

Chapter 2.53

PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Contents:

Section 2.53.010	Definitions
Section 2.53.020	Social Media Policy
Section 2.53.030	Media Relations Policy

Section 2.53.010 **Definitions**

As used in this chapter:

"District social media sites" means social media sites which the District establishes and maintains, and over which it has control over all postings, except for advertisements or hyperlinks by the social media site's owners, vendors, or partners. District social media sites shall supplement, and not replace, the District's required notices and standard methods of communication.

"Posts" or "postings" means information, articles, pictures, videos or any other form of communication posted on a District social media site.

"Social media sites" means content created by individuals, using accessible, expandable, and upgradable publishing technologies, through and on the internet. Examples of social media include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Blogs, YouTube, and LinkedIn.

Section 2.53.020 **Social Media Policy**

- A. Purpose: This Social Media Policy establishes guidelines for the establishment and use by the District of social media sites as a means of conveying information to members of the public. The intended purpose of District social media sites is to disseminate information from the District about the District's mission, meetings, activities, and current issues to members of the public. The District has an overriding interest and expectation in protecting the integrity and content of the information posted on its social media sites and the content that is attributed to the District and its officials.
- B. General Policy
 1. The District's official website at www.rmwd.org (or any domain owned by the District) will remain the District's primary means of internet communication.
 2. The establishment of District social media sites is subject to approval by the General Manager or his/her designee. Upon approval, District social media sites shall bear the name and/or official logo of the District.

3. Content on District social media sites is subject to oversight by the General Manager's Department.
4. District social media sites shall clearly state that such sites are maintained by the District and that the sites comply with the District's Social Media Policy.
5. District social media sites shall link back to the District's official website for forms, documents, online services, and other information necessary to conduct business with the District whenever possible.
6. The General Manager's Department shall monitor content on District social media sites to ensure adherence to both the District's Social Media Policy and the interest and goals of the District.
7. District social media sites shall be managed consistent with the Brown Act. Members of the District's Board of Directors shall not respond to, "like," "share," retweet, or otherwise participate in any published postings, or use the site or any form of electronic communication to respond to, blog, or engage in serial meetings, or otherwise discuss, deliberate, or express opinions on any issue within the subject matter jurisdiction of the body.
8. The District through its General Manager reserves the right to terminate any District social media site at any time without notice.
9. District social media sites shall comply with usage rules and regulations required by the site provider, including privacy policies.
10. The District's Social Media Policy shall be displayed to users or made available by hyperlink.
11. All District social media sites shall adhere to applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and policies.
12. District social media sites may be subject to the California Public Records Act. Any content maintained on a District social media site that is related to District business, including a list of subscribers, posted communication, and communication submitted for posting, may be considered a public record and subject to public disclosure. There is no expectation of privacy in any content or comments.
13. Employees representing the District on District social media sites shall conduct themselves at all times as a professional representative of the District and in accordance with all District policies.
14. All District social media sites shall utilize authorized District contact information for account set-up, monitoring, and access. The use of personal email accounts or phone numbers by any District employee is not allowed for the purpose of setting-up, monitoring, or accessing a District social media site.

15. District social media sites may contain content, including but not limited to, advertisements or hyperlinks over which the District has no control. The District does not endorse any hyperlink or advertisement placed on District social media sites by the social media site's owners, vendors, or partners.
16. Social media pages should state that the opinions expressed by visitors to the page(s) do not reflect the opinions of the District.
17. Social media pages should indicate that posted comments will be monitored and that the District reserves the right to remove comments that are found to be in violation of this policy.
18. The following statement shall be posted on the District social media sites' primary page or by a hyperlink directing a user to the same wherever possible:

“The intended purpose of this page is to serve as a mechanism for communication between the Ramona Municipal Water District and members of the public. However, this page is not the primary method of communication with the District, and any notices or requests for District services must be made via official communication methods identified on the District’s website, or by traditional methods of notification recognized by the District, and no comments or posts on this page will be construed as providing notice to the District of any claim, deficiency, dangerous condition, request, or otherwise.

Any comments or other content posted or submitted to this page for posting, as well as personal identifying information for the page’s users and visitors, and its list of fans, may be public records subject to disclosure pursuant to the California Public Records Act. Public disclosure requests must be directed to the District office.”

In addition to the above statement, the District social media sites' primary page shall also contain contact information for the District and a hyperlink to the District website providing addresses, names, phone numbers, fax numbers, and email addresses of applicable department listings or District staff and methods of making official requests for maintenance or services and notice of the condition of District property or other similar requests.

19. The District reserves the right to change, modify, or amend all or part of this policy at any time.

C. Content Guidelines

1. The content of District social media sites should only pertain to District-sponsored or District-endorsed programs, services, and events. Content includes, but is not limited to, information, photographs, videos, and hyperlinks.
2. Content posted to the District's social media sites will contain hyperlinks directing users back to the District's official website for in-depth information, forms, documents, or online services necessary to conduct business with the District, whenever possible.

3. The District shall have full permission or rights to any content posted, including photographs and videos.
4. Any employee authorized to post items on any of the District's social media sites shall review, be familiar with, and comply with the social media site's use policies and terms and conditions.
5. Any employee authorized to post items on any of the District's social media sites shall not express his or her own personal views or concerns through such postings. Instead, postings on any of the District's social media sites by an authorized District employee shall only reflect the views of the District.
6. Postings will contain information that is freely available to the public and not be confidential as defined by any District policy or state or federal law.
7. Postings may NOT contain any personal information, except for the names of employees whose job duties include being available for contact by the public.
8. Examples of social media content may include but are not limited to: updates on main breaks or similar disruptions in service, construction project updates, water conservation, special events, reminders for board meetings and committee meetings, updates to District office hours or closures, and updates and information on District services and procedures.
9. The District is not required to allow users to post comments on its social media sites, however, if it does allow postings, they shall NOT contain any of the following as listed below. The District disclaims any and all responsibility and liability for any materials that the District deems inappropriate for posting which cannot be removed in an expeditious or otherwise timely manner. The District reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of this policy or any applicable law. Any articles, messages, posts, comments, images, video or other content containing any of the following shall not be allowed and may be removed as soon as possible:
 - a. Comments that are not topically related to the particular posting being commented upon or not within the jurisdictional purview of the District;
 - b. Comments in support of, or opposition to, political campaigns, candidates or ballot measures;
 - c. Profane or obscene language or content;
 - d. Violent or threatening content;
 - e. Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, or status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation, as well as any other category protected by federal, state, or local laws;

- f. Sexual content or links to sexual content;
 - g. Solicitations of commerce or advertisements including promotion or endorsement;
 - h. Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity;
 - i. Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems;
 - j. Disclosure of confidential, sensitive or proprietary information;
 - k. Content intended to defame, harass, threaten, or stalk any person, group or organization; or
 - l. Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party, such as a trademark or copyright infringement.
10. These guidelines shall be displayed to users or made available by hyperlink on all District social media sites. Any content removed based on these guidelines must be retained, including the time, date, and identity of the poster, when available.
11. The District reserves the right to implement or remove any functionality of its social media sites, when deemed appropriate by the General Manager or his/her designee. This includes, but is not limited to, information, articles, pictures, videos, or any other form of communication that is posted on a District social media site.
12. Except as expressly provided in this policy, accessing any social media site shall comply with all applicable District policies pertaining to communications and the use of the internet by employees, including email content.
13. All of the content on District social media sites is subject to oversight by the General Manager's Office. The District reserves the right to change, modify, or amend all or part of this policy at any time.

Section 2.53.030 Media Relations Policy

- A. General Purpose: Good media relations benefit the District. When the District helps the media with the job of gathering and reporting the news, we are also helping communicate our story to the public. Through good media relations, the District can strengthen community support and build a positive image in the community. Providing this kind of assistance also discharges our responsibility to be accountable to the public. The District strives to provide transparent communications on District activities and projects at all times and in a comprehensive manner. The purpose of the policy is to establish guidelines that protect the District, inform and educate customers, and encourage interaction with stakeholders.

- B. Press Releases and Official Statements: Generally speaking, all press releases or official statements regarding the policies of the District or actions taken by its Board of Directors should be issued by the President of the Board of Directors or the General Manager. Press releases regarding the operational activities by the District or its staff should be issued by the District's General Manager.
- C. Media Requests for Information: In order to ensure compliance with this policy, all requests for information from the media should be directed to the General Manager's office.
- D. Personal Comments or Contact with Media: Nothing within this policy is intended to restrict or prevent individual Board Members from making personal comments or contact with the media; it only applies to official comments from the District or its Board of Directors. If a Director offers a personal opinion during meetings with other elected officials or at a District speaking engagement, it should be identified as such. District staff should not make any comments to the media without prior approval from the General Manager.
- E. Questions regarding litigation or exposure to litigation should be referred immediately to the District's General Counsel and copied to the General Manager.

Chapter 2.53 References:

Date	Document Type/No.	Action	Code Section(s)
05/09/23	Ordinance No. 23-476	Added	Chapter 2.53 in its entirety