

Staff Policies Manual



Title: **Social Media Policy**
Policy #: 102
Sponsored by: City Manager's Office
Approved by: City Manager
Date: Issued: 7/3/2014 Amended: 6/12/2017

Purpose

The City of San Mateo (City) recognizes the importance of social media in communicating with the public and reaching a broader audience to convey information about the City's mission, meetings, activities, and current issues. The City has an overriding interest and expectation to protect the integrity of the information posted on its social media sites and the content that is attributed to the City and its officials. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the City's social media outlets maintain the professional image of the City of San Mateo and meet legal standards. The policy shall establish oversight, administration and management guidelines for departmental use of social media to further the goals of the City.

Scope

This policy applies to City of San Mateo employees, volunteers, contractors, and any other representative acting on behalf of the City or any of its Departments and Divisions.

This policy will provide precautionary information around employee's personal use and restrictions related to social media including self-expression, discrimination, and acceptable use of technology. Specific guidelines can be found in other City and Department policies.

Definitions

The U.S. Government defines social media as the various activities that integrate technology, social interaction, and content creation. Through social media, individuals or groups can create, organize, edit, or comment on, combine, and share content. Social media uses many technologies and forms, including social-networking, blogs, wikis, photo-sharing, video-sharing, podcast, social bookmarking, mash-ups, widgets, virtual worlds, micro-blogs, Really Simple Syndication (RSS) and more. Not all forms of social media may be appropriate for use by City departments.

1. Communications Manager: As applies to this policy, is a position designated by the City Manager to have administrative responsibility for implementing, overseeing, and ensuring that the Social Media policy is effectively communicated to and applied by Departments choosing to utilize social media.

2. Department Director: As applies to this policy, will have the authority to determine and establish social media activity at the department or division program level, appoint staff to manage social media account(s), and periodically monitor use.
3. Employee(s): As applies to this policy, any City employee or employees authorized by Department Director to post and establish social media presence at the department or division program level.
4. Social Media: A category of Internet-based resources that has a participatory element by integrating user-generated content. This includes, but is not limited to, social networking sites (Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn), micro-blogging sites (Twitter, Nixle), photo and video-sharing sites (Flickr, Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube), wikis (Wikipedia), blogs and news sites (Digg, Reddit, WordPress).
5. Social Networks: Online platforms where users can create profiles, share information and socialize with others using a range of technologies.
6. Speech: Expression or communication of thoughts or opinions in spoken words, in writing, by expressive conduct, symbolism, photographs, videotape or related forms of communication.

Responsibility

1. Administration of Social Media Sites

For the purpose of providing general oversight and continuity related to the City's use of social media, the Communications Manager, or designee must be able to immediately address content from all City sanctioned social media sites/accounts, including but not limited to access in crisis situations.

Therefore, the Communications Manager, or designee will:

- A. Maintain a list of social media tools that are approved for use for City business.
- B. Have redundant 24/7 contact access to social media managers in departments or divisions with social media accounts, to immediately address emergency issues, if needed. If no 24/7 redundancy is in place within the division or department utilizing social media, the Communications Manager will have universal access, in conjunction with IT Department, through an administrative login to access all social media sites.
- C. Maintain a registry of all City social media presences, including name and contact information of employee(s) responsible for site.
 1. Specialized social media presences being used for forensic or public safety purposes will not be in this registry.
- D. Will provide guidance and resources to assist Department Directors in addressing concerns regarding public comments

- E. Have the right to review content on City social media sites, which does not include confidential public safety related content, to ensure compliance with the City's Social Media Policy and the interests and goals of the City.
- F. Monitor industry standards for style and content, and ensure that the departments using social media receive periodic updates regarding expectations pertaining to the City's social media presence.
- G. Be responsible for ensuring any critical or time sensitive information that comes to their attention is appropriately disseminated through the proper channels to ensure timely dissemination to the affected individuals.

2. Department Directors

Within the terms of this policy, Department Directors will have the authority to determine and establish social media activity at the department or division program level including:

- A. Appointing an employee or employees with authority to use social media on behalf of department or division.
- B. Adding, editing, monitoring, maintaining, and removing content from all social media sites their Department or Division may create, including review of comments from the public.

3. Employees

- A. Any employee authorized to post items on any of the City's social media sites shall review, be familiar with, and comply with the City's Social Media Policy, the social media sites' use policies and terms and conditions and any related guidelines issued by the Communications Manager, or designee.
- B. Employees posting social media on behalf of their individual departments or division shall also be subject to any more restrictive terms if established by their department or division and such more restrictive terms shall not be limited by this policy.
- C. Postings on any of the City's social media sites by an authorized City employee shall only reflect the views or concerns of the City. Any postings made by authorized City employees on an official City of San Mateo social media site will be viewed by the public as coming from the City Organization, and shall reflect an accepted City of San Mateo voice and validity.

4. Exception

City employees using social media in an authorized investigative or covert capacity – for a purpose other than output for public relations or community engagement (such as law enforcement) - shall not be limited by this policy, and shall be governed by internal department or division policy for that investigative or covert effort.

5. User Behavior

Employees representing the City government via social media outlets must conduct themselves at all times as representatives of the City of San Mateo. Employees shall comply with any applicable City and Department policies regarding speech and expression. Employees that fail to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary actions.

Procedures

1. General

- A. The City will utilize social media to engage, build relationships with, and provide useful information to the City's residents, partners and stakeholders. We will build awareness of the City's mission by providing relevant, timely information and opportunities for interaction.
- B. Our goals in using social media include:
 1. Expanding visibility and outreach;
 2. Increasing credibility with the public by posting relevant information and offering transparency;
 3. Building affinity; creating a media presence that positively promotes the City and/or its Divisions/programs;
 4. Increasing engagement from the public as visitors/fans/members/customers/ patrons;
 5. Disseminating time-sensitive and emergency information efficiently and quickly and in coordination with appropriate departments when necessary consistent with applicable City policies.
 - a. Emergency information should be coordinated with San Mateo Police Department's Public Information Officer to disseminate via reverse 911 and community alerts as needed.
 - b. Emergency information should also be coordinated with the City's Communication Manager to disseminate via city-wide social media accounts and to appropriate community partners.
 6. Increasing and unifying internal communications and engagement with all City employees, volunteers, contractors, and any other representatives acting on behalf of the City.
- C. The City's website (www.cityofsanmateo.org) will remain the City's primary and predominant internet presence.

- D. Where appropriate, content posted to City social media sites will also be available on the City's official website.
- E. Where appropriate, content posted to City social media sites should contain links directing users back to the City's official website for further information and services.
- F. All official social media presences are to be listed on the City of San Mateo website to assist the public in identifying official social media presences, and where appropriate the social media presence should be in an interactive format, utilizing "Follow Us" or "Like Us" buttons.
- G. All City social media sites shall comply with usage rules and regulations provided by the site provider, including privacy policies.
- H. The City reserves the right to terminate any City social media site that has been inactive for 90 days or longer. Prior to deactivation, the Department or Division will be notified in writing by the Communications Manager, or designee that the site will be terminated within five days of notice.

2. Use of Social Media for Emergency Communications

- A. Social media, reverse 911 and community alerts are available resources that can be used in an emergency and crisis situation when information needs to be disseminated to the community efficiently and quickly. Activation of these resources can be directed through Police Dispatch or the Communications Manager.

3. Creating Social Media Accounts

Prior to creating an account Departments choosing to utilize social media shall:

- A. The Director will consider whether social media is appropriate and/or useful to the Department or Division including an analysis of which platforms to use.
- B. Establish a well thought out social media plan that complements citywide policies and considers the department's mission and goals, audience, legal risks, technical capabilities, security issues, emergency response procedures, etc.
- C. Assign the responsibility of adding, editing, monitoring, maintaining, and removing content from all social media sites to an employee or employees within the department or division to assist in maintaining the site.
- D. Inform the Communications Manager, or designee in writing that an account will be created and include the account name and address, login information, intended use of the account, and the names and contact information of employee(s) responsible for maintaining account.

- E. Notify the City Attorney's Office and request legal review of the terms and conditions for establishing an account using a new social media site that has not been designated as an approved social media site.

- 1. Exception for Emergency Communications

- Departments or divisions within the City of San Mateo needing to access a social media site not previously used by the city for the purposes of maintaining public safety or law enforcement confidentiality are exempted from required advance notice to the Communications Manager and City Attorney, if the emergent need dictates immediate action.

- F. All City social media sites shall utilize official City contact information for account set-up, monitoring, and access. The use of personal email accounts or phone numbers by any City employee, official or volunteer is not allowed for the purpose of setting up, monitoring or updating a City social media site.

- 4. Adherence to Laws and Regulations

- A. All City social media sites shall adhere to applicable federal, state and local laws, regulations and policies, including all applicable City policies or guidelines.
 - B. Any person representing the City on any social media site shall conduct himself or herself at all times as a professional representative of the City and in accordance with all City policies. This includes any City or Department policies that have specific language governing expressions, display of images, posting and use of department records.

- 5. Public Records

- The City is subject to the California Public Records Act. All social media sites shall clearly indicate that any article and any other content posted or submitted for posting are subject to public disclosure as required by law.

- 6. Retention of Records

- A. City social media sites are subject to the California Public Records Act. Any content maintained on a City social media site that is related to City business, including a list of subscribers, posted communication, and communication submitted for posting, may be considered a public record and subject to public disclosure.
 - B. All postings on a City social media site shall be archived and maintained consistent with the City's Records Retention Schedule and Records Management Policy (#110).
 - C. Content removed pursuant to this policy shall be printed out prior to removal and forwarded to the Communications Manager, or designee for retention. Removed content will be retained by the Communications Manager, or designee pursuant

to relevant records retention schedule, including the time, date and identity of the poster when available.

7. Content Standards

Any City social media site that elicits or allows comments from the public shall be designated as a limited public forum for First Amendment purposes. As such, and in order to promote the City's goals articulated above and remain in compliance with other laws, City social media site content shall not contain any of the following.

- A. Profane language or content;
- B. Sexual content or links to sexual content;
- C. Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability, or sexual orientation; or other protected characteristic
- D. Solicitations or commerce;
- E. Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity;
- F. Information that may compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems
- G. Libelous or defamatory comments;
 - 1. Libel is a false and unprivileged publication by writing, printing, picture, effigy, or other fixed representation to the eye, which exposes any person to hatred, contempt, ridicule, or obloquy, or which causes a person to be shunned or avoided, or which has a tendency to injure a person in his or her occupation.
- H. Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party;
- I. Private or personal information published without consent
- J. Comments not topically related to the particular social medium article being commented upon
 - 1. These guidelines shall be displayed to users or made available by hyperlink on all City social media sites. Any content removed based on these guidelines must be retained, including the time, date and identity of poster, when available.
 - 2. If the comment cannot be removed due to the social media platform where the post originated, the department may choose to address the post by monitoring the activity of the commenter, sending a direct

message, muting, blocking, or reporting negative activity to the social media platform where it originated.

3. Users posting to the City's social media sites shall be informed that the City disclaims any and all responsibility and liability for any materials that the City deems inappropriate for posting.

Daily maintenance and monitoring of these social media sites is the responsibility of the applicable City Department.

8. Access to City Social Media Sites

No city social media site shall be maintained or operated to block or mute users of the social media platform.

Policy History

1. This policy was originally issued on July 3, 2014 as the "Social Media Policy" and numbered 102. Social media standards issued by the Communications Manager or designee are periodically updated.
2. This policy was amended on June 12, 2017 to prohibit the blocking or muting of social media users from city social media sites.

Contact for this Policy

Communications and Public Relations Analyst

Approval

This policy was issued on July 3, 2014 and approved by:

LARRY A. PATTERSON
CITY MANAGER