

City of Philadelphia's Social Media Policy

Purpose: The City of Philadelphia encourages all departments, offices, employees and public officials to consider how social media can play a role in enhancing communication, collaboration, and information exchange with the residents of Philadelphia. To ensure a consistent and positive approach citywide the following policy regards personal and official use of social media, effective April 1, 2017.

I. Rules for Personal Use of Social Media

The following are rules based on existing policies that all employees must also adhere to when using social media:

- A. City employees must use social media in a manner that complies with federal, state, and local laws and regulations, and with City and agency policies.
- B. City employees cannot publish social media posts containing information that has been classified as confidential and could compromise the safety and security of the City, its residents, or guests. *Refer to the City's existing Information Security Policy - Information Classification.*
- C. City employees cannot use social media accounts in a way that violates political activity rules. *Refer to the Board of Ethics' [Regulation No. 8](#)*
- D. City employees have no right to privacy with respect to their personal social media accounts accessed by means of City equipment, or on City time. *Refer to the City's existing Information Security Policy - Acceptable Use.* In addition, public records laws may bring this type of use under scrutiny by the media and public. *Refer to the City's [Open Records Policy](#).*

II. Guidelines for Personal Use of Social Media

While the above are rules and currently existing policies, we also have a number of guidelines that employees may find helpful. While we respect your right to use your social media accounts in ways that are useful to you, these best practices will ensure your personal use of social media does not interfere with your work as an employee of the City. As an employee of City taxpayers, we hope you are proud of your role serving the people of Philadelphia. Because personal use of social media may reflect on the City, or appear to be on behalf of the City, we offer the following guidelines:

- A. On personal social media accounts, the City encourages employees to share the work that they and fellow public servants do to make Philadelphia a better place.
- B. Whether or not your profile says that you work for the City, your audience may think content you share represents City policies. As such, carefully consider the appropriateness of your content before posting it. Furthermore, when posting



- personal opinions online, do not imply that your personal views, conclusions, statements, or other social media content are an official communication of the City.
- C. The City considers the activities and uses of social media listed below to be unacceptable. Therefore, it is highly recommended that employees abstain from engaging in any of them on their social media accounts. Do not use social media in a manner that:
 - i. Violates the copyright, fair use, trademark, or other intellectual property rights of any person or entity;
 - ii. Includes threats, profanity, personal attacks or insults, or material that could be considered to be harassing, defamatory, fraudulent, abusive, offensive, or discriminatory;
 - iii. Contains hate speech directed at an individual or group's race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, ethnicity, age, religion, medical condition, or disability; and
 - iv. Displays sexually explicit or violent images, cartoons, jokes, messages, or other material.
 - D. Exercising common sense when employing social media for professional or personal purposes helps to assure that their great potential is fully realized without inadvertently compromising professional, legal, or ethical standards.
 - E. The misconduct described above may result in discipline. However, the City does not, and will not pursue discipline for social media content that constitutes protected speech and/or "concerted activity" for the purpose of collective bargaining, mutual aid, or protection.

III. Personal Accounts of Public City Officials

Many senior members of the administration or public facing employees, like Department Heads, public information officers, or community organizers, are likely to use social media as an important tool to communicate administration policies and news. As such, we've created guidelines to further enhance your use of social media:

- A. The City encourages the use of appropriate social media technologies to strengthen communication, collaboration, and information exchange in support of its mission.
- B. All of the guidelines in Sections I and II apply here, but as an employee whose job requires interfacing with the public, we expect you to hold yourself to higher standards on social media as you do elsewhere.
- C. Those with leadership responsibilities, by virtue of their position, must consider whether personal thoughts they publish, even in clearly personal venues, may be misunderstood as expressing City positions.



- D. In the same way that you engage with constituents and highlight your department's accomplishments at events, we encourage informative social media posting.

IV. Rules for Creating & Managing Official City Accounts

The following rules apply to all official city accounts:

- A. **Official City Accounts:** All new Official City Accounts must be approved by the Department Head and the City's Digital Director.
- B. **Verified Handle or Page:** All Official City Accounts must be verified. The Digital Director will assist with this process once analytics metrics are met.
- C. **Analytics Reporting:** Each department must provide a monthly analytics report for all Official City Accounts to the City's Digital Director.
- D. **Archiving:** It is the responsibility of each department to determine if social media posts need to be archived.
- E. **Security:** It is the responsibility of each department to create a secure password management system.
- F. **Monthly Social Media Meeting:** To encourage collaboration, consistent messaging, and the use of best practices, there is a monthly Digital meeting that a representative from each department employing social media is required to attend.
- G. All Official City Accounts must reflect the mission and values of the City and its departments.
- H. The Digital Director reserves the right to close accounts that do not reflect the mission of the City.

V. Public Interaction with Official City Accounts

To ensure the City of Philadelphia can communicate in an effective and meaningful way with all of its citizens, the following guidelines and rules apply for people who interact on or with Official City Accounts:

- A. Comments may be archived.
- B. The following behavior may result in comments being deleted and frequent offenders being banned from the page:
 - i. Off-topic comments
 - ii. Violation of the copyright, trademark, or other intellectual property rights of any person or entity.
 - iii. Vulgar language, ethnic slurs, material that is harassing, defamatory, fraudulent or discriminatory.

- iv. Displays sexually explicit images, cartoons, jokes, messages, or other offensive material.

VI. Definitions

- A. Social Media: Online sources that allow people to create and exchange user-generated content with others via some form of online or cellular network platform. Information may include, but is not limited to, text, photographs, video, audio, and other multimedia files. Examples include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, YouTube, Instagram, Periscope and Pinterest.
- B. User-Generated Content: User-created or assembled text, comments, ratings, photos, videos, etc. posted on a Social Media site or with a Social Media tool and shared with others.
- C. Post (noun): Content an individual shares on a social media site.
- D. Post (verb): The act of publishing content on a site.
- E. City Social Media Account or Official City Account: Any official social media channel that is used to communicate with the public by a City department, office, agency, board or commission.
- F. Speech: Expression or communication of thoughts or opinions in spoken words, in writing, by expressive conduct, symbolism, photographs, videotape, or related forms of communication.
- G. General Guidelines: Sections I and II of this Policy which must be followed for Official City social media accounts.
- H. Internal Policy: This Policy applies to all City departments, offices, agencies, boards, and commissions. If you'd like to create a department-specific policy, reach out to the City's Digital Director to create one together.
- I. Mission: The mission of the City of Philadelphia is to deliver efficient, effective services to the people of Philadelphia in every neighborhood.
- J. Official capacity: An individual speaking on behalf of and representing the City. You are acting in an official capacity when your job description or supervisor designates this activity as part of your official duties.
- K. Verified Handle or Page: An Official City Account that has been approved by the Digital Director, Department Head, and received a blue "check" mark from the social media channel to verify its authenticity.
- L. Analytics Reporting: A monthly report of key metrics identified by the Digital Director and submitted for each social media account to the Digital Director.
- M. Archiving: Record retention of social media posts.