



Policy

CITY OF SAN MARCOS

SUBJECT: Social Media Policy

WRITTEN: August 11, 2010

ADOPTED:

REVISED:

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to City of San Marcos employees who use social media for communication on behalf of the City. All staff and contractors using social media on behalf of the City must to adhere to this policy.

GOAL

The goal of the City's social media communication is to provide content to community members about City issues and services, leading to a more responsive government and a high level of public confidence.

BACKGROUND

"Social media" refers to media designed to disseminate content (information, images, audio, video) through social interaction, created using highly accessible and scalable Web-publishing techniques. The term includes "social network sites" that allow individuals and organizations to construct a profile and create and share content with others. Examples of social media include, but are not limited to:

- video-sharing sites such as YouTube
- blogs
- photo-sharing sites such as Flickr
- podcasting
- social networks such as Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn
- microblogging and short messaging such as Twitter
- wikis
- content sharing sites such as Delicious and Digg
- online discussion groups
- aggregation platforms such as FriendFeed and Streamy

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Use of social media for official City purposes raises legal issues that are unique to local government and generally do not affect private persons or entities. Therefore, all City use of

social media shall be in accordance with this policy and all applicable local, state and federal laws; policies of the City of San Marcos pertaining to the use of computers, electronic communications and respectful workplace; and all other applicable City of San Marcos policies and procedures.

Establishing a Social Media Presence

Use of social media shall support the objectives of the City and present the City in a positive and professional manner. The City of San Marcos communications officer is responsible for overall management of City social media presences and the strategies for engagement in them.

To ensure consistent and appropriate use, departments that wish to establish a presence in social media must contact the communication officer to coordinate their effort. The communications officer will review the request and ensure compliance with all terms of use for any social media site or service prior to approving and/or implementing the social media outreach.

All City social media sites shall post a link to the City of San Marcos' social media policy. The communications officer or his/her designee will monitor content on all City social media presences to ensure adherence to this policy. Violation of the terms may result in the removal of content or accounts from social media venues.

Posting Information

Only the City communications officer or his/her designee is authorized to post content on a social media venue on behalf of the City of San Marcos. Staff using social media on behalf of the City must be truthful at all times about who they are and their role with the City of San Marcos.

The tone of social media content is often informal, however staff is encouraged to adhere to the City's writing style guidelines whenever possible.

Linking to related City Web site pages is strongly encouraged whenever practical and appropriate.

The City must either own the copyright to or have a valid license (written permission) to use the content, including images, videos, sound records, etc., posted to its social media sites. The communications officer or his/her designee must verify the validity of all copyrights or licenses before content is posted.

Prohibited Content

All content posted by City staff to social media sites shall support the City's social media goals described in this policy. Staff is prohibited from posting content about:

- Actual or perceived threats to public health, safety or property (unless the person authorized to post content represents police or fire)
- Potentially controversial issues
- Actual or potential legal claims, lawsuits or other legal issues
- Personnel matters
- Budget planning and priorities
- Crime investigations and content about a crime scene
- Personal opinion on City issues or any other issue

- Political issues, including opinions about elected officials or candidates for elective office and issues appearing on an election ballot
- What a council member might think about an issue or speculation about a potential decision they might make
- Emergency situations (unless the person authorized to post content represents sheriff or fire)

City-posted content may not include content that promotes religious beliefs or philosophies, that is illegal under federal, state or local laws, or that is defamatory (i.e. slander or libel) or indecent, or that promotes hate, tobacco, alcohol, profanity, obscenity or pornography.

City staff may not make disparaging remarks about the City or any City staff or officials nor post content that would tend to discredit the City, its staff or officials.

Comment Policy

The primary purpose of the City of San Marcos' use of social media is to share content about City news and services. The City does not intend to use social media to create a public forum for the discussion of City issues or any other topic. While users of the City's social media sites may use the comment feature, the City reserves the right to remove any comment that is considered illegal under federal, state or local laws, or that is defamatory (i.e. slander or libel) or indecent (i.e. use of foul language), or that promotes hate, tobacco, alcohol, profanity, obscenity or pornography.

Images

Images posted by staff on social media may not include photographs or images of anyone who can be identified, other than the employee posting, without first obtaining a signed City of San Marcos release form. The City must either own the copyright or have a valid license to use images posted to social media sites.

Public Records Act

All content posted on social media sites may be subject to the California Public Records Act. Until a legal determination is made on this issue, staff shall limit content posted on social media sites to previously published documents or material that otherwise complies with City policies and procedures regarding document management and retention.

Account Set up and Settings

Official account names or user names on social media sites shall be established using "sanmarcocity" as the leading identifier. The department name, purpose or individual name may also be included or appended. City account profiles must contain a valid City of San Marcos e-mail address.

Profiles or posted content must never contain a personal e-mail address or any other personal information, except the name of the employee whose job duties include being available for contact by the public via a City e-mail account.

The design of City pages shall be consistent with the City's brand identity. The City logo shall be used as the account profile picture or background image. Any other image used on a City social

media site must be approved by the communications officer. Images used for backgrounds shall not tile or repeat and that feature, when applicable, shall be disabled.

All City social media sites shall enable all accessibility features available on the sites to make the content as accessible to everyone as possible. Privacy settings for any City social media account meant for public consumption must configure privacy settings on that account to be as open as possible within that network. If the social network or any of its features or applications has a setting for allowing complete and open public access, that feature setting must be used. If the social network site or application requires account administrative approval to join, everyone who requests access must be approved.

Official City of San Marcos User/Profile Names

All official social media user or profile names are to be listed on the City of San Marcos Web site to assist the public in identifying official City social media presences.

ACTION

This policy shall become effective immediately.

Prepared by:

Approved by:

Jenny Peterson, Communications Officer

Paul Malone, City Manager