

CITY OF PLANO POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

135.000

Department Name: Communications and Community Outreach

Procedure: Social Media Policy

Effective Date: 3/31/2010

Revision Date(s): 6/30/2011, 9/30/2011, 6/30/2012, 6/30/2014, 7/1/2018, 4/6/2020

I. Purpose

To define the social networking and social media policy for the City of Plano. The City allows the use of social media to further the goals of the City and the missions of its departments, where appropriate and when approved. The City has an overriding interest and expectation in deciding what is “spoken” on its behalf on social media sites. This policy establishes a framework for the use of social media and is intended to supplement existing policy regulation, and law, where applicable.

II. Definitions

- A. Social Media: A category of Internet-based resources that integrate user-generated content and user participation. This includes, but is not limited to, social networking sites (Facebook, Instagram, Glassdoor, Nextdoor); micro blogging sites (Twitter); photo and video sharing sites (Flickr, Snapchat, Tumblr, Tik Tok, Yik Yak, WeChat, YouTube, Periscope, Facebook Live); messaging apps (Whats App, Kik, Skype, Facebook Messenger) ;wikis (Wikipedia); blogs; and news sites (Digg, Reddit).
- B. Obscene: Content that the average person, applying contemporary community standards would find that (a) the work, taken as a whole, appeals to the prurient interest; (b) the work depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct specifically defined by the applicable state law; and (c) the work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.

III. City Employee Professional Use

All official City-related communication through social media and social networking outlets must remain professional in nature and must always be conducted in accordance with the City’s communications policy and best practices. For those that have access to official City sites, employees are prohibited from using official City social media or social networking sites for political purposes, to conduct private commercial transactions, to engage in private business activities or for personal, non-City related use.

Inappropriate usage of official City social media and social networking sites could be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination. If social media and social networking sites are used for official City business, all such sites, regardless of any personal views, are required to comply with City policy and standards.

Only individuals authorized by the City may publish content to a City Web site, social networking outlet or other technology platform.

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IV. Approval and Registration

All new City social media sites shall (1) be approved by the Communications and Community Outreach Department; (2) be published using approved social networking platform and tools; (3) grant administrative rights to a designated member of the Communications and Community Outreach Department; (4) operate with a written social media strategy and content calendar; and (5) be administered by the contact or their designee.

A written social media strategy, content calendar and training with the Communications and Community Outreach Department must be completed prior to authorization of a new social media channel. Each City employee authorized to post on City social media sites must first complete required training with the Communications and Community Outreach Department. Only City employees are authorized to post to City social media sites.

V. Oversight and Enforcement

Employees representing the City through social media outlets or participating in social media features on City websites must maintain a high level of ethical conduct and professional decorum. Failure to do so is grounds for revoking the privilege to participate in City social media sites, blogs, or other social media features.

Information must be presented in accordance with professional standards for good grammar, spelling, brevity, clarity and accuracy, and avoid jargon, obscure terminology, or acronyms. Posts should reflect the tone of the City:

- Positive
- Aspirational
- Confident in pursuit of excellence
- First-person (but always “we,” and never “I”)
- Warm, as if “friends”

City employees recognize that the content and messages they post on social media websites are public and may be cited as official City statements. As City employees, pay special attention to sources when sharing other posts and/or retweeting. Social media must not be used to circumvent other City communication policies, including news media policy requirements.

City employees may not delete or hide public comments unless they are in violation of the City of Plano Site Terms and Conditions. City employees may not block or mute followers on social media channels unless they are in violation of the City of Plano Site Terms and Conditions.

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City employees may not publish information on City social media sites that includes:

- **Confidential or proprietary information**
 - An example would be pages of a vendor's bid marked confidential that has proprietary information.
 - Another example would be publishing or posting private facts and personal information about someone without their permission that has not been previously revealed to the public, is not of legitimate public concern, and would be offensive to a reasonable person.
- **Content that violated a legal ownership interest in another party**
 - Using another's trademark, logo or likeness without their permission would be an example of this.
 - Another example would be publishing the creative work of another or photography without permission or giving proper copyright credit.
- **Profanity, racist, sexist, obscene or derogatory content or comments**
 - An example of profanity would be language considered vulgar by societal standards.
 - An example of racist, sexist or derogatory content would involve comments made toward co-workers and/or members of the public that denigrates a particular race, religion, national origin, sexual orientation or gender identity.
- **False or defamatory comments**
 - These would include instances where comments aimed at co-workers and/or members of the public denigrate a person's character or reputation and are untrue.
 - Another example would be publishing or posting false information that harms the reputation of a group or organization.
- **Comments in support of or opposition to political campaigns or ballot measures**
 - An example of this would be to post campaign materials in support of a political candidate in the comment section of a City social media post.
- **Content that solicits or promotes commercial services or products**
 - An example of this would include posting an advertisement on a City sponsored social platform.
 - Promoting a business outside of a documented sponsorship agreement would also be an example of this.
- **Legal information: anything to do with pending litigation or legal issue, including attorney-client privileged communications and/or attorney work product**

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- This would include pending litigation matters where the City is a party.
- **Information not subject to disclosure under the Texas Public Information Act and other relevant state and federal law**
 - Examples would include social security numbers and protected health information.
- **Threat of physical harm or intentional disruption of City operations**
 - An example of this includes information that may compromise the safety or security of the public, public systems, or employees.
- **Advocating for or causing the damage or destruction of City property, illegal discrimination, or harassment (including sexual harassment)**

VI. Emergency Communications

In an emergency, refer to the Crisis Communications plan. Suspend all prescheduled posts until cleared to resume normal posting.

VII. Records Retention and Open Records

Social media sites contain communications sent by and received by the City and its employees. These interactions are considered public records subject to disclosure, in accordance with the Texas Public Information Act. Regular retention requirements (Policy 116.000) apply regardless of the form of the record (for example, digital text, photos, audio, and video). The City preserves records pursuant to a relevant records retention schedule for the required retention period in a format that preserves the integrity of the original record and is easily accessible.

Note that these requirements and obligations to preserve and retain extend to circumstances where public employees post information pertaining to public business with their private social media accounts. In such instances, forward records of these postings to a City email address so information can be stored to public servers.

VIII. City Employee Use of Personal Social Media Accounts

- A. Employees are not authorized to represent the City on social media sites unless explicitly authorized by their Department Director, and approved by the Communications and Community Outreach Department, to do so. It is paramount for the audience to know the difference between your personal opinion and the official view of the City. State that the views expressed in your postings are your own by using a disclaimer such as: "The postings on this site are my own and don't reflect or represent the opinions of the City of Plano." If you happen to be a Plano

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resident speaking in a personal capacity, state that you are posting based on your status as a Plano resident alone and not in the capacity of a City employee.

- B. The City of Plano recognizes that many individuals use social media sites for their own purposes. Personal sites may not be designed in such a way as to cause users to believe the site is a City-administered or City-endorsed site, including the unauthorized use of the City of Plano logo and trademarks.
- C. The use of official employment insignias, logos, uniforms or similar identifying items are prohibited for personal use on any social media site.
- D. Unless the employee is a designated site administrator for an official City of Plano social media site, the employee shall not use the city e-mail account in conjunction with a personal social networking site.
- E. Employees are prohibited from disclosing confidential information with regards to the City of Plano's computer systems, projects, facilities, or employees on any personal social media in any way. This includes photographs or depictions of activities, including investigations and incidents.
- F. Employees shall not access social media for personal matters using city devices during work hours.

IX. Monitoring

If you come across positive or negative comments about the City, consider forwarding them to the Communications and Community Outreach Department.

X. Media Inquiries

Personal blog and website postings may generate media coverage. If a member of the media contacts you about a City-related posting or requests City information of any kind, contact the Director of Media Relations.

XI. Employee Responsibilities

Failure to adhere to this policy may result in disciplinary actions as depicted in Policy 216.000 Disciplinary Process.

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