

A RESOLUTION ADOPTING AN ADVERTISING POLICY FOR WASHTENAW COUNTY'S E-GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE

WASHTENAW COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

October 17, 2001

WHEREAS, Washtenaw County began investigating E-Government in January of 2001 as a business tool to enhance customer service; and

WHEREAS, an internal task force was developed to determine the best method for Washtenaw County to gain information on this initiative; and

WHEREAS, the task force educated themselves through site visits, professional organizations that are experienced with E-Government methodologies and implementation; and

WHEREAS, the task force developed a strategic plan to address the E-Government initiative, which outlines the implementation of a County-wide E-Government initiative; and


WHEREAS, Advertising is a major issue that local units are facing regarding E-Government; and

WHEREAS, the County needs to adopt policies that will protect this initiative and allow for successful implementation and provide protection to the information and security to the technology infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, the E-Government initiatives will provide information and service delivery 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; and

WHEREAS, this matter has been reviewed by Corporation Counsel, Information and Technology Services, the County Administrator's Office and the Ways & Means Committee

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners hereby adopts the Advertising Policy for the E-Government initiative, as attached hereto and made a part hereof

	<b>WASHTENAW COUNTY POLICY</b>	<b>GENERAL OPERATIONS - VOLUME I</b>		
<b>TITLE:</b>  <b>Advertising for E-Government Initiatives</b>	RESOLUTION NUMBER	SUPERCEDE:	EFFECTIVE DATE  10/17/01	PAGE OF  1        2

I. APPLICATION:


This policy shall govern the County's advertising for any E-Government Initiative.

II. INTENT:

It is the intent of the Board of Commissioners to provide guidelines for the County's use on advertising through it's website and any E-Government initiative.

III. GENERAL POLICIES:

- I. As Washtenaw County makes services and information more available via the Internet, new challenges emerge. One of these challenges is advertising on county-controlled web sites. From a funding aspect, this opportunity looks very attractive. However, there are numerous legal and policy issues that surface when considering advertising on government-controlled web sites.
  
- II. The Internet has become one of Washtenaw County's most important resources for providing easy access to information, both internally and to our citizens and customers. There are many challenges, such as funding of web-based initiatives, appropriate use of the Internet, security and privacy that need to be addressed as the County moves toward providing an increasing number of services on the Internet. One such challenge is the issue of placing advertisements on government-controlled web sites in order to ease funding pressures. Because of the importance of these legal and policy issues, we must carefully research and consider them for the County to progress in a uniform manner since the actions of individual departments may set a precedent that impacts the entire County.
  
- III. Controlled web sites may have the potential to generate significant revenues; however, to date, there is no evidence that this is the case. There is a potential for legal liability and U. S. First Amendment implications for agency control and content guidelines. Advertisers may track the visitors linking to their site, there is a loss of a level of privacy control, and while some privacy requirements could be placed on advertisers, those requirements need to be clearly and comprehensively defined.

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- I. Few counties, if any, have adopted policies on advertising on their web sites, but the current lack of clear standards poses a danger that advertisements will degrade web site performance or create confusing web sites, and as such, those standards need to be comprehensively defined. Web site visitors may perceive that the County service or information delivered is controlled by or associated with the advertiser, either directly or indirectly. Advertising on County-controlled web sites has the potential appearance of favoritism or endorsement, with the ability of web sites to re-direct their visitors to other web sites. The County may lose control of providing a means for visitors to return to the County web site, and, furthermore, there is a danger that the visitors may very quickly be directed to problematic web sites. This new funding source needs to be carefully examined for its impact on funding overall, including the implications to departments receiving federal funds and, apart from any of the legal implications described above, web advertisements may entail a high-risk of litigation, the cost of which must be considered.
  
- II. Until the issues surrounding web advertisements on government-controlled web sites have been fully studied, Washtenaw County shall not allow advertisements, sponsorships or endorsements on County government-controlled web sites including vendor-hosted web sites. Whenever a County web site file requires the use of particular software that the web site visitor may need to download (e. g., .PDF formatted files require the Adobe Acrobat Reader software), the link to the download site may be included. A statement should accompany the link that the particular software is required.
  
- III. This policy does not apply to links to businesses and other non-governmental organizations when the link is strongly related to a County service.