

CITY OF PLYMOUTH

Category:	SOCIAL MEDIA	Policy 2021-01
Title:	Social Media Policy And Guidelines For Use	

PURPOSE

This policy provides guidelines for the establishment and use of social media by the City of Plymouth (“City”) and its staff, as a means of conveying information about the City and its events and activities to its residents.

For purposes of this policy, “social media” is understood to be content created by individuals, using accessible, expandable, and upgradable publishing technologies, through and on the Internet. City will be using a City of Plymouth Facebook, Instagram and other social-media platforms, that may be added from time-to-time.

The City has an overriding interest and expectation in deciding what is spoken on behalf of the City through the use of social media sites (including but not limited to Facebook and Instagram).

For purposes of this policy, comments include information, articles, pictures, videos or any other form of communicative or symbolic content posted on the City of Plymouth’s social media site.

Nothing in this policy shall be applied to prohibit or infringe upon any communication, speech or expression that is protected or privileged under law. This includes speech and expression protected under state or federal constitutions as well as labor laws or other applicable laws. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the City’s social media sites are limited public forums intended to provide and disseminate information about City events and activities and are subject to the policies and restrictions herein.

B. GENERAL POLICY

1. The establishment, posting use by any City department, or City employee, or City public official, of the City’s social media sites are subject to the pre-approval of the City Manager, or designee.
2. The City Manager shall designate a principal social media administrator who will collaborate with department-designated social media administrators (if any) who manage additional social media sites (if any) secondary to the primary City sites.
3. All City social media sites shall clearly denote that it is maintained by the City, e.g. display the City name and/or City Seal and/or approved graphic, and that the site follows the City’s Social Media Policy
4. Wherever possible, the City’s social media sites shall link to the official City of Plymouth website for forms, documents, online services and other information necessary to conduct business with the City.
5. The principal and department-designated social media administrators (if any) will monitor content on the City’s social media sites to ensure adherence to both the City’s Social Media Policy, and the interest and goals of the City.

6. The City reserves the right to respond to any posting and restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of the City's Social Media Policy or any applicable law. Any content removed based on these guidelines must be retained by the department-designated social media administrators in accordance with any applicable retention period. The City is not able to monitor all content at all times, and therefore, the City reserves the right to remove any such content at any time, and the failure to do so in one instance shall not be construed as a waiver of a similar or same content in another instance.
7. This policy must be displayed to users or made available by hyperlink on the City's social media sites so the public can be informed of the guidelines, requirements, and restrictions.
8. The City will approach the use of social media tools as consistently as possible, City website.
9. The City's official website at <https://cityofplymouth.org> will remain the City's primary and predominant internet presence.
10. The City may provide educational information regarding ballot measures via the City's social media sites in compliance with federal and state law, regulations, and policies.
11. All City social media sites shall adhere to applicable federal, state and local laws, regulations and policies.
12. Comments on topics or issues not related to the jurisdictional purview of the City may be removed.
13. Employees or public officials representing the City on any social media site, must conduct themselves at all times as a representative of the City and in accordance with all City policies.
14. Employees representing the City in their capacity as employees shall not comment or engage in debate on social media platforms that are not established as official City social media accounts.
15. City employees shall not engage, comment or post using their personal accounts and claim or otherwise indicate they are communicating officially on behalf of the City or representing the City with their comments on their personal accounts.
17. Where appropriate the City can choose to reply to call outs or social media engagement where the City's social media site does not enable hosting of the conversation (for example, Twitter).
18. City social media accounts shall be managed consistent with the Ralph M. Brown Act, California Government Code 54950 et seq. Members of the City Council, Commissions and/or Boards, as a matter of free speech, may establish their own social media accounts, but are requested to make clear that the content posted on social media sites is not the official position of the City.

Members of the City Council, Commissioners and/or Boards may engage in separate conversations or communications on any social media platforms to answer questions, provide information to the public, or to solicit information from the public regarding a matter that is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the respective body, provided that, such member shall not respond directly to any communication on any social media platform regarding a matter that is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the legislative body that is made, posted, or shared by any other member of that respective body.

19. The City reserves the right to terminate any City social media account at any time
20. This Social Media Policy may be revised at any time.

C. COMMENT POLICY

1. As a public entity, the City must abide by certain standards to serve all of its constituents in a civil and unbiased manner.
2. Comments or content containing any of the following forms of content shall not be permitted and are subject to removal and/or restriction by the City:
 - a. Comments not related to the business of the City (or specific department if department-specific site), or not relevant to the original topic;
 - b. Comments in support of, or in opposition to, political campaigns, candidates, or ballot measures;
 - c. Profane, obscene or obscene content and/or language;
 - d. Sexual content or links to sexual content
 - e. Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, national origin, physical or mental disability, medical condition, sexual orientation, as well as any other category protected by federal, state, or local laws;
 - f. Content that defames any person or organization;
 - g. Content that incites violence;
 - h. Solicitation of commerce, including but not limited to, advertising of any non-government related event, or business or product for sale;
 - i. Conduct in violation of any federal, state or local law;
 - j. Encouragement of any illegal activity;
 - k. Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems;
 - l. Content that violates a legal ownership interest, such as a copyright, of any other party;
 - m. Harassment or content which constitutes stalking;
 - n. Comments that may reasonably interfere with, inhibit, or compromise law enforcement investigations, police tactics, police responses to incidents and/or the safety of police staff and officers;
 - o. Content that violates another person's right to privacy
 - p. Posts or comments that contain any external links.
3. A comment posted by a member of the public on any City social media site is the opinion of the commenter or poster only, and the publication of a comment does not imply endorsement of, or agreement by, the City, nor do comments necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of the City.
4. The City reserves the right to deny access to its social media sites for any individual who violates the Social Media Policy at any time and without prior notice.
5. The City reserves the right to respond to restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of the City Social Media Policy or any applicable law.

6. Comments with inappropriate content as defined in the City's Social Media Policy will be removed as soon as possible and without prior notice. If available on social media sites the City shall invoke a filter that will automatically hide a comment if profanity is used within a post.
7. Posting a social media comment is not a recommended way to contact the City or Sheriff's Department. Contact should be made directly to the Sheriff's Department at (209) 223-6500, or in an emergency response call 911.
8. City departments will monitor their social media sites for comments requesting responses from the City and for comments in violation of this policy. Notwithstanding the foregoing, a social media comment shall not be construed as giving the City formal notice including, without limitation, notice of a legal action, a subpoena, etc. Formal notice shall be given to the City as required by law.
9. When an employee responds to a comment, in the capacity of a City employee, the employee's name and title shall be made available. The employee shall not share their personal information, or the personal information of other City employees.
10. All comments posted to any of the City's Facebook sites are bound by Facebook's Statement of Rights and Responsibilities and Community Standards, located at <http://www.facebook.com/terms.php>, and <http://www.facebook.com/communitystandards>, respectfully. The City reserves the right to report any violation of Facebook's Statement of Rights and Responsibilities and/or Community Standards to Facebook, with the intent of Facebook taking appropriate and reasonable responsive action.
11. All comments posted to any other City social media or similar site not specifically named herein, are bound by the applicable rights and responsibilities that are listed on the general information page for the specific site. The City reserves the right to report any violation of rights and responsibilities and/or community standards, or similar, to the specific site with the intent of the site taking appropriate and reasonable responsive action report any violation of rights and responsibilities and/or community standards, or similar, to the specific site with the intent of the site taking appropriate and reasonable responsive action.
12. By posting or commenting on a City social media site, the user agrees to the City's terms of use. The user participates by their own choice, taking personal responsibility for comments, username and any information provided.
13. These guidelines shall be displayed or made available by hyperlink on all City social media sites. Any content removed based on these guidelines must be retained in accordance with any applicable records retention law, including but not limited to the time, date, and identity of the person when available.

D. 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 the City's Social Media Policy, or any other 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 the City's Social Media Policy.

Any content removed based on these guidelines must be retained by the sponsoring department for a reasonable period of time, in accordance with any applicable retention period. Upon removal of content or access, the social media administrator shall notify the commenter that their response or access has been denied and/or limited due to inconsistency with the City's requirements as set forth in this policy.

The City reserves the right, at any time and without prior notice, to deny, limit, or otherwise block access to post or comment on the City social media site to any individual who violates this policy at any time. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the City's social media sites are limited public forums intended to provide and disseminate information about City events and activities. The City will not engage in unlawful viewpoint discrimination when determine whether to remove or block a comment or a user.

E. TERMS OF SERVICE

Each type of social media maintains a "Terms of Use" agreement. 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.

F. IMPLEMENTATION AND OVERSIGHT

The City Manager and/or designee has responsibility for the implementation and oversight of this policy.