

City of Marysville, Michigan
Employee Social Media Policy
July 1, 2020

Overview

This policy establishes the City of Marysville's position on the use of social media and provides guidelines on its management, administration and oversight. This policy is not meant to address one particular form of social media but rather social media in general terms as technology will outpace our ability to discover emerging technology and create policies governing its use. Common current examples of social media are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Snapchat, blogs, message boards, etc.

Social media has become some of our most powerful tools in communicating with residents and other interested parties. The City of Marysville endeavors to use social media to speak with a consistent voice that is representative of the City and puts our efforts and events in the best light possible.

Not only does the City of Marysville endorse the secure use of social media by its employees in a city-related capacity but also in a personal capacity. City employees have the same rights of free speech as other U.S. citizens however there are some additional obligations that come with working in the public sector.

The following guidelines are meant to provide precautionary guidance as well as restrictions and prohibitions on the use of social media by City employees on and off the clock.

Guidelines

City Sanctioned Use of Social Media

1. All City and departmental social media sites or pages shall be approved by the City Manager or designee and shall be administered by a designee(s).
2. Social media pages shall clearly indicate they are maintained by the City or a department and shall have contact information prominently displayed.
3. Social media content shall adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including all information technology and records management policies of the City.
4. Employees representing the City via social media outlets shall do the following:
 - a. Conduct themselves at all times as representatives of the City and, accordingly, shall adhere to all City standards of conduct and observe conventionally accepted protocols and proper decorum;
 - b. Identify themselves as an employee of the City;
 - c. Post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate confidential information, including photographs or videos, related to City training, activities, or work-related assignments without express permission; and
 - d. Shall not conduct political activities or private business.

Potential City Uses of Social Media

1. Provide information in written form or via photograph, video or audio of subjects such as road closures, events and weather emergencies, etc.

2. Gather information for background checks on potential employees or volunteers.
 - a. Candidates applying for employment with the City must sign a release document enabling an assigned employee to conduct a background check using any resource to include social media.
 - b. The City has an obligation to include Internet-based content when conducting background investigations of job candidates.
 - c. Searches should be conducted by or with permission from the City Manager and only for the purposes of providing possible background material on an employee candidate.
 - d. Search methods shall not involve techniques that are a violation of existing law.
 - e. Vetting techniques using social media as one of many resources to provide valid and up to date information shall be applied uniformly to all candidates.
 - f. Every effort must be made to validate Internet-based information considered during the hiring process. This shall not be the only mechanism to provide background information on a possible candidate.

Personal Use of Social Media by Employees

1. City employees are free to express themselves as private citizens on their personal social media sites to the degree that their speech does not impair or impede the performance of duties, impair discipline and harmony among coworkers or negatively affect the public perception of the City or bring disrespect on employees or the City. Employees are encouraged in their social media bios to display 'Opinions are my own.'
2. City or department social media sites shall not be used by employees for personal social media purposes.
3. As public employees, personnel are cautioned that their speech either on or off duty, and in the course of their official duties that has a link to the employee's professional duties and responsibilities or which brings disrespect on themselves or the City, will not be protected speech under the First Amendment.
 - a. Such conduct may form the basis for discipline if deemed detrimental to the City.
 - b. City employees should assume that their speech and related activity on social media sites will reflect upon their position within the City.
4. City employees shall not post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate any information to which they have access as a result of their employment without written permission from the City Manager or designee.
5. City employees are cautioned not to do the following:
 - a. Display department logos, uniforms or similar identifying items on personal web pages without prior written permission.
 - b. Post personal photographs or provide similar means of personal recognition that may cause him or her to be identified as an employee of the City of Marysville without prior written permission.
 - c. Use city e-mail addresses to register on social networks, blogs or other online tools utilized for personal use.
6. Adherence to the City's code of conduct is required in the personal use of social media. In particular, City employees are prohibited from the following:
 - a. Speech containing obscene or sexually explicit language, images or acts and statements or other forms of speech that ridicule, malign, disparage, or otherwise express bias against or disparage race, creed, color, age, religion, sexual orientation, gender, or national origin;

- b. City employees may not divulge information gained by reason of their authority, make any statements, speeches, appearances, and endorsements or publish materials that could reasonably be considered to represent the views or positions of the City without express authorization;
- c. City employees should be aware that they may be subject to civil litigation for publishing or posting false information that harms the reputation of another person, group or organization otherwise known as defamation to include:
 - i. publishing or posting private facts and personal information about someone without his or her permission that has not been previously revealed to the public, is not of legitimate public concern, and would be offensive to a reasonable person;
 - ii. using someone else's name, likeness or other personal attributes without that person's permission for an exploitative purpose; or
 - iii. publishing the creative work of another, trademarks, or certain confidential business information without the permission of the owner.
7. City employees should be aware that privacy settings and social media sites are constantly in flux. They should never assume that personal information posted on such sites is protected and should take care to understand a site's terms of service.
8. City employees should expect that any information created, transmitted, downloaded, exchanged or discussed in a public online forum may be accessed by the City at any time without prior notice; and
9. City employees are cautioned that a violation of this policy may result in discipline up to and including discharge. Each employee is expected to exercise sound judgment when using social media and to adhere to this policy in all respects.

All in all when using social media, City employees should be mindful that their speech becomes part of the World Wide Web. Whatever is published will be in the public domain for a long time if not permanently.

Reporting Violations

Any employee becoming aware of or having knowledge of a posting or of any website or webpage in violation of the provision of this policy shall notify his or her supervisor immediately for follow-up action.

Public Comment Policy on City Sanctioned Social Media Accounts

As a public entity the City of Marysville must abide by certain standards to serve all its constituents in a civil and unbiased manner. Comments or content containing any of the following inappropriate forms of content shall not be permitted on our social media sites and are subject to removal and/or restriction by the City:

1. Comments not related to the business of the City (or specific department if department-specific site), or not relevant to the original topic;
2. Violent, profane, obscene or pornographic content and/or language;
3. Content that promotes, fosters or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, sexual orientation, gender, or national origin;
4. Content that threatens or defames any person or organization;
5. Content that is hateful or incites violence;

6. Solicitation of commerce, including but not limited to, advertising of any non-government related event, or business or product for sale;
7. Conduct in violation of any federal, state or local law;
8. Encouragement of any illegal activity;
9. Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems; and
10. Content that violates a legal ownership interest, such as a copyright, of any party.

A comment posted by a member of the public on any City of Marysville social media site is the opinion of the commentator or poster only, and publication of a comment does not imply endorsement of, or agreement by, the City, nor do such comments necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of the City of Marysville.

The City reserves the right to deny access to City of Marysville's social media sites for any individual, who violates the City's social media policy, at any time and without prior notice.

Departments shall monitor their social media sites for comments requesting responses from the City and for comments in violation of this policy.

All comments posted to any City of Marysville site are bound by Facebook's Statement of Rights and Responsibilities located at <http://www.facebook.com/terms.php>. The City reserves the right to report any violation of Facebook's Statement of Rights and Responsibilities to Facebook with the intent of Facebook taking appropriate and reasonable responsive action.

Reporting/Removal of Unauthorized Comments

The City requires that department-designated social media administrators immediately notify the City Manager's Office if there is any posted material that may be inappropriate, that violates this policy, or any City policy, is illegal, or that potentially infringes the copyrights or other rights of any persons. The City Manager's Office will investigate and respond to all reports of potential violations of this policy.

Any content removed based on these guidelines must be retained by the sponsoring department for a reasonable period of time, including the time, date and identity of the poster, when available. Upon removal of content, the social media administrator shall notify the commenter that his or her response has been deemed inappropriate and removed due to inconsistency with the City's content requirements.

The City reserves the right, at any time and without prior notice, to deny access to the social media site to any individual who violates this policy.

Terms of Use for Constituents

The City of Marysville's social media pages maintain a "Terms of Use" agreement for its constituents. All comments posted to any City social media site are bound by these Terms of Use and the City reserves the right to report any user violation. Terms of Use can be found at on the City of Marysville's website at cityofmarysvillemi.com and visitors to the City's sites are expected to follow these guidelines.

City Website

The City of Marysville's website at cityofmarysvillemi.com will remain the City's primary and predominant Internet presence.