

City of Friendswood
SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Date of Policy: 4/27/16

Date Revision Adopted by City Council: 06/03/2019

A. Purpose

To address the fast-changing landscape of the Internet and the way residents communicate and obtain information online, City of Friendswood departments may consider using social media tools to reach a broader audience. The City encourages the use of social media to further the goals of the City and the missions of its departments, where appropriate.

The City of Friendswood has an overriding interest and expectation in deciding what is “spoken” on behalf of the City on social media sites. This policy establishes guidelines for the use of City Social Media Sites and governs the use, administration, management, monitoring and retention of social media and social media content, consistent with state, federal and City laws and regulations.

B. Scope

This Policy applies to all interactive Social Media Sites of the City of Friendswood, the uses of social media by City employees maintaining, using or providing oversight of social media tools. Employees for this policy shall include, but not be limited to full-time or part-time employees, seasonal employees, appointed board and committee members, interns, volunteers, and contractors on City business who access or contribute content. This policy also applies to members of the public who comment or otherwise interact with the City through its social media websites.

C. Definitions

1. SOCIAL MEDIA SITES – Third party websites which allow for the creation of content and dialogue around a specific issue or area of interest, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and You Tube.
2. CITY SOCIAL MEDIA SITES – Those pages, sections, or posting locations in Social Media that are established or maintained by an employee of the City who is authorized to do so as part of the employee’s job and that are used to conduct City business, communicate with the public on City business.
3. CITY SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT – Information, images or photographs posted or provided to a City Social Media Site by a City employee or authorized representative when such activity is part of the employee’s job duties.
4. SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT – Information, images or photographs posted or provided to a Social Media Site.
5. SOCIAL MEDIA ADMINISTRATORS – City employees expressly designated by their department directors to maintain oversight of their department’s Social Media Sites. A Social Media Administrator’s authority is limited to actions that directly reflect guidance from the Social Media Administrator’s department director and these policies.

D. Responsibilities

1. Each department director is responsible for:
 - a. Implementing the provisions of this Policy and ensuring that employees are aware of this Policy for creating and maintaining City Social Media Sites;
 - b. Designating a Social Media Administrator;
 - c. Ensuring that content that is inappropriate or violates this Policy is not posted on the City Social Media Site established and maintained by the Department; and
 - d. Ensuring that the approval is sought from the City Manager or his designee prior to the creation of a City Social Media Site.
2. Each departmental Social Media Administrator is responsible for oversight of the department's social media tools, ensure all contributions adhere to this Policy and shall:
 - a. Review all requests to establish official City departmental Social Media Sites and recommend approval or denial to the City Manager or his designee. Social Media Administrators shall review Social Media Sites or tools that have already been established in their departments to ensure that they are in compliance with this Policy and shall submit a request for approval of such sites within 30 days of the effective date of this Policy.
 - b. Ensure the department's Social Media Sites are regularly maintained and kept current.
 - c. Review information posted to the department's Social Media Sites to ensure the content is appropriate, professional, and consistent with the City's policies and the purpose for which the site exists. Frequent review of sites that provide opportunity for comment or other interaction is essential.
 - d. Keep the department's director informed of the department's social networking tools and activities.
3. City employees whose official duties include creating or posting information to a City Social Media Site are responsible for ensuring that such information is accurate, professionally presented, respectful, relevant, and on topic with the department's and City's mission. Care must be taken to ensure that grammar and spelling are correct. Mistakes must be corrected quickly.

E. Policy

1. CREATION AND MAINTENANCE OF CITY SOCIAL MEDIA SITE

City Social Media Sites may contain information that represents, or may create the appearance of representing the City's position on policy issues and/or the positions of its leadership. No employee may create or maintain a Social Media Site that purports or appears to be a City Social Media Site without the permission of that employee's department director and the City Manager or his designee. Before any employee or department representative creates a City Social Media Site, approval must be received from the City Manager or his designee. The request must state the business necessity for the City Social Media Site. For any City Social Media Sites currently in existence, the department must submit a request for approval within 30 days of the effective date of this Policy.

Once a City Social Media Site is approved by the City Manager or his designee, the following information must be shared with the Media Communication Specialist:

- a. All City Social Media Site login and password information (in the case of Facebook, you may make the Media Communication Specialist an administrator of the site instead of providing the password);
- b. Any changes to the login and password; and
- c. The names of any employees who are authorized to maintain the City Social Media Site or to post City Social Media Content (“Administrators”).

At the direction of the City Manager or his designee, the Media Communication Specialist may disable a City Social Media Site and prohibit posting of any City Social Media Content to a site any time and for any reason, including any violation of this Policy, unprofessional use of this resources, lack of use or disinterest by the public, or a department’s failure to maintain the site.

2. PUBLIC RECORDS

City Social Media Sites create city records that are subject to the Texas Public Information Act and document retention rules of the State of Texas. Each departmental records administrator with the assistance of the Media Communication Specialist, shall ensure that such records are retained and archived in conformance with Texas law.

3. POSTING ON CITY SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

Employees creating, maintaining, or posting Social Media Content on the City Social Media Site:

- a. Must at all times conduct themselves as representatives of the City of Friendswood and in accord with all the City of Friendswood Personnel Policies and other department or management rules or directives;
- b. Will follow these guiding principles:
 - i. Unless the employee is posting or responding as the City Social Media Site Administrator, the employee should maintain transparency by using his/her given name and job title and clearly stating the employee’s role regarding the subject;
 - ii. Use correct grammar and spelling;
 - iii. Avoid jargon;
 - iv. Write and post only about the employee’s area of expertise;
 - v. Keep posting factual and accurate;
 - vi. Do not post photographs submitted by the public that were taken at City-related events held in public places unless you have permission from the photographer;
 - vii. Reply to comments in a timely manner, when a response is appropriate. When disagreeing with others’ opinions or providing comments, do so in a meaningful, respectful, and relevant manner;
 - viii. Understand that postings are widely accessible, not retractable, and retained or referenced for a long period of time; all content should be carefully considered;
 - ix. Ensure that Social Media Content does not violate another person’s privacy interests;
 - x. Refrain from posting Social Media Content that is proprietary, copyrighted, attorney-client privileged, subject to state or federal privacy laws, and information not subject to the Texas Public Information Act;
 - xi. Never comment on anything related to legal matters, litigation or any parties with whom the City may be in litigation without the approval of the City Attorney or the City Manager;
 - xii. Refrain from the expression of personal opinions or positions regarding:

- a. Programs or practices of other public agencies, political organizations, private companies, or non-profit groups;
- b. Political campaigns; or
- c. Religion.

4. DESIGN AND CONTENT OF CITY SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

- a. The following shall be clearly posted on any City Social Media Site:

- i. *“Comments. The purpose of this site is to present matters of public interest in the City of Friendswood, Texas. We encourage you to submit comments, but please note that this is not a public forum. City Social Media Sites that permit interactivity with the public through comments or postings are limited forum sites and should clearly post the following statement:*

The City reserves the right to delete completely or hide, when necessary and as soon as feasible, any posting unrelated to the purpose and topical scope of the page.

- ii. A clear statement of the intent, purpose, and subject matter of the site, so the public is aware of the topical scope of the page;
- iii. City contact information;
- iv. Link to City website, www.friendswood.com;

- b. In addition, City Social Media Sites that permit interactivity with the public, comments, or posting should post clear statements of the following:

- i. “All content and postings are subject to public disclosure pursuant to the Texas Public Information Act and e-discovery laws;
- ii. Disclaimer that postings do not necessarily reflect the views or position of the City; and
- iii. The site is NOT monitored 24 hours a day and that in case of an emergency, the public should call 911;

- iv. *The City reserves the right to delete completely or hide, when necessary and as soon as feasible, any posting that contains:*

1. *Content that is not topically related to the particular posting by the City;*
2. *Content that contains false or misleading information;*
3. *Content that contains obscene language or sexual content or links to sexual content;*
4. *Advertisements or content that is commercial in nature;*
5. *Content that threatens, defames or personally attacks any person or organization;*
6. *Content that promotes, perpetuates or fosters discrimination on the basis of age, gender, race, religion, color, national origin, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, marital status, and/or gender identity;*
7. *Content that implies, promotes or encourages illegal activity;*
8. *Content that opposes or supports political candidates, political organizations or ballot propositions;*
9. *Content that is contrary to the safety of City employees, the public or public systems;*
10. *Content that violates the legal ownership of another party or infringes on copyright, trademark or other intellectual property rights;*
11. *Links to any site; or*
12. *Content that is confidential according to the Texas Public Information Act.”*

Links placed on City Social Media Sites should only be to a resource on the City's website, a City-owned website, a state, federal or local government site, an educational website, or an organization with an official partnership or supportive business relationship with the City. Exceptions to this rule shall be at the discretion of the City Manager or his designee.

5. EMPLOYEE TIME SPENT MAINTAINING OR CREATING SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

Non-exempt employees who serve as City Social Media Site Administrators shall work on the City Social Media Site (monitoring, creating, maintaining, or posting) only during normal office hours unless specifically pre-approved in writing by the employee's supervisor. Any time spent in excess of a 40-hour work week by a City Social Media Site Administrator monitoring, creating, maintaining or posting on a City Social Media Site will be paid overtime in compliance with federal law and City Policy.

6. USE BY BOARDS OR COMMISSIONS

Due to open meetings requirements, individual members of a city board or commission are prohibited from participating in postings or discussion threads on City Social Media Sites created and maintained by the department or group of which they advise.

7. EMPLOYEE STANDARD FOR USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

All uses of social media on behalf of the City or City department, or in any manner that appears to represent the City or constitute communication by the City, must comply with the provisions in this Policy, including the following standards.

- a. No City employee may establish any Social Media Site in the name of or on behalf of the City or any City department unless:
 - i. The City Manager or his designee and the user's department head have all approved the Site; and
 - ii. All information to be posted on the account has previously been approved by the employee's department head.
- b. Social Media Sites established by the City or a City department are to be used for City and department business purposes only. Use for communications and postings that are not directly related to a City or City department business purpose is prohibited.
- c. Employees must report unauthorized uses of City Social Media Sites or City Social Media Content to their department head and/or City Manager or his designee.
- d. Employees are expected to be attentive and careful in their use of social media. Employees should be aware that their use of social media may be perceived as representing the City and City government, and should tailor their use accordingly.

8. UNACCEPTABLE USES BY EMPLOYEES

The City considers the activities and uses listed below to be unacceptable uses of social media established by the City or City department.

- a. Using social media in a manner that does not comply with federal, state, local laws and regulations, and with City or department policies.
- b. Using social media in a manner that:
 - i. Violates copyright, trademark or other intellectual property rights of any person or entity, or otherwise violates their legal ownership interests;

- ii. Includes ethnic slurs, profanity, personal insults, material that is harassing, defamatory, fraudulent or discriminatory, or other content or communications that would not be acceptable in a City workplace under the City or department policy or practice;
- iii. Violates the terms of contracts governing the use of any social media content, including, but not limited to software and other intellectual property license;
- iv. Displays sexually explicit images, cartoons, jokes, messages or other material in violation of the City sexual harassment policy;
- v. Violates Section 9.06 of the City of Friendswood Personnel Policy relating to Political Activity;
- vi. Contains confidential information that is protected from release pursuant to the Texas Public Information Act or “for official use only” information or information that does or may compromise the security of City networks or information systems. Confidential information includes, but is not limited to medical information, social security numbers and other personally identifiable information;
- vii. Violates the terms of use governing third party websites that allow for the creation of social media sites.
- viii. Violates Section 4. b. iv. 1-12 described on page 4 of this Policy.

9. PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

This Policy is not intended to govern employees’ establishment or use of person social media sites for personal purposes, outside the workplace and using non-City information systems. However, some personal uses of social media may reflect on the City or appear to represent City policy or to be on behalf of the City. In addition, accessing and using personal social media accounts by means of City information systems is subject to City policy. For these reasons, City employees are expected to comply with all City and department policies, as well as the following standards, when using personal social media accounts.

- a. City employees have no right to privacy with respect to their personal use of social media or personal social media accounts accessed by means of City information systems, or with respect to personal social media content so accessed. Employees should not expect or assume privacy or confidentiality with respect to any such personal social media use or social media content.
- b. Postings and user profiles on personal social media accounts must not state or imply that the views, conclusions, statements or other social media content are an official policy statement, position, or communication of the City of Friendswood, or represent the views of the City or any City officer or employee, unless the head of the user’s department and/or City Manager or his designee have previously granted express written permission for that user to do so.
- c. If a City employee has not received such express written permission, any user profile, biography, or posting on a personal social media account that identifies that person as a City employee must include a qualifying statement in substantially the following form: *“The views I express on this site are my own and do not reflect any official view or position of the City of Friendswood.”*
- d. Employees subject to the City’s Political Activity restrictions under Section 9.06 of the City’s Personnel Policy, must comply with those restrictions in personal uses of social media, whether or not City information systems have been used.
- e. Employees may not attribute personal statements or opinions to the City when engaging in private blogging or postings on social media sites.
- f. City employees and City volunteers shall not post images, files, or text depicting City property, equipment, or personnel in any manner that would adversely affect the reputation of the City or a City department.

g. City employees and City volunteers shall not use their City email account or password in conjunction with a personal social networking site.

10. EXCEPTIONS

Exceptions to this rule shall be at the discretion of the City Manager or his designee.

11. COMPLIANCE

Each City department head shall be responsible for enforcing compliance of this Policy by department employees. An employee who fails to comply with any aspect of this Policy is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

On this date, I received the revision to the Social Media Policy. I understand it is my responsibility to read and abide by this Policy, and I understand it is my responsibility to ask questions if something is unclear.

Employee's Signature

Employee's Printed Name

Date