

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 22, 2020

TO: Mayor Kevin White & City Council

FROM: Lynn Kitchens, Director of Marketing – via 
Mercy Rushing, City Manager

SUBJECT: Social Media Policy for use of City of Mineola social media outlets

Council Meeting Agenda Item for October 26, 2020

Background Information:

Merriam-Webster defines Social Media as: forms of electronic communication through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos). Social Media platforms include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TicToc, LinkedIn and others.

This social media policy is intended to outline policy and procedure for the use of official City of Mineola social media to publicize official city services and events, disseminate pertinent information to the public and provide guidance to city employees who use social media as a communication tool to engage with the public, as well as employee responsibilities regarding the use of city resources.

This policy outlines the expectation of user participation, monitoring and accessibility, designating only a few authorized individuals to access the various social media accounts to limit the potential for error.

This policy is intended to supplement - not replace - the City of Mineola's Social Media Policy found in the Employee Handbook – Section 8.17. Internal policies on confidentiality, use of city equipment, professionalism, and other rules of conduct addressed in other policies are not affected, altered or amended by this policy.

Given the evolving nature of social media, this document will be reviewed and updated periodically as technologies or law evolve.

This policy has been reviewed and approved by City Attorney Blake Armstrong.

Recommendation: It is the recommendation of the Marketing Department that the Mayor and City Council consider the approval of this Social Media Policy by ordinance.

ORDINANCE NUMBER _____

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF MINEOLA, TEXAS APPROVING AND ADOPTING A SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY; IMPLEMENTING REGULATIONS REGARDING THE ADMINISTRATION AND USE OF CITY-SPONSORED SOCIAL MEDIA SITES; PROVIDING A SEVERABILITY CLAUSE; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, the City Council for the City of Mineola, Texas (“City”) finds it to be appropriate and necessary to implement regulations concerning the administration and use of City-sponsored social media sites; and

WHEREAS, the City finds that the City’s use of social media sites can facilitate the dissemination of information concerning City business, services and activities; and

WHEREAS, the City finds that sponsoring social media sites can enhance the transparency of City government by allowing citizens to not only receive information, but also provide constructive comments and thoughts concerning City related matters; and

WHEREAS, the City finds that the following regulations concerning the administration and use of City-sponsored social media sites is necessary and in the best interest of its citizenry.

NOW, THEREFORE, be it ORDAINED by the City Council for the City of Mineola, Texas as follows:

**I.
Social Media Policy Adopted**

The City Council hereby approves and adopts the social media policy attached hereto as Exhibit A, which is incorporated herein for all purposes as if fully set forth at length.

**II.
Severability**

Should any phrase, clause, section, sentence or other provision of this Ordinance be found invalid, illegal or unconstitutional by any court or tribunal having jurisdiction, said finding shall not affect the remainder of this Ordinance.

**III.
Effective Date**

This Ordinance and the social media policy adopted herein shall become effective immediately upon its passage and approval by the City Council for the City of Mineola, Texas.

PASSED AND APPROVED by the City Council for the City of Mineola, Texas on this the _____ day of _____, 2020.

APPROVED BY:

Kevin White, Mayor

ATTEST:

Cindy Karch, City Secretary

SOLICAL MEDIA POLICY

This policy outlines the protocol and procedures for the use of social media to publicize official city services and events. In addition, this policy provides guidance to the employees of the City of Mineola concerning their use of social media as well as their responsibilities with regard to social media and the use of city resources.

Definitions

Social Media: For the purposes of this policy, social media shall mean official city websites as well as all forms of online community activities such as online social networks (e.g., Facebook), professional networking sites (e.g., LinkedIn), message boards (e.g., Twitter), video sharing (e.g., YouTube), blogs, wikis, chat rooms and online forums.

Policies and Procedures

Official City of Mineola Social Media Sites

Official social media sites/pages representing the city will be the property of the City of Mineola. Accounts must be registered through the Marketing Department. If approved by the Marketing Department, the Marketing Department will secure approval from the City Manager or designee before establishing the account.

A. The Marketing Department will be responsible for the oversight of the city's social media formats to include:

1. Serving as liaison with contracted website developers, designers and hosting companies, and related services;
2. Authorizing all social media accounts;
3. Maintaining a list of social media domains as well as usernames and passwords;
4. Monitoring social media activity to verify that content is compliant with the city's goals, objectives and ethical conduct policy;
5. Access to all administrative rights and privileges of all social media domains and accounts belonging to the City of Mineola.

B. In order to be acceptable, the content of the social media must contain:

1. Information about city events, activities or issues tied to something funded, operated, managed, etc. by the city;
2. Positive aspects of the City of Mineola; or
3. Reflect the goals and purpose of the account (e.g., Historic Downtown Mineola posting about shops in the Historic Downtown District offering special deals; Historical Museum posting about displays or activities).

C. Postings to City of Mineola social media sites must be respectful and shall **NOT** contain any of the following:

1. Comments that are not typically related to the particular posting being commented upon;
2. Profane language or content;
3. 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, as well as any other category protected by federal, state, or local laws;
4. Sexual content or links to sexual content;
5. Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity;
6. Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems;
7. Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party including the disclosure of private or confidential information;
8. Information about actual or potential claims and litigation involving the city;
9. The intellectual property of others, without written permission; or
10. Photographs of employees or members of the public, without written permission or publicly posted notice given.

D. The City of Mineola website will remain the official location for content regarding city business, services and events. When possible, links from social media sites will be used to direct users back to the city's website for more information.

E. Any request for a social media site from a department or employee must be approved by the Marketing Department. If approved by the Marketing Department, the Marketing Department will secure approval from the City Manager or designee before establishing the account. Requests should include:

1. Purpose of the site, goals desired to be accomplished, and benchmarks to track progress.
2. How often the site will need to be updated; and
3. Individuals that have authority to change content of the social media site.

F. Only designated employees will have authority to change content of the social media site. The authorized user names and passwords will be kept by the marketing department and city secretary.

G. Individual departments that the posted information is related to are responsible for providing a site administrator with an official response to any inquiries related to the posted information.

H. Communications through social media is PUBLIC RECORD. Posts by city departments, employees and any outside feedback (comments) will be part of the PUBLIC RECORDS for the city. The Marketing Department, working with the city's Public Information Officer, will be responsible for establishing guidelines for maintaining and storing copies of the content posted in order to comply with the TEXAS PUBLIC INFORMATION ACT.

I. Content posted by outside contributors and not officially posted by the City of Mineola do not constitute any endorsement or representation on the part of the City of Mineola. Any comments or content posted

that are deemed inappropriate will be deleted. The city also reserves the right to block from accessing the city's social media sites any users that violate these guidelines.

J. If a question arises regarding the use or posting of confidential information on a social media site, the matter shall be referred to the City Attorney for review. The information shall not be posted, or if already posted will be removed immediately until an opinion is rendered by the City Attorney. The City Manager or designee reserves the right to restrict or remove any information on the social media site that he/she does not believe serves in the best interest of the city or puts city's reputation in question..

K. Each official City of Mineola social media page will include a disclaimer that contains wording similar to:

"The City of Mineola maintains this social media site/page to provide information and promote City of Mineola programs, services, policies and objectives. It is the city's goal to keep the most current and accurate information available to the public on this site, however, varying events occur that could affect the timeliness of the information and the accuracy of the content. Comments posted on this site by "friends", "fans", or "followers" will be monitored and any posting or comments that are disrespectful, offensive, dishonest, or do not accurately reflect the views, values or objectives of the City of Mineola will be deleted without notice. This site/page may contain links to other Internet sites and resources as a convenience to the viewer. Linked sites/pages are not under the control of, nor maintained by, the City of Mineola and the City of Mineola is not responsible for the content of these sites. In addition, the inclusion of a linked site/page does not constitute an endorsement or promotion by the City of Mineola."

Use of Social Media at Work

A. Work-related social media access by employees while on duty utilizing city property will be subject to the rules and guidelines set forth by the City of Mineola and Marketing Department.

B. Personal use of social media by employees while on duty utilizing city property will be subject to the rules and guidelines set forth in **City of Mineola Employee Handbook** per HR Department.

C. Media inquiries generated on social media sites should follow the protocols generally accepted by the city regarding media inquiries and should be forwarded to City Manager.

D. The city reserves the right to monitor employees use of social media sites accessed during work hours on city equipment. Users should have no expectation of privacy or confidentiality when using these resources that have been provided by the city.

E. Employees may not ignore copyright laws, cite or reference sources inaccurately. Plagiarism is prohibited.

F. All information published on social media sites must comply with city's privacy and/or data policies. This includes comments, pictures, videos, audio or any other multimedia posted on social networking sites, blogs, and forums.

G. Employees are discouraged from discussing information about city employees, citizens, vendors, issues, business or legal matters without expressed consent to do so.

H. All city-related communication through social media outlets should remain professional in nature. Incomplete, inaccurate, inappropriate, threatening, demeaning, harassing or poorly worded postings may be harmful to other employees, damage employee relationships, create hostile working environments, violate city policies or harm the city's reputation. Such wording will be removed by the Marketing Department staff at their discretion. Employees bear full responsibility for the material they post on social media sites. Inappropriate usage of social media can be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

The City of Mineola reserves the right to remove content that is deemed in violation of this policy or any applicable law. Violations of this policy may result in immediate revocation of any or all electronic communications access and user privileges and may be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including termination. Certain violations could result in civil or criminal liabilities for the user.

Use of Social Media at Home

While the city encourages its employees to enjoy and make good use of their off-duty time, certain activities on the part of employees may become a concern if they have the effect of impairing the work of any employee; harassing, demeaning, or creating a hostile work environment for any employee; disrupting the smooth and orderly flow of work within the office; or harming the goodwill and reputation of the city among its citizens or in the community at large. In the area of social media, employees may use such media outside work as long as such use does not produce the adverse consequences noted above. For this reason, the city reminds its employees that the following guidelines apply in their use of social media, both on and off duty:

- A. Information that is published on personal online sites should never be attributed to the city and should not appear to be endorsed by or originated from the City of Mineola.
- B. Employees engaging on personal social media platforms should not use their City of Mineola email account or the city's name, logos, pictures of the employee in a City of Mineola uniform, incorporate the city in their identity (e.g., username, "handle", screen name or profile picture), nor should they speak as a representative of the city.
- C. Any person identified as an employee of the city on a publicly accessible site is expected to maintain a positive online image that is consistent with the city's goals and objectives.
- D. Employees that choose to list their employment affiliation on public websites should regard all communication on that site as professional.
- E. Employees that contribute to a public site or blog and identify themselves as a City of Mineola employee as asked to provide a clear disclaimer that their views are not endorsed by the city and are their beliefs alone.

- F. Relationships with other City of Mineola employees established outside of work on social media sites may have an adverse effect on work relationships. Employees should be mindful of this possibility.
- G. Posts should not disclose private or confidential information including posting photographs of fellow employees or citizens without their permission.