	CITY OF HENDERSONVILLE		
		Policy Name:	Social Media Policy

I. Purpose

It is the policy of the City to provide guidance to City employees and to inform employees of expectations when using social media so that the City achieves high standards in communication that reflect positively on the City and complies with other relevant City policies. Additionally, it is the policy of the City to provide guidance and necessary information to members of the community who access City social media sites for updates and information.


II. Applicability

1. All City departments and their employees must follow the Social Media Policy when using City-related social media sites.
2. All City employees must follow the Social Media Policy when using personal social media sites in order to minimize the risk of personal social media sites impacting City business and community perception.
3. All community members who access City social media sites must follow the guidelines set out in the Social Media Policy in order to ensure continued access to updates and information posted on City social media sites.

III. Use of Social Media

- A. Definition of Social Media: Umbrella term that encompasses various City and personal activities integrating technology, social interactions, and content creation to share and exchange information, allow comments on user-generated content, or otherwise encourage online discussion about City programs, services, events, activities, and other matters of public interest. Social media sites, including but not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and Tumblr, all fall under this policy.
- B. Social media enables the City to reach different demographics in order to achieve certain business and communication goals including the following:
 1. Transparency in conducting local government business
 2. Civic engagement regarding City projects, programs and initiatives
 3. Disseminating information, especially time-sensitive material during public safety emergencies
 4. Promotion of the City and its services and programs

Social media tools supplement the City’s primary websites and, among other purposes, should drive people to the primary websites. The City’s primary websites are its primary and definitive source of accurate information about the City. These sites include HendersonvilleNC.gov and DowntownHendersonville.org. As a rule, City communications posted to social or mobile

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media sites should also be available on the City’s primary websites or contain links directly to the City’s primary websites. Endorsing or promoting of services, entities, or products not sponsored by the City is not allowed on City social media sites unless the City Manager or their designee authorizes such variance.

IV. Prohibited Uses of Social Media


Whether an employee is using social media for personal or official City use, the following are strictly prohibited at all times whether on or off duty and whether using a City or a personal device. This is a representative list and does not include all prohibitions that would violate City policies and procedures.

1. Disclosure of confidential information to which an employee has access as part of the employee’s role or duties. Examples of such information are a vendor’s patented information of which the employee has knowledge due to his/her assignment on a City project; personal, confidential or health information about someone; billing information of customers compiled and maintained by the City; any data collected from a person applying for financial or other types of assistance including, but not limited to, their income, bank accounts, savings account, etc.
2. Disclosure of non-public information or legally protected personal information to which an employee has access or has obtained from the City such as someone’s address, date of birth, driver’s license number, social security number or other personal information.
3. Information related to unlawful activities including, but not limited to, the use, sale or distribution of illegal substances.
4. Employee actions must align with the City’s Personnel Policy and other relevant policies at all times.

Employees are encouraged to ask for clarification and verification before posting anything they are unsure of on the City’s website, social media sites, and personal social media sites.

V. Personal Social Media Use

Personal use is defined as use of social media by an employee speaking as an individual. Personal use of social media by a City employee is permitted for social or professional networking purposes. In personal use, the employee is speaking as an individual and not on behalf of the City. An employee’s use and comments made on social media sites are subject to limited First Amendment protections. As a public employee, use of social media is considered an extension of the workplace as it relates to employee conduct. As a City employee, personal use is subject to the following guidelines:

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1. Where personal use is related to a matter of public concern, it must be conducted in such a manner that a reader would not think the employee is speaking for or on behalf of the City.
2. Employees must comply with City policies, including but not limited to the Personnel Policy, the Employee Handbook, the Network and Internet Use Policy, and the Cellular Phone Policy.
3. Employees should exercise sound judgment and discretion so as not to reflect adversely on the City in contributing to social media sites.
4. Personal use of social media may not violate or infringe upon the right of any other person or entity or constitute a criminal offense or create civil liability.
5. Personal use of social media while on duty, including during breaks, must not be excessive such that it interferes with the employee's work or work of others.

Employees are reminded that if their personal devices are connected to the City's wireless resources, data sent, received, or stored may become City property and may be subject to transparency and information laws.


City employees are prohibited from posting, transmitting, or disseminating any photographs, video or audio recordings, likenesses or images of department logos, emblems, uniforms, badges, patches, marked vehicles, equipment, or other City-specific material on any personal or social networking website or web page without the express written permission of the City Manager or their designee. No employee shall represent themselves, directly or indirectly, in any public forum as a City employee, either by text, photograph, or image depicting a uniform or badge in any manner that reflects a lack of good moral character. No employee will represent themselves in any public forum as an employee of the City with other information, opinion, or posture that would bring unfavorable criticism or embarrassment upon the City.

Inappropriate personal usage of social media may be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including termination.


VI. Official Use of Social Media

City departments are encouraged to create and use a social media site to support their services and operations. Departmental engagement in social media is subject to the provisions of this Policy.

- A. The department's social media action plan shall include the following:
 1. Designation of City employees who are approved for official use of social media as spokespersons for their department
 2. Goal and Objectives of the site or application
 3. Strategy: Describe how use of the social media supports a larger departmental communications plan or initiatives related to the community engagement strategy and identify audiences, messages, and other tactics.

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4. **Site Manager:** List a primary contact for the social media site and list all employees authorized to post on the site
 5. **Service Delivery & Response:** Outline the plan for fulfillment of service requests that may come in via the site or how responses will be made and include timeframes for responses.
 6. **Implementation and Resources:** Include an implementation plan as well as process for managing site accounts such as frequency and protocol associated with posting information.
 7. **Passwords and Authorizations:** Provide all authorization information necessary for designated employees to gain access to social media sites for updates or postings in the absence of the site manager.
 8. **Public comments:** Determine whether public comments will be permitted and how such comments will be displayed.
- B. City social media sites and applications, regardless of date of establishment or whether maintained internally or externally, must adhere to City policies and protocols. These include the following:
1. **Communications Standards:** All tools must maintain corporate standards in the use of City logos. Variations of the standards can be approved by the City Manager or their designee.
 2. **Best Practices:** Use of social media sites shall meet best practices for maintaining social media such as but not limited to frequent updates and accurate information.
 3. **Public Records and Retention:** All sites are subject to state of N.C. public records laws and retention and shall be based on standards for other public records.
 4. **Political Activity:** The social media sites shall not contain any political information or be used for political activity.
 5. **City-Sponsored:** Nothing shall be posted on City social media sites that is not sponsored by the City unless the City Manager or their designee grants a variance.
 6. **Internet Security Policies:** All sites shall comply with City policies and procedures for information security.
 7. **Conduct:** City policies, rules, regulations, and standards of conduct apply to employees who engage in social activities while conducting City business.
 8. **Privacy:** Information created for or posted on social media sites by City employees shall comply with all privacy protection laws to protect the privacy of employees, privacy of citizens, and the City and its confidential information.
 9. **Other Laws:** Sites also shall adhere to all copyright, public records, retention, fair use, and financial disclosure laws and other statutes that might apply to the City or department.

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10. Third-Party Citations: Information created for or posted on social media sites by City employees shall not contain citations of vendors, suppliers, clients, citizens, co-workers or other stakeholders without their explicit permission.


C. When a City employee is designated by a department or the City Manager as an official social media spokesperson for the City, the following guidelines apply:

1. Identify oneself and capacity: When City-related matters are discussed in one's official capacity, each employee must identify himself or herself and the role held at the City as it is important to clearly articulate when speaking for oneself, when giving an opinion, or when speaking on behalf of the City
2. Employees are personally responsible for what they publish: Be mindful that information published in social media constitutes a public record and as such will be retained per the regulations of public records law
3. Be transparent, admit mistakes, and respectfully differ: Promptly admit to and correct mistakes with facts and do not enter into verbal altercations with users
4. Use good judgment: If the content of what is being published or posted causes discomfort, the employee should pause, review and edit the submission; if discomfort remains, discuss it with the department manager before posting
5. Adhere to all of the same prohibitions that are included in Section 5-Personal Social Media Use

D. City social media sites that permit public comments and postings should include the following disclaimers:

1. Views and opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not reflect those of City of Hendersonville officials and employees
2. People who comment shall have no expectation of privacy as comments and postings are public records retained and subject to disclosure in accordance with applicable laws and City policies
3. City social media policies are subject to amendment or modification at any time without prior notice
4. Multiple violations of comment standards may result in a public user's comments and postings being banned from City social media sites
5. Limitations may apply to public users and users should be cautioned not to use the site when another form or filing, notification, or request is required.

All comments and postings shall be retained in accordance with City policies. Public comments from City social media sites may be blocked, hidden, or removed as long as the site manager develops content-neutral comment standards.

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All comments and postings that are blocked, hidden, or removed from City social media sites shall be retained until such time as the City Attorney’s Office advises otherwise.

The City reserves the right to block, hide or remove comments and postings that contain the following:

- Vulgar, abusive or threatening language, defamatory statements, or nudity in profile pictures or attachments
- Personal attacks, hate speech, or offensive terminology targeting individuals or groups of individuals
- Suggestions or encouragement of illegal activity
- Unsolicited business proposals or endorsements and promotion of commercial services, products, or entities
- Infringements of copyrights, trademarks, or other intellectual property
- Endorsements of political parties, candidates, or groups
- Off-topic comments and postings, spam, or links to unrelated sites

VII. Oversight of Social Media Sites, Policies, and Use

The City Manager has the authority to delegate oversight duties as deemed appropriate. The City Manager or their designee will review requests for new social media sites to ensure that the sites are implemented as effectively and consistently as possible across all City departments. This includes approval for individual employees to engage in social media as City employees and as an official part of their duties. The City maintains a list of social media accounts approved for use and will expand or contract the list as social media evolves. The City will also monitor all City social media accounts to ensure adherence to the policy and reserves the right to remove pages or close sites if necessary.