

SUBJECT: Social Media, Public Information	NUMBER: 13.04.010
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: City Manager	EFFECTIVE DATE: 03/04/2013
POLICY OWNER: City Manager	LAST UPDATED: 12/30/2020
POLICY CONTACT: Community Relations Officer	APPROVED: 

POLICY

This policy shall govern the establishment and maintenance of social media accounts, pages, profiles and/or handles created to communicate as a representative of the City of Stockton.

The City's use of social media may enhance civic engagement, including, but not limited to, permitting members of the public to comment using social media. The use of social media accounts, pages, profiles and/or handles shall be dedicated to limited subject matters and limited topics related exclusively to official City business and are not intended to create or substitute for a traditional public forum. Comments by members of the public on social media must directly relate to the subject matter of the particular social media or the comments may be removed pursuant to this Policy.

PURPOSE

The City of Stockton uses a variety of social media platforms to inform the public about the latest news, activities, programs, projects, and events happening in the City and is intended to serve as a means of communication between the City and the public.

Social media, also known as social networking sites, is the term used to refer to activities that integrate technology, social interaction, and content sharing. It allows people to connect and organize through various means. The City has an overriding interest and expectation in deciding what is communicated on behalf of the City on social media sites. This policy establishes procedures for the use of social media technology for the City of Stockton, including:

- Defining appropriate social media tools, relevant laws, and policies.
- Information about the appropriate use of social networking sites; and
- Specific procedures for the upkeep and maintenance of each social media site.

DEFINITION

The term “social media” includes websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking through electronic communities and shared, online technologies, such as social networking sites, video sharing sites, sites that enable push notifications, wikis, blogs, and folksonomies (social tagging).

SCOPE

This policy applies to all City officials and employees, and is applicable to any social media platform that is used by the City of Stockton, including City internet technologies, as well as social networking and other technology sites that are the property of an outside host or company.

SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT

Before social media accounts, profiles, pages, or handles are created and activated, a Social Media Use Request/Registration form must be completed and submitted to the City’s Community Relations Officer for approval by the City Manager.

The Community Relations Officer is also responsible for maintaining a list of all social networking application domain names in use, the names of all employee administrators of these accounts, as well as the associated user identifications and passwords.

Departments requesting to use social media must assign a department designee as a site administrator and point of contact with the Community Relations Officer. The department designee will be responsible for reviewing subject matter on the social media site(s) for consistency with this policy and any administrative guidelines approved by the Community Relations Officer for as long as the technology remains in use and the department content is displayed.

The department’s director is ultimately responsible for the content and upkeep (including maintenance and monitoring) of any social media account, profile, page or handle the department creates.

If possible, keep personal accounts separate from City accounts. Use caution and adjust privacy settings to restrict personal information when posting on City accounts.

ACCEPTABLE USE

Employees must follow regulations and policies according to City Policy 14.02.010 Acceptable Use of Technology Resources. Some aspects of the policy that relate to employees’ use of social media/networking resources include the following:

- 1) City employees, contractors, business partners and all other third-parties are prohibited from making statements or comments intended to be perceived as official statements by the City, a Department, or any elected official without prior authorization from the Community Relations Officer.

- 2) The City uses multiple “online” channels to communicate to employees, business partners, other government organizations, media outlets, and residents. Some examples of these “online” channels include, but are not limited to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, Nextdoor, and any other site where text, documents, or multimedia files can be posted. As these sites are also often used by our employees and contractors for personal reasons, it is essential that all personal and official business postings be clearly differentiated.
- 3) For all City-related social media sites, community members accessing these platforms must be able to recognize that content published to a City-related account, profile, page and/or handle is produced and maintained by the City and not an external entity or individual.
- 4) All official City web sites and presences on social media sites are considered an extension of the City’s information networks and therefore must be maintained in accordance with City standards.

CONTENT

The City’s website will remain the City’s primary and most important internet presence.

- A) Whenever possible, content posted to the City’s social media platforms should first be made available on the City’s website.
- B) Whenever possible, content posted to the City’s social media sites should contain hyperlinks directing users to the City’s official website for in-depth information, forms, documents, or online services.

The most appropriate social networking use for the City will generally fall into three categories:

- 1) Disseminating time-sensitive information as quickly as possible.
- 2) Promoting City messages to the widest possible audience.
- 3) Targeting a particular demographic group or area of interest.

Be as accurate as possible. Link any sources to posted material. If unsure about the correctness of any information, check with a supervisor or the Community Relations Officer before posting. Do not reveal any information that may violate the City or an employee’s rights. For example, do not post a social security number, medical information, or financial information of any individual.

CONTENT STANDARDS

Every social media account, profile, page and/or handle must, at a minimum, adhere to the following content standards:

- 1) Include an introductory statement which clearly specifies its purpose and subject matter.
- 2) Clearly indicate that it is maintained by the City of Stockton, include the City of Stockton logo, and prominently display contact information for the City of Stockton.
- 3) Include the following notice in a prominent place:

“The views of the individuals posting comments do not necessarily represent the views of the City of Stockton.”

- 4) Embedded hyperlinks to external sites must be identified as such. Social media accounts, profile, page and/or handles must include the following disclaimer in a prominent place:

“The City of Stockton does not guarantee the authenticity, accuracy, appropriateness, or security of links to other websites or the subject matter of such sites.”

- 5) Each social media account, profile, page and/or handle must post the following notice in a prominent place, instructing visitors how to request public records:

“This site may not be routinely monitored and, therefore, any requests for public records must be forwarded as instructed on the City of Stockton website at www.stocktonca.gov/pio.”

- 6) Each social media account, profile, page and/or handle that allows public comment must contain the following notice in a prominent place:

“This site is intended to serve as a forum for communication between the public and the City of Stockton. Comments posted to this page will be monitored during regular business hours.”

- 7) Users and visitors to social media account, profile, page and/or handle shall be notified that the intended purpose of the site is to serve as a mechanism for communication between City departments and members of the public. Articles, content, and comments that contain any of the following forms of content are not allowed to be published to City of Stockton social media accounts, profiles, pages and/or handles:

- Comments not topically related to the particular social medium article being commented upon.
 - Comments in support of or opposition to political campaigns or ballot measures.
 - Profane language or content.
 - Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination based on race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status regarding public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability, or sexual orientation.
 - Sexual content or links to sexual content.
 - Solicitations of commerce, such as the promotion of professional services or business.
 - Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity.
 - Information that may compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems.
 - Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party.
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These guidelines must be displayed to users or made available by hyperlink. Any content removed based on these guidelines must be retained, including the time, date, and identity of the poster when available.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, the City is not obligated to take such actions, and the City disclaims any and all responsibility and liability for materials that the City deems inappropriate for posting which cannot be removed in an expeditious and otherwise timely manner.

EMPLOYEE CONDUCT

City employees and officials are expected to demonstrate the highest standards of personal integrity, honesty, and conduct in all activities to inspire public confidence and trust in City employees.

City employees must adhere to all laws, City ordinances, policies, and rules when participating in social media; including, but not limited to:

- City Administrative Directive 11.02 – Code of Ethics for Employees and City Officials
- City Policy 12.02.010 – Codes of Conduct
- City Policy 14.02.010 – Acceptable Use of Technology Resources

Any other regulation(s) governing the conduct of City employees apply equally to all social media postings. No user (City or otherwise) may post, mail, display, or otherwise transmit in any manner, any content, communication, or information that can be deemed offensive, a personal attack, or violates an established internal code, rule, or law.

City employees must never use City communication resources, or work time, for personal social media use. Do not use City email addresses to register for social media, blogs, or other online tools utilized for personal use.

COMMENTER GUIDELINES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

These guidelines apply to all persons, including City employees, who comment on social media.

- 1) Enrollment of commenters must be accompanied by valid contact information, including a name and email address. Social media validates email addresses based on login information and falsified email addresses will not be allowed. To the extent the City has access to and control over names, addresses, and valid email addresses provided, the City will keep the information confidential, unless disclosure is necessary or required to investigate any acts of misconduct, pursuant to court order or pursuant to any applicable federal, state, or local law.

- 2) In the case of internet technology that allows semi-anonymous posting, commenters may comment “semi-anonymously”; each commenter must provide valid contact information, but if the commenter chooses to have a comment posted anonymously, the commenter may do so.
- 3) In order to assure compliance with the Ralph M. Brown Act, California’s open meeting law, a member of a “legislative body” that is subject to the Brown Act (generally, the City Council and City Boards, Commissions and Committees) must identify themselves as such when posting a comment on social media. Moreover, a member of a legislative body must not post a comment if posting could result in a quorum of the legislative body discussing, deliberating, or acting on a topic within the subject matter jurisdiction of the legislative body.

Post in a prominent location on the social media site:

“A comment posted by a member of the public on this site is the opinion of the commentator or poster only, and the posting of a comment does not imply endorsement of, or agreement by, the City, nor do such comments necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of the City. The City neither guarantees the authenticity, accuracy, appropriateness nor security of external links, websites, or content linked thereto. Any content posted to this site is subject to public disclosure.”

POSTING RESTRICTIONS

The City reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is in violation of this policy or any other applicable law or policy. If a social media site allows comments from the public, it will allow only comments that are topically related to the subject matter of the technology and within the purpose or a limited public forum.

LEGAL ISSUES

All City of Stockton social networking accounts, profiles, pages and/or handles shall adhere to applicable state, federal, and local laws, regulations, and policies including all Information Technology and Records Management City policies and other applicable City policies.

The California Public Records Act, Freedom of Information Act, and e-discovery laws and policies apply to social media content and therefore, content must be able to be managed, stored, and retrieved to comply with these laws.

City of Stockton social networking accounts, profiles, pages and/or handles are subject to public records laws. Relevant City of Stockton and State of California records retention schedules apply to content published on social media accounts, profiles, pages and/or handles. Records required to be maintained pursuant to a relevant records 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 City platforms and tools.

- The department maintaining the social media account, profile, page and/or handle is responsible for providing records that facilitate responding to requests for public records.
- Such requests shall be handled in accordance with the City's Request for Public Records or Release of Information Policy 11.08.020. Content related to City business shall be maintained in an accessible format so that it may be produced in response to a request.
- Social media accounts, profiles, pages and/or handles should clearly state that any content posted or submitted for posting may be subject to public disclosure upon request.

Content shall be submitted for review prior to posting. Content that is deemed not suitable for posting by a City of Stockton social networking moderator because it is not topically related to the particular social networking site objective being commented upon, or is deemed prohibited content based on this policy, 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.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Community Relations Officer

- Review and update the social media policy.
- Maintain a list of all social media accounts, profiles, pages, and/or handles in use.
- Maintain the names of all employee administrators of accounts along with the associated user identifications and passwords.
- Removes permissions for employees who have access to administering or contributing to City social media sites, when notified by the Department Director that an employee with such permissions separates from the City's employment.

Department Site Administrator

- Responsible for reviewing content on the social media account, profile, page and/or handle for consistency with this policy and any administrative guidelines approved by the City Manager for as long as the technology remains in use and the department content is displayed.

City Employees

- Must adhere to all laws, City ordinances, policies, and rules when participating in social media.

Department Director

- Maintain, monitor, and oversee the content published via department social media accounts.
- Must notify the Community Relations Officer when an employee who is responsible for or who has access to posting information to social media accounts separates from the City.

RELEVANT AUTHORITY

California Government Code, Section 54950 – 54963 (Ralph M. Brown Act)

California Government Code, Sections 6250 - 6270.7 (California Public Records Act)

RELATED CITY POLICIES

Citywide Records Management Program <11.08.010>

Requests for Public Records or Release of File Information Policy <11.08.020>

Public Disclosure and Public Records Policy <11.08.040>

Communications Training <13.01.010>

Press and Media <13.01.030>

Emergency Communications <13.01.040>

Citizen Complaints/Inquiry Responses <13.02.010>

Web Site Policy <13.04.020>

Web Site Privacy Policy <13.04.030>

Website Sponsorship <13.06.010>

Corporate Partnership Policy <13.06.020>

City Logo and Manual of Graphic Standards <13.06.030>

RELATED CITY PROCEDURES

Communications During Emergencies <13.01.040.01>

Web Site Content <13.04.020.01>

Corporate Sponsorship <13.06.020.01>

RELATED FORMS, DOCUMENTS, OR LINKS

Social Media Use Request/Registration

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

To be determined.

UPDATE HISTORY

December 30, 2020