

---

## MEMORANDUM

---



TO: City Council  
FROM: Stephanie Hilleshiem, Community Dev. Specialist  
**SUBJECT: Facebook Page**  
DATE: July 7, 2020

---

### **Background:**

The City of Princeton has had a Facebook page since 2013. Currently, there is no policy regarding the type of page we are hosting, or a policy regarding the allowance of public commenting and how much, or response time or response direction.

City staff works hard to moderate the 3 public pages (City of Princeton, Splash Park, Riverside Campground) to ensure comments that are false or have legitimate questions are answered in a timely manner, within 2 hours. Responses to private messages are often responded to within 30 minutes, even on weekends. This has begun to require more time and effort.

### **Analysis: -**

After researching what other municipalities and local governments are doing it has been identified that a city has the option of: : a "Traditional public forum" or a "Government Communication."

If a municipality decides to not allow public comments on its Facebook page, it is designating it as a "government communication," much like the municipal website, and the discussion of the issue of public commenting ends.

If a municipality decides it would like to allow commenting on its Facebook page, the consideration is how much and on what topics commenting is to be allowed. If the municipality only wants to open up public comments on specific posts or for a specific period of time, it is creating a "designated" or "limited" public form. In a "designated public forum" situation, the municipality would open up commenting on specific posts and limited to certain topic.

If a municipality allows public commenting on all aspects, in any form, the municipality must decide how to moderate the comments and determine when to delete or hide comments.

In a limited forum, the deletion of a comment "must not discriminate against speech based on viewpoint, and must be reasonable in light of the forum's purpose."

It is best practice for a municipality to set forth a clear policy regarding public comments and appoint a moderator that will exhibit neutrality and a strict adherence to such policy.

Researching local city pages staff has noticed limited commenting (Cambridge, Becker, Plymouth, Maple Grove, Elk River, Monticello). We have reached out to cities to see what their specific policies are and are waiting to hear.

### **Recommendation:**

City staff recommends the council identifies the type of page the City of Princeton Facebook should be, as categorized above. Based upon our research, a model policy of a designated or limited form Facebook page would be most efficient for the City to balance public comment with staff time and brought back to the Council for consideration and adoption.