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MEMORANDUM

TO: City Council, North Ogden City
FROM: Dave Carlson, City Attorney
DATE: January 6, 2011
RE: *Social Media Policy*

Dear City Council Member:

Ed Dickie brought to my attention that some City departments are using certain types of “social media” to communicate with citizens and asked me to recommend a policy to govern the City’s use of social media. As you are aware, the use of internet based social media such as Face Book, Twitter, etc. is becoming a very common method of communicating. Many organizations have embraced these new methods of communication, realizing their potential for getting messages out to the public.

Any time the City uses a medium to communicate its messages to the public, First Amendment issues are implicated. It is prudent, therefore, that the City’s use of social media be governed by a written policy and that the public be made aware of the policy.

I have researched social media policies enacted by other cities in this area and have put together a draft of a policy for your consideration. These are the highlights of the policy:

1. The City Manager is responsible to oversee the City’s use of social media.
2. The Manager is assisted by the City’s IT specialist, a Public Information Officer designated by the Manager and heads of City departments.
3. The purpose of the use of social media is to assist the City to communicate its message about City governance and operations to its citizens.
4. The policy requires that users of the City’s social media sites be made aware of the City’s “Social Media Policy.”
5. By their nature, social media sites provide a forum for users to respond to messages posted by the City and, therefore, the policy establishes rules to govern users who post responses to the City’s messages.
6. Certain City officials are given the responsibility to police the City’s social media sites for postings that violate the Social Media Policy and to respond to questions and requests for information from citizens.

I hope you will find this executive summary of the policy useful in your deliberations. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.