

## **South Tahoe Public Utility District**

### **SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

*(last revised 6/19/2018)*

The purpose of this Social Media Policy is to (1) establish parameters on the creation and use of South Tahoe Public Utility District (District) sponsored social media sites, (2) provide guidance to employees regarding their personal use of social media in ways that intersect with their District employment, and (3) outline policy for external use of the District's social media sites.

The Social Media Policy consists of the following Sections:

- I. Employee and Director Personal Use of Social Media
- II. District Use of Social Media
- III. External Use Social Media Rules

All use of social media should be consistent with applicable District, State, and Federal laws, regulations and policies, as well as the guidelines in this document. This includes the District's Information Technology Policy and Procedures and the applicable Memorandum of Understanding.

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### Section I. PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Many District employees and Board of Directors (Directors) use personal social media sites. These sites should remain personal in nature (i.e. be used only in a *personal* capacity rather than an official one) and be used to share personal opinions or non-work related information. Following this principle helps ensure a distinction between sharing personal and District views. District employees and Directors shall not use their District email account or password in conjunction with a personal social networking or social media site.

#### Employees

For District employees, this Policy prohibits the personal use of social media during work time or using District electronic resources. Further, this Policy expressly prohibits employees from representing themselves, impliedly or expressly, as presenting the opinions or positions of the District unless authorized to do so in advance by the General Manager in writing. Employees are also prohibited from using personal social media to divulge the District's intellectual property, trade secret information, or confidential business information (including personal and confidential personnel information and/or safety information that may put employees or the public at risk of harm), or in ways that violate the District's policies (including but not limited to those that prohibit harassment or retaliation). The prohibitions in this Policy are not intended to prohibit lawful speech about matters of public concern or collective employee discussion about terms and conditions of employment. In short, Employees are expected to be attentive and careful in their use of social media and to use good judgment. District personnel who identify themselves as District employees on their personal social media sites should assume that their speech and related activity on those sites may reflect upon the District and should tailor their use accordingly

#### Board of Directors

It is best for Directors to take a cautious approach when commenting, liking or sharing District-related content on social media. It is possible to unintentionally violate the Brown Act by conducting a serial meeting on social media. Multiple Directors liking, retweeting and/or commenting on other Director's sites and posts may inadvertently create an actual or perceived serial meeting.

Directors who decide to have personal social media sites and/or who decide to comment on posts about official District business should adhere to the following general principles:

- State your name and, if relevant, role when discussing District business
- Use a disclaimer such as: "The postings on this site are my own and do not represent the opinions of the South Tahoe Public Utility District"
- Avoid commenting on District's social media sites

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### SECTION II. DISTRICT USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The District welcomes Employees to submit proposed content for the District's website or social media sites to the General Manager, or to staff specifically designated and authorized by the General Manager who manage such accounts. However, only the General Manager or such designated and authorized personnel may publish content to a District web site or social media site. Unauthorized usage of or posting to the District's website or social media accounts, and/or violation of the Social Media Policy, can be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including termination.

All District-related communication through its social media sites must remain professional in nature. Information posted on social media must be presented following professional standards for good grammar, spelling, brevity, clarity and accuracy, and avoid jargon, obscure terminology, or acronyms. Social media accounts should be registered under the District's social media email address (SocialMedia@stpud.dst.ca.us).

#### Content of Posts:

District social media sites shall not be used for any of the following:

- For endorsing political candidates
- For conducting private commercial transactions or engaging in private business activities
- For endorsing or recommending any private business
- For posting of personal commentary on District policy

Additionally, the following types of communications are prohibited:

- Profanity, obscenity, or racist or sexist content or comments, as well as content likely to discredit the reputation or professional integrity of the District
- Copyright violations
- Confidential or other non-public information

If an account is used for District purposes, the entire account, regardless of any personal views, is subject to these best practices guidelines, including open records provisions

#### Sharing Content (including Re-Posting, Re-Tweeting, etc.):

Re-posting or sharing content from an appropriate outside source can be a useful tool in informing the public about District activities. When using a District account to share content from an outside source:

- Thoroughly read information/stories in links before sharing
- Clearly identify the source
- Ensure content being shared promotes or highlights the District in a positive manner

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### Responding to Comments on District sites and Accounts:

Social media sites offer ample opportunities for the District to interact with the public. The District's policy is that questions or factually inaccurate comments posted to District sponsored media sites should be answered or corrected by designated District staff as soon as possible. Responses should be professional, conversational, accurate and positive no matter how the original question or comment was phrased.

### Following or "Liking" Outside Pages:

Following or liking a page or account on social media can be perceived as an endorsement and should only be done when it fits the following criteria:

- Other regional governments or quasi-governmental agencies relevant to the District
- Topically appropriate and recognized local, regional, state or national organizations (such as Association of California Water Agencies)
- Event or program pages of District co-sponsored events or programs
- Relevant media outlets (local, regional, state, or trade)

### Referencing External Social Media Comment Rules:

All District-sponsored social media sites must contain the following disclaimer and public comment policy, to the degree permitted by the host. The legal disclaimer should be posted in an area on the social media site that is static to the degree permitted by the social media site.

"Using this page indicates your agreement with South Tahoe Public Utility District's Public Comment Rules\* which contain important conditions and restrictions. If you do not agree, please refrain from using this page."

\*Public Comment Rules (link to District webpage with Public Comment Rules and Disclaimer featured in Section III. External Use Social Media Policy)

### Records Management:

All comments or posts made to District account walls or pages are public, not private. In the spirit of transparency at the District:

- Social media posts and comments that adhere to the External Use Social Media Policy will be left on the social media page for as long as the social media provider's policy allows.
- Account administrators who receive messages through the private message service offered by the social media site should encourage users to contact them at a public e-mail address maintained by the District.

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### SECTION III. External Use Social Media Rules

All District-sponsored social media sites should contain a link to the following disclaimer and public comment rules on the District's website, to the degree permitted by the social media site.

#### Public Comment Rules

The purpose of comment-enabled social media sites is to facilitate a polite and constructive dialogue between South Tahoe Public Utility District (District) and its customers on matters of public interest. The District's social media sites serve a *limited public forum* and all content published is subject to monitoring. User-generated posts will be rejected or removed (if possible) when content:

- Is off-subject or out of context
- Contains obscenity or racist, sexist, or derogatory content or personal attacks
- Contains personal identifying information or sensitive personal information
- Contains offensive terms that target protected classes
- Is threatening, harassing or discriminatory
- Incites or promotes violence or illegal activities
- Contains information that reasonably could compromise individual or public safety
- Advertises or promotes a commercial product or service, or any entity or individual
- Promotes or endorses political campaigns or candidates

#### Public Records Law

South Tahoe Public Utility District's social media sites are subject to applicable public records laws. All comments or posts made to District account walls or pages are public, not private. The District is responsible for responding completely and accurately to any public records request.

#### Legal Disclaimer

The South Tahoe Public Utility District's social media sites are produced and maintained by the District. Links to other internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views contained therein. The District does not control or guarantee the accuracy, relevance, timeliness or completeness of information contained on a linked website. The District does not endorse the organizations sponsoring linked websites or the views they express or the products/services they offer. The District cannot and does not authorize the use of copyrighted materials contained in linked websites. Users must request such authorization from the sponsor of the linked website. The District will not be responsible for content posted by any user in any forum, message board, wall, tweet or other area within the Web Communications host. Opinions expressed by visitors to the District's social media pages do not reflect the opinions of the District.

***If a user does not agree to these terms, the individual should not use South Tahoe Public Utility District's sponsored social media pages as a violation of these terms may lead to legal liability.***