



CRAIG BROWN
COLUMBIANA COUNTY RECORDER

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Recorder Brown Requests Opinion on Facebook From Prosecutor

Columbiana County Recorder Craig Brown has requested an opinion from County Prosecutor Bob Herron regarding the usage of social media, such as Facebook or Twitter by the county recorder's office.

"As government officials we should always be looking for new ways to communicate with the people we serve in an open and honest manner," Brown continued, "Tools such as Facebook and Twitter provide us with another avenue to help us open a dialogue with area residents."

Still Brown cautioned, "The tricky aspect of this whole thing is that technology is moving forward faster than many entities have been able to develop rules or best practices regarding its usage."

The basic question about using social media, "is what information needs to be kept and what information can be deleted," Brown stated.

Many governmental entities around the world have adopted presences on social media sites such as Twitter or Facebook, but many of said entities are also unsure about how to archive the information it is sharing as well as information it receives from the general public.

Social media sites and their increasing popularity are creating a whole new issue for governmental public records laws. Many entities are just now adopting rules about what types of email communication should be archived or destroyed.

"There is a real issue here," Brown continued, "The question is do we keep all information that is submitted to the site by everyone, just the information submitted by the office, or just the information that is critical to the functioning of the office."

Emails received by governmental entities are retrievable under public records laws and are recoverable via servers and computers that are owned by the entity. Social media creates a whole new issue since the information being exchanged is being "hosted" on a third party site with its own rules and regulations.

"I'm confident that the prosecutor's office will work with us to arrive at a decision regarding how we can all best use this new technology to serve the people who hired us," Brown said in closing.

Brown currently serves on the Ohio Electronic Records Commission, a board formed to create rules and best practices regarding the electronic storage of information.

For additional information please contact Columbiana County Recorder Craig Brown (330) 424-9517 ext. 1351 or via email cbrown@ccclerk.org. The website address of the Columbiana County Recorder is www.columbianacountyrecorder.org.