



## **CITY OF FERNDALE POSTED CONTENT AND COMMENTARY POLICY EFFECTIVE AUGUST 20, 2025**

### **Purpose**

The City of Ferndale encourages public engagement through digital platforms as part of our commitment to transparency, accessibility, and democratic participation. We welcome your input and respect your right to free speech as protected by the U.S. and Washington State Constitutions. This policy outlines how we manage and moderate content and interactions on our official online platforms.

### **Scope**

This policy applies to all official online services and digital platforms operated, managed, or administered by the City of Ferndale, including:

- Social media accounts (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, X, YouTube, Nextdoor, LinkedIn)
- Websites that allow user interaction (e.g., comment sections, forums)
- Any public content including text, images, videos, links, replies, reactions, and private messages

### **Expectations for Users**

- The City of Ferndale does not guarantee responses to comments or messages posted online.
- Online platforms are not continuously monitored. **In case of emergency, always call 9-1-1.**
- Requests for service or information are best submitted through the City's official contact methods (website forms, phone lines, or in-person).
- Comments, posts, and messages are public records and may be disclosed under Washington's Public Records Act (Chapter 42.56 RCW).
- Public records requests and official research or service inquiries should not be submitted through social media platforms and are best submitted through the City's official contact methods (website forms, physical forms available at City Hall, or email).

- Comments, posts, and messages are not considered, and will not be included, as formal comments to the City.

## **Comment Moderation and Prohibited Content**

To ensure a constructive, respectful, and legal public dialogue, the City of Ferndale reserves the right to moderate or remove content that falls under any of the following categories:

### **Harmful or Disruptive Content**

- Personal attacks, harassment, bullying, or threatening language.
- Repetitive, off-topic, or spam content that disrupts discussion.
- Malicious content (malware, phishing, impersonation, or links to harmful sites).
- Promotion or incitement of illegal activity.
- False statements that may harm reputations or livelihoods (potentially libelous).

### **Discriminatory or Offensive Content**

- Profane, obscene, or sexually explicit content.
- Content that promotes or perpetuates discrimination based on race, color, creed, religion, gender, marital status, age, national origin, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, or veteran status.
- Hate speech or inflammatory remarks.

### **Inappropriate or Irrelevant Content**

- Comments not relevant to the topic of the post.
- Embedded images from unauthorized or external sources.
- Private or personal information shared without consent.
- Commercial messages, advertisements, or solicitations.
- Political advocacy, including support or opposition to candidates, campaigns, or ballot measures.
- Any content that violates federal, state, or local laws.

### **Consequences for Violations**

- Inappropriate content may be hidden, removed, or reported to the platform provider.
- Records of removed content will be retained in compliance with records retention laws.

- Repeated violations may result in the user being blocked or restricted from interacting with City platforms.
- Unlawful conduct will be reported to law enforcement authorities.

## **Definitions**

- **Content:** Text, images, audio, video, and links posted by users to City-managed platforms.
- **User:** Any member of the public who interacts with the City's websites or social media accounts.
- **Social Media:** Official City accounts on public platforms including Facebook, Instagram, X, YouTube, LinkedIn, and others.
- **Website:** Official Ferndale web pages that allow user interaction.
- **Public Disclosure:** The release of records under the Washington State Public Records Act (Chapter 42.56 RCW).