



## Social Media Policy

Revision #	1
Implementation Date	8/23/2012
Last Reviewed/Update Date	8/3/2023
Resolution #	31511

Page 1 of 8

### **1. Purpose**

This Social Media Policy ("Policy") sets guidelines for the establishment and use of social media by City of Marion ("City") as a means of conveying City information to the public. The intended purpose behind the use of City social media sites is to disseminate information from the City, about the City, to the public in a civil and unbiased manner.

### **2. Scope**

This policy applies to any pre-existing or future social media accounts created by City employees for City of Marion business and the terms with which the public is encouraged to interact with the City on social media.

This policy also applies to all persons authorized to use social media on behalf of the City.

### **3. Authorized Administrators**

City policies, rules, regulations and standards of conduct apply to authorized individuals that maintain social media accounts on behalf of the City. Employees who engage in social media while representing the City of Marion are held to the same standards as any other public communication, such as comments to a TV, radio or newspaper reporter.

Authorized administrators shall be approved by the Communications Manager and trained to speak for the agency in an official capacity. Authorized administrators will use social media tools to manage and maintain the City of Marion's social media presence, projecting a unified voice that is friendly, engaging, professional and reliable.

### **4. Use of City Social Media**

Only authorized administrators shall create or manage social media posts or accounts on behalf of the City. Authorized administrators shall comply with the following:

1. Authorized administrators representing the City of Marion on the City's social media accounts must conduct themselves professionally and in accordance with this policy at all times as representatives of the City. Authorized administrators who fail to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner or anyone who utilizes the City social media accounts without proper authorization shall be subject to discipline according to City policy up to and including termination of employment.
2. Authorized administrators are responsible for any content they publish on any social media site.
3. City social media accounts may not be used by any City employee or representative for the purpose of expressing personal views.



## Social Media Policy

Revision #	1
Implementation Date	8/23/2012
Last Reviewed/Update Date	8/3/2023
Resolution #	31511

Page 2 of 8

4. Authorized administrators who are hourly employees should not work on social media after hours without prior approval. This is considered overtime, and failure to obtain prior authorization may be cause for corrective action.
5. If an authorized user makes a factual mistake on a City's social media account, they should correct it as soon as possible. Corrections should be upfront and timely. Do not try to "hide" corrections, as someone may have seen the incorrect information and may be acting upon it.
6. Any new or additional City social media accounts are subject to approval by the Communications Manager. Department Directors must sign and provide the Social Media Establishment and Authorization Form to the Communications Manager when requesting a new social media account or authorizing new authorized administrators.

### **5. General Policy**

1. It is the policy of the City of Marion to ensure that City social media sites are created and maintained for exclusive use by the City in communicating information relevant to the City's purpose and goals; and to document the Terms of Use that govern the usage of the City's social media sites. The City reserves the right to determine what information may and may not be placed on City social media sites on behalf of the City.
2. The City's official website will remain the City's primary and predominant internet presence for official information.
3. Content posted to social media sites should contain links 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 when applicable.
4. The City reserves the right to implement or remove any functionality of its social media sites, when deemed appropriate by the Communications Manager or their designee. This includes, but is not limited to, information, articles, pictures, videos or any other form of communication that is posted on a City social media site.
5. City social media sites or equipment may not be used by employees or appointed or elected officials as a platform for private business or charitable activities, commercial or personal transactions, or for any other purpose prohibited by law.
6. Communications made through a social media site will in no way constitute a legal or official notice or comment by or to any official or employee of the City for any purpose.



## Social Media Policy

Revision #	1
Implementation Date	8/23/2012
Last Reviewed/Update Date	8/3/2023
Resolution #	31511

Page 3 of 8

7. City of Marion social media accounts are subject to public records laws. Any content maintained in a social media format that is related to City business, including a list of subscribers and posted communication, is a public record.
8. All social media accounts maintained by the City must adhere to applicable federal, state and local laws, regulations, and City policies including all policies relating to the use of computers and security, electronic communications, workplace discrimination, City records management, and any other applicable City policy or procedure.

### **6. Requirements for City Social Media Accounts**

1. Any new or additional City social media accounts are subject to approval by the Communications Manager. Departments must provide a written statement including specific reasons for the need to have separate social media accounts, a description of how those accounts will be maintained and monitored, and an explanation of how the new account will not detract from the City's unified brand identity. If approved, the Communications Manager will periodically review each account. Accounts that do not meet the City's intended goals and objectives may be subject to removal at the direction of the Communications Division.
2. City social media accounts must make clear that they are maintained by the City of Marion. City approved logo or branding must be used on all City social media accounts to confirm authenticity of the site. Each City social media account must identify the City name, state, and department. The social media account must also state that it is the "official" account for the department or City.
3. Only authorized administrators shall have access to post content to City social media accounts. Department directors are responsible for designating which employees are authorized to post on their department's behalf and for maintaining a current list of authorized administrators for their department. Department directors shall provide an updated Social Media Establishment and Authorization Form whenever there is a change to the department's authorized administrators.
4. Departments that maintain their own social media accounts are responsible for creating and maintaining timely and accurate information or content thereby helping to advance the City's vision, mission, and goals and inform and educate the public about City programs, services, activities, and events.
5. Replies to posts and monitoring accounts will be done during normal working hours; exceptions may include emergency situations, weather-related events, or special events occurring outside normal business hours. Every effort should be made to reply to comments or questions within 24 hours (during the standard work week) when a response is warranted.



## Social Media Policy

Revision #	1
Implementation Date	8/23/2012
Last Reviewed/Update Date	8/3/2023
Resolution #	31511

Page 4 of 8

6. When responding to comments on social media, the name of the page should be used to respond to comments. When appropriate, direct the comment to the City's website or provide a department phone number and/or staff member number and email to contact for more information.
7. Social media accounts should state that the opinions expressed by visitors to the page(s) do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the City or the department, that comments will be monitored, and that content posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure.
8. Authorized administrators will follow any guidelines established by the Communications Manager relating to social media posts, including limits on the number of posts and guidelines for responding to comments. In the event of a severe weather event, crisis, or emergency, City social media accounts may post as many updates as warranted.

### **7. Content Standards**

1. The primary purpose of City social media sites is to share City-specific information, such as City news, services, or City produced or sponsored special events or programs.
2. Non-City information, news, or events must be either related to a program or event in which the City of Marion is an active partner or published by a community organization or government agency informing Marion residents of services available.
3. The City shall not violate any trademark or copyright laws by ensuring it has full permission or rights to any content before it is posted by the City, including photographs, videos, and music. Contact the Communications Manager with questions.
4. Content written will be a reflection of the City voice and not an individual employee. Do not use "I" language. Use of "We" and "Our" language is encouraged to meet the City's goal of a personalized and conversational tone on social media.
5. Postings must contain information that is freely available to the public and not be confidential as defined by any City policy or local, state, or federal law.
6. Postings may not contain any personal information, except for the names of employees whose job duties include being available for contact by the public, without consent of the individual.
7. The City of Marion has no control over content, commercial advertisements, or other postings produced by the social media site that appear on the City of Marion's social media account as part of the site's environment.



## Social Media Policy

Revision #	1
Implementation Date	8/23/2012
Last Reviewed/Update Date	8/3/2023
Resolution #	31511

Page 5 of 8

### 8. *Comment Policy*

1. As a government entity, the City of Marion must abide by all state and federal laws and uphold the public's First Amendment right to free speech. Each social media platform may have its own community standards and rules for commenting. Under the First Amendment, the City of Marion expressly reserves the right to remove or block submissions that contain:
  - a. Obscenities (obscenity is not the same as profanity);
  - b. Defamation
  - c. Threats to any person or organization, including encouragement of violence;
  - d. Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity;
  - e. Content that violates a legal ownership interest, such as a copyright or trademark, of any party;
  - f. Malware links
  - g. Other unprotected speech that is inconsistent with the City's overall mission or function
2. The City reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of this policy or any applicable law. No content or comments shall be removed until after consulting with the Communications Manager and the City Attorney. The Communications Manager and/or the City Attorney shall establish a procedure for tracking removed content.
3. When a person's comment is removed, the City should post a reason for removing the comment (i.e. "A comment to this post was removed because it threatened violence against a City Elected Official. This is in violation of the City's comment policy.").
4. Although the City encourages posts and comments on social media sites managed by the City, the sites are limited public forums and are moderated by City staff. The City reserves the right to deactivate the comment feature on City-affiliated social media sites, where applicable, at any time without prior notice.
5. A comment posted by a member of the public on any City of Marion 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.
6. All users must adhere to applicable federal, state and local laws, regulations and policies.



## Social Media Policy

Revision #	1
Implementation Date	8/23/2012
Last Reviewed/Update Date	8/3/2023
Resolution #	31511

Page 6 of 8

### 9. *Elected and Appointed Officials*

1. For the purpose of this policy, the term “elected and appointed official” refers to any person currently elected or appointed to the Marion City Council or any City of Marion Board or Commission.
2. Elected and appointed officials interacting with any of the City’s social media sites must comply with applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and policies. This includes adherence to established laws and policies regarding copyright, records retention, the Open Records law, First Amendment, and privacy laws.
3. Elected and appointed officials are representatives of the City and should conduct all communications on social media in a professional manner.
4. Elected and appointed officials must exercise caution in using personal or professional social media profiles or pages to discuss, deliberate, or express opinions on any issue within the subject matter jurisdiction of the City (or any commission, board, or committee of the City), as such responses may create a “meeting” in violation of the Open Meetings law.
5. Adding to a post or comment that would create a quorum of the group you represent should be strictly avoided. (If the comment or posting requires official review it should be handled before the group during a public meeting.)
6. Elected officials should not use social media as a mechanism for conducting official City business other than to communicate informally with the public.
7. Elected officials should be sure that efforts to be transparent do not result in sharing non-public information related to employees, personnel data, medical information, claims or lawsuits, or other non-public or confidential information.
8. To help prevent errors and liability issues, officials are encouraged to ask the appropriate staff person or department to post official City documents (i.e., an ordinance recently passed by City Council), rather than summarizing such documents themselves. If an elected official makes a mistake, it should be corrected as soon as the official is made aware of the error. Corrections should be upfront and as timely as possible. If you modify an earlier post, make it clear the posting has been corrected. Consider designating corrections with “Fixed link” or “Fact correction” prior to the correction.
9. Elected and appointed officials who choose to have a social media page or profile that identifies their office, should include the verbiage “Content on this site does not represent any official position of the City, only that of (NAME) in (THEIR) personal capacity.”



## Social Media Policy

Revision #	1
Implementation Date	8/23/2012
Last Reviewed/Update Date	8/3/2023
Resolution #	31511

Page 7 of 8

10. City staff will not set-up or administer a City-run social media account for an elected or appointed official.

### **10. Accessibility**

It is the City's goal to provide maximum access for all users of the City's social media sites. Departments using social media will use reasonable efforts to ensure that persons with disabilities may have access to the City social media presence.

### **11. Accuracy and Timeliness**

The City of Marion will make every effort to ensure the accuracy of information provided on the City's social media pages. However, several factors that are beyond the City's control (including unauthorized modification of electronic data, transmission errors, browser incompatibilities, cached information, or other aspects of electronic communication in an evolving and time sensitive environment) can affect the quality of the information displayed on the site.

The City's timeliness about posts and responses to comments may also vary based on staff availability.

### **12. Disclaimer**

1. Whenever possible, City social media accounts will include a link to this policy.
2. A disclaimer that includes the following language will also be posted on the social media account:
  - a. City of Marion social media pages are informational in nature and are not designed to handle official requests or notices from the public. All requests and notices to the City of Marion must be made through the applicable City department.
  - b. Do NOT report emergencies on any City social media sites. City social media sites are not monitored 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In case of an emergency, dial 911.
  - c. By using this site, you agree to abide by the City's comment policy and Terms of Use. Please note that comments will be monitored by City staff during the City's normal business hours to ensure that posted comments are suitable for all readers while respecting a range of opinions and points of view. We will reply to comments in a timely manner when a response is appropriate. We reserve the right to hide or delete comments that violate the Terms of Use. Any content posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure.
  - d. The opinions expressed by visitors to the page(s) do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the City or any individual department. The City does not endorse any product, service,



## Social Media Policy

Revision #	1
Implementation Date	8/23/2012
Last Reviewed/Update Date	8/3/2023
Resolution #	31511

Page 8 of 8

company, or organization advertising on social media. The ads that appear on social media platforms are sold, posted, and maintained by the individual corporations.

3. The Communications Manager has the authority to work with the Authorized Administrators or Department Directors to create an abbreviated disclaimer where necessary or appropriate. Said authority includes the right to waive the disclaimer if this social media policy is linked to the social media page or site.

### **14. Questions**

Any questions concerning this Social Media Policy or related procedures or fees should be directed to the Amber Bisinger, Communications Manager.

Amber Bisinger, Communications Manager  
City Manager's Office  
1225 6<sup>th</sup> Ave  
Marion, IA 52302  
(319)743-6345  
[abisinger@cityofmarion.org](mailto:abisinger@cityofmarion.org)