



City of Sunset Valley | Social Media Policy

Purpose:

The City of Sunset Valley uses social media to send and receive messages about city announcements, services, and related programs with community stakeholders, including employees, vendors, citizens, media, and other members of the public. This policy intends to provide clear and concise guidelines for social media use. Anyone who participates in social media on behalf of the City should understand and follow approved guidelines and policies, which are subject to change as new technology and networking tools emerge. This policy applies to any future or proposed social media websites or accounts created by City employees within the scope of their employment, and on which the public is encouraged to interact with the City. The primary benefits of social media use by the City include:

- Engage in one-on-one communication with Sunset Valley residents and stakeholders.
- Promote city government programs and services promptly.
- Respond to public questions or concerns promptly.
- Expand and target media reach to a diverse set of community audiences.

For The City of Sunset Valley to ensure that all social media communication meets appropriate legal and professional standards; it is the policy of the City that any use of social media should be coordinated through the City Community Coordinator and City Secretary, under the supervision of the City Administrator and the Public Information Officer (Chief of Police)

Use by City Employees

- A. You must adhere to applicable federal, state, and local regulations while managing content on a City social media account, including those specific to computer use, electronic communications, workplace behavior, professionalism, records management, and all other applicable City policies and procedures.
- B. You are responsible for the content you author or publish from a City social media account.
- C. The City Secretary is responsible for the archival and retention of content published from a City social media account in accordance with the Texas Public Information Act.
- D. This policy does not extend to personal social media accounts managed by you. However, you may be subject to corrective action for violating City policies and procedures by publishing content that could negatively affect public confidence in either City operations or your capacity to serve as a Sunset Valley City employee.
- E. While connections to City social media accounts from your personal accounts are permitted, the content of personal accounts should not be published in such a way as to cause users to believe the content is administered or endorsed by the City, including unauthorized use of Sunset Valley City logos and trademarks.

Roles and Responsibilities:

Each department Director has the responsibility to ensure that all employees are aware of these guidelines when creating and maintaining social media resources. Carrying out the procedures outlined may be the responsibility of departmental public information staff, the city of sunset valley community coordinator, or another member of staff designated by the City Administrator.

For Emergency Operations and emergency notifications, the Public Information Officer (Chief of Police) will handle all coordination of social media communication.

Boards, Committees, and Commissions

The Chair or another designee approved by the meeting body shall coordinate any Board, Committee or Commission request for social media resources and coordinate the activity with the City Secretary and Community Coordinator.

The Community Coordinator will be the coordinating authority for review, approval, monitoring, and governance of all approved City social media sites.

Social Media Use by permanent Boards and Commissions, other temporary task forces, and advisory bodies created by City Council including committees created by such Boards

- A. Due to open meeting requirements, individual members of a meeting body are prohibited from participating in postings or discussion threads on Social Media sites created and maintained by the group that they are a member of.
- B. Any use of Social Media Sites shall not serve as a replacement for postings and notifications required to be posted by the City Secretary.
- C. Boards may utilize social media for gathering of public input and fostering of public discussion related to the advisory role they have been assigned by City Council if they meet the following requirements:
 - The request for input or posting of discussion items is approved in a formal action of the Board at a posted meeting.
 - The request for input or posting of discussion items does not relate to any solicitation that is identified as being in the "No Contact Period" by any city office or committee.
- D. "Regular business" is defined as the standard and routine activity of any Board, and generally includes agendas, minutes, presentation documents, and backup items created during regular Board proceedings. This may also include responses or clarifications of items of fact related to the Board (dates, times, published data, etc.). The regular business of the Board may be posted to approved Social Media Sites by the appropriate staff liaison without formal action of the Board, provided that posted documents are also available on the City's website.
- E. Under no circumstance should a Board direct staff to post statements of personal opinion held by individual members.

Prohibited Activity

Prohibited Activity You are not permitted to:

- a. Create a social media page representing the City or one of its departments, affiliates, boards, or committees unless authorized by the City Administrator and Community Coordinator in writing.
- b. Link City contact information to a personal social media account (i.e. City addresses, names, phone numbers, emails) unless authorized by the City Administrator or Community Coordinator, in writing.
- c. Use personal social media accounts while at work when it violates the City's code of conduct policy or any other City policies or procedures, or if it involves unlawful or unauthorized commercial, political, or other prohibited activities.
- d. Publish content on a City social media account that contains any of the following:
 - 1) Misleading or derogatory information about the City or its employees, officials, policies, or procedures.
 - 2) Actual or potential claims and litigation involving the government.
 - 3) Known copyrighted work or intellectual property of others without written permission.
 - 4) Personal, sensitive, or confidential information.
 - 5) Pornography or any sexually explicit content or comments.
 - 6) Racist, sexist, or disparaging language about any ethnic, religious, or social group.
 - 7) Threatening, harassing, or defamatory comments.
 - 8) Political campaign materials or comments.
 - 9) Information that is not public in nature.
 - 10) Content that violates applicable City policies and procedures and/or other laws (i.e. discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, hostile work environment, retaliation, ethics, professional work environment, copyright, etc.)
- e. Administrators of City social media accounts intended for public access and comments are prohibited from blocking users of those accounts except under limited circumstances as defined later in this document. Administrators ARE permitted to turn the commenting feature off when designing a post, prior to publishing the post. This must be done before any public comments are posted.

Public Comments

City social media accounts are intended for public access and comments and are considered to be limited forums where the public may comment on content posted by representatives of the City.

All public comments on City's social media accounts will be monitored. Questions will be answered at the discretion of the managing department of the social media page. Communications made by the public from any social media platform will in no way constitute a legal or official notice or comment to the City or any City official for any purpose

City social media account administrators reserve the right to remove public comments if they contain any of the following prohibited content:

1. Vulgar, physically threatening, or harassing language.
2. Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, religion, gender, marital status, familial status, national origin, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, source of income or another protected status under applicable law.
3. Inappropriate sexual content or similar links.
4. Private or otherwise confidential information.
5. Content that promotes illegal activity or encouragement of actions that may compromise public safety.
6. Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party.
7. Comments not topically related to the original article or post.
8. Organized political activity, or comments in support of or opposition to political candidates, campaigns, or ballot measures.
9. Promoting or advertising a commercial transaction, organization, or event that is not sponsored or in direct relationship with the City.
10. Information that may compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems.

Additional Criteria:

- All questions or other requests from news media should be directed to the City Administrator
- In the case of identical or similar posts on a topic, the first submission will be used.
- Anonymous postings are prohibited. Commenters should use their full names when applicable and may be contacted to verify authenticity.
- Communications made from any social media platform will in no way constitute a legal or official notice or comment to the City or any City official for any purpose.

City social media accounts are in no way meant to replace or circumvent existing City processes and procedures. *For example, a comment that asks for public records will not be considered an official request unless sent through the proper channels and processes (i.e., by a direct email or website form submission).*

Texas Public Information Act: <http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/SOTWDocs/GV/htm/GV.552.htm>

State law clarifies the definition of “public information” as information that is written, produced, collected, assembled, or maintained in connection with the transaction of official business, which includes email, Internet posting, text messages, instant messages, and other electronic communication.

Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, unless otherwise stated, the following definitions apply:

a. **Comment** – a message posted by site visitors, either in response to an existing topic or introducing a new topic. In general, the content of comments is controlled solely by the user, but often can be deleted, accepted, or rejected before publishing by the site or page administrator.

b. **Connections** – Any deliberate links between a user and a social media channel or page, whether it is initiated by the individual or by the site moderator. Terms used by various sites to describe a connection include friend, fan, follower, or subscriber.

c. **Employee** – Any individual who performs services for the City of Sunset Valley. This may include but is not limited to, full- or part-time staff and interns.

d. **Limited forum** – a public forum created by the government voluntarily for the expressive activity that may be restricted as to subject matter or class of speaker. Forum restrictions must be able to withstand strict judicial scrutiny of its effect on First Amendment rights.

e. **Post** – In relation to social media accounts or online activity, anything published in an online forum or social media account.

f. **Social media** – Internet-based third-party platforms that facilitate interaction and engagement among individuals in a network or virtual community. Social media offers a participatory environment and includes user-generated content such as videos, photos, videos, blogs, and wikis.

Violation of Policy

The City of Sunset Valley reserves the right to restrict or remove any content deemed in violation of the terms of this policy.

Any content removed based on these guidelines will attempt to be retained, including the time, date, and identity of content and authors when possible.

Employees determined to have violated these terms of use may be subject to corrective action up to and including termination.

Proposed City Social Media Accounts

The following are social media accounts/ platforms that the City of Sunset Valley will use for communication with the public

Facebook

Facebook is a social networking website that is privately owned and managed. Permitted users age 13 or older can add friends, send direct messages, join closed or open groups, author posts, and comment on posts shared by other users.

Twitter

Twitter is a free social networking and microblogging service that enables its users to send and read messages (tweets) in the platform. All users can send and receive tweets via the Twitter website, Short Message Service (SMS), or external applications, and senders can restrict the delivery of tweets to certain followers.

Instagram

Instagram is a free, online photo-sharing application and social network platform that was acquired by Facebook in 2012. Instagram allows users to edit and upload photos and short videos through a mobile app.

Other Accounts

City employees may manage other social media content used to share or maintain other types of media like videos and photos, or to respond to specific geographic sectors of the community.

Examples: Flickr, [Nextdoor](#), [YouTube](#)

“Other accounts” are used in conjunction with Facebook, Twitter, and the City website to incorporate multimedia applications, as well as implement geo-targeted messages to certain community areas or neighborhoods.

Policy Updates

The City of Sunset Valley reserves the right to update these terms of use at any time.