

**VILLAGE OF BERRIEN SPRINGS  
COUNTY OF BERRIEN, STATE OF MICHIGAN**

**SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY – TERMS OF USE FOR THE PUBLIC**

**Purpose**

- To address the fast-changing landscape of the internet and the ways in which residents communicate and obtain information online, the Village of Berrien Springs (the “Village”) encourages the use of social media to reach a broader audience in order to further the mission and goals of the Village and the objectives of its departments, where appropriate.
- The Village has an overriding interest and expectation in deciding what is “spoken” on behalf of the Village on the Village’s media sites.
- This policy establishes guidelines for the establishment and use by the Village of social media sites (including but not limited to Facebook and Twitter) as a means of conveying Village information to its citizens, increasing transparency, engaging citizens, and/or encouraging citizen participation in the affairs of local government.
- The intended purpose behind establishing Village social media sites is to disseminate information from the Village, about the Village, to its citizens.
- The Village’s social media websites are a place for collecting suggestions and new ideas and to encourage conversations among the people it serves, not a substitute channel for services or general questions. Do not submit unsolicited proposals or other business ideas or inquiries through this media; these sites are not to be used for contracting or commercial business.
- Do not submit any claim, demand, informal or formal complaint, or any other form of legal and/or administrative notice of process. The Village’s social media websites are not to be used to report criminal activity. If you have information for law enforcement, please contact your local police agency.
- We expect conversations to follow the rules of polite discourse and we ask that participants treat each other, as well as our employees, with respect. For the benefit of robust discussion, we ask that comments remain on topic. This means that comments posted must relate to the topic that is being discussed and/or congruent with the nature of the social media website and its nature of business or service.

**Policy**

- The Village’s website will remain the Village’s primary and predominant internet presence.

- The best, most appropriate Village uses of social media tools fall generally into two categories;
  - As channels for disseminating time-sensitive information as quickly as possible (example: emergency information);
  - As marketing/promotional channels which increase the Village's ability to broadcast its messages to the wisest possible audience.
- Wherever possible, content posted to Village social media sites will also be available on the Village's website.
- Wherever possible, content posted to the Village's social media sites should contain links directing users back to the Village's official website for in-depth information, forms, documents or online services necessary to conduct business with the Village.
- Village social media sites are subject to the Michigan Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Any content maintained in a social media format that is related to Village business, including a list of subscribers, posted communication, and communication submitted for posting, may be a public record subject to public disclosure, and therefore, subject to the Village's Record Retention Policy.
- Wherever possible, Village social media sites shall clearly indicate that any articles and any other content posted or submitted for posting may be subject to public disclosure. Users shall be notified that public disclosure requests must be directed to the relevant Village Departmental FOIA Coordinator.
- The Village reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of this Social Media Policy or any applicable law. Any content removed based on these guidelines must be retained in accordance with the FOIA. Social media content may be archived through the periodic, permissive removal of social media posts after such posts have been "live" for at least thirty (30) calendar days, provided that such posts are first copied and pasted to a digital file that is retained in accordance with a FOIA-compliant record retention schedule.
- These guidelines must be displayed to users or made available by hyperlink.
- The Village will approach the use of social media tools as consistently as possible, enterprise-wide.
- Individual departmental social media pages (e.g. Facebook) shall present a consistent "look and feel" as determined and monitored by the Village Council or its designee.
- All Village social media sites shall adhere to applicable federal, state and local laws, regulations and policies.

- Comments on topics or issues not within the jurisdictional purview of the Village of Berrien Springs may be removed.
- Employees, contractors, consultants and vendors representing the Village government via Village social media sites must, while acting in such capacity, conduct themselves as a representative of the Village and in accordance with all Village policies.
- All new social media tools proposed for Village use will be approved by the Village Council or its designee.
- For each social media tool approved for use by the Village, the following documentation will be developed and adopted:
  - Operational and use guidelines;
  - Standards and processes for managing accounts on social media sites;
  - Village and departmental branding standards;
  - Enterprise-wide design standards;
  - Standards for the administration of social media sites.
- The following social media tools have been approved for use by the Village: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn.
- This Social Media Policy may be revised at any time.

**Comment Policy:**

- As a public entity, the Village must abide by certain standards to serve all its constituents in a civil and unbiased manner.
- The intended and primary purpose behind establishing the Village's social media sites is to disseminate information from the Village, about the Village, to its citizens, businesses and other customers.
- Comments containing any of the following inappropriate forms of content shall not be permitted on Village social media sites and are subject to removal and/or restriction by the Village Council or its designee;
  - Comments not related to the original topic, including random or unintelligible comments;
  - Profane, obscene, violent, or pornographic content and/or language;
  - Content that promotes, fosters or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, or national origin;



- Defamatory or personal attacks;
- Threats to any person or organization;
- Comments in support of, or in opposition to, any political campaigns, referendums or other ballot measures;
- Solicitation of commerce including, but not limited to, advertising of any business or product for sale;
- Conduct in violation of any federal, state or local law;
- Encouragement of illegal activity;
- Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems;
- Content that violates a legal ownership interest, such as a copyright, of any party; or
- Topics and information which are exempt from disclosure as provided for under the Michigan Open Meetings Act and FOIA.

These guidelines must be displayed to users or be made available by hyperlink:

- A comment posted by a member of the public on any Village social media site is the opinion of the commentator or poster only, and publication of a comment does not imply endorsement of, or agreement by, the Village of Berrien Springs, nor do such comments necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of the Village of Berrien Springs.
- The Village reserves the right to deny access to Village social media sites for any individual, who violates the Village's Social Media Policy, at any time and without prior notice.
- Departments shall monitor their social media sites for comments requesting responses from the Village and for comments in violation of this policy.
- When a Village employee or authorized contractor, consultant, or vendor responds to a comment, in his/her official capacity as a Village representative, the individual's name and title should be made available, and the individual shall not share personal information about himself or herself, or other Village employees, contractors, consultants, or vendors.
- All comments posted to any Village Facebook site are bound by Facebook's Statement of Rights and Responsibilities, located at <http://www.facebook.com/terms.php>, and the Village reserves the right to report any violation of Facebook's Statement of Rights and Responsibilities to Facebook with

the intent of Facebook taking appropriate and reasonable responsive action. This policy shall also apply to other Village social media sites containing similar Statements of Rights and Responsibilities, or Codes of Conduct.

Approved by the Village Council June 20, 2022.