



Proposed Council Policy: Social Media Policy

May 10, 2021
City Council Study Session
Presentation 21-222

Policy Goals

- Provide clear guidelines for social media use in Councilmember's "official" capacity
 - Focus on individual responsibility
 - Separating private use from public use
 - Establishing standards for use
 - Establishing expectations for staff
- Protect the rights of the public
- Protect the City and Councilmembers from liability



Official vs. Personal Use

- All social media use is subject to the policy (both personal and official use)
 - Improper personal use subjects account to policy
- Personal use must be separate and distinct:
 - does not make use of City e-mail address, position, title, or official capacity (as a City representative); or
 - not used for excessive discussion of the business or affairs of the City (recommended to avoid entirely)

Standards (1)

- Identification of official capacity
- Expectation of accurate representations (no misrepresentations or speculation)
- Use to benefit the city and council and improve discourse and understanding
- Prohibited use by councilmembers:
 - Ethnic slurs, profanity, personal insults
 - Posting of restricted content
 - Confidential information
 - Personal information of others
 - Intellectual property of others

Restricted Content

- Discriminating or promoting discrimination (race, creed, color, age, religion, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, national origin, weight, height or genetic information)
- Degrading/obscene language
- Defamatory, libelous, offensive, or demeaning material, or engaging in a combative exchange
- Sexual content or links to sexual content;
- Comments on pending or likely legal proceedings or ongoing investigations
- Harassing statements
- Solicitations of commerce except as part of City-sponsored events or the promotion of businesses in the City
- Conduct/encouragement of illegal activity
- Confidential, proprietary information or non-public information;
- Information that may tend to put at risk the safety and security of the public or public systems;
- Comments supporting or opposing political campaigns or ballot questions, except for reporting resolutions approved by the City Council; and
- Threatening comments about or related to anyone.

Standards (2)

- No representation of council or city policy without authorization
 - Encouraged use of disclaimer of personal opinion
- No expectation of privacy for official accounts or posts
- All accounts subject to “Terms of Use”
 - Must be included on or linked from account



Standards (3)

- No restriction of ability to view or post comments based on viewpoint
 - Public visibility required (if possible)
 - Cannot block or restrict access from view or responding to post unless applicable to all
 - If used to moderate an exclusive group (e.g., Nextdoor), cannot block or restrict persons unless applicable to all
- Deletion of posts or comments restricted unless
 - Violates Terms of Use (which are posted or linked)
 - Prior conferral with City Attorney
 - Post preserved and poster notified

Standards (4)

- Open Meetings Law compliance required
- Limits for interaction with quasi-judicial matters
- Limit on deleting posts or messages to comply with record retention

Staff Support Expectations

- Official social media is an individual responsibility
- Staff support is limited to:
 - Generic content for consistent messaging
 - Assistance in implementing graphic design and branding standards
 - Posting generic content to official accounts
 - Legal advice
 - Other support with specific Council authorization



Discussion

