Using Social Media to Advance Ethical Planning

2013 Rocky Mountain Land Use Institute Conference

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This session has been created to provide general education regarding the AICP Code of Ethics.

Though examples, sample problems, and question and answer sessions are an important part of illustrating application of the code’s provisions, all certified planners should be aware that “Only the Ethics Officer [Chief Executive Officer of APA/AICP] is authorized to give formal advice on the propriety of a planner’s proposed conduct.” (AICP Code of Ethics, Section C3).

If you have a specific question regarding a situation arising in your practice, you are encouraged to seek the opinion of the Ethics Officer (Paul Farmer).
Your Experience and Interests

- Planners, attorneys, others?
- Public sector, private sector?
- Personal and/or professional use of social media?
- Extensive or limited use?
- What types of social media?
- Are you considering use of social media personally or in the workplace?
**Why Use Social Media?**

- Reach new audiences
- Disseminate more information
- Disseminate different types of information
- Facilitate community discussion
- Two-way dialogue
- Speed
- Cost
How Is Social Media Being Used By Local Government/Planners?

- Facebook
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- YouTube
- flickr
- Pinterest
- Blogs

- Disseminate information
- Two-way Conversation
- Marketing
- Solicit public input
  - Surveys
  - Virtual meetings
  - Message Boards

* How are you using it?
American Planning Association Colorado Chapter

Non-Profit Organization

We are an organization of professionals and citizen planners providing vision and leadership for the future development of Colorado communities.

City of Fort Collins, Colorado - Government
September 23, 2010

This is a good one: How can the City best address traffic congestion and maximize resources? Join the conversation on our Discussion Board, topic: Pan Fort Collins-Traffic Congestion.

Emily Heinz It is possible to put protected (perhaps barrier), bike lanes along College, Shields, Mulberry & Prospect? I'd be happy if we'd just start with College Ave!
September 23, 2010 at 3:47pm • Like

Lief Youngs Make more bike friendly routes and let the traffic be a little heavy. Drivers may convert to bikers when they see the bikers go places faster.
September 23, 2010 at 3:11am • Like

Don Onwalsley Businesses that can function well enough by keeping many of their employees at home would cut down on dense traffic.
September 23, 2010 at 5:03pm • Like

Ken Miller III If you continue to build bigger better roads cars will continue to fill them up, if you let congestion build alternative means of transportation will become more attractive. Personally I would like to see all main roads look more like West Mountain especially near parks and schools.
September 23, 2010 at 5:55am via mobile • Like

Matt Fischer How about a special driving test for people with Wyoming plates?
September 23, 2010 at 6:59am via mobile • Like

Joan White I can just picture me bicycling with my 98 yr old mother on the back of the bike to the doctor's office, yikes.
September 23, 2010 at 9:27pm • Like

Brian Linddecker More bike-friendly roads with dedicated, protected biking lanes.
September 23, 2010 at 9:33pm • Like

Joscie Tierney TAX CUTS FOR CYCLISTS.
September 23, 2010 at 9:49pm • Like

Linda Berger A roundabout at Southridge Greens Boulevard and Triby...the congestion at that intersection is the worst in the CPC...Power Line Trail meets busy parking lot for Platte River Power Polo, east and west bound traffic at 60-mph ignoring the recommended 25mph under train tracks with limited pts, distance and narrow bridge over Fossil Creek...bikes, bikers, drivers, walkers with dogs off leash...crazy busy congestion.
September 24, 2010 at 12:15am • Like

Ken Miller III What I meant by West Mountain is car lanes for those taking their mother to the doctor, bike lanes for those who prefer to bike and a small trail for the folks that choose mass transit to connect to the Mason corridor.
Other Emerging Interaction & Feedback Mechanisms
Who Has Access to the Internet?

* Everybody?
  * Adults: 78%
  * Teenagers: 95%

Source: Pew Research Center
Who Has Internet Access?

* Seniors: 41%
* Hispanics: 68%
* No High School Diploma: 43%
* Less than $30,000 Income: 62%
* Disability: 54%

Source: Pew Research Center
Who Uses Social Networking Sites?

65% of All Internet Users

Source: Pew Research Center
Why Discuss Social Media and Ethics?

- Growing use of social media for planning applications
- Use of social media creates new ethical and legal situations
  - Inclusiveness/exclusivity
  - More timely and complete information/outdated information
  - Lack of privacy/potential anonymity
  - “Sunshine Law” violations
Why Discuss Social Media and Ethics?

- Potential for finding your mistakes “on the front page of the paper” with no help from the media
Social Media Experience

- Lessons Learned
  - Build an audience
  - Provide timely and accurate information
  - One tool in the tool box
  - Establish policies and protocols prior to use
Challenges

* How do you move beyond notification to engagement?
* How to replicate the experience for non-users?
* How do you meet expectations?
* How to manage and interpret results?
* Personal vs. professional use
Four Sections

- Aspirational Principles – Ideals to which we are committed
- Rules of Conduct – Rules to which we are held accountable
- Procedures – Processes by which Code is enforced
- Planners Convicted of Serious Crimes – Automatic suspension

NOTE: In slides which follow, the Code provisions are paraphrased. For full text, please see http://www.planning.org/ethics/ethicscode.htm.
Aspirational Principle 1. Our Overall Responsibility to the Public

Our primary obligation is to serve the public interest and we, therefore, owe our allegiance to a conscientiously attained concept of the public interest that is formulated through continuous and open debate.

d) Provide timely, adequate, clear and accurate information on planning issues to all affected persons and to governmental decision makers
Aspirational Principle 1.e)
Our Overall Responsibility to the Public

We shall give people the opportunity to have a meaningful impact on the development of plans and programs that may affect them. Participation should be broad enough to include those who lack formal organization or influence.
Implications

Social Equity
Aspirational Principle 3. Our Responsibility to Our Profession and Colleagues

We shall contribute to the development of, and respect for, our profession by improving knowledge and techniques, making work relevant to solutions of community problems, and increasing public understanding of planning activities.

* Used judiciously, social media can be an invaluable tool
* Used unwisely, it can erode respect for the profession and mislead the public
* Use of social media creates new expectations and responsibilities.
Aspirational Principle 3. 
Our Responsibility to Our Profession and Colleagues

a) We shall protect and enhance the integrity of our profession.

* Social media becomes our public face – how do we come across?
* Private versus professional use of social media – can we really keep these totally separate?
* What about “friend, following and connecting?”
What About “Friending, Following, Connecting”?

What are the pros and cons?

A lot depends on context:
- Private versus public use of social media
- Private sector versus public sector planners

What are the exact circumstances behind relationship?

Is there a conflict or an appearance of conflict?

What does “friending” really mean?
b) We shall educate the public about planning issues and their relevance to our everyday lives.

* Great opportunity to reach the public on a regular basis – not just when they feel threatened
* Again - use of social media creates new expectations and responsibilities
Aspirational Principle 3. 
Our Responsibility to Our Profession and Colleagues

c) We shall describe and comment on the work and views of other professionals in a fair and professional manner.

* Disparaging comments made on social media can have far-reaching consequences.
Some Key Rules of Conduct

Rule 1 – We shall not deliberately or with reckless indifference fail to provide adequate, timely, clear and accurate information on planning issues.
Rule 7 – Requirement to maintain confidentiality of client information except in when required by process of law, to prevent a clear violation of law, or to prevent a substantial injury to the public.

* Applies to information “the client or employer has requested to be held inviolate or that we should recognize as confidential because its disclosure could result in embarrassment or other detriment to the client or employer.”

* Use of social media can exacerbate any intentional or unintentional violation of this rule.
Rule 8 – We shall not, as public officials or employees, engage in private communications with planning process participants regarding matters over which we have authority to make a binding, final determination if prohibited by law, agency rules, procedures or custom.

Rule 9 – We shall not engage in private discussions with decision makers in any manner prohibited by law, agency rules, procedures or custom.

- Sunshine law: meetings must be open, with advance notice and minutes taken
- Possibility of intentional or inadvertent discussion of public matters outside sunshine
- Records retention issues
- Critical need for social media policy to guide use
Rule 12 – We shall not misstate facts relevant to our professional qualifications.
Rule 19 – We shall not fail to disclose (nor participate in an effort to conceal) the interests of our client or employer when participating in the planning process.

* Ability to skew the discussion and deceive the public
* Increased potential for anonymity on social media
* Issue for social media policy
Rule 20 – We shall not unlawfully discriminate against another person.
Tips for Effective Use of Social Media (and Staying Out of Trouble)

* Don’t over-rely on social media – it has limitations
* Consider the implications before you post – it’s like putting it in the newspaper
* Remember that as planners we have to avoid even the appearance of unethical behavior
* Keep information accurate and up-to-date
* Set up protocols for posting and for managing the account
Does the AICP Code of Ethics Adequately Address Social Media?

* What do you think?
* Why or why not?
* How could this issue be resolved?
* Other thoughts?