social media enterprise maintains a “Term of Use” agreement. All comments posted to any Township social media platform are bound by those Terms of Use agreements and the Township reserves the right to report any user violation to the respective enterprise.

The Township also reserves the right to remove content from, or deny access to, any government social media platforms if any individual or organization violates the Social Media Use Policy. Anyone posting comments which violate this Terms of Use Policy may be prohibited from future participation.

### **Procedures**

All Township social media pages, applications, and sites shall be approved by the Township Board.

Where possible, social media pages shall clearly indicate they are maintained by Washington Township and shall have Township contact information prominently displayed. Social Media content shall adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including all information technology and records management policies.

1. Content is subject to public records laws. Relevant records retention schedules apply to social media content.
2. Content must be managed, stored, and retrieved to comply with open records laws and e-discovery laws and policies.

Where possible, social media pages should state that the opinions expressed by visitors to the page(s) do not reflect the opinions of the Township.

1. Pages shall clearly indicate that posted comments will be monitored and that the Township reserves the right to remove obscenities, off-topic comments, and personal attacks.
2. Sites shall clearly indicate that any content posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure.

The Township shall ensure that visitors to the Township’s social media pages and applications are notified that the Township’s social media pages, applications and other electronic media accounts are not monitored 24/7, and as such, posts and responses should not be immediately expected. Accounts are typically monitored during normal business hours. As the Township’s social media accounts are not monitored 24/7, users shall be advised **NOT** to use the Township’s social media to report a crime, emergency situation, or other circumstances requiring an immediate response by the Township or otherwise. Crime reports and requests for police, fire or emergency medical assistance must be made by dialing 9-1-1.

### **Compliance with Laws**

The Township’s official social media resources are subject to the State of Illinois’s Freedom of Information Act. With only certain limitations, content on official social media resources are public records and subject to public disclosure. Illinois state law and relevant Township record retention policies apply to social media content. As official Township records, social media content shall be preserved and retained in a format that preserves the integrity of the original record.

All Township social media platforms shall adhere to applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and policies. Content posted on any Township social media platform by any user is subject to the Freedom of Information Act, and record retention laws and may be subject to e-discovery laws. Property

that is protected by copyright or trademark should not be posted or maintained on a social media platform in violation of the owner's legal interest.

### **Employee Usage of Private Social Media**

Washington Township recognizes that social media creates opportunities for community engagement, interpersonal connection, and self-expression, but it also creates risks and responsibilities. Everyone should assume that a colleague, supervisor, partner, supplier, or member of the public whether on a business or personal account could view any use of social media.

1. Therefore, any social media activity of the Township's employee that adversely affects the employee's job performance, the performance of fellow employees, or otherwise adversely affects members, customers, suppliers, people who work on behalf of the Washington Township or the Washington Township's legitimate business interests, standing and reputation and/or strategic goals may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination. In particular, Township's personnel are prohibited from the following:
  - a) Speech containing obscene or sexually explicit language, images, or acts and statements or other forms of speech that ridicule, malign, disparage, or otherwise express bias against any race, and religion, or any protected class of individuals.
  - b) Speech involving themselves or other Township personnel reflecting behavior, which would violate the Washington Township Employment Policies.
  - c) The personal use of any audio/video recording device, (such as tape recorders, cameras, camera phones, tablets – small portable computers activated by touching the screen, drones, smartphones, computers, etc.) on Township premises is prohibited without the express prior permission of senior management and of the person(s) subject to recording. Video or audio recording in restrooms and/or locker rooms is forbidden.
2. Disclosure of confidential Township information, sensitive information or personal information relating to Township officials and employees, or members of the public, is prohibited.
3. It is requested that employees who identify themselves as employees of the Washington Township post a disclaimer on their own personal social media platforms that any posts or blogs are solely the opinions of the employee and not the employer.
4. Employees of the Washington Township shall not use employer equipment to access their private social media or use private devices to access their private social media during hours of employment.
5. Violation of this section may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

## **Disclaimer**

The Washington Township reserves the right to update this Terms of Use Policy at any time. The Washington Township does not warrant or make representations or endorsements as to the quality, content, suitability, accuracy, or completeness of the information, text, images, video, graphics, hyperlinks, or other items contained on a social media site's server or any other server. Such materials have been compiled from a variety of sources and are subject to change without notice. The Township's primary and predominant Internet presence is the Township's official website at <https://washingtontownshipil.com> and no other website or social media site shall characterize itself as such.

Except to the extent required by law, commercial use of the materials on this site are prohibited without the written permission of the Township. Some of the links on the Township's social media pages may lead to resources outside the control of the Washington Township. The presence of these links should not be construed as an endorsement by the township of these sites or their content. The Township is not responsible for the content of any such external site.

Except to the extent required by law, communications made through and comments made on the Township's social media pages shall in no way be deemed to constitute legal notice to the Washington Township or any of its agencies, officers, employees, agents, or representatives with respect to any existing or potential claim or cause of action against the Township, its officers, employees, agents, or representatives where notice to the Township is required by any federal, state, or local laws, rules, or regulations.

## **UNOFFICIAL EMAIL ACCOUNTS & TEXT MESSAGING**

### **A. Unofficial Email Accounts**

Township officials and employees should not use their personal accounts for work-related communications. Such work-related communications may constitute public records subject to the Freedom of Information Act, 5 ILCS 104/1, et seq. If an official or employee uses a personal email account for work-related communication it may require disclosure or review of that personal account (either inadvertently or when it is unavoidable), he or she must ensure that a copy of such email is maintained in official files. This may include, for example, forwarding a copy of each such email immediately to the officials or employee's government email account. This policy applies to all work-related emails sent or received on private accounts, including receipt of unsolicited work-related emails.

For Township Trustees or other purely legislative officials (that is, officials who have no executive branch or administrative roles), all emails discussing public business that are either sent or received during a public meeting or that include a majority of a quorum of the legislative body, shall ONLY be sent with an official email account designated by the public body for the purposes of collecting and retaining such emails. Moreover, care should be taken that said communications do not violate the Open Meetings Act, 5 ILCS 120/1, et seq.

**B. Text Messages**

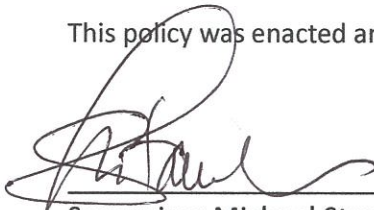
Township officials and employees should not use text messaging for work-related communications. Such work-related communications may constitute public records subject to the Freedom of Information Act, 5 ILCS 5/140, et seq., may require disclosure or review of that personal account. If an official or employee uses a text message for work-related communication (either inadvertently or when it is unavoidable), he or she must ensure that a copy of such work-related text message sent or received by the official or employee is maintained in the official files.

The retention and disposal of these records is subject to the Local Records Act, 50 ILCS 205/1, et seq.

**POLICY ADOPTION**

This Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy for Washington Township, and any amendments thereto, shall be approved and adopted by the Township Supervisor and Board of Township Trustees

This policy was enacted and approved on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of January 2026.

  
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Supervisor Michael Stanula

  
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Clerk Joseph Burgess

SEAL

