



City of Annapolis

Social Media Policy

1. OVERVIEW

1.1. Purpose

Social media and networking services have become a common form of communication in the workplace and among stakeholders and citizens. Social networks are online communities of people or organizations that share interests and/or activities and use a wide variety of Internet technology to make the interaction a rich and robust experience. The purpose of this policy is to set forth guidelines on the City of Annapolis' use of social media to communicate with citizens, businesses, visitors and other stakeholders. It also sets forth the roles and responsibilities of moderators and commenters who use the City's social media networks and sites, and of City employees who use social media to pursue official, professional or personal interests.

1.2. Stakeholder Engagement

Properly used, social media enhance the City's ability to engage its stakeholders on many topics, including, but not limited to:

- 1.2.1. City-wide and departmental policies;
- 1.2.2. Adopted and pending City Council legislation;
- 1.2.3. Special projects, like the Market House; and
- 1.2.4. Special events taking place in the City

The City's intention will be to keep legitimate discussion, whatever its origin, on point for the benefit of the stakeholders who engage the City via social media.

1.3. Employee Use

From the perspective of City employees, this policy addresses use of social media in at least three distinct ways:

- 1.3.1. To advance official City goals and objectives within the scope of their employment;
- 1.3.2. To pursue professional interests related to their expertise or profession but outside of the scope of their employment; and
- 1.3.3. To explore purely personal interests

Detailed guidance for employee participation is presented in Section 4, Employee Guidance for Participating in Social Media.

2. DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this City Social Media Policy, the following terms are defined as provided below:

- 2.1. **Social Media:** Social media is content created by individuals using accessible and scalable technologies through the Internet. Examples of social media include Facebook, blogs, MySpace, RSS, YouTube, Second Life, Twitter, LinkedIn, Delicious, Flickr, Piscasa, Wikipedia and Slideshare.
- 2.2. **Blog:** (An abridgment of the term web log) A City website with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video.
- 2.3. **City Moderator:** An authorized City official or employee who creates and is responsible for posted articles, messages and information on social media sites. The City Moderator reviews, authorizes and allows content submitted by public commentators to be posted to a City social media sites (see section below).
- 2.4. **Article:** An original posting of content to a City social media site by a City Moderator.
- 2.5. **Commenter:** A City official or member of the public who submits a comment for posting in response to the content of a particular City article or social media content.
- 2.6. **Comment:** A response to a City article or social media content submitted by a commenter.

3. USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON OFFICIAL CITY BUSINESS

3.1. City Social Media Regulation

- 3.1.1. **Approval and administration:** All official use of social media on behalf of the City of Annapolis shall be:
 - 3.1.1.1. Approved by the Public Information Officer, the Managers of the Office of Management Information Technology (MIT) and, if applicable, the requesting Department Director;
 - 3.1.1.2. Conducted using only approved City social media platforms and tools; and
 - 3.1.1.3. Administered by the MIT Webmaster or his/her designee. Designees shall secure authorization from the employee's appointing authority, shall have demonstrated a complete understanding of this policy, and shall have appropriate content and technical experience.
- 3.1.2. **Applicable law and policies:** All City social media sites shall adhere to applicable federal, state and local laws, regulations and policies, including, to the extent applicable and feasible, those relating to the disclosure and retention of public records.
- 3.1.3. **Public disclosure notice:** All City social network sites and entries shall clearly indicate that any articles and any other content posted or submitted for posting may be subject to public disclosure.
- 3.1.4. **City reserved rights:** The City reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of this policy or any applicable law.

- 3.1.5. **Public notice and standards:** Each City social media site shall include an introductory statement that clearly specifies the purpose and topical scope of the social media and social network site. Where possible, social media sites should link back to the official City Internet site for forms, documents and other information. Each City social media site shall post and commenters shall abide by the sections 3.1.6 Prohibited content and 3.2 Social Media Standards.
- 3.1.6. **Prohibited content:** City social media content and comments containing any of the following forms of content shall not be allowed for posting:
 - 3.1.6.1. Comments not topically related to the particular site or social media article being commented upon;
 - 3.1.6.2. Profane language or content;
 - 3.1.6.3. Content that promotes, fosters or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, martial status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation;
 - 3.1.6.4. Sexual content or links to sexual content;
 - 3.1.6.5. Solicitations of commerce;
 - 3.1.6.6. Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity;
 - 3.1.6.7. Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems; or
 - 3.1.6.8. Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party.
- 3.1.7. **Moderator training:** All City social media moderators shall be trained regarding the terms of this City policy, including their responsibilities to review content submitted for posting to ensure compliance with the policy.
- 3.1.8. **Maintenance and contact notice:** All City social sites shall clearly indicate they are maintained by the City and shall have City contact information prominently displayed.
- 3.1.9. **Security policy:** Where appropriate, City IT security policies shall apply to all social media sites and articles.
- 3.1.10. **Conduct:** Employees representing the City Government via social media outlets must conduct themselves at all times as a representative of the City and in accordance with all human resources policies. See 3.2 Social Media Standards and 4. Employee Guidance for Participating in Social Media.
- 3.1.11. **Policy Violation:** Employees found in violation of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

3.2 Social Media Standards

3.2.1 Content

- 3.2.1.1. Comments submitted by members of the public must be directly related to the content of the articles. Submission of comments by members of the public constitutes participation in a limited public forum. City social media moderators shall allow comments that are topically related

to the particular article being commented and thus within the purpose of the limited public forum, with the exception of the prohibited content listed in section 3.1.6 Prohibited content above.

3.2.1.2. Departments are responsible for establishing, publishing and updating their content on social media sites. Although it will be the department's responsibility to maintain the content, the City Public Information Officer (PIO) may monitor the content on each of the department pages to ensure:

3.2.1.2.1 A consistent citywide message is being conveyed and adherence to the City Social Media Policy.

3.2.1.2.2 The PIO also reserves the right to direct departments to modify social media content based on best practices and industry norms.

3.2.2 City Moderator and Commenter Identification

3.2.2.1 All City social media Moderators and public commentators shall be clearly identified. Anonymous social media postings shall not be allowed.

3.2.2.2 Enrollment of public commentators shall be accompanied by valid contact information, including a name, address and e-mail address.

3.2.3 Department Responsibility and Moderators

3.2.3.1 The content and format of each City social media site shall be the responsibility of the department producing and using the social media.

3.2.3.2 Documents and articles submitted to a City social media shall be moderated by a moderator authorized by the department director and trained to be a social media moderator.

3.2.4 The Role of the City Moderator

3.2.4.1 Social media can be used by the City to canvass the views of the community and stakeholders. These processes will inevitably attract comments that are offensive, inappropriate or irrelevant and many will require some form of moderation.

3.2.4.2 Departments that seek comments online should have the 3.2.6 Ethical Social Media Commenter Conduct policy displayed on the website that makes clear that contributions should be relevant, non-threatening, respectful of the views of other contributors and avoid insulting, obscene and defamatory comment; and that the City Moderator may remove or reject any posts either pre or post publication that do not comply with the 3.2.6 Ethical Social Media Commenter Conduct policy or 3.1.6 Prohibited content section.

3.2.4.3 The City Moderator should post new comments to correct commenter's factual errors, inaccurate information or clarification.

3.2.4.4 Departments should have guidelines in place to cover the role of the City Moderator, and these may vary in detail, depending on the topics and

issues under discussion. They should, however, cover the following principles:

- 3.2.4.4.1 The moderation process must be objective and impartial and avoid any perception that posts are being censored for political reasons;
- 3.2.4.4.2 The moderation process must be sensitive to the diversity of the public and avoid any perception that it is being applied in a discriminatory manner; and
- 3.2.4.4.3 The moderator must inform commenters as to why a post has been removed or rejected and give them an opportunity to resubmit an edited version.

3.2.5 Social Media Comments and Responses

3.2.5.1 All social media articles and comments shall be reviewed and approved by an authorized social media moderator before posting on a City social media.

3.2.5.2 All social media articles and comments submitted for posting with attached content shall be scanned using antivirus technology before posting.

3.2.5.3 The linked content of embedded hyperlinks within any City social media articles or social media comments submitted for posting shall be evaluated before posting.

3.2.5.4 Any posted hyperlinks shall be accompanied by a disclaimer stating that:

“The City of Annapolis guarantees neither the authenticity, accuracy, appropriateness nor security of the link, website or content linked to it”.

3.2.6 Ethical Social Media Commenter Conduct

3.2.6.1 Mutual commenter respect is paramount.

3.2.6.2 Commenters should use every effort to keep interactions factual and accurate.

3.2.6.3 Commenters should strive for transparency and openness in interactions.

3.2.6.4 Commenters should provide links to credible sources of information to support interactions, when possible.

3.2.6.5 Commenters should publicly correct any information communicated that is later found to be in error.

3.2.6.6 Commenters should be honest about relationships, opinions and identity.

3.2.6.7 Commenters should protect their personal privacy and that of others by not including personal information (such as email addresses, private addresses or phone numbers).

3.2.6.8 Commenters should not be abusive, harass or threaten others.

3.2.6.9 Commenters should not make defamatory or libelous comments.

3.2.6.10 Commenters should not use insulting, provocative or hateful language.

3.2.6.11 Commenters should not post multiple versions of the same view to the forum.

3.2.6.12 Commenters should respect the rules of the social media site.

3.2.6.13 Commenters shall abide by the section on 3.1.6 Prohibited content.\

4. EMPLOYEE GUIDANCE FOR PARTICIPATING IN SOCIAL MEDIA

4.1 Professional standards

- 4.1.1 The lines between public and private, official, personal and professional employee roles in social media are somewhat blurred. By identifying yourself as a City of Annapolis employee, you are creating perceptions about your expertise and about the City by legislative stakeholders, customers, business partners and the general public.
- 4.1.2 Be sure that all content associated with you is consistent with your work and with the City's values and professional standards.

4.2. Employee use for official agency interests

- 4.2.1 The main body of this document explains the policy for use by City employees of department City social media sites in their fulfillment of their official duties.
- 4.2.2 Official City use explicitly implies that an employee's authorized use of social media is for the express purpose of fulfilling City officials, organizational or departmental duties or services via the use of social media technologies.

4.3. Employee use for professional interests

- 4.3.1. Internally within City government, professionals often collaborate through various technologies such as file sharing and the City Intranet, but professional use implies going outside of the City's internal network for the purpose of furthering their specific job responsibilities or professional duties.
- 4.3.2. The use for professional interests are beneficial to the work of government by enabling employees to inform themselves on important issues or to collaborate with their peers by using outside or non-City social media tools or sites. These outside sites the employee is using is not maintained or monitored by the City itself. The employee is accessing sites and setting up accounts owned by private entities to consume and exchange information.

4.4 Employee use for personal interests

- 4.4.1 An employee may want to check their personal Facebook page, send out a personal Tweet, or watch the latest viral YouTube video during a lunch hour or another designated break during work hours as permitted by your department director and City policies. In addition, outside of work hours, employees might maintain a blog related to a hobby or other personal interest that does not directly relate to one's professional duties. Using social media for personal interests is not related to an employee's job duties for the City.
- 4.4.2 The City has the discretion, through City website filtering tools, to restrict employee access to areas of the Internet deemed non-work related, such as personal e-mail or leisure Web sites.
- 4.4.3 Employees should also understand that public records laws may bring their personal use via City facilities under scrutiny by the media and public.
- 4.4.4 Refer to existing policy on personal use of City computers and remind all that they have no reasonable expectation of privacy.

- 4.5 **Employee Social Media Use Guidelines:** Employees who choose to participate in social media as a City employee must adhere to the following guidelines:

- 4.5.1 City policies, rules, regulations and standards of conduct apply to employees who engage in social media activities while conducting City business. Use of your City e-mail address and communicating in your official capacity will constitute conducting City business.
- 4.5.2 City employees shall notify their department director, MIT and the PIO if they intend to create a social networking site or service to conduct City business.
- 4.5.3 Departments have the option of allowing employees to participate in existing social media sites as part of their job duties. Department directors may allow or disallow employee participation in any social media activities in their departments.
- 4.5.4 City employees must protect their privacy, the privacy of citizens and the information the City holds. Follow all privacy protection laws, i.e., HIPPA, and protect sensitive and confidential City information.
- 4.5.5 City employee must follow all copyright laws, public records laws, retention laws, fair use and financial disclosure laws and any other laws that might apply to the City or your functional area.
- 4.5.6 City employees must not cite vendors, suppliers, clients, citizens, co-workers or other stakeholders without their approval.
- 4.5.7 City employees must make it clear when they are speaking for themselves and not on behalf of the City. If employees publish content on any website outside of City control and it has something to do with the work they do or subjects associated with the City, use a disclaimer such as this: “The postings on this site are my own and don’t necessarily represent the City’s positions or opinions”.
- 4.5.8 City employees must 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 or inflammatory.
- 4.5.9 City employees must identify themselves in their official capacity, ensure their profile and related content is consistent with how they wish to present themselves to colleagues, citizens and other stakeholders.
- 4.5.10 City employees must correct your mistakes, and don’t alter previous posts without indicating that you have done so. Frame any comments or opposing views in a positive manner.
- 4.5.11 Add value to the City through your interaction. Provide worthwhile information and perspective.