

Sample Social Media Policy

Dear Reader:

The following document was created from the MTAS website ([mtas.tennessee.edu](http://www.mtas.tennessee.edu)). This website is maintained daily by MTAS staff and seeks to represent the most current information regarding issues relative to Tennessee municipal government.

We hope this information will be useful to you; reference to it will assist you with many of the questions that will arise in your tenure with municipal government. However, the *Tennessee Code Annotated* and other relevant laws or regulations should always be consulted before any action is taken based upon the contents of this document.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or comments regarding this information or any other MTAS website material.

Sincerely,

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Reference Number: MTAS-1624

Social Media Policy

City of _____

RESOLUTION NO. _____

A RESOLUTION ADOPTING A SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND INTERNET POSTING POLICY

WHEREAS, The prevalence of online social media has made personal expression on public or semipublic websites commonplace; and

WHEREAS, The free speech rights afforded by the United States and Tennessee Constitutions are of utmost importance to the city/town, its officials and employees; and

WHEREAS, The city/town of _____ has an interest in cultivating and maintaining a positive presence on the internet. NOW THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED by the _____ (*governing body*) that the following is hereby approved and adopted:

SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND INTERNET POSTING POLICY

SECTION 1. APPLICABILITY

1.1. This policy applies to every employee, whether part-time, full-time, currently employed by the city/town in any capacity who posts any material whether written, audio, video or otherwise on any website, blog or any other medium accessible via the internet.

1.2. For purposes of this policy, social media is content created by individuals using accessible and scalable technologies through the Internet. Examples include: Facebook, Twitter, Google +, Skype, LinkedIn, Tumblr, Instagram, Pinterest, Wikipedia, Yammer, YouTube, Snapchat, Xing, etc.

SECTION 2. CITY/TOWN OWNED OR CREATED SOCIAL MEDIA

2.1. The city/town maintains an online presence. An employee may not characterize him or herself as representing the city/town, directly or indirectly, in any online posting unless the characterization is made pursuant to a written policy of the city/town or at the direction of a supervisor.

2.2. All social media sites that are directly or indirectly represented to be an official site of the city/town must be created pursuant to this policy and be approved by _____ (*name of approving official*).

2.3. The city/town's primary and predominant Internet presence shall remain _____ (*city/town website url*) and no other website, blog or social media site shall characterize itself as such.

2.4. The _____ (*department or employee*) is responsible for the content and upkeep of any social media sites created pursuant to this policy.

2.5. Whenever possible a social media site shall link or otherwise refer visitors to the city/town's main website.

2.6. In addition to this policy all social media sites shall comply with any and every other applicable city/town policy including but not limited to:

- a. Public Records Policy
- b. Acceptable Internet Use Policy
- c. IT Security Policy
- d. Ethics Policy
- e. Records Retention Policy

2.7. The content on the city/town's social media sites is subject to Tennessee's Public Records Act (T.C.A. § 10-7-101, *et seq.*) and Open Meetings Act (T.C.A. § 8-44-101, *et seq.*) and no social media site shall be used to circumvent or otherwise violate these laws. Any information posted on the city/

town's social media sites may be a public record subject to public inspection. All lawful records requests for information contained on a social media site shall be fulfilled by _____ (*official or employee*) and any employee whose assistance is necessary to fulfill the request. All of the city/town's social media sites shall contain a clear and conspicuous statement referencing the aforementioned state laws. All official postings on a social media site shall be preserved in accordance with the city/town's records retention schedule.

2.8. All of the city/town's social media sites shall also contain a clear and conspicuous statement that the purpose of the site is to serve as a mechanism for communication between the city/town and its constituents and that all postings are subject to review and deletion by the city/town. The following content is not allowed and will be immediately removed:

Comments not topically related to the particular article being commented upon;

Comments in support of or opposition to political campaigns or ballot measures;

Profane language or content;

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 or sexual orientation;

Sexual content or links to sexual content;

Solicitations of commerce;

Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity;

Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems; or

Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party.

Additionally, repeatedly posting content that is prohibited or egregious postings may subject the poster to banishment from all city/town social media sites.

2.9. The city/town will approach the use of social media tools, software, hardware and applications in a consistent, manner city/town-wide. All new tools, software, hardware and applications must be approved by _____ (*employee or official*).

2.10. Administration of city/town social media sites.

The _____ (*official, employee or department*) will maintain a list of social media tools which are approved for use by city/town departments and staff.

The _____ (*official, employee or department*) will maintain a list of all city/town social media sites, including login and password information. Employees and officials will inform the _____ (*official, employee or department*) of any new social media sites or administrative changes to existing sites.

The city/town must be able to immediately edit or remove content from social media sites.

2.11. For each social media tool approved for use by the city/town, the following documentation will be developed and adopted:

Operational and use guidelines

Standards and processes for managing accounts on social media sites

City/town and departmental branding standards

Enterprise-wide design standards

SECTION 3. NON-CITY/TOWN SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

3.1. An employee may not characterize him or herself as representing the city/town, directly or indirectly, in any online posting unless the characterization is made pursuant to a written policy of the city/town or at the direction of a supervisor.

3.2. The use of a city/town email address, job title, seal or logo, as well as reference to a social media site as the official site of the city/town, shall be deemed an attempt to represent the city/town in an official capacity. Other communications leading an average viewer to conclude that a posting was made in an official capacity shall also be deemed an attempt to represent the city/town in an official capacity.

3.3. Departments have the option of allowing employees to participate in existing social networking sites as part of their job duties. Department Heads may allow or disallow employee participation in any social media activities as part of their job duties and while on municipal work time.

3.4. Any postings on a non-city/town social media site made in an official capacity shall be subject to the Tennessee Public Records Act and the Tennessee Open Meetings Act.

3.5. An employee or official posting on a social media site shall take reasonable care not to disclose any confidential information in any posting.

3.6. When posting in a non-official capacity an employee or official shall take reasonable care not to identify themselves as an official or employee of the city/town. When the identity of an employee or official posting on a non-city/town social media site is apparent, the employee or official shall clearly state that he or she is posting in a private capacity.

This resolution will take effect immediately upon its passage, the public welfare requiring it.

Approved this _____ day of _____, 20__.

Mayor

Attest:

City Recorder

DISCLAIMER: The letters and publications written by the MTAS consultants were written based upon the law at the time and/or a specific sets of facts. The laws referenced in the letters and publications may have changed and/or the technical advice provided may not be applicable to your city or circumstances. Always consult with your city attorney or an MTAS consultant before taking any action based on information contained in this website.

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