

IWVGA ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

STAFF REPORT

TO: IWVGA Board of Directors **DATE: September 10, 2025**

FROM: Carol Thomas-Keefer, General Manager

SUBJECT: Social Media Account

BACKGROUND:

At its July 16 meeting, the IWVGA considered a recommendation from staff and outreach consultants Westbound Communications (“Westbound”) to create a social media account – specifically, a Facebook page – to broaden IWVGA’s communication with the community and provide a vehicle for regular distribution of Authority news, information and education. (The report and recommendation from Westbound provided at the July meeting is attached for reference.)

Board discussion on the proposed social media account included a variety of questions and concerns, including: legal concerns regarding implementation of a social media policy that suggests it will restrict or remove content; alternative vehicles for outreach and dissemination of information; and the cost associated with creating and maintaining a social media page. Staff was directed to research and return with additional information in response to these questions.

Social Media Policy

Westbound’s proposed social media policy, which is consistent with policies used by various other local public agencies, was reviewed by IWVGA counsel. Ultimately, counsel recommended that IWVGA should not create a social media policy but should rather rely on the terms of use created and enforced by the social media platform that it chooses to use.

Alternative Outreach Methods

While use of social media can be an effective tool in reaching community members and local stakeholders, Westbound has compiled a list of other methods and platforms that can be utilized to help communicate IWVGA’s business and engage with its stakeholders. These recommendations are in alignment with IWVGA’s Community & Engagement Plan and include the following (along with noteworthy considerations):

- 1) IWVGA website (primarily one-way communication)
 - a) Can serve as the primary source for sharing IWVGA information
 - b) Adding “Contact Us” pages to allow the public to ask questions
 - c) Accessible to the public 24/7
 - d) “Latest News” or “Updates” page mirrors social media posts for the community

- 2) Stakeholder and/or public-facing e-newsletter (one-way communication)
 - a) Direct-to-inbox delivery ensures message visibility
 - b) Longform content, policy summaries and meeting reminders
 - c) Provides a record of communication history for transparency
 - d) Public newsletter requires opt-in subscription

- 3) Community presentations (two-way communication)
 - a) Town Hall-style meetings or invited speaker to existing function
 - b) Promote event and print applicable collateral
 - c) Time/resource intensive
 - d) Format can lead to tangential discussions or grandstanding

- 4) Direct mail (one-way communication)
 - a) Reaches populations with limited or no internet access
 - b) Tangible format reinforces messaging
 - c) Builds trust with senior and rural demographics
 - d) Printing and mailing can be costly

- 5) Paid advertisements (one-way communication)
 - a) Publish legal notices in regional print and digital news outlets
 - b) Create flyers, posters and collateral materials as needed to place local advertisements for key messages
 - c) Costly and short duration

The use of a social media page is intended as one of many tools to enhance outreach and community education. It offers an ongoing information source that is easy to access and readily available for those who engage in social media.

Cost to Create and Maintain a Social Media Page

Westbound proposes to maintain the social media page on behalf of IWVGA and would use pre-approved messages or responses to comments as needed. The cost to create the account is minimal, and the time to maintain the account and manage posts and responses would be incorporated into the consultant's existing scope of work and contract. Consequently, IWVGA would not see additional expenses associated with its social media page.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Board consider authorizing the creation and maintenance of the IWVGA social media page, using Facebook as the primary platform. Staff further recommends that, based on advice of counsel, IWVGA not consider adoption of a social media policy at this time.

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Memorandum

Meeting Date: June 25, 2025
From: Westbound Communications
Subject: Inland Wells Valley Groundwater Authority – Facebook Page Recommendation

RECOMMENDATION

Westbound Communications recommends that IWVGA create a dedicated Facebook page to serve as a central platform for public communication and engagement.

RATIONALE

Currently, IWVGA can only share information such as press releases, statements, and other updates through the City of Ridgecrest's Facebook page. While this helps that some information reaches the public, there is no direct opportunity for IWVGA to post and engage with public comments or the ability to address misinformation.

While the City as a member of IWVGA should share information released by the agency, the City should not be responding to comments on IWVGA's behalf. Ideally, the City would share posts from a standalone IWVGA Facebook page, and other supporting groups or individuals could do the same.

An IWVGA-owed Facebook page would enable direct communication with the community, allow IWVGA to share timely press releases, statements, answer questions and direct users to accurate and reliable sources of information. There is already a solid level of engagement on City posts related to IWVGA.

SOCIAL MEDIA DISCLAIMER/POLICY

It is essential that a social media disclaimer/policy be developed and posted in the "About" section of the Facebook account. This will help manage the public's expectations on the role of the page to communicate information about IWVGA and to be clear about what is deemed inappropriate conduct that is grounds for removal of posts and blocking of followers. Following are two examples of social media disclaimers/policies:

- San Bernardino County – [Social Media Disclaimer](#)
- Riverside County Transportation Commission – [Social Media Policy](#)

Westbound would develop a social media disclaimer/policy for IWVGA's Facebook page that would outline clear rules on how the page would operate. Beyond not allowing rude language, posts by people looking to grandstand, harass or spread misinformation would be removed, and consistent

offenders would be blocked. Westbound will monitor the page regularly and flag relevant conversations or concerning trends for the team's awareness.

For the most part, pre-approved responses will be shared, and posts or replies will never be argumentative. In cases of abusive, threatening, or otherwise escalated behavior, we reserve the right to report users to the appropriate authorities and to utilize Facebook's built-in safety and moderation tools to maintain a respectful environment.

With these clear guidelines, it's entirely feasible for the agency to manage a social media page in a professional and consistent manner. IWVGA Facebook administrators/editors would maintain a non-confrontational tone while countering mis- and dis-information being circulated by groups and individuals.

Disclaimer: While IWVGA will always have full control on what gets posted or deleted as needed for noncompliance to the social media disclaimer/policy on its own Facebook page, it does not have the ability to delete posts that may be shared on open or closed Facebook pages not owned by IWVGA. Westbound will monitor other groups it can join and flag issues or concerns that should be reported.

ONGOING ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

Westbound will monitor Facebook page activities regularly, closely, and provide monthly reporting on social media efforts. The reporting will help provide insights to determine if adjustments need to be made with content, responses, and the overall social media strategy.