

	PERSONNEL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES		SUBJECT: SOCIAL MEDIA
	NUMBER: GEN 9-1	REVISIONS:	EFFECTIVE DATE: APRIL 16, 2018
	SUPERCEDES:	APPROVED AND ADOPTED BY MAYOR AND COUNCIL:	
		A. Max Bacon, Mayor	Date

Policy Summary

This policy provides precautionary information to City employees and outlines prohibitions on the use and content of social media and networking sites. This policy also provides rules and protocol direction for established and future social media uses for the City of Smyrna. All City employees are subject to this policy. Moreover, all social media sites are subject to this policy, including: social networking sites, microblogging sites, photo and video sharing sites, wikis, blogs, forums, and news sites.

The guidelines and policies herein are administered by the Community Relations Director and the Human Resources Director. As is the case for the City of Smyrna’s website, the Community Relations Director (and/or approved administrators/users/contributors) will maintain official oversight of social media. Access to the sites (channels etc.) shall be granted to approved, decision-level approvers/administrators only. All channels (sites, etc.) must be monitored. Assignment of responsibility for monitoring may not be transferred without approval and documentation/tracking through Community Relations, the IT Department and the City Administrator.

I. Administrative/Staff Code of Conduct for Representing the City through Social Media

The following are guidelines that specify the rules and limitations of using social media outlets for posting information on behalf of the City of Smyrna.

- (1) The City of Smyrna’s website (www.SmyrnaGA.gov) will remain the City’s primary and predominant internet presence and conduit for City services and official conduct of and communication of City business, policies, and access to citizen services.
- (2) The following social media tools have been approved for use to represent the City: Facebook, Twitter, Nixel (Instagram and/or Pinterest in special circumstance/use, in accordance with policy).
 - a. All new social media tools must be approved for use by the Community Relations Director and/or City Administrator. No channels or platforms may be established without prior approval.
 - b. Additional YouTube or video/streaming channels (with the exception of the official web portal and delivery of City meetings) require approval by the Community Relations Director.
 - c. All sites/channels must be updated and maintained.
 - d. All logins and passwords must be registered with Information Systems and/or Community Relations. In most cases, administrative permissions must be established for Community Relations and/or Information Systems.
- (3) Only authorized individuals may publish content to the City’s webpage and/or social media sites.

- (4) The best, most appropriate uses of social media tools (though other applications may be identified at later date) fall into two categories:
 - a. As channel(s) for dissemination of time-sensitive information as quickly as possible (example: power outages or emergency situations).
 - b. As channel(s) which are meant to increase the City of Smyrna's ability to deliver/receive messages and appropriate content/information to the widest possible audience on a wide range of topics, all of citizen interest – adhering to the established Comments Policy. Though no individual departmental pages/accounts shall be operated, “issues-based” channels/sites/platforms, may be established for the purpose of communicating special group activities, beyond information of interest to our citizens (such as Smyrna Library Kids). Special consideration is given to public safety.
- (5) Whenever possible and appropriate, content posted to the City of Smyrna's social media sites will also be available on the City of Smyrna's main website. However, many items that are appropriate for general community release may not appear on the City of Smyrna website, as is the case with events not organized or managed by the City of Smyrna or information that is of interest to citizens such as education successes and/or events and activities offered by the Smyrna Public Safety Foundation (as example). Department heads and/or designated persons shall provide requested postings and content for communication to the Community Relations Department and do so within a timely manner with, when possible, sufficient lead time for proper vetting and communication practices to be applied.
- (6) Whenever possible, content posted to the City of Smyrna social media sites should contain links directing users back to the City of Smyrna's official website for in-depth information, forms, documents, or online services necessary to conduct business with the City (or to official City sanctioned/supported platforms/applications for similar purpose). Or, for posts that are not specific to City business/operations/services, a link (approved link) to (appropriate) outside information sources should be provided.
- (7) The following items are prohibited from articles, information, or comments pertaining to or representing the City (see Comments Policy).
 - a. Comments, content shares, or posts not topically related to the subject being discussed;
 - b. Comments, content shares, or posts in support of, or opposition to, political campaigns or ballot measures;
 - c. Comments, content shares, or posts that raise partisan questions, issues, or promote a political agenda or campaign;
 - d. Profane, lewd, or sexual content or links to any profane, lewd, or sexual content;
 - e. Content that fosters discrimination;
 - f. Solicitations of commerce;
 - g. Content that encourages or endorses illegal activity;
 - h. Content that infringes a legal ownership interest of any other party;
 - i. Information that may compromise the safety or security of, employees, the City or any of its systems.
- (8) Content that is posted must meet the following guidelines:
 - a. Postings will reflect the City's goals for using technology and enhance the City's communication efforts;
 - b. Content that is published shall be as consistent as possible;
 - c. All postings and sites must comply with the City's current conduct policy or policies as well as administrative rules as presented now and/or in the future;
 - d. Information posted should be relevant and timely;
 - e. All content, comments, and replies posted on the City's website and/or social media pages will be considered to be subject to Open Records laws or written/shared/posted with this in mind;
 - f. If a copyright is (or even if not readily) indicated on a video, photo, graphic, or other material, permission must be obtained before using said material;

- g. Images used on social media and/or the City website(s) must follow standards set forth in the official City of Smyrna Brand Guide;
 - h. The City reserves the right to restrict or remove any content posted to social media sites associated with the City or make use of platform tools and options to provide a safe and abuse-free environment;
 - i. If any employee who has administrative rights to the City's social media sites leaves the city, their administrative access to these sites will be terminated.
- (9) When commenting functionality is enabled, sites/channels must be monitored and moderation must meet all applicable policies and the intent of the standing Comments Policy. The City reserves the right to close/lock/limit commenting options on all social media sites during times when City offices are closed or it is otherwise not possible to monitor (such as overnight) if/when needed but this should be considered to be a last-resort option. Because transparency and the two-way, nature of social content sites should be maintained, restricting commenting should always be considered a last resort.
- (10) With the exception of public meetings, the use of live video is prohibited from being streamed on City channels/platforms.

II. Code of Conduct for Personal Use of Social Media for Employees

The City of Smyrna administration fully respects the legal rights of its employees. In general, what employees do on their personal time is, and remains, their affair. However, activities inside or outside of work that affect job performance, the performance of others, the business of the City, or public perception of the City are a proper focus for the City of Smyrna's social networking policy. The following points outline appropriate conduct with respect to the personal use of social media sites by City employees.

- (1) City employees are personally responsible for content they publish online, whether in a blog, forum, social networking site, or any other form of user-generated media or private messaging. Be mindful that anything that is published will be public for a long time, so it is important for employees to protect their privacy and take measures to understand each site's terms of service.
- (2) If employees publish content related to the City in their personal capacity, or on a personal website, use a disclaimer such as: "The postings on this site are my own and do not necessarily represent City positions, strategies, or opinions of the City of Smyrna."
- (3) Do not provide information regarding confidential, proprietary, or sensitive matters publicly, whether related to the City, City employees, or any other individuals or entities.
- (4) Do not cite or reference citizens, vendors, partners, or suppliers without their approval. When/if a reference is made, provide a link back to the source, if possible (tag or link).
- (5) Do not publish anything that might allow inferences to be drawn that would embarrass or damage a citizen, representative, or employee of the City of Smyrna. Note: This applies to private messaging and emails as well as social media.
- (6) Respect the audience. Do not use ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in the City of Smyrna workplace.
- (7) Show proper consideration for other's privacy and for topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory such as politics or religion, avoiding forceful engagement.
- (8) Respect copyright, fair use, and financial disclosure laws.
- (9) Do not use City logos or trademarks (insignia, badges and/or uniform) unless approved to do so. Sharing posts from official City sites (channels etc.) is encouraged but must be in the spirit of the original post or communication and not altered with ill intent or possible misunderstanding.
- (10) Employees should be aware of their association with the City of Smyrna in online social networks and groups. If an employee chooses to identify themselves as City employee, or make references that might otherwise identify their employer or position, it is important to ensure that all profiles and content material are consistent with the guidelines set forth in this document.

- (11) Do not pick fights. Be the first to correct mistakes if content is published that is not in accordance with the guidelines set forth herein.
- (12) Try to add value. Provide information and perspective that is worthwhile and positively contributes to the flow of information online.
- (13) In some circumstances, what employees post – just as what they do – may impact their employment status so avoid any behavior that would put the City in the position of making that judgment call.

Background/Discussion

Purpose

In order to address the fast-changing world of communication, the Internet, device capabilities, digital action options, as well as the way residents communicate and obtain information, the City of Smyrna uses social media and new media tools in order to reach and interact with citizens as well as a broader audience. The purpose of the policy and the following documentation is twofold:

- To address the way that City of Smyrna employees use social media, and social media networks (which include products and platforms for closed group communication such as neighborhood groups) to communicate with residents and distribute information about the City and/or activities or citizen and City concerns.
- To address the way that employees use social media in a personal capacity and to ensure that this use is in compliance with City policies (including governing laws to include those specific to or related to governing bodies), and appropriately represents and guides employees of the City of Smyrna.

The City of Smyrna is increasingly cultivating online discourse through social computing to empower City employees as professionals, innovators, and citizens. These individual interactions represent not mass communication but clusters of new and emerging communication/interactions. Through these interactions, one of the City's greatest assets – the experience of its employees – can be shared with stakeholders and the community. Moreover, improved communication with City operations and staff may be facilitated and/or enhanced through online collaboration and social media platforms. Consequently, it is very much in the City's interests to make the most of, and participate in, this realm of communication and exchange. It is essential that interaction and idea exchange through these avenues be conducted in a responsible and productive manner, with protocols and controls provided in and in the spirit of this policy.

As Smyrna aspires to delivering an innovation-based local government, the City of Smyrna believes in the importance of open, productive exchanges between citizens, City employees, and the general population. Thus, the benefit of becoming involved with ongoing technological advances is that it assists in service delivery, conflict management/resolution, and promotes collaboration, innovation and development, but requires protocols and controls – provided within and in the spirit of this policy.

Furthermore, as a legal and service-oriented local government, the City makes important contributions to the quality of life within its borders and encourages public dialogue on a broad range of issues. Because the City's business and activities provide services that extend beyond services such as sanitation and public safety, it is important for City employees to share information in responsible ways, to receive feedback from the community, and to participate in the unique social environment created by the collection of citizen voices as well as global and individual social networks.

Definitions

App: Device based or easily accessible limited function tool for a specific purpose. Generally understood to be an “application,” especially as downloaded by a user to a mobile device.

Blog: A self-published diary or commentary on a particular topic that may allow visitors to post responses, reactions, or comments. The term is short for “Web log”.

Page: The specific portion of a social media websites where content is displayed and managed by an individual or individuals with administrator rights.

Post: Content an individual shares on a social media site or the act of publishing content on a site.

Profile: Information that a user provides about himself or herself on a social networking site.

Social Media: A category of Internet-based resources that integrate user-generated content and user participation. It is also a two-way form of communication falling within transparency and interaction goals of the City of Smyrna. This includes, but is not limited to: social networking sites (Facebook, for example), microblogging sites (Twitter, for example.), photo- and video-sharing sites/platforms (Instagram, YouTube for example), wikis (Wikipedia), blogs, and news sites (constantly emerging and numerous, but not limited to those currently identified in this policy). For the purposes of this policy, email may be considered to fall within Speech and Social Media because of the ability to interchange and the likelihood of carry over into various platforms and media.

Speech: Expression or communication of thoughts or opinions in spoken words, in writing, by expressive conduct, symbolism, photographs, videotape, or related forms of communication. For the purposes of this policy, email may be considered to fall within Speech and Social Media because of the ability to interchange and the likelihood of carry over into various platforms and media.

Web 2.0: Term historically used to describe the second generation of the World Wide Web focused on sharable, user-generated content, rather than static web pages. The term has been used interchangeably with social media.

Wiki: Web page(s) that can be edited collaboratively.

Supplemental:

Background / Additional Instruction / Detailed Discussion of Policy and Position

The City of Smyrna supports open dialogue and the exchange of ideas.

The City regards blogs and other forms of online discourse as primarily a form of communication and relationship among individuals. When the City of Smyrna wishes to communicate publicly, whether to citizens or the general public, it has well established means to do so. Only those officially designated as approved administrators for the City’s social media networks have authorization to speak on behalf of the City.

With that being said, the City believes in dialogue among City employees and with citizens, clients, vendors, and members of the many communities with whom the City interacts. Such dialogue is inherent in the City’s dedication to innovation and the development of open citizen communication. The City believes that employees can both derive and provide important benefits from exchanges of perspective. However, it is necessary that all such exchanges be conducted in an approved and productive manner. This policy should not be considered as permission to act without guidance and approval from designated social media administrators. Since the nature of media and social media is ever changing, the City will adjust this policy as needed under the guidance of the Community Relations Department in conjunction with the Director of Information Systems, the City Administrator, and Human Resources, as warranted. Additional instruction and direction may be provided at any time regardless of the standing policy.

Among the things expected from City of Smyrna employees is the core value of “trust and personal responsibility in all relationships.” As a government, the City of Smyrna trusts – and expects – employees to exercise personal responsibility whenever they participate in social media. This includes not violating the trust of those with whom they are engaging. City of Smyrna employees should not use the

City's social media sites for covert marketing, campaigning, or unapproved public relations. If, and when, employees engage in advocacy for the City they must have authorization to do so (as identified in the policy) and should readily identify themselves and their position within the City.

Know your role and follow all guidelines

If employees have any confusion about whether they ought to publish or comment about something, be it online or to the media, it is vitally important that they consult with the Community Relations Director. Pay particular attention to issues of propriety and avoid negative comments or anything that could lead to misrepresentation, in general and/or generate negative response or a great level of upset. If confusion as to the propriety or appropriateness of a post persists, it is best to refrain from posting and seek the advice of Community Relations. Persons new to social media roles with the City of Smyrna must begin with regular interaction with and response to direction from Community Relations and department leadership.

Be open and honest

The City of Smyrna believes in transparency and honesty; anonymity is not an option. When discussing topics relevant to the City, employees must use their real name, be clear about who they are, and identify that they work for the City. Additionally, employees should use their own voice, speak in first person, and bring their personality to the forefront. However, when posting to official sites (channels etc.) posts and content should be written to inform, rather than reveal individual personality or attempt humor or expression that may be misunderstood. When posting as the City of Smyrna (such as on the City of Smyrna main Facebook page), attention to how information is presented from "the voice of the City." While participating in outside networks, if an employee has a vested interest in something they are discussing or posting, they should be the first to point it out. However, be smart about protecting privacy. Items published online will, likely, be available for an extended period of time, so it is important to consider the content of postings carefully and to also be judicious in all disclosures, claims and/or disclosing or offering of personal and/or business details.

Be thoughtful about how you present yourself

The lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred in online social networks. By identifying oneself as a City of Smyrna employee, connections are made with colleagues, managers, and citizens alike. Consequently, employees should ensure that content associated with them is consistent with their work at the City of Smyrna and accurately reflect approved and/or sanctioned roles or titles. (Note: Applies to email.) If employees have recently joined the City they should be sure to update the social profiles to reflect the guidelines put forth herein. Upon leaving employment, affiliation with the City of Smyrna in an active capacity must be removed from platforms, personal sites (channels etc.) and any other products generally associated with social media and web communication. Employees may not use City of Smyrna logos or trademarks as part of their posts unless approved by special review (through Community Relations and the City Administrator), or sharing posts from established City sites.

Use a disclaimer

Whenever an employee publishes content in any form of digital media, it is important that they are clear about the fact that what they say is representative of their own views and opinions and not necessarily the views and opinions of the City of Smyrna. For instance, in a personal blog, the following standard disclaimer should be prominently displayed: "The postings on this site are my own and do not necessarily represent my employer's positions, strategies, or opinions." If a site does not afford enough space to include this full disclaimer, employees should use their best judgment to position their comments appropriately.

Personal or satellite website should never be used, or allowed to be used, as a conduit for contacting the City of Smyrna or conducting business for or as the City of Smyrna. The same holds true of social media pages/platforms.

****Special Note****

The standard disclaimer does not, by itself, exempt officials from a special responsibility when participating in online environments. By virtue of their position, they must consider whether personal thoughts they publish, persons or opinions that they promote may be misunderstood as expressing City of Smyrna positions. These individuals must assume that other employees will read what is written. Public forums are not the place to communicate City policies or to express official City decisions.

Respect copyright and fair use laws

For City of Smyrna’s protection, as well as the protection of all employees, it is critical that proper respect is shown for the laws governing copyright and fair use of copyrighted material owned by others, including City of Smyrna’s own marks and materials. Employees should never quote more than short excerpts of someone else’s work and it is important to cite and/or link to the work in question.

Protecting confidential and proprietary information

Social computing blurs many of the traditional boundaries between internal and external communications. Employees must be thoughtful about what they publish – particularly on external platforms. They must make sure not to disclose or use City of Smyrna’s confidential or proprietary information or that of any other person or company in any online social computing platform. For example, ask permission before posting someone’s picture (or tagging) in a social network or publishing a conversation that was supposed to be private. This policy extends to conversations with media representatives.

City of Smyrna legal/personal issues and other sensitive subjects

Some topics relating to the City of Smyrna are sensitive and should never be discussed, even if an employee is expressing their own opinion and using a disclaimer. For example, employees must not comment on, or speculate about, the City of Smyrna’s future policies or actions, City Council decisions, unannounced strategies or prospects (including information about partnerships and pending contracts, potential acquisitions or related information, matter affecting the City and other similar subjects that could negatively affect the City of Smyrna. This applies to anyone, including conversations with financial analysts, the press, or other third parties (including friends). If an employee is unsure of the sensitivity of a particular subject, they should seek advice from the City Administrator, the Community Relations Director, Department Director or other approved administrators with decision-level access or jurisdiction before taking action (making comment) or simply refrain from the conversation. City of Smyrna policy is not to comment on or promote rumors in any way. This applies to social networks as well as verbal and other communication options such as email and blogs. Do not deny or affirm them (or suggest the same in subtle ways), speculate about them, or propagate them by participating in “what-if” type conversations.

Protect City of Smyrna citizens, business partners, and suppliers

City of Smyrna citizens, partners, or vendors should not be cited or obviously referenced without their approval and/or approved through a process that includes the City Administrator and/or Community Relations. Only official, approved partnering or co-branding is approved for content and/or shares. In the event of potential need for clarity and/or special circumstance (such as a business or citizen receiving a special recognition or award that is identified in media, for example), double check with Community Relations and/or the City Administrator if the posting is outside of the spirit of previously approved shares/posts, this policy and/or the standing Comments Policy. Externally, never identify a citizen, partner, vendor, or supplier without permission and never discuss confidential details of any engagement. Employees should be sensitive to their audience and consider who will see their content. Explicit permission for the use of a name is needed in virtually all instances. Think carefully about any content that will be published and get the appropriate permission when necessary.

Employees should be thoughtful about the types of information and the subjects that they share if it may inadvertently lead others to guess at confidential identities. Furthermore, comments in email, personal websites, or online social networks are not the place to conduct confidential business with a citizen, a

partner, a vendor, or a supplier. Remember that all communication related to work might be subject to Open Records laws, regardless of who owns the platform/device. As laws regarding access, and what is allowable, between personal devices and City business is subject to change, it is best to avoid conducting business on personal devices unless it is agreeable to make all personal data on that device available as/when requested by the City (refer to standing official policy regarding use of personal devices).

Respect audiences and coworkers

Remember that the City of Smyrna is a high-profile organization whose employees and citizens reflect a diverse set of customs, values, and points of view. Employees should not be afraid to be themselves, but they should do so respectfully. This not only includes the obvious – no ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, etc.– but also proper consideration of privacy and topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory, such as politics and religion. Furthermore, employees should be thoughtful when using tools hosted outside of the City’s Intranet environment to communicate among fellow employees about the City or City related matters. Additionally, while it is fine for City employees to disagree, it is not acceptable to use an external blog or social media website to air differences or take other actions based on differences.

Add value

City employees are the best representation of the City of Smyrna and its citizens and must be mindful and especially careful of what an employee publishes online reflects upon City reputation and brand. Communication networks that are hosted on City of Smyrna owned domains, such as employee Intranet as well as all other employed platforms (electronic or otherwise), should be used in a way that adds value to City of Smyrna business. Something adds value if: it helps employees, citizens, or partners do their jobs and solve problems; it helps to improve knowledge or skills; it contributes directly or indirectly to the improvement of City of Smyrna’s vision, service delivery, processes, and policies; it builds a sense of community; and/or it helps promote the City’s quality of life focus for citizens. It is best for employees to stay within their sphere of expertise and when they are presenting something as fact, they are to ensure that it is a fact. Though not directly business related, background information that an employee chooses to share may be useful in establishing a relationship with readers but it is entirely an employee’s choice whether they want to share such information (in a personal capacity and on personal platforms, of course). Overall, employees must remember that what they post should add value, and they should take a mindful and productive approach.

Do not pick fights

If an employee sees misrepresentations made about the City of Smyrna, by media, analysts, or others (bloggers, etc.) they may (with permission and guidance) add comments on the original discussion to point out the inaccuracy. It is expected that all employees will seek prior approval from the Community Relations Director, and/or the City Administrator or other authorized decision-level administrators, before taking such action. When pointing out an inaccuracy, always do so with respect. Employees should identify their affiliation with the City of Smyrna and stick to the facts of the matter only. If employees are going to speak about a citizen they must ensure that what is being said is factual and does not disparage the citizen. It is essential to avoid unproductive arguments. Brawls may earn traffic but they will also negatively impact the employee’s reputation, as well as the City’s reputation, in the process. Employees should not try to settle scores or goad agitators or others into debates.

Be the first to respond to personal mistakes

If an employee makes an error, they are expected to be upfront about their mistake and correct it as quickly as possible. This can help to mitigate negative consequences and restore trust between the employee and their coworkers or the citizenry. If an employee modifies any content that was previously posted, they should make it clear that they have done so (if a platform does not provide public notation of edits or corrections). General attentiveness to and correction of typos and other texted-based errors is expected without flourish.

Adopt a warm and approachable tone

Remember that most of the City of Smyrna's image is developed through the public's interaction with City employees. Consequently, it is in the best interests of the City and all of its employees for that image to be a positive one. An employee's tone, openness, and approachability can help to facilitate that image just as it can assist with developing a personal reputation.

Use good judgment

If an employee is about to publish or respond to something that makes them even the slightest bit uncomfortable, they are encouraged to review the above suggestions and consider why that is and refrain from action. If uncertainty about the potential posts persists, and topic is related to the City of Smyrna, employees are encouraged to discuss the matter with Community Relations and/or the City Administrator (with notification to and/or through their manager/department head, who should be prepared to discuss the concern with the Community Relations Director).