



POLICY ON OFFICIAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

City of Santa Barbara Administrative Policy Issued by:
City Administrator

Date: 7/16/2012

Page 1 of 5

Purpose

Provide guidelines to establish and use social media sites to communicate with the public about City issues, programs, and activities, while protecting the integrity of the content that is attributed to the City organization.

Definitions

- **Social Media Sites:** Internet-based tools for sharing and discussing information with networks of individuals and groups. The policy applies to City-administered sites created and maintained by the City and other sites where the City can post information without hosting responsibility. Examples of social media sites include the following: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Nixle, LinkedIn, Flickr, NextDoor, RSS Feeds, Wikis, and blogs.
- **Posts or Postings:** Information, media releases, articles, photos, videos or any other form of communication posted by City employees on a social media site as part of official City communication efforts.

Site Setup

1. **Relationship to City Website:** The City's official website at SantaBarbaraCA.gov will remain the City's primary means of Internet communication. Wherever possible, social media sites shall link back to the City's official website for forms, documents, media releases, online services and other information necessary to conduct business with the City.

Links to the social media sites shall be included on central and department website pages. Wherever possible, social media toolbars may be used in newsletters, videos, and other media to help the public share information with others.

2. **Site Approval:** The creation of new social media sites must be approved by the program manager and the City Administrator's Office. To obtain approval for a new City-administered social media site, staff must demonstrate the following:
 - a. City website pages are current and updated frequently;
 - b. Media releases are issued in a timely manner and citywide communication tools, such as the City News in Brief, are used regularly;
 - c. Staff time to monitor, update, and respond to comments on the social media site is in balance with other work priorities;
 - d. Proposed strategy for the particular use of social media is acceptable based on target audience, information, and level of interaction;



POLICY ON OFFICIAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

City of Santa Barbara Administrative Policy Issued by:
City Administrator

Date: 7/16/2012

Page 2 of 5

- e. Program manager and employee(s) identified as responsible for maintaining the site; and
- f. Plan exists to track the use and return on investment of the social media site.

A listing of approved sites will be maintained in the City Administrator's Office and will help the City verify and respond to reports of fraudulent City sites.

Staff can post information on social media sites not administered by the City if they are approved for citywide use. Requests to add a new site should be submitted to the City Administrator's Office.

3. **Eligible Sites:** Social media sites can be developed for the entire organization, individual departments, divisions, programs, or projects, if the site meets the criteria listed above. As part of the City's official social media network, sites cannot be developed for individual employees, elected officials, or advisory groups.
4. **Style and Branding:** All official City social media sites must feature the City seal and "City of Santa Barbara" as the prominent brand of the main site page, consistent with the City's [Identity Guidelines](#). These elements will ensure that the public can identify information from an official source.

Unauthorized use of the City seal is prohibited. Personal sites and other third-party sites displaying the City seal or text suggesting they are a legitimate City entity is prohibited.

Site Management

5. **Account Settings:** All City social media sites shall utilize employee contact information for account set-up, monitoring and access. The use of personal email accounts or phone numbers should not be used for the account settings on a City social media site. Whenever possible, a shared resource email address should be used to allow backup staff to access the site if the employee is not available or leaves City employment.
6. **Authorized Employees:** The responsibility of updating a social media site must be assigned to a specific employee. A back-up employee may be appointed to post information in his or her absence. Supervisors should assign clear responsibility for employees to spend work time performing social media tasks and agree to a reasonable number of hours needed to perform the tasks.
7. **Posting Information:** Postings on social media sites shall be made during normal business hours. After-hours or weekend postings shall only be made with approval of the supervisor.



POLICY ON OFFICIAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

City of Santa Barbara Administrative Policy Issued by:
City Administrator

Date: 7/16/2012

Page 3 of 5

8. **Content Monitoring:** The department staff and manager who coordinate social media sites have the primary responsibility of monitoring content and ensuring adherence to the City's Social Media Policy and other applicable policies and laws, and the interest and goals of the City.
9. **Policy Enforcement:** The City Administrator's Office reserves the right to request changes to social media sites or department websites to comply with City policies and applicable laws and to achieve citywide communication goals. This responsibility will be assumed by the Assistant to the City Administrator or the City Administrator's designee.

Content Guidelines

10. **Allowed Content:** The content of City social media sites and postings shall only pertain to City-sponsored or City-endorsed programs, services, news, and events. Content includes, but is not limited to, information, photographs, graphics, videos, and hyperlinks.

Appropriate content includes information about major projects, new programs or services, facility openings, service changes, events and workshops, emergency incidents, public education topics, tips, and general advice. On certain occasions, it may be appropriate to post information in relation to more controversial or sensitive issues with approval from a manager. Content considered inappropriate for posting on City social media sites includes the following: personal employee announcements (i.e. retirements, life events), personnel disputes, union notices, items for sale, and internal employee recognition.

As a representative of the City, authorized employees shall be professional at all times with posted content.

11. **Accuracy of Information:** Authorized employees should ensure that information posted on social media sites is accurate. If a mistake is made, correct it quickly. Disclose if any previous posts have been altered. Much of the information posted on social media sites is archived and even deleted postings can be found.
12. **Personal Points of View:** All employees have the right to their personal points of view regarding City issues. However, personal views may conflict with the official policy and direction of the City. Conveying personal views through social media sites on behalf of the City is prohibited. Official postings on social media sites should not reflect an employee's own personal views or concerns but must reflect the official policy and direction of the City.



POLICY ON OFFICIAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

City of Santa Barbara Administrative Policy Issued by:
City Administrator

Date: 7/16/2012

Page 4 of 5

- 13. Prohibited Content:** Monitor social media sites often and be proactive to delete inappropriate content. The following content is prohibited from use on the City social media sites:
- a. Comments in support of, or opposition to, political campaigns, candidates or ballot measures;
 - b. Profane language or content;
 - c. Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, or status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation, as well as any other category protected by federal, state, or local laws;
 - d. Sexual content or links to sexual content;
 - e. Solicitations of commerce and business advertisements;
 - f. Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity;
 - g. Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems; or
 - h. Content that violates a copyright, trademark, or legal ownership interest of any other party.

This policy shall be displayed to users or made available by hyperlink on all City social media sites. The City reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of this social media policy or any applicable law. If content is removed, make a copy of the content and note the reason for its removal. Blocking individual users from posting content is prohibited.

- 14. Compliance with Applicable Laws and City Policies:** Use of social media sites shall comply with all applicable laws and City policies, including but not limited to the following:
- a. **Public Records Act:** City social media sites are subject to the California Public Records Act. Any content contained in a social media format that is related to City business, including a list of subscribers and postings may be a public record subject to public disclosure.
 - b. **Brown Act:** City social media sites should not be created for members of the City Council, Commissions, or Boards to participate or engage in serial meetings on any issue within the subject matter jurisdiction of the body.
 - c. **City Policies:** City social media sites must comply with the City Identity Guidelines, Email Use Policy, Internet Use Policy, Political Campaign Restrictions, Personnel Handbook, Non-Discrimination and Harassment Policy, and Workplace Security Policy.
 - d. **Department Policies:** The use of social media sites should adhere to the protocol or policy established by an individual department. Where the policies differ, the guidance of the citywide social media policy supercedes any individual department policy.



POLICY ON OFFICIAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

City of Santa Barbara Administrative Policy Issued by:
City Administrator

Date: 7/16/2012

Page 5 of 5

15. **Inactive Sites:** Social media sites that are no longer needed or used must be deleted when they become inactive. It is the responsibility of the department to properly delete the social media site profile when it is no longer in use.
16. **Linked Content:** Content posted to the City's social media sites should contain hyperlinks directing users back to the City's official website for in-depth information, forms, documents or online services necessary to conduct business with the City, whenever possible. It is recommended that links are shortened through services such as Goo.gl and Bit.ly. These services provide Quick Response (QR) codes and a tracking history for their links.
17. **Multi-Media Content:** Departments are encouraged to post or link to photos or videos approved for City use that visually enhance messages and engage readers.
18. **Comments on Social Media Sites:** Authorized employees should use good judgment to determine whether and how to respond to comments on social media sites. Responding to comments can increase the amount of staff time monitoring the site and create expectations that all comments will be addressed. If comments are allowed, develop a system to respond in a timely manner.

Authorized employees can comment on behalf of the City on social media sites not administered by the City if the site has been approved for citywide communication needs. Examples may include correcting inaccurate information on a community news blog or posting City news for specific neighborhoods organized on an approved social media network.

Employees should not use "likes," "retweeting," or endorsement of information on outside social media sites because the City is not affiliated or responsible for sites administered by other organizations or individuals. Do not invite or accept the invitation of any organization that may not be an appropriate contact.