



POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Subject **Policies and Procedures Administration**

Policy # **202**

Date **Issued: 1/3/2012 Amended: 5/23/2024**

Approved by **City Manager**

Authored by **City Manager's Office**

1. PURPOSE

The City of Walnut Creek ("City") recognizes the importance of social media in communicating with the public and has an over-riding interest and expectation in protecting the integrity of the information posted on its social media sites and the content that is attributed to the City and its officials. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the City's social media channels best serve the needs of the community and meet legal standards.

In addition, this policy establishes oversight, administration, and management guidelines for departmental use of social media to further the goals of the City.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to City of Walnut Creek elected and appointed officials, employees, volunteers, contractors and any other representatives acting on behalf of the City or any of its Departments and Divisions.

3. DEFINITIONS

Communications Manager

The Communications Manager or the Communications Manager's designee.

Content

Information, images, audio, video, photographs, hyperlinks, and other means of communicating information or ideas. The guidelines for such content shall be set forth in Section 5.F.

Employee(s)

All employees who work for the City (including full-time, part-time, contract, temporary, hourly, provisional, and seasonal employees), and all officials, consultants, contractors, and volunteers.

Social media

Internet-based media that has a participatory element, including but not limited to websites, blogs, wiki pages, user-generated video and audio sites, and online social networks. (Current examples include, but are not limited to, Facebook, X, LinkedIn, YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, Nextdoor, etc.)

4. POLICY STATEMENT

A. GENERAL

1. The City will utilize social media to engage, build relationships with, and provide useful information to the City's residents, partners, and stakeholders. The City will build awareness of the City's Mission, Vision, & Values through providing relevant, timely information and opportunities for interaction.
2. The City's goals in using social media include:
 - a. Expanding visibility and outreach;

- b. Increasing credibility with the public by posting relevant information and offering transparency;
 - c. Building affinity; creating a media presence that positively promotes the City and/or its Divisions/programs;
 - d. Increasing engagement from the public.
 - e. Disseminating time-sensitive information efficiently and quickly.
3. The City's website (www.walnutcreekca.gov) will remain the City's primary and predominant internet presence.
- a. Where appropriate, content posted to City social media sites will also be available on the City's official website.
 - b. Where appropriate, content posted to City social media sites should contain links directing users back to the City's official website for further information and services.
4. All official social media presences are to be listed on the City of Walnut Creek website to assist the public in identifying official social media presences.
5. All City social media sites shall comply with usage rules and regulations provided by the site provider, including privacy policies.
6. The City does not endorse any links or advertisements that may show up on any City social media sites/postings.
7. The City reserves the right to terminate any City social media site at any time without notice.

B. CREATING SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

1. Staff must obtain their Department Director's approval prior to creating a social media site or account on behalf of the City.
2. Before creating a social media site or account, the Director will consider whether social media is appropriate and/or useful to the Department or Division.
3. When a Department or Division determines it has a business need for creating a social media site or account on behalf of the City, it will submit a request to the Communications Manager, who must provide written approval to create the social media site or account.
4. Once approved, the Communications Division will create a basic page on the social media platform. Add-on applications may not be added to the basic page without the express written permission of the IT Division.
5. When possible, all City social media sites shall utilize official City contact information for account set-up, monitoring, and access (e.g. a City email address). The use of personal email accounts or phone numbers by any City employee, official or volunteer is not allowed for the purpose of setting up, monitoring, or updating a City social media site, unless the use of a personal account is the only available option.
6. The following formatting requirements apply:

- a. The main image of the social media site shall be the Department or Division logo, the City's logo, or some other appropriate photo.
 - b. If applicable, the Department shall include a statement linked to the Terms of Use page on the Department's website that contains the following statement: "This is an official [Facebook, Instagram, X, etc.] page of the City of Walnut Creek [or City relevant program/department]. For more information about the City of Walnut Creek, please visit www.walnutcreekca.gov. This site is intended to serve as a mechanism for communication between the public and the department on the listed topics, and as a forum to further the mission of the department. Any comment submitted to this page and its list of followers may be considered a public record which is subject to disclosure pursuant to the California Public Records Act. Public Information Requests must be directed to the City's Communications Manager." The statement will also include a link to the City's Social Media webpage.
 - c. If comments are available and turned on for this social media site, the statement linked to the Terms of Use app on the site shall also include a Comment Policy with the following disclaimer: "Comments posted to this page will be monitored and inappropriate content will be removed as soon as possible. Under the City of Walnut Creek Social Media Policy, the City reserves the right to remove inappropriate content, including, but not limited to content that: contains obscene language or sexual content; threatens or defames any person or organization; violates the legal ownership interest of another party; promotes illegal activity; or promotes commercial services or products. The City disclaims any and all responsibility and liability for any materials that the City deems inappropriate for posting, which cannot be removed in an expeditious and otherwise timely manner."
 - d. A link to <http://www.walnutcreekca.gov> or Department or Division/Program website will be included on the Info, tagline, or any equivalent section on the site.
 - e. A link to the City's social media policy must be posted in the footer of <http://www.walnutcreekca.gov> and all Department or Division/Program websites.
 - f. The site name must be descriptive of the Department or Division/Program. Each Department shall choose carefully, and with due consideration, any abbreviations, slang iterations, and proper grammatical usage. The Communications Manager shall approve proposed names.
 - g. As soon as is reasonably possible, and where applicable, the page should be given a unique url to make it easy to find, e.g., "Facebook.com/walnutcreekgov."
7. The Department or Division's official social media account may "like," "Follow," "be fans of," etc. of any social media accounts that the Communications Manager determines to fall outside of the "Terms of Use" guidelines, The Communications Manager in coordination with the City Manager holds the ultimate discretion to decide which social media accounts that falls outside of the "Terms of Use" guidelines.

5. ADMINISTRATION OF OFFICIAL SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

A. COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER RESPONSIBILITIES

1. The Communications Manager must be able to immediately add, edit or remove content from all City sanctioned social media sites/accounts, including but not limited to access in crisis situations. Therefore, the Communications Manager will:
 - a. Maintain a list of social media tools that are approved for use for City business.
 - b. Will review concerns raised by Department Directors regarding public comments.
 - c. Have the right to monitor content on City social media sites to ensure compliance with the City's Social Media Policy and the interests and goals of the City.
 - d. Create style and usage standards for specific social media tools as appropriate.

B. DEPARTMENT OR DIVISION RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. The Department or Division will be responsible for adding, editing, monitoring, and removing content from all social media sites their Department or Division may create, including review of comments from the public. Guidelines for staff will be provided and updated periodically by the City's Communications Manager.
2. Maintain a registry hosted by IT of Department or Divisions social media presences, including log-in and password information.
3. The Department or Division shall designate one or more staff members as page administrators who will be responsible for monitoring the Department's or Division's social media site(s).
4. Only designated Department or Division staff members may publish content. Before publishing any photos, videos, or other media containing members of the public, staff must secure waivers by the individuals depicted in such media unless the media was taken in a public area or at a public event, where there is no expectation of privacy. Photos, videos, or other media of City employees taken during regular work hours may be posted without obtaining a waiver.

C. EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Any employee authorized to post items on any of the City's social media sites shall review, be familiar with, and comply with the City's Social Media Policy, the social media sites' use policies and terms and conditions and any related guidelines issued by the Communications Manager.
2. Any employee authorized to post items on any of the City's social media sites shall not express his or her own personal views or concerns through such postings. Postings on any of the City's social media sites by an

authorized City employee shall only reflect the views or concerns of the City.

3. While City employees may use their personal social media platforms to express their opinions and views, employees may not use their personal social media account(s) to speak on behalf of the City.

D. ADHERENCE TO LAWS, REGULATIONS AND POLICIES

1. All City social media sites shall adhere to applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and policies, including all applicable City policies or guidelines.
2. Any person representing the City on any social media site shall conduct himself or herself at all times as a professional representative of the City and in accordance with all City policies.

E. PUBLIC RECORDS

1. The City is subject to the California Public Records Act. Entries, articles, postings, direct or private messages to the City and other contents uploaded or submitted to a City social media site or page are open and available to the public free of charge and access restrictions. To the extent possible, all City social media sites shall clearly indicate that any article and any other content posted or submitted for posting are subject to public disclosure, searches and retrieval as required by law.
2. Except as otherwise removed or deleted, all City social media content will be located on the internet platform to which the content was originally uploaded or submitted. Such content shall be available to the public as long as the City user account associated with the social media platform remains active. The City does not maintain any social media postings or content in additional electronic or hardcopy form, unless such postings or content has been printed, downloaded, filed or otherwise saved by the Department or Division staff responsible for the social media site or page.
3. Removed postings and content will be retained by a third-party vendor.

F. CONTENT STANDARDS

Any City social media site that elicits or allows comments from the public shall be designated as a limited public forum for First Amendment purposes. As such, and in order to promote the City's goals articulated above and remain in compliance with other laws, City social media site content and comments containing any of the following forms of content shall not be allowed and shall be promptly removed:

- a. Profane or threatening language or content;
- b. Sexual content or links to sexual content;
- c. Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, ancestry, age, religion, gender or gender expression, marital status, AIDS/HIV, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, medical condition, political activities or affiliations, military or veteran status, physical or mental disability, or

sexual orientation;

- d. Solicitations or commerce, including but not limited to, advertising of any non-government related event, or business or product for sale;
 - e. Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity;
 - f. Information that may compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems;
 - g. Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party;
 - h. Potentially libelous or defamatory comments; and
 - i. Private or personal information published without consent.
2. Users posting to the City's social media sites shall be informed that the City disclaims any and all responsibility and liability for any materials that the City deems inappropriate for posting.
 3. These guidelines will be posted on the City's website and must be made available to social media users by hyperlink.

6. POLICY HISTORY AND CITATIONS

This policy is an amendment to the original policy issued on January 3, 2012.

This policy was issued on May 23, 2024 and approved by:



Dan Buckshi
City Manager

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