



Social Media Policy

Overview

The City of Golden Valley intends to use social media websites as additional communication channels to help promote its programs, events, and services, and represent itself appropriately and consistently on the Internet. Social media technology allows news of an event to spread quickly and is a good forum to facilitate public discussion.

A social media presence is yet another way government can communicate to the broadest possible audience of those it serves and residents can communicate with their government. The City of Golden Valley's intent is to increase transparency, immediacy, and feedback to the community and to address the fast-changing landscape of the Internet and the way residents communicate and obtain information online.

The best, most appropriate, City of Golden Valley uses of social media tools fall into three categories:

- channels to supplement information from other City communication sources, such as the website, and draw more eyes back to those communication sources, and to broadcast the City's messages to the widest possible audience
- channels for disseminating time-sensitive information as quickly as possible (ie, emergency information)
- a two-way communication, promoting transparency and social engagement in government

General Technicalities

The City of Golden Valley communications department will maintain multiple social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc) to represent the organization. If a department determines it has a business need for a separate social media presence, it must submit a request to the communications manager for approval by the City manager.

All City of Golden Valley social media accounts will adhere to the content standards below.

- The City has social media "pages," not "groups." For example, Facebook pages offer distinct advantages, including greater visibility, customization, and measurability.
- City accounts shall be categorized as "government," unless there is a business purpose for the account, in which case the account may be categorized as "business."
- The City's communications team will standardize and provide all City social media page displays to include appropriate logos and other pertinent information.
- Any City social media page must be based on a template that includes consistent City branding and style. The communications team will provide departments/divisions with the template.

- Departments/divisions must use proper grammar and standard AP style, avoiding jargon and abbreviations. Social media may be more casual than most other communication tools, but it still represents the City at all times.
- An application shall not be used unless it serves a business purpose, adds to the user experience, comes from a trusted source, and is approved by the communications manager, IT coordinator, and City manager.
- All new social media tools proposed for City use will be approved by the City manager, communications manager, IT coordinator, and the appropriate department's manager.

Centralization: Employees, Non-Communications Departments, and Elected Officials

For the purposes of efficiency, expediency, and consistency, Golden Valley's social media outreach will be centralized to the City's communications department. This may change in the future based on changing needs. In such a case, any departments wishing to create social media accounts on their own must receive approval from the City manager before implementation and follow the guidelines provided by the communications department. This will initiate a process to ensure that the City's array of sanctioned social media accounts are kept to a sustainable number, policies are followed, and the City's branding and Internet-based communication strategy is appropriately and consistently maintained.

Departments are responsible for forwarding requests to the communications staff to make social media posts and will work with the communications department to create and develop a department social media site.

Employees representing the City of Golden Valley on the City's social media sites must conduct themselves professionally at all times as representatives of the City.

Elected officials should comply with the guidelines outlined in the City's Technology, Communications, and Social Media Policies.

Social Media Administrators

Successful social media accounts require monitoring. Each City department/division shall appoint one or two of its staff as the assigned administrator(s) (AA), who will be responsible for monitoring the social page. Posts shall be approved by the AA or a designated alternate.

Posts and monitoring shall be done during office hours, with the exception of emergency situations, and all comments or questions shall be responded to in a timely manner within those parameters.

AFTER HOURS: In the event of an emergency need for an after-hours posting, designated communications department staff shall be contacted to post information on the City's website followed by social media.

Staff may set up automatic email notification when someone posts a comment to a social media site.

Employee Access to Social Media Sites

Designated AA employees are allowed to use personal logins/accounts to access social media sites as part of their work duties. Use of personal mobile devices and access of personal social media sites should be minimal while at work in accordance with the Employee Handbook. Authorization during work time is for the express purpose of allowing social media editors to conduct their work.

Employees not willing to use personal accounts must make arrangements with Supervisory and IT staff to create a City log-in. The IT Coordinator must be provided with login-in and password information if using a City account to post to social media sites, as well as any subsequent changes in City password or log-in information to those sites. Note that some social media sites, like Facebook, expressly forbid maintaining two accounts in the same name, so one must choose either to maintain a personal account (which is provided access to edit a City page), or have a City account, but not both. Some social media sites have penalties for violations which could result in loss of privileges from those sites which could, in turn, compromise the city's future use of that social medium. The City of Golden Valley will not be held liable for an employee's loss of his/her personal account privileges on these social media sites if they have failed to follow those site's policies.

Social media accounts are considered a City asset, and log-ins to these accounts must be securely administered in accordance with City technology policies.

City Social Media Posts

The City's official website shall remain the City's primary online medium for communicating information to the public and, with the exception of emergency communication efforts, all social media posts must be related back to information first posted on the website. While no City information shall be posted exclusively to social media websites, simple "reminders" and "shares" are appropriate and encouraged. Content posted to social media sites shall 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 of Golden Valley.

Accuracy and Timeliness

The City of Golden Valley will make every effort to ensure the accuracy of the information provided on its social media pages. However, several factors that are beyond the City's control (including unauthorized modification of electronic data, transmission errors, browser incompatibilities, information that has been cached on the local computer or storage device, or other aspects of electronic communication in an evolving and time-sensitive environment) can affect the quality of the information displayed on the site. For that reason, the City does not guarantee the accuracy of the information provided on its social media page and is not liable for reliance on this information.

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

Therefore, a disclaimer shall be posted on any social media site, stating:

This social media page is intended to get information out to a wide number of people quickly, not as an in-depth or complete source of information, but as an evolving supplement to the City of Golden Valley's website (www.goldenvalleymn.gov/), newsletter, press releases, and in-person communications. For these reasons, staff may not respond to every comment or question posted on the City's social media sites. Any responses to comments will be posted within office hours (Monday-Friday, 8 am-4:30 pm) and within the varying parameters of staff availability.

All responses to comments by City staff shall be accompanied by those staff members' initials, to reinforce the social aspects of the site, and to let residents know they are communicating with a specific employee within the City and not the City as an entity.

Comments

To facilitate two-way communication and broaden the ways residents may connect with the City, comments to the City's posts on the wall will be turned on. The following disclaimer will be posted on all social media pages allowing comments:

Please note that comments expressed on the City's social networking sites do not reflect the opinions or positions of the City of Golden Valley, its employees, or its elected officials. The City of Golden Valley reserves the right to remove any comments, questions, or postings containing:

- *profane language or content*
- *personal attacks, harassments, or threats against any individual or organization*
- *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*
- *content not topically related to the particular social medium article being commented upon*
- *support for or against any political campaign or ballot measures*
- *copyright infringements or other legal violations*
- *solicitations of commerce*
- *sexual content or links to sexual content*
- *conduct or encouragement of illegal activity*
- *information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems*
- *content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party*

The City reserves the right to restrict or remove any content deemed in violation of this social media policy or any applicable law.

Often commentators will police themselves; therefore, comments should be removed by the City only as a last resort.

All removed comments will be saved in a "removed comments" folder for data practices purposes. When a comment is removed, a note will be posted in its place explaining the violation.

Data Practices Concerns

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. The department maintaining the site is responsible for responding completely and accurately to any public records request for public records on social media. Content related to City business shall be maintained in an accessible format and so that it can be produced in response to a request.

These guidelines must be displayed to users or made available by hyperlink. Any content removed based on these guidelines must be retained, including the time, date, and identity of the poster when available as well as the City's reason for removing the content.

Content posted to social media sites will be transitory in nature, in order to adhere to the City's records retention policy.

A social media account shall not be used by the City or any City employee or representative to disclose private, confidential, and non-public information.

Employee Conduct

All City employees have a responsibility to help communicate accurate and timely information to the public in a professional manner. When using social media, City employees must follow all policies outlined here and in the Employee Handbook.

Social media platforms provide new ways to engage with citizens and customers to build stronger relationships, civic engagement, and “connectedness.” Employees designated to participate in social media are expected to follow these principles:

- Postings shall be related to that department’s specific function and subject matter expertise.
- Postings shall be factual, respectful, on-point, and reasonably avoid being thought of as spam, off-topic, or offensive.
- Per the City’s communications policy (see applicable section of the Employee Handbook), employees must notify the City communications department of any media contacts received related to their posts. Further, under no circumstances shall non-department head personnel comment to reporters regarding matters of City policy, opinion, or interpretation.
- Employees shall not use the City’s social media sites to copy or transmit any documents, images, software, or other information protected by a copyright owned by someone or an entity other than the City of Golden Valley without proper authorization from the copyright owner. Copyright protection applies to any document, image, software, or information unless it is specifically marked as public, not copyrighted, or freeware. In the absence of any specific copyright markings, material or information should be assumed to be copyright-protected. It is the employee’s responsibility to obtain proper authorization from the copyright owner before using the electronic communications system to copy or transmit copyrighted material.
- City social media sites or equipment may not be used by staff as a platform to share personal opinions or for political purposes, private business or charitable activities, commercial or personal transactions, or for any other purpose prohibited by law.
- Replies to individual constituent inquiries received via social media sites must be retained per the City’s record retention schedule.
- Decisions to remove posts or comments that violate the City’s social media policy shall be made by the appropriate department head, communications manager, and/or the City manager. Employees monitoring City social media pages must bring questionable posts/comments to the attention of their department head or the communications manager immediately.
- Employees who are asked by organizations to post information on the City’s social media sites shall refer the request to the communications department and shall comply with the Guidelines For City Communications Outlets.

Guidelines For Personal Communications

While every individual has a right to speak out on the issues facing the community, state, and nation, employees must take great care to make it clear that their personal opinions are their own and do not

represent the official policy position of the City. It is important for employees to remember that their personal communications may reflect on the City, especially if they are commenting on City business, supervisors, or policies.

The following guidelines apply to personal communications, including various forms of social media, letters to the editor of newspapers, personal endorsements, email, City correspondence, newsletters, and cable television.

- All City employees are expected to actively protect any information considered private or protected under Data Privacy and HIPPA Compliance laws. (Questions should be directed to the Golden Valley City Clerk.)
- Employees MUST NOT post information, images, or icons obtained in their official capacity with the City on their personal social media pages and/or accounts without prior approval from the communications division AND the appropriate department or division head. For example, employees shall not post photos, icons, or information from an incident/call on his/her personal social media sites.
- If you wish to write an opinion based upon your work experience, you shall not make reference to the City if you are not discussing City business. For example, write, “As a police officer...” rather than, “As a Golden Valley police officer...” or “As a public employee...” rather than “As a City of Golden Valley employee....”
- Employees shall not comment on social media or publish something related to City business without identifying themselves and using a disclaimer such as, “I am an employee of the City of Golden Valley. However, these are my own opinions and do not represent those of the City of Golden Valley.”
- The City of Golden Valley expects its employees to be truthful, courteous and respectful toward supervisors, coworkers, citizens, customers and other persons associated with the City. Do not engage in name-calling or personal attacks.
- Refrain from making comments about the workplace, policies, or supervisors, or discussing internal employment issues on social media. Assume anything written about a coworker or supervisor will be read by that coworker, your supervisor, and many others.
- Remember that what you write or post is public, and will be so for a long time. It also may be spread to large audiences without your knowledge or permission. Refrain from sending or posting information – including images or icons – that you would not want your supervisor or other employees to read, or that you would be embarrassed to see in the newspaper or viewed by your parents, spouse, or loved ones.
- City resources, working time, or official City positions must not be used for personal profit or business interests, or to participate in personal political activity. For example, an employee must not use any City logo (including the Brookview Golf Course logo or public safety badges or logos), email, or working time to promote his/her side business or for personal gain.
- Personal social media account names or email names shall not be tied to the City (eg, using your City email address when posting), unless you’re a designated AA who does not wish to set up a personal social media account (see Employee Access To Social Media Sites).

Social Media Guidelines For Elected Officials

Elected officials should comply with the following guidelines when using City of Golden Valley social media sites:

- Elected officials shall not use official City social media sites for campaigning purposes.
- Elected officials shall not post comments or links to any content that endorses or opposes political candidates or ballot propositions, including links to an elected official's campaign site.
- ALL comments posted during an election season by anyone who has filed for office will be removed.
- Elected officials should be mindful of the risks of electronic communication in relation to the Minnesota Data Practices Act and the Open Meeting Law; two-way communication between elected officials should be strictly avoided.
- Elected officials should not use social media as a mechanism for conducting official City business other than to informally communicate with the public.
- Elected officials should reveal that they are elected officials for the City if/when making a post and be honest, straightforward, and respectful.
- Elected officials should be sure that efforts to be honest don't result in sharing non-public information related to coworkers, personnel data, medical information, claims or lawsuits, or other non-public or confidential information.
- Elected officials should add value to any social media discussion by staying focused on the issue.
- To help prevent errors, elected officials should not post official information (eg, incorrect information about a new city ordinance) about the City as it could create liability issues.
- 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.
- Elected officials who are contacted by the media on a topic of official City business should follow City communications protocols.

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