

*Social Media Administrative Policy
Chapter 7, Records and Information
Policy 7-5
Effective Date: June 7, 2023*

PURPOSE:

- To establish basic guidelines, standards and instructions for the City of Kirkland ("City") to use social media for the purpose of sharing time-sensitive and emergency information; enhancing customer service; providing information about City programs, services, projects, issues, events and activities; and marketing City goals and missions within an overall communications strategy.
- To establish guidelines for City social media sites in order to ensure consistency, accuracy, value to the community, and compliance with State and Federal laws.
- To prohibit inappropriate use.

GOAL:

To establish and document the acceptable and appropriate use of social media technology tools for City-related business purposes, as well as the management, retention, and disposition of the associated public records.

SCOPE:

This policy applies to all City employees using social media sites for City-related business.

DEFINITIONS:

- A. **Social Media:** the use by the City of third party hosted online technologies that facilitate social interaction and dialogue and provide the City with alternative ways to share information with a broader audience. Social Media includes social networking sites like Facebook, LinkedIn, or Instagram, micro-blogging tools such as Twitter, and audio-visual networking sites such as YouTube.
- B. **Site Manager:** a designated City contact who creates a department-specific Social Media site and is responsible for posting information and monitoring comments on that site.
- C. **Site Contributor:** a designated City contact who posts information and monitors comments under the direction of a Site Manager.
- D. **Post:** an article or short statement or other content posted to a City social media site by a Site Manager or Site Contributor.
- E. **Commenter:** a member of the public who submits a comment for posting in response to the content of a particular City post or Social Media content.

- F. ***Comment:*** a response to a City post or Social Media content submitted by a commenter or Site Contributor.
- G. ***Subscriber:*** a member of the public who subscribes to a Social Media site to receive regular updates (such as "followers" in Twitter and "fans" in Facebook).
- H. ***External Social Media Policy:*** a policy that dictates standards and guidance for use of City Social Media sites by the public.

REFERENCES:

The following City of Kirkland Administrative Policies should be referenced for further clarification:

- [Administrative Policy 7-1](#): Technology Resource Usage
- [Administrative Policy 7-2](#): Web Page Linking Records and Communication
- [Administrative Policy 7-4](#): Technology Security Policy
 - GS 2010-007 Communications Non-Executive
 - Washington Public Records Act, Chapter [42.56 RCW](#)
 - Washington Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter [42.30 RCW](#)
 - [RCW 42.17A.555](#), prohibited use of public office or agency facilities in campaigns
 - Children's Online Privacy Protection Act

POLICY:

The following procedures and standards will be used by all departments using Social Media sites.

GUIDELINES:

I. Creating Department Social Media Sites

- A. Prior to creating a Social Media site, departments should consider the need and value of a department- or program-dedicated site versus relying on other City communication channels to disperse department or program information. Since Social Media sites lose the interest of their audiences when not updated regularly, department staff should consider the time and effort it will take to maintain a site so that visitors continue to find value over time. In general, Social Media sites should be updated at a minimum of once per week.
- B. Departments must obtain approval from the Communications Program Manager prior to creating a Social Media site for City business.
- C. Once approval is received from the Communications Program Manager, Information Technology will create the Social Media site in order to help ensure

appropriate information is posted, archiving software is integrated (as relevant), and to help maintain consistency with other Social Media sites.

- D. Information Technology shall maintain a list of all Social Media sites that are operating, including logins and passwords. The Communications Program Manager should be an administrator on all social media sites. Department staff must inform Information Technology if they make changes to logins and passwords or intend to stop operating their Social Media site. Information Technology will make this information accessible to the Communications Program Manager.
- E. The Department director must appoint a specific staff member(s) to maintain and monitor the Social Media site (i.e. Site Manager(s)). Directors are responsible for ensuring their staff follows the procedures set forth in this policy.
- F. Site Managers are responsible for regularly posting information, monitoring comments, removing any prohibited content pursuant to Section IV, Prohibited Content, and saving content required under the Public Records Act.
- G. Social Media sites will be reviewed on an ongoing basis and audited approximately every six months by the Communications Program Manager to ensure that they are maintained in compliance with procedures set forth in this policy. At any time that a site is not being managed and monitored appropriately, the Communications Program Manager may take action, including shutting down the site, even if temporarily.
- H. A Comment Policy Notice must be displayed on City Social Media sites that allow comments indicating the discussion is moderated and inappropriate content will be removed. The City's External Social Media Policy must be linked on all Social Media sites.

II. Information Posted on Social Media Sites

City-Posted Information

- A. The most appropriate uses of Social Media sites are:
 - 1) for time- sensitive and emergency information; and
 - 2) as a communications/promotional/marketing tool which increases the City's ability to broadcast public service messages to the widest possible audience.
- B. Site managers must maintain accurate City information on Social Media sites by frequently reviewing and updating it as necessary and appropriate.

- C. In order to help ensure appropriate retention of public records under the Public Records Act, whenever possible, content posted by the City departments on City Social Media sites should not be original source content (i.e. content that has not been created anywhere else but instead only exists on the Social Media site), but rather a secondary copy of information that is posted either on the City website or contained in an electronic record or a hard copy by the City.
- D. Wherever possible, a link to the City's website, should be included in Social Media posts, directing users back to the City of Kirkland website for in-depth information on the posted content.
- E. Content posted to Social Media sites should comply with policies set forth in this policy as well as any applicable City Personnel Policies and Procedures.
- F. Councilmembers and other officials and appointed volunteers shall avoid participating in online discussions where their participation could constitute action or a meeting without required notice under the Open Public Meetings Act.

Information Posted by Outside Individuals

- A. For all Social Media sites that allow posts, such sites are limited public forums, moderated by City staff to ensure content posted by outside users is allowable.
- B. Prohibited content is described in Section IV.
- C. Prohibited content should be hidden or deleted by City staff promptly upon discovery.
- D. If comments are allowed and when the platform allows it, City staff will turn off commenting capabilities by the public for City posts when the number of comments reaches or surpasses 40. City staff will also periodically turn off commenting capabilities by the public if the post has been public for more than two weeks. This will allow for City staff to review all comments according to this policy in a timely manner. When comments have been turned off, the City shall provide a link to a relevant City webpage or other means by which the community can submit questions or comments about the topic of the post. City posts, along with associated public comments, for specific events may be removed from the social media site after the event at the discretion of the City Manager or designee.

III. Retention of Posted Information

- A. Information posted on the Social Media sites is subject to the Public Records Act and associated retention schedule. Original source content posted on Social Media sites must be retained for three years from the date of posting. See GS 2010-007 Communications Non-Executive.
- B. Subscriber information and comments posted by outside users on Social Media sites, including those that are prohibited and hidden or removed by staff, must be retained. In addition, when inappropriate content is hidden or removed, the record must include the name of the City staff member who removed the content and the date and time the content was removed. Records will be maintained using the best technology available in order to capture comprehensive data about what has been posted on social media sites. Instructions to site managers and contributors will be detailed in guidelines provided by the Communications Program Manager.

IV. Prohibited Content

The following is limited or prohibited on Social Media sites and may be hidden or deleted:

- A. Comments not topically related to the particular post being commented upon;
- B. Posts and comments that promote or advertise commercial services, entities or products except as stipulated in City marketing plans and determined by the City to support public goals such as economic development;
- C. Comments for the purpose of assisting a campaign for election of any person to any office or for the promotion of or opposition to any ballot proposition as prohibited by [RCW 42.17A.555](#);
- D. Posts and comments that include threatening language or defamation;
- E. Obscene or sexual content or links to obscene or sexual content;
- F. Illegal activity or encouragement of illegal activity;
- G. Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems;
- H. Comments from children under 13 pursuant to the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act. By posting on a City social media site, users acknowledge that they are at least 13 years old. Those 12 years old or younger may e-mail the City

instead; or

- I. Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party.

Questions regarding prohibited content should be directed to the Communications Manager.