

CITY OF VICTORIA

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY AND PROCEDURE

PURPOSE

To address the changing way citizens communicate and obtain online information relating to the missions, programs, and goals of the City online, the City of Victoria participates in social media platforms to reach a broader audience. This policy sets guidelines for use of social media in an effort to ensure timely, accurate and appropriate use of those online platforms to deliver clear, concise and consistent messages on behalf of the City.

APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to all City of Victoria employees and the staff of the Office of Emergency Management.

POLICY

- A. All official City of Victoria social media platforms are considered an official extension of the City's information and communications network.
- B. All City requests to develop and maintain social media sites must receive approval from the Department Director, final approval from the City Communications Director, and comply with this policy.
- C. It is the responsibility of the Communications Director to oversee the City's official web presence via social media platforms. It is the responsibility of each Department Director of any City department approved to use social media, to appropriately coordinate the posts to their department's social media platforms.
- D. It is the responsibility of the Information Technology (IT) Department to administer archives (back-ups), security and monitoring measures that support this policy. State law requires that any social media platforms used by the City of Victoria must be archived by the City IT Department. If a social media platform cannot be archived, it cannot be used.
- E. The City will maintain official pages per each approved social media platform, which are to be created and maintained by the approved employees and their department directors, to be overseen by the City Communications Director and Communications staff, and technical support from the City Web Services Specialist in IT.
- F. Potential Uses for social media include, but are not limited to, information about city events, activities and issues. The use of social media use during emergencies is highly encouraged.

- G. The use of social media must comply with applicable federal, state, and city laws, regulations, and policies, as well as proper business etiquette. This includes adherence to established laws and policies regarding copyright, records retention, Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), U.S. Constitution First Amendment, privacy laws and information security policies established by the City of Victoria.
- H. Wherever possible, links should direct users back to the City’s official website for more information, forms, documents or online services. Links should rarely direct users to an external website
- I. Employee Code of Ethics. Employees representing the City via social media platforms must always conduct themselves, as representatives of the City of Victoria and use the highest ethical standards:
 - a. Respect the posts and opinions of our citizens;
 - b. Keep interactions factual and accurate;
 - c. Strive for transparency and openness in all social media use, never seek to “spin” or “embellish” information;
 - d. Employees will, if needed, provide links to credible sources of information to support interactions;
 - e. Employees will respect the established usage rules of the particular social media platform utilized (e.g. Facebook’s user policy); and
 - f. Employees will protect City’s privacy and internal permissions policies.
- J. Employee Code of Conduct
 - a. All employees posting on behalf of the City must have permission from their department director and must complete “Social Media Training Class” offered by the City Attorney and the City Communications Director.
 - b. Approved employees can use social media but must ensure each of the approved uses and sites adheres to the social media policy for appropriate use and criteria, consistent with the branding, goals and mission of the City of Victoria. If after 3-6 months, the social media account is not meeting the required criteria outlined below, it will be subject to be managed by Communications and/or deleted entirely, depending on its analytics.
 - i. Post Frequently & Timely, according to the platforms below:
 - 1. Facebook – 1 to 2 times a day
 - 2. Instagram – 1 time a day
 - 3. Twitter – 2 times a day
 - a. Each department’s analytics will show when its audience is most active on each account for determining optimal times to post.
 - ii. Do not repost the same information multiple times, but rather, change the image, video, text, and use hashtags.

1. Each platform will require a different content strategy based on its audiences and style of language. For assistance in optimizing your social media's content, contact Communications.
- iii. Consistently engage with public
 1. Respond to appropriate questions, comments and messages within a 24-48-hour timeframe. If the comment is not a question, consider whether not engaging/answering would be the best option. Get with Communications for a strategic message for those that are not so clear.
- iv. Include relevant images or videos
 1. Facebook posts with an *appealing image have an 87% interaction rate versus posts solely with text. *Appealing, meaning a high-quality graphic without any text on it. Communications has an image library available for stock images should a department need to request one.
- c. Live videos are viewed three times more than pre-recorded videos. Please work with Communications to setup all Facebook lives to remain consistent and appropriate to the audience. Employees should not commit a City or department to any action or initiative unless they have prior authority to do so.
- d. The City does not post on any external social media sites on behalf of the City of Victoria, other than approved City social media platforms. (The only exceptions to this rule are Department Directors and other City administrative officials.)
- e. Employees making comments on external social media sites must not represent or portray themselves as a City employee authorized to speak on behalf of the City. Simple sharing the City's content, "liking" all posts, or commenting on posts is completely allowed and encouraged. If an employee sees a comment that needs to be addressed, send the information to the department head and the Communications Director. This does not in any way prohibit employees from exercising their first amendment right to free speech.
- f. It is encouraged that City employees help share, like and engage with City-posted material to help increase our reach to the public. If employees choose to post information, photos and videos about the City of Victoria using their personal social media accounts,, they can do so, but should avoid any posting that might be interpreted as an official statement made on behalf of the City, on behalf of your department or that might compromise perceptions of your ability to do your job in an unbiased and professional manner. Please do not include your City title on your social media account. A disclaimer from Communications will be required to include in a location clearly visible to the public indicating that you are operating and speaking on your own and that any views or opinions expressed by you do not reflect the City of Victoria.
- g. Employees cannot use the City name, logo, images or iconography to promote a product, cause, or political party or candidate.

- K. Violation of these standards may result in the removal of the employee's authority to post from social media platforms. The City Attorney, Communications Director and IT retain the authority to remove social media information.
- L. If the individual department allows public comments in their social media outlet(s), then the City of Victoria reserves the right to remove any messages or postings for any reason, and if a clear disclaimer about required appropriate conduct is visible on the account, including but not limited to the following:
- a. Obscene comments;
 - b. Abusive, profane or insulting language
 - c. Attacks on individual character or to the personality of individuals
 - d. Materials violating copyrights, trademark right, or other intellectual property of any third party;
 - e. Comments unrelated to the topic of the forum or not within the scope of the responsibilities of the City of Victoria (or the specific departmental page);
 - f. Commercial promotions, endorsements of products, services, organizations or other entities, or spam; or
 - g. Political endorsements of parties, candidates or groups
 - h. Content that infringes on copyrights
 - i. Substantially repetitive content
 - j. Solicitation of funds
 - k. Speculative comments on any ongoing investigation
 - l. Content that implies, promotes or encourages illegal activity
 - m. Sexual content
 - n. Hyperlinks to material that is not directly related to the discussion.
 - o. A three-strike rule will go into effect upon three instances of an individual violating this policy.
 - i. Once violated, the individual should be given a prewritten response upon violation of the disclaimer/policy of participation on our social media sites about the reason for a comment being "hidden," and our required course of action taken – two more times, and they're no longer allowed to post to our site.
 - ii. If a second instance occurs, the individual once again will be given a prewritten response, more firm than the last, indicating his violation of the disclaimer/policy required to participate on our social media site, including an indication about his comments being "hidden," and our required course of action – one more time, and they're no longer allowed to post to our site.
 - iii. If the same individual violates our policy a third time, the individual will be given a conclusive response indicating that his third comment is being "hidden," and now is no longer allowed to post to our site (aka banned from participation).
- M. Facebook profanity filters are not allowed to be used without consent from and receipt of the appropriate disclaimer to display provided by the Communications Director, and proper setup by IT. If approved, these filters will come with a required disclaimer indicating the standards of participation and potential consequences, in a clearly visible

location to the public.

- N. All social media pages will ensure the disclaimer is visible and up to date. It will have verbiage around appropriate use of the forum, and potential consequences should they not abide by our requirements.

PROCEDURES

- A. Departments requesting to setup a brand-new official City social media account, must fill out the attached “Social Media Site Request” form detailing why it is necessary, the proposed social media solution, the resource requirements for such use, and what will deem its use successful.
- B. The City Communications Director will have final approval of all social media requests with a success plan provided for each, particularly during the probationary period.
- C. If approved, Department Directors and/or designee(s) will be responsible for creating, maintaining, and monitoring their departmental social media pages(s). The account will be put on a probationary period for at least 3 months to detect its success and use. A specific set of criteria will be enforced, and if not followed, could be at risk of losing the social media account altogether and its content rolling up under the main COV account. The criteria are outlined above.
- D. The City Communications Director and IT will maintain a list of all approved users, accounts and a link to all social media pages on the official www.victoriatx.org website. The City only can archive a limited amount of social media accounts at this time.
- E. Only City e-mail addresses or e-mails authorized in advance by the Information Technology (IT) Department will be posted on the site or used to create the web site accounts. Use of generic email addresses, for example, pio@victoriatx.org, is appropriate to create social media accounts.
- F. To the extent that design parameters of the host site allows, City of Victoria pages will conform to the following:
 - a. Be identified as an official City of Victoria posting;
 - b. Contain appropriate staff contact information;
 - c. Contain the City logo or Departmental logo;
 - d. Have a link to the appropriate page of the City’s website;
 - e. Include a disclaimer about our content policy of acceptable comments and the three-step rule; and
 - f. Specify that all content posted is subject to Texas Open Records laws.
- G. The Department Head and/or designees(s) will ensure the content of their departmental social media outlet(s) is not deleted or edited until backing up or archiving has been accomplished. One alternative to editing existing content that is published by City staff,

is to simply add text to the existing post that indicates a change or update has been made without making any changes to the existing content.

- H. The City Web Services Specialist will ensure that regular backups or archiving, are performed on all social media platforms.
- I. All content on any City of Victoria social media outlets is kept in accordance with the City's records retention policies.
- J. Delete a post. The following procedure will be used if a post on a social media site does not comply with the City social networking policy. No social media post will be deleted until these steps are followed:
 - a. The employee should contact a supervisor or director to make sure they agree that the post needs to be deleted.
 - b. Take a "screen capture" of the entire "conversation thread" and email it to legal@victoriatx.org. Call the Legal Office at 485-3520 to let them know you want to delete a post and have sent an email.
 - c. The City Attorney will determine if the post can be deleted.
 - d. If the post can be deleted, the City Attorney or his designee will contact the Web Web Services Specialist in IT at 485-3142
 - e. The Web Web Services Specialist must perform a "back up" of the social media page before a post can be deleted.
 - f. Web Services will delete the post after the page is archived and inform the requestor and the Communications Director once it has been deleted. No other employees are authorized to delete social media posts.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The Communications Director and Communications & Public Affairs Office, Department Directors, City Attorney and IT Applications Developer, will be responsible for enforcing this policy.

FORMS

See attached "Social Media Site Request" form.

Social Media Site Request

Name & Title: _____

Department: _____ Date: _____

Brief statement of business need: _____

Brief description of proposed social media platform: _____

Benefits of the social media site (improved productivity, timeliness of providing information, etc.): _____

Is citizen input available for this social media site, and if so, how will they be managed?

What measures will be used to determine the success of this social media platform?

What goals do you have for this social media site?

Names of approved departmental social media staff contributors:

Approvals:

Department Head Approval: _____

Public Information Approval: _____