

County social media policy set

By Alexa Zoellner azoellner@dailyunion.com | Posted: Wednesday, May 11, 2016 9:30 am

JEFFERSON — The Jefferson County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday enacted a social media policy for county departments, officials and organizations.

“Really what it is is, we found some great opportunities in social media,” Jefferson County Administrator Ben Wehmeier said. “Technology definitely helps us get messages out, but at the same time, we have to make sure that it’s being used in the proper way and that it’s within the rights of the people who are using it as well and the public. So it’s really policy keeping pace with the technology for that purpose.”

The policy is intended to promote the safe, orderly, responsible and consistent use of social media by Jefferson County through its departments, officials, agents and employees.

It applies to all county programs, divisions, departments, officials, agents, employees, subunits and agencies; to all county official websites, both Internet and Intranet; to all other websites hosted by the county; and to any division, department, agency or subunit receiving direct services from Jefferson County Management Information Systems.

“The need for this policy was brought to the attention of the Administration and Rules Committee by our county administrator and our corporation counsel,” Supervisor Amy Rinard said. “While the social media use by our county departments has really expanded, we have not had a policy like this in the past. So it’s filling a void, and I think it provides some really excellent guidance on how to use social media.”

Various county entities have developed social media platforms over the past few years and there was no set policy on how that took place, Wehmeier explained following the meeting.

“In some cases, some (departments) had to come to committees to get permission; in some cases, some didn’t; sometimes they just appeared,” he said. “We really wanted to have one set standard across the county in terms of how that operated. ... So it really is a way to keep pace and having a formality so staff is trained on how to utilize it too.”

Corporation Counsel J. Blair Ward said that the most important part of the policy is the simple fact that there now is a policy in place.

“There are a number of Jefferson County departments that have Facebook pages, for example, but there’s no uniform guidance on how they operate their Facebook pages,” Ward said. “That has caused some concerns for the administration of Jefferson County, so that’s why I put together a

policy — so everyone would have the same set of rules to follow and they'd know the rules and what would be expected of them when operating a Facebook (or other social media) page.”

The “biggest part” of the social media policy that people need to pay attention to is what are considered appropriate comments, both by employees and by the public.

“(Employees) are responsible for making sure that they know what the policy says and they know what's appropriate to post on behalf of the county,” Ward explained. “For example, they can post comments in a professional capacity as a county employee, but if they were to cross the line into their personal beliefs or personal comments on something, that might create problems. So they need to know that.

“If there's a situation where comments are made that are clearly inappropriate on a subject on social media, then employees are given the authority to remove those comments as being non-responsive,” he continued. “When you have that in a policy, that gives the employees that authority and it also says to the public that we're not trying to censor what they're putting out there, but we're telling them that they need to respond appropriately to whatever subject is being discussed or addressed on the page.”

In other business, the board:

- Approved creation of three full-time positions at the Jefferson County Human Services Department. The positions include a behavioral health specialist/psychotherapist, Comprehensive Community Services (CCS) facilitator and a group home worker position.

The behavioral health specialist/psychotherapist and CCS facilitator positions are in response to the growing number of citizens struggling with opiate and/or heroin addictions. It is not uncommon for Human Services to receive five to 10 requests for opiate treatment in a single day and for individuals to wait over one month to receive treatment.

The behavioral health specialist/psychotherapist position will address the increased need for psychotherapy. It will be partially funded through billable services and any additional funding needed will be obtained by transferring funds from the State Mental Health Institutes account.

The CCS facilitator position will provide wraparound and rehabilitative services. It will be fully funded through Federal and state Medicaid funding.

The one full-time group home worker position comes with the elimination of two part-time group home worker positions at Lueder Haus, one of which currently is vacant. Funding for the position will be obtained by transferring funds from the State Mental Health Institutes account.

- Approved creating a business relations and marketing manager position for the Jefferson County Economic Development Consortium (JCEDC), contingent on approval by the Watertown

Economic Development Organization (WEDO) Board of Directors of the merger between JCEDC and WEDO.

WEDO voted to approve the merger Tuesday morning. As part of the merger of the organizations, all employees of both entities will work under the umbrella of the JCEDC and, based on the Intergovernmental Agreement that formed under the JCEDC, staff will be employees of the county.

It will be a phased merger, with the first phase including the transition of the business relations and marketing manager post to the JCEDC. WEDO will provide \$60,000 as part of the proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to support costs for the transition.

The remaining position, the associate director of business development, will transition from WEDO to JCEDC as part of the 2017 budget process. After 2016, the two positions will be funded as result of the capital campaign that will be completed by the end of 2016.

- Authorized the Land Information Office to contract with Pro-West and Associates of Walker, Minn. for parcel-mapping services at a cost of \$8.85 per parcel for a total project cost of \$59,994.15.

The project aims to improve the accuracy of the county's digital parcel maps for 6,779 parcels in four towns along the northern part of the county. The remaining 16,000 rural parcels are planned for improvements in future years as funding becomes available.

The project is funded in the 2016 budget through a Wisconsin Land Information Program Strategic Initiative Grant of \$50,000 and non-tax levy Land Information Program retained fees of \$9,994.15.