

## SOCIAL MEDIA USE POLICY, STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES

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### Purpose

To address the way residents and businesses communicate and obtain information about the City of Columbus, Indiana online, the City of Columbus' (the "City") departments may consider using social media tools to reach a broader audience. The City encourages the use of social media to further the goals of the City and the missions of its departments, where appropriate.

The City has an overriding interest and expectation in deciding what is "announced" or "spoken" on behalf of the City on social media sites. This policy establishes internal procedures for the use of social media. This policy covers all departments within the City of Columbus.

Social media refers to activities that integrate technology, social interaction and content creation. This media allows people to generate, organize, share, edit and comment on web content by means of RSS and other web feeds, blogs, mashups, widgets, wikis, podcasts and photo- and video-sharing, to name a few.

### General

- All of the City's social media sites that are posted by departments and offices should be logged with Community Development or its designee.
- The City's website (<http://www.columbus.in.gov>) will remain the City's primary and predominant internet presence.
- The most appropriate uses of social media tools are as informational channels to increase the City's ability to broadcast its messages to the widest possible audience.
  - o Social media will not be the primary tool used for disseminating emergency information. **The Everbridge system, through Bartholomew County 911 System will remain the primary source of that information.** Emergency information may be released on social media sites, but not before release on the Everbridge or other emergency information systems.
- Wherever possible, content posted to the City's social media sites will also be made available on the City's website.
- Wherever possible, content posted to the City's social media sites must contain hyperlinks 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 of Columbus.

- Each Department Head or designee will be responsible for the content and upkeep (including maintenance and monitoring) of any social media site that department may create.
- The City's social media sites shall comply with all appropriate City of Columbus policies and procedures, including but not limited to:
  - o **Applicable policies from Personnel Handbook**
- The City's social media sites shall comply with the City's conflict of interest code and applicable ethics rules and policies:
  - o **Applicable policies from Personnel Handbook**
- Indiana law and relevant City records retention schedules apply to social media formats and social media content. Appropriate retention formats for specific social media tools are detailed in the City's Twitter, Facebook and Video Posting standards.
- The City will approach the use of social media tools as consistently as possible, enterprise wide.

#### **Guidelines for Public Postings on City Social Media Sites**

Users and visitors to the City's social media sites shall be notified that the intended purpose of the site is to serve as a means of communication between City departments and members of the public. The City's social media site articles, posts and comments containing any of the following forms of content shall not be allowed and shall be removed and archived as soon as possible:

- o Profane language or content;
- o Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability, veteran status or sexual orientation;
- o Sexual content or links to sexual content;
- o Solicitations of commerce;
- o Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity;
- o Information that may compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems;
- o Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party
- o Content that defames or slanders another person

Users shall be informed that all posts are monitored by City personnel and are subject to public information laws for municipal governments as outlined by the

State of Indiana and will be archived for such purpose. Users posting to the City's social media sites that 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.

- These guidelines must be displayed to users or made available by hyperlink.
- **Note:** Any content removed based on these guidelines must be retained, including the time, date and identity of the poster when available (see the City's Twitter, Facebook and Video Posting standards), in accordance with the City's policy on the retention of such information.
- The City reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of this policy or any applicable law.

## **PROCEDURES**

### **Administration of the City's Social Media Sites**

- Community Development or its designee will maintain a list of social media tools which are being used by City departments and staff, along with a list of departments' administrators.
- Each Department Head or designee will inform the Community Development or its designee of any new social media sites or administrative changes to existing sites.
- Community Development or its designee must be able to immediately edit or remove content from social media sites
- For each social media tool approved for use by the City the following documentation will be developed and adopted:
  - o Operational and use guidelines;
  - o Standards and processes for managing accounts on social media sites;
  - o City and departmental branding standards;
  - o Standards for the administration of social media sites
  - o Social Media Standards

The following social media tools have been approved by the City and standards have been developed for their use:

**Instagram/Twitter – Instagram/Twitter Standard**

**Facebook - Facebook Standard**

**Video - Video Posting Standard**

## INSTAGRAM AND TWITTER STANDARD AND GUIDELINES

### Purpose

Twitter is a micro-blogging tool that allows account holders to tweet up to 140 characters of information to followers. By procuring and maintaining Twitter accounts, City departments will communicate information directly to their Twitter followers, alerting them to news and directing them to the City's website for more information. Instagram is an online mobile photo-sharing, video-sharing, and social networking service that enables its users to take pictures and videos, and share them either publicly or privately on the app, as well as through a variety of other social networking platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and Flickr. **These standards should be used in conjunction with the City's Social Media Use Policy, Standards and Procedures.**

### Content

- A Department's Director, Department Head or designee shall hold and maintain that department's Instagram or Twitter account.
- Each department will have only one Twitter account, unless otherwise approved by the Community Development or its designee. Account information, including usernames and passwords, shall be registered with Community Development or its designee.
- A department's Instagram and Twitter biography and/or background information will include a link to City's website where the following disclaimer information will be posted:
  - o "This is an official City of Columbus, Indiana Instagram/Twitter account. For more information about the City of Columbus please visit [www.columbus.in.gov](http://www.columbus.in.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 direct tweets to this page and its list of followers may be considered a public record which is subject to disclosure pursuant to the Indiana Public Records Act. Public information requests will be handled by individual departments and sent to CTO."
- Instagram and Twitter usernames shall begin with "ColumbusIN" (ColumbusINPD, ColumbusINFire and ColumbusINPlanning). In cases where the username consists of too many characters, begin with "CbusIN."
- The main image shall be the Department logo or an appropriate photo. It may also be the City's logo which will be provided by Community Development or designee. If the City logo is not used as the main image it should be in the background section.
- Instagram and Twitter accounts shall serve three primary purposes:
  - o

- Disseminate immediate interesting or important information to residents of which a news item on the City’s website is not necessary or possible
- Promote City-sponsored meetings, events, programs and facilities
- Refer followers to a news item or content hosted at the City’s website and the department’s Facebook page
- Information posted on Instagram and Twitter shall conform to the existing guidelines the City and the department that is posting the information. Posts and tweets shall be relevant, timely and informative.
- Instagram and Twitter content, as much as possible, shall mirror information presented on the City’s website and other existing information-dissemination mechanisms. The department’s director, Department Head or designee shall ensure that information is posted correctly the first time.
- Departments will use proper grammar and standard AP style, and will avoid the use of jargon and abbreviations. Instagram and Twitter are more casual than most other communication tools, but communications must still best represent the City at all times.
- The department’s director, Department Head or designee shall be responsive to those constituents who communicate via Twitter's @reply or direct message functions and be reasonably responsive to comments on the department’s Instagram account. Communication with followers will be timely and consistent with existing guidelines.

### **Archive**

- The department’s director, Department Head or designee will utilize the social media archival service adopted by the City of Columbus in accordance with the City of Columbus’s and State of Indiana’s retention policy for public comments.

## **FACEBOOK STANDARD AND GUIDELINES**

### **Purpose**

Facebook is a social networking site that continues to grow in popularity and functionality. Businesses and government agencies have joined individuals in using Facebook to promote activities, programs, projects and events. This standard is designed for City departments looking to drive traffic to department websites and to inform more people about City activities. These standards should be used in conjunction with the Social Media Use policy and video posting policy. As Facebook changes, these standards may be updated as needed.

### **Establishing a Page**

Whenever a department determines it has a business need for a Facebook account, it will submit a request to the Community Development or designee. Once approved, Community Development or designee will work with the department to create a basic page for the department. Applications are not to be added to the City's Facebook site without the express written approval of Community Development. The department's director or designee will register the page with a City email address. Personal Facebook profiles may be used to administrate City pages as approved by Community Development or designee.

### **Type of "Pages"**

- The City will create "pages" in Facebook (not "groups"). Facebook "pages" offer distinct advantages including greater visibility, customization and measurability.

### **Format**

- For 'type' description, choose "government."
- The main image shall be the Department logo or an appropriate photo. It may also be the City's logo and the City logo must be one of the profile pictures.
- Departments will include a mission statement or appropriate text in the introduction box on the Wall Page.
- Using the FBML static page application, a boilerplate section should contain a department/program description and the following:
- "This is an official City of Columbus, Indiana Facebook account. For more information about the City of Columbus please visit [www.columbus.in.gov](http://www.columbus.in.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 direct tweets to this page and its list of followers may be considered a public record which is subject to disclosure pursuant to the Indiana

Public Records Act. Public information requests will be handled by individual departments and sent to CTO.”

- If comments are turned on, the FBML page shall also include a Comment Policy Box with the following disclaimer:
  - o “Comments posted to this page will be monitored and inappropriate content will be removed as soon as possible. Under the City of Columbus, Indiana Social Media Use Policy, Standards and Procedures, the City reserves the right to remove inappropriate content, including, but not limited to, those items that have obscene language or sexual content, threaten or defame any person or organization, violate the legal ownership interest of another party, promote illegal activity and promote 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.”
- The page shall be linked to the City’s Facebook page.
- A link to [www.columbus.in.gov](http://www.columbus.in.gov) will be included on the Info page.
- City department and project pages should be fans of other City Facebook pages.
- The page name must be descriptive of the department. Each department will choose carefully with due consideration given to abbreviations, slang iterations, and proper grammatical usage.
  - o Community Development or designee will approve proposed names.

### **Page Administrators**

- A successful page requires consistent attention. The department’s director will designate one or more staff members as page administrators who will be responsible for monitoring the department’s Facebook page. Only designated department staff members will make posts.
- The department’s director or designee will be responsible for ensuring content is not stale. The department will designate one or more back-up administrators, **one of which must be Community Development or designee.**

### **Comments and Discussion Boards**

- Comments to the Wall generally will be allowed if the department is able to and does regularly monitor content. Discussion Boards shall be turned off unless approved by the Community Development or designee.
- Department Heads, Department directors or their designee will be required to respond to comments on the Facebook page within 48 hours. Auto replies may be used. Content of the reply must be approved by Community Development or their designee before they are implemented on the Facebook page.



### **Photos and Video**

- Page administrators may add photos and videos to the department’s Facebook page. The approval of Community Development will not be required. If there are postings of photos and/or videos of the public, staff must secure waivers by individuals depicted in the photo and/or video. Photos and/or videos of the City’s employees taken during regular office hours may be posted without obtaining waivers. Videos must follow the Video Posting Standard.
- The ability for fans to post photos, videos and links shall be turned off.

### **Style**

- The City’s and the departments’ Facebook pages will be based upon a template that includes consistent City branding.
- Community Development or its designee will provide departments and offices with the template.
- Departments will use proper grammar and standard AP style, and will avoid the use of jargon and abbreviations. Facebook is more casual than most other communication tools, but communications must still best represent the City at all times.
- Reference the attached “The Government’s Guide to Using Facebook” for guidelines on best practices for governments.

### **Applications**

- There are thousands of Facebook applications. Common applications can allow users to stream video and music, post photos, and view and subscribe to RSS feeds. While some may be useful to the page's mission, they can cause clutter and security risks.
- An application must not be used unless it serves an appropriate and a valid business purpose, adds to the user experience, comes from a trusted source, and is approved by the City of Columbus IT Department.
- An application may be removed at any time if the City determines that it is causing a security breach or spreading viruses.

### **Archive**

- The department’s director or designee will maintain an electronic record or printout of any information necessary to retain for the purposes of public records retention in accordance with applicable City policy regarding retention of such information that is not available from the application.
- Archival procedures will be completed per the direction of Community Development or its designee.

**A Note about Indemnity**

- Most online sites require users to agree to terms of service that include such provisions as:
  1. **Indemnification and Defense.** When a public agency creates an account on a social media site, it typically must agree not to sue the site, nor allow the site to be included in suits against the agency. Many sites also require the account owner to pay the site's legal costs arising from such suits.
  2. **Applicable Law and Venue.** Most terms of service also assert that a certain state's laws (usually Indiana, but not necessarily always) apply to the terms of use and that the state's courts will adjudicate disputes.
- The terms of service represent a binding contract; public agencies should assure that they have taken the steps necessary to bind the agency to such an agreement.
- Some companies are willing to negotiate on the substantive provisions in the terms of use, but they may be hesitant to negotiate separate agreements with dozens of different agencies.

## **VIDEO POSTING STANDARD**

### **Purpose**

The City will enable access to online video content, as this is the way many residents communicate and obtain information online. Key objectives for video content shall meet one or more of the follow goals: to further the department’s mission, provide information about City services, showcase City and community events and explore City issues The City encourages the use of video content to further the goals of the City and the missions of its departments, where appropriate. These standards should be used in conjunction with the City's Social Media Use Policy, Standards and Procedures.

### **Video Posting Guidelines**

- The department’s director, Department Head or designee will be responsible for approving the video content.
- Video quality must be comparable to DVD resolution quality.
- Low quality video will be considered as long as the audio portion is clear and the content is compelling and informative.
- All videos must be posted on the department’s website and the department’s Facebook page.
- The department must secure a disclaimer from the author or owner or the right to use all of or part of a video if the video was not produced by the department or any other City department.
- Videos streamed from other sources may not be posted to the City’s website. Links to external videos are permitted, but it must only be used when content is relevant and necessary approvals are received.

### **Submitting Videos to Hosting Sites**

- Videos may be submitted to hosting sites such as YouTube and Vimeo as well as Facebook on a case-by-case basis under the direction of the department’s director or designee.
- Most of these sites limit the video to the lesser of 10 minutes in length or less than 1 GB of data storage.
- Comments posted to these sites must be monitored or the ability to post a comment shall be turned off. Comments must adhere to the guidelines stated in the Social Media Use Policy.

### **Archive**

- Any video posted to a third party’s video site must also be posted the department’s website for purposes of records retention.