

City of West St. Paul, Minnesota Social Media Policy

Purpose

Social media in government serves two primary functions: to communicate and deliver messages directly to citizens and to encourage citizen involvement, interaction and feedback. This policy seeks to ensure the proper use of the City of West St. Paul’s social media sites by its representatives.

The City of West St. Paul aims to maintain a positive and informative social media presence. City employees and agents have the responsibility to use the City’s social media resources in an efficient, effective, ethical and lawful manner pursuant to all existing City and departmental policies. This policy also provides guidelines and standards for City employees and agents regarding the use of social media for communication with the public, the media, businesses and organizations.

Definition

Social media are internet and mobile-based applications, websites and functions, other than email, for sharing, distributing and discussing information, where users can post photos, videos, comments or links to other information to create content on any topic.

As used in this policy “social media” includes, but is not limited to:

- Social networking sites and mobile applications such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Nextdoor, etc.
- Blogs, Vlogs
- News and aggregate sites such as Reddit and BuzzFeed
- Video and photo sharing sites such as YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, Imgur and TikTok
- Wikis, or shared encyclopedias such as Wikipedia
- An ever emerging list of new web-based platforms generally regarded as social media or having many of the same functions as those listed above

As used in this policy, “employees and agents” includes all City representatives, including

- Employees; including full-time, part-time, seasonal and temporary employees, volunteers and interns
- Independent contractors
- Elected or appointed officials
- Appointed or elected board or commission members

As used in this policy, “social media manager” includes any employee or agent with administrative access to any of the City’s social media accounts.

As used in this policy, the terms “the City” and “City” refer to the City of West St. Paul.

Policy

The City of West St. Paul will determine, at its discretion, how its social media accounts and pages are designed, implemented and managed as part of its overall communication and information sharing strategy.

City of West St. Paul social media accounts are considered a City asset and administrator access to these accounts must be securely administered in accordance with the City’s Computer Use Policy. The City reserves the right to modify, deactivate or shut down any of its social media sites or accounts at any time, for any reason, without notice.

Scope

This policy applies to any existing or proposed social media websites sponsored, established, registered, or authorized by the City of West St. Paul. The City’s social media accounts are exclusively the following:

1. City of West St. Paul Facebook account at facebook.com/cityofwsp.
2. City of West St. Paul Twitter account at twitter.com/WestStPaul.
3. West St. Paul Police Department Facebook account at facebook.com/WestStPaulPD.
4. West St. Paul Police Department Twitter account at twitter.com/WestStPaulPD.
5. City of West St. Paul Vimeo account at vimeo.com/weststpaul

The City does not create, collect, disseminate, or regulate use of any other social media accounts, including the personal accounts of its elected officials and staff. Questions regarding the scope of this policy should be directed to the Marketing and Communications Manager.

Rules of Use

City social media managers are responsible for managing and maintaining social media accounts or websites.

Employees, facilities or departments wishing to establish a new social media presence must, with the approval of their Department Head, submit a written request to, and receive written approval from, the Marketing and Communications Manager prior to establishing any new social media presence. All approved sites will be clearly marked as belonging to the City of West St. Paul and will contain a link to the official City website (www.wspmn.gov). No one may establish social media accounts, applications or websites on behalf of the City unless authorized in accordance with this policy.

All City social media accounts must conspicuously display or link to a public notice that informs the public of the purpose of the social media presence and the terms one agrees to in accessing, using, or posting to the City's social media page. [Insert link to notice]

However, the West St. Paul Police Department (WSPPD) may create and maintain Social Media profiles for investigative purposes without having to obtain approval from the Marketing and Communications Manager, but must have approval from the Administrative Lieutenant. Under those circumstances, the WSPPD must maintain a list of usernames and passwords for all social media accounts and profiles with unique usernames and passwords or otherwise be responsible for the usernames and passwords for the sites. The WSPPD must ensure appropriate records access for data requests, subpoenas, and court orders. The WSPPD must ensure records retention of the data on the sites; and the WSPPD must ensure continuity in the sites when there is a change of administrator.

To ensure accurate records keeping and a consistent message, departments or employees wishing to add or remove social media manager(s) to any of the City's social media accounts must receive written approval from the Marketing and Communications Manager. All employees acting as social media managers will do so with permission from their department head.

Administration of all social media must comply with applicable laws, regulations, and policies.

City social media accounts covered by this policy are City assets and must not be used by social media managers for private or personal purposes.

No City social media shall be used by the City or any employee or agent to disclose information classified by the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act as confidential, private, nonpublic, or protected nonpublic. If there is any question as to whether information is classified by the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, contact the Human Resource Director or City Clerk.

Outside of situations of disaster, no City social media account will be used for transactions of city business. In the event a user initiates a request, application, or question through social media that affects city business or requires another city policy or process to be followed, follow up with that user by phone, email, or other channels. If comments are allowed, in the event of a question of general interest, a response may be given in comments or a subsequent post may be created to include the information.

Be aware that content will reflect not only on the writer but also on the City of West St. Paul as a whole, including elected officials and other City employees and agents. Make sure information is accurate and free of grammatical errors.

All City social media managers shall:

- Adhere to all City personnel and computer use policies
- Use only appropriate language
- Not provide private, confidential, or classified information, including names, or using such material as part of any content added to a site

- Not provide information related to pending decisions that would compromise negotiations
- Be aware that all content added to a site is subject to open records/right to know laws and discovery in legal cases
- Always keep in mind the appropriateness of content
- Comply with all existing policies established by the City

If and when the City's social media invites comments from the public, the City intends to create a limited public forum for discussion of matters related to City government and services. Comments, posts or media posted by members of the public will not be edited; however, they may be removed or denied. The following are examples of content that may be denied, hidden or removed by City social media managers before or after being published:

- Obscene or pornographic content
- Direct threats to persons or property
- Material asserted to violate the intellectual property of another person
- Material unrelated to City government or services
- Private, personal information about a person published without his/her consent
- Information that compromises a public safety security system
- Statutorily private, confidential, or nonpublic data
- Commercial promotions or spam
- Hyperlinks to material that falls into one of the foregoing categories

Where moderation of comments prior to posting is an available option, comments from the public may be moderated and approved or denied by the City based on the above criteria. Where moderation prior to posting is not an option or not used, sites will be regularly monitored and reviewed by City social media managers.

Before deleting any content that falls into one of the foregoing categories, the deleting social media manager will take a screenshot of the relevant content and email it to the Marketing and Communications Manager. Please contact the Marketing and Communications Manager with questions regarding this process.

A member of the public whose comment is removed may appeal the removal of the comment and seek reconsideration of its removal by contacting the City in writing and explaining how the comment does not fall into one of the categories for removal. A written response should be provided as soon as reasonably possible.

A member of the public who disputes the legality of any portion of this policy may dispute the particular portion in writing. The City should acknowledge the claim promptly and, upon consultation of the City Attorney, respond to the claim concerning legality of the policy portion as soon as reasonably possible under the circumstances.

Data Ownership and Retention

All communications or messages within social media accounts covered by this policy composed, sent, or received on City or personal equipment are the property of the City and will be subject to the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act. This law classifies certain information as available to the public upon request.

Policy Violations

Violations of this policy may subject the employee or agent to coaching or disciplinary action up to and including discharge from employment.

Private Accounts

This policy does not apply to personal social media accounts of the City's elected officials or employees. The City is not responsible for monitoring or regulating private accounts. Elected officials and employees should be mindful, however, that it is possible a private account might be deemed a public forum for First Amendment activity if the account is used as a platform to discuss matters of public interest related to City government or services.

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