



1410 - SOCIAL MEDIA

I. INTRODUCTION

The City of Newport News (the City) supports and encourages the use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, etc.) to communicate directly with the public, stakeholders, partners, and the media. City use of social media is intended to broaden the reach of communication and engagement with the community, while utilizing new platforms that offer methods of communicating beyond the traditional source of official information located at nnva.gov. All social media should be treated as a formal, public communications tool and should be used to:

- Enhance and encourage external communications;
- Educate citizens regarding city services, programs, projects, meetings, events and businesses;
- Increase government transparency and efficiency;
- Engage citizens in community dialogue;
- Respond to inquiries regarding municipal services and government in a timely manner;
- Share posts from other City government social media sites to help promote their programs, events and services;
- Communicate with citizens during inclement weather, emergencies, and man-made disasters; and
- Expand citizen interactivity and participation through online services and resources.

II. PURPOSE

The City has an overriding interest and expectation in deciding what is “spoken” on behalf of the City on social media sites. This policy establishes the procedures for the proper use of social media.

III. POLICY

All City and departmental social media sites shall be (1) approved by the requesting Department Head and the Communications Office in the City Manager’s Office; and (2) administered by the Communications Office or a designee. Designees can be any department employee or volunteer designated by the requesting Department Head that has a complete understanding of this policy and has appropriate content and technical experience. Designees shall provide the Communications Office with full access to City-related social media sites either through the provision of login and password, Administrator rights, or any other method approved by the Communications Office. The Communications Office will notify Departments of any actions involving their sites.

- A. All City and departmental social media sites shall adhere to applicable local, state, and federal laws, regulations, and policies, including the City’s Use of Information Technology Policy and other applicable City policies.

- B. Virginia Freedom of Information Act and e-discovery laws and policies apply to electronic content and therefore all social media content must be able to be managed, stored, and retrieved to comply with these laws.
- C. All City and departmental social media sites are subject to the Library of Virginia's (LVA) Public Records Act. Relevant City and LVA records retention schedules apply to social media content. Records required to be maintained pursuant to a relevant record retention schedule shall be maintained for the required retention period in a format that preserves the integrity of the original record and is easily accessible using the approved platforms and tools.
- D. Content deemed not suitable for posting by a City or departmental social media moderator and removed from social media sites shall be retained pursuant to the records retention schedule along with a description of the reason the specific content is deemed not suitable for posting.
- E. The City and its departments reserve the right to restrict or limit the subject matter of their social media sites, and remove any content that is clearly off topic or outside of the scope of the covered subject areas, or in violation of this policy or any applicable law. However, comments and postings by the public which may fall outside the subject area limitations imposed by a particular City department but which relate to other City departments, City business or operations, should be referred to the Communications Office for appropriate response including a referral to the correct department.
- F. All City and departmental social media sites shall, where appropriate, have the City's posting policy permanently displayed. *See Section VI. Posting Policy.*
- G. All social media sites shall clearly indicate they are maintained by the City and shall have City contact information prominently displayed.
- H. Employees representing the City government via social media platforms must conduct themselves at all times as a representative of the City and in accordance with all Human Resources administrative policies. *See Section IV, Employee Guidance for Participation in Social Media.*
- I. The Communications Office may monitor content on social media sites to ensure adherence with this policy - and ensure consistent citywide messages. The Communications Office retains the authority to remove pages or close sites if necessary.
- J. Employees found in violation of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

IV. EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION IN SOCIAL MEDIA

Employees who are authorized to participate in City social media sites as a City employee spokesperson shall adhere to the following:

- A. All City policies, rules, regulations, and standards of conduct apply to employees that engage in social media activities while conducting City business. Use of a City e-mail address and communicating in an official capacity constitutes conducting City business. All posts and responses to posts made on the City's behalf shall be done through a City account, not a personal one.

All requests to establish a social networking site to conduct City business shall be made to the Communications Department after receiving Department Head approval.

- B. Department Heads have the option of allowing employees to participate in existing City social media sites as part of their job duties.
- C. Employees posting as a City spokesperson shall not write any content or postings that involve or are related to the following:
- Potential or actual litigation, including administrative proceedings, involving the City or its employees.
 - Nonpublic information of any kind.
 - Illegal or banned substances and narcotics.
 - Pornography or other offensive illegal materials.
 - Defamatory, libelous, offensive or demeaning material. Don't engage in a combative exchange.
 - Private/personal matters of yourself or others.
 - Disparaging/threatening comments about or related to anyone.
 - Personal, sensitive or confidential information of any kind.
 - Medical information that violates a person's Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) protections
- D. Follow all copyright laws, public record laws, retention laws, fair use and financial disclosure laws and any other laws that might apply to the City or functional area.
- E. Do not cite vendors, suppliers, clients, residents, co-workers or other stakeholders without their approval.
- F. Do not use ethnic slurs, profanity, personal insults or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in the City's workplace. Avoid comments or topics that may be considered objectionable, inflammatory, or discriminatory.
- G. Correct mistakes, and do not alter previous posts without indicating a change has been made. Frame any comments or opposing views in a positive manner.
- H. Add value to the City through your interaction. Provide worthwhile information and perspective.

V. ADDITIONAL TIPS

A. Be timely

When responding to comments and posts, do so in a timely fashion and with an accurate response. Not all posts, however, require a response.

B. Be regular

Establish a habit of posting regularly to social media accounts. On the other hand, don't inundate your audience with excessive and/or irrelevant messages.

C. Be transparent

Your honesty, or dishonesty, will be quickly noticed in social media environments.

D. Perception is reality

In online social networks, the lines between public and private, personal and professional can be blurred. Just by identifying yourself as a Newport News employee, you are creating perceptions about the City. Be sure all content associated with you is consistent with your work and with the City's values and professional standards.

E. Be judicious

All statements must be true and not misleading and all claims must be substantiated and approved. What you publish will be around for a long time, so consider the content carefully. Don't publish anything you wouldn't want your family, coworker, clergy, or supervisor to read!

F. Your responsibility

What you write is ultimately your responsibility. Participation in social computing on behalf of the City is not a right and access may be removed. Posting needs to be taken seriously and with respect.

G. It's a conversation

Talk to your readers like you'd talk to real people in professional situations. Avoid bureaucratic or formal language. Don't be afraid to bring in your own personality. Consider open-ended content that invites response and comments. Stay professional – don't be combative.

H. Bring it back

Whenever possible include links on social media sites that direct users back to the City's website for more information.

I. Be open

One of the great benefits of social media is the interaction between us (you) and our customers. Take in ideas. Share relevant feedback & input with relevant colleagues.

J. If it gives you pause, pause

If you're about to publish something that makes you even the slightest bit uncomfortable, don't shrug it off and hit 'send.' Take a minute to review this policy and try to figure out what's bothering you, then, fix it. If you're still unsure, check with your supervisor or the Communications Office. Ultimately, the decision about what you publish is yours – as is the responsibility.

VI. POSTING POLICY

All of the following information shall be provided at each site:

Welcome to the official City [or Department of [X] [name of social media outlet].

The purpose of this site is to present matters of public interest in Newport News. Followers of the City of Newport News are encouraged to submit questions, comments, and concerns related to the matter presented or to the business of this Department, but please note that this is a moderated online discussion site.

Here is our Posting Policy for participation to encourage civil discourse. The following are prohibited:

- Threats of physical or bodily harm, or incitement of actions that would harm others;
- Content which constitutes, incites, promotes, or encourages illegal activity;
- Submission of personally identifiable medical information;
- Defamatory statements;
- Content that includes or constitutes obscenity or child pornography;
- Solicitations of commerce and commercial product promotions;
- Spam, links to other sites, chain letters, pyramid schemes or fraudulent or deceptive messages;
- Content that violates copyright, trademark, or other intellectual property rights; and
- Comments that are clearly off topic of the City social media post being commented upon, or beyond the scope of the subject matter of the social media page.

Note: - The Communications Office will have the final say in interpreting these rules. The City reserves the right to reject, delete, disable or remove any content that does not comply with these Posting Guidelines.

Disclaimer:

Please note that public comments expressed on this site do not reflect the opinion and position of the City of Newport News government or its officers and employees. If you have any questions

concerning the operation of this online moderated discussion site, please contact Communications and Community Relations at city@nnva.gov.

VII. USE OF PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA

This policy shall not seek to regulate users establishing and using personal social media accounts and other similar communications (e.g. personal Internet sites, blogs) for personal purposes outside of the workplace and using non-City equipment, resources, and information systems. Personal social media use, as well as the use of other similar communications tools hosted externally or internally on City hosted resources such as, but not limited to, forums and blogs, shall include no statements or depictions stating or implying that the user represents the City, is making an official statement of City policy, or is making a statement or depiction with the City's permission, whether implied or expressed, unless the user has received documented permission from the appropriate City authorities to communicate on the City's behalf in the non-City venues.

Users are encouraged to include in personal electronic communications discussing or relating to City business, a disclaimer that states, "The views I express are my own and do not reflect the official view or position of City of Newport News." In accessing personal social media from the City IT environment, users are required to follow all City policies and procedures. Users may not download or copy content from their personal social media accounts to City of Newport News systems without permission.

Supersedes/Amends: 1410, 03/01/2014

Approved:


City Manager