


**Social Media for  
Boards and  
Commissions**

Presentation to the  
City Council

**June 10, 2010**



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**Guiding considerations**

- **Open Meetings Act** – City Ordinance requires that all City boards adhere to the state open meetings laws
- **Vendor Participation** – Anonymity of many social media tools puts City anti-lobbying rules at risk
- **Records retention** – All content created must be archived according to applicable state and Federal requirements

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**Guiding considerations**

- **Maintenance** – City staff must be available to maintain the page to ensure its maintenance and relevance
- **Content Ownership** – Dominant social media providers often claim ownership of the content created using their tools
- **First Amendment** – Open forums require that all comments must be posted regardless of the nature of the comments

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## Staff findings

### ■ Three stated areas of need:

- Content management, document management and general “business support for boards and commissions
- Collaboration tools to facilitate “virtual” meetings of boards and commissions
- Social media tools to engage public and key constituents in discussions relevant to the board

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## Staff findings

- Content and meetings management tools will be addressed with new, standardized agenda management system (to be implemented over the next 18 months) and CMS implementation in Phase II of AustinGO project (to begin late 2010)
- Online collaborative tools, such as SharePoint, present open meetings concerns that were outside of the scope of this social media policy

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## Staff findings

- For the purposes of this policy, staff has focused on the third stated need, which is the use of social media to increase public engagement

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### Key policy recommendations

- **Sec. VIII B:** “Due to open meetings requirements, individual members of Boards are prohibited from participating in postings or discussion threads on social media sites created and maintained by the group that they are a member of.”

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### Key policy recommendations

- **Sec. VIII C:** “Any use of social media sites shall not serve as a replacement for postings and notifications required to be posted to the City Clerk and/or City of Austin websites.”

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### Key policy recommendations

- **Sec. VIII D:** “Boards wishing to initiate social media sites should do so by formal action of the Board, and follow requirements for approval and governance as outlined in Section IV of the Social Media Policy.”

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## Key policy recommendations

- **Sec. VIII E:** “Committees of Boards are required to use the main resource established and approved by the “parent” Board.”

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## Key policy recommendations

- **Sec. VIII H:** “Under no circumstance should a Board direct staff to post statements of personal opinion held by individual members.”

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## Key policy recommendations

- **General governance:**
  - A business case must be completed by the board liaison in advance of launching social media tools.
  - A staff liaison must be assigned to maintain the resource.
  - Postings and discussions must be relevant to the assigned advisory role of the board.

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## Budgetary Implications

### ■ Maintenance requires staff time

- There are currently **56** permanent Boards and **94** subgroups of Boards.
- Dozens of subgroups with a limited term may exist at any given time.
- If each Board and subgroup had one site, which required one hour of maintenance weekly @ \$20/hr, the annual cost (in staff time) would be **\$156,000**. This does not consider additional "limited term" subgroups.

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## In summary

- Social media should not be viewed as a replacement for a fully functional CMS or agenda management system, both of which are on the immediate horizon.
- Social media should not be viewed as a surrogate for meetings of the board (open meetings limitation).
- Social media is best used as a tool to foster public discussion on topics relevant to the board, and should be integrated as such.

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## In summary

- Our recommendation is to create a simple workflow for requesting and approving social media use by boards.
- Board members must collectively make decisions on content/discussion postings.
- Due to open meetings concerns, individual board members may follow discussions, but not actively participate.

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## In summary

- A broader discussion of social media governance, staffing and resourcing may be in order if we wish to truly integrate social media in to our engagement and communication strategies.

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## Next steps

- Consider appropriate process for Council adoption of policy
- Work with selected boards to pilot process
- Evaluate effectiveness based on pilot project(s) and make adjustments as necessary

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## Questions?

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