

## **Village of Lake Zurich Social Media Policy**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this policy is to address the use of social networking forums by the Village of Lake Zurich and its employees, volunteers, and elected officials. The Village recognizes that social networking has become a common form of communication among residents, business owners, constituents, media outlets, and other stakeholders. Using this technology, the Village has the ability to disseminate news and engage public dialogue about events, ordinances, policies, topics of public interest, and generally information that supports the goals and mission of the Village.

**Definitions:** “Social media” includes any website or medium (including video) that allows for open communication with Internet users. Examples of social media include Facebook, Twitter, Nextdoor and LinkedIn (social networking) and YouTube (video sharing). These social media websites often provide a forum for public engagement with stakeholders. This policy shall apply to the Village’s social media accounts and the social media accounts of elected officials who engage in public discourse, information dissemination and/or comments on Village-related topics.

### **Village of Lake Zurich Social Media Accounts**

The Village encourages the use of social media to further its mission and goals in service to the residents, businesses, guests, constituents and other stakeholders of the Village. The use of social media advances the Village’s commitment to “radical transparency” and the advancement of the “civic engagement” strategic goal. Social media shall be used to support the Village’s delivery of municipal services and the Village’s dissemination of information of public interest.

The Village does not intend for the use of its social media accounts to constitute official public forums *per se*. However, the Village respects that community members may, from time to time, engage in discourse about public matters on the Village’s social media platforms. The Village strives to uphold and protect all individuals’ First Amendment rights to freedom of expression.

The Village shall employ the following protocols when using social media:

1. The Village Manager or designee shall approve the social media outlets that are suitable for use by the Village. The Village is not obligated to use every available platform, and will consider the accessibility, frequency of activity, number of participants and relevance to Lake Zurich when approving and using social media platforms.
2. Social media sites selected for use shall be branded with the Village logo, along with any other appropriate information identifying the site as an official Village of Lake Zurich social media account.
3. Appropriate personnel as designated by the Village Manager or designee will monitor social media use, and will review and approve all content prior to posting.
4. Content will be reviewed for appropriateness, quality, consistency with overall Village messaging, priorities, goals and policies. No advertising, solicitations of commerce, or political

messages will be sent through social media. No spam messages will be allowed. Posts that are unrelated to Village Business, such as personal posts, are strictly prohibited.

5. All Village departments are encouraged to provide information suitable for dissemination through social media accounts. Information sought to be published on the Village's social media accounts shall be submitted to the Village Manager or designee so such information can be reviewed, and distributed through the appropriate social media accounts operated by the Village.
6. Information offered will include emergency notifications (watering bans, road closures, evacuations, etc.) police alerts and advisories, construction projects, event invitations (community festivals, concerts, holiday happenings, etc.), press releases issued by the Village, and related images.
7. Posts must adhere to established laws and policies regarding copyright or plagiarism, records retention, Freedom of Information/FOIA, First Amendment rights, privacy and information security policies, and protocols established by the Village.
8. Wherever possible, links to more information should direct users back to the Village's official website for more information, forms, documents, or online services necessary to conduct business with the Village.
9. The Village will allow private comments from the public, which will be reviewed by the Village's social media page administrator in order to provide a private response when necessary. Any private comments and responses are akin to emails and shall be treated accordingly.
10. The Village's social media accounts shall be noticed to inform users that the intended purpose of the site is to serve as a mechanism for communication of Village news, services and events. The policy regarding private comment procedure and review shall also be included. This notice shall include The Village's website address and a single point of contact for inquiries about the social media account (at the minimum, a general email address or phone number). This notice shall be posted in a conspicuous location on the Village's social media account and should be posted in a consistent location on all of the Village's social media accounts.
11. All Village-related information disseminated by social media shall occur only on the Village's designated social media accounts. Village employees are prohibited from creating, maintaining, or contributing to a social media account on behalf of the Village and representing the Village without first receiving approval from the Village Manager or designee.
12. Employees using the Village's social media accounts shall obey all privacy protection laws, i.e. HIPPA, and protect sensitive and confidential Village information at all times. No employee may post or share any information about litigation involving the Village on the Village's social media accounts without prior approval of the Village's legal counsel.
13. Posts to the Village's accounts, whether from personal or designated official accounts to public and non-public forums may not be deleted, or individuals blocked from receiving them. Posts and/or replies from the public may not be deleted or blocked irrespective of disagreement or criticism with the following exceptions:

- Posts that incite violence may be hidden.
  - Posts that built-in profanity filters missed may be hidden.
  - Posts that include *ad hominem* attacks/comments may be hidden.
14. The use of social media tools is intended to benefit the community. If the use of a particular social media tool or platform by the Village is determined to no longer serve the interests of the community or Village due to improper use, undesirable consequences, impacts or abuse, that do not serve to benefit the community, the Village reserves the right to discontinue use of such tool or platform.
  15. The Village cannot and does not continuously monitor social media communications and is not able assure any response time to information or messages posted on any Village utilized social media platform. If a member of the public has a request requiring some Village response, such as a FOIA or service request, such request should be made through the Village's website [www.lakezurich.org](http://www.lakezurich.org) or contacting Village Hall at 847-438-5141.

### **Elected Officials' Social Media Accounts**

The Mayor, Village Trustees and Village Clerk, as elected representatives of the Village of Lake Zurich, often participate in public discourse on social media platforms. Though they individually do not constitute a "public body" (i.e. a majority of a quorum), the Village's elected officials may represent, comment on, forward or otherwise engage constituents on public matters via social media on the behalf of the Village. They may also engage their constituencies as individually elected officials and express views that may or may not be consistent with official Village positions, decisions or goals. When engaging in public discourse on social media platforms, either on the behalf of the Village or as an independently elected official, the comments, responses and images posted may contribute to a "public forum" to which FOIA, First Amendment rights to freedom of expression and public records retention laws may apply.

To uphold the Village's commitment to "radical transparency," the advancement of the "civic engagement" strategic goal, and the protection of citizens' First Amendment rights to freedom of expression, the elected officials of the Village of Lake Zurich shall employ the following protocols when using social media:

1. Elected officials shall identify themselves as such when commenting on Village and/or matters of public concern (e.g. posting as "Mayor" or "Trustee"), differentiated from their activity on social media as an "individual citizen" (e.g. family pictures, personal posts, etc.), as appropriate.
2. Elected officials are encouraged to share official information provided by the Village including emergency notifications (watering bans, road closures, evacuations, etc.) police alerts and advisories, construction projects, event invitations (community festivals, concerts, holiday happenings, etc.), press releases issued by the Village, and related images.

3. Wherever possible, links to more information should direct users back to the Village's official website for more information, forms, documents, or online services necessary to conduct business with the Village.
4. Elected officials using social media accounts shall obey all privacy protection laws, i.e. HIPPA; maintain the confidentiality of executive session discussions, and protect sensitive and confidential Village information at all times. Elected officials shall avoid commenting on or sharing information about litigation involving the Village, instead referring commentary to the Village Manager or the Village's legal counsel, as appropriate.
5. Posts by elected officials on social media platforms, whether they be on their own accounts or pages, the Village's, or another's personal or business account, may constitute public discourse subject to FOIA, records retention requirements and First Amendment protections. Elected officials are advised to not block other users, hide or delete posts, or otherwise inhibit public commentary, irrespective of disagreement or criticism except as allowed by law, including the following exceptions:
  - o Posts that incite violence may be hidden.
  - o Posts that built-in profanity filters missed may be hidden.

PASSED this 4<sup>th</sup> day of November, 2019.

AYES: Trustees Spacone, Beaudoin, Euker, Gannon, Sprawka, Weider

NAYS: Ø

ABSENT: Ø

APPROVED this 6<sup>th</sup> day of November, 2019.

Tom Boynton  
Tom Boynton, Village President

ATTEST:

Kyle Kordell  
Kyle Kordell, Deputy Village Clerk

