



Administrative Directive

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1.0 Purpose and Need

To address the fast-changing landscape of the Internet and the way people communicate and obtain information, City of Virginia Beach departments may consider using social media tools to engage broader audiences. This directive establishes rules and guidelines for any activity and participation in "social media" by all City of Virginia Beach employees and volunteers. These rules are intended to be adaptable to the changes in technology and norms of online communication and behavior, and may be amended at any time, for any reason, without prior notice to employees and volunteers.

2.0 Administrative Directive

The City encourages the use of social media to further the goals of the City and missions of its departments, where appropriate and in accordance with the rules and guidance set forth herein. The best, most appropriate social media tools for the City of Virginia Beach fall generally into three categories:

- A. As channels for disseminating time-sensitive information as quickly as possible.
- B. As marketing/promotional channels which increase the City's ability to broadcast its messages to the widest possible audience.
- C. As opportunities for people to have input into and comment on relevant issues and concerns.

3.0 Procedure to Accomplish Administrative Directive

Department Directors and administrative personnel shall make certain that all employees and volunteers within their department are instructed in this Directive's guidance and follow it without deviation.

4.0 Responsibility and Authority

- 4.1 Only designated department staff shall be responsible for the content and upkeep of any official social media sites their department may create.
- 4.2 The Communications Office shall provide general oversight of all department-created external social media sites.

5.0 Definitions

Photo and Video Sharing: the uploading and publishing of digital images for the purpose of sharing with other people. This includes, but is not limited to web-based photo sharing services like Flickr, Buzznet, Photobucket, Snapfish, Shutterfly, You Tube and Facebook.

Social Media: For purposes of this policy the term "social media" applies to any external web-based and mobile technologies, in use now or developed in the future, that enable individual or entities to disseminate or receive information, communicate, or otherwise interact, and includes, without limitation, messaging, social networking, blogging, micro-blogging, bulletin boards, and so on, through providers such as Facebook, LinkedIn, MySpace, Twitter, YouTube, Nextdoor, or others.

6.0 Specific Requirements

- 6.1 The Communications Office shall maintain a master list of all department social media accounts and login information.

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- 6.2 Wherever possible and appropriate, content posted to a department social media site shall also be available on the department official website.
- 6.3 Wherever possible and appropriate, content posted to a department social media site 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 Virginia Beach.
- 6.4 All department social media sites shall comply with all applicable City of Virginia Beach policies and standards, including, but not limited to:
 - A. Code of Ethics
 - B. Official Web Site Content Guidelines
 - C. Information and Communications Technology Acceptable Use
 - D. Information Technology Infrastructure and Asset Management
- 6.5 Users and visitors to department social media sites shall be notified that the intended purpose of the site is to serve as a mechanism for communication between City departments and members of the public.
- 6.6 Department social media sites shall display the City's posting standards and a statement that the City and department reserve the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed a violation of the posting standards, this Directive, or any applicable law.
- 6.7 For each social media site approved for use the following Operational and Use Guidelines must be posted:

While the City encourages posts, questions, discussion, comments and varying viewpoints; the City of Virginia Beach and Department will not feature any comment that clearly contains any of the following and reserve the right to delete questions and/or comments that include the following:

- 1. Solicitations or advertisements of any kind that are not officially sponsored or endorsed by the City of Virginia Beach
 - 2. Abusive or threatening language, threats against any person or group; libelous, harassing or abusive statements
 - 3. Contain personal attacks or aggressive behavior
 - 4. Promote hate of any kind
 - 5. Use profanity or vulgar language
 - 6. Blatant spam
 - 7. Relate to personnel actions regarding City employees, volunteers or appointees of constitutional offices
 - 8. Contain personal information about someone else, such as home address, name, phone number, personal health information
 - 9. Contain information affiliated with or promoting political campaigns
 - 10. Hostility or violence toward an individual or group, including personal insults, libel, defamation of character
 - 11. Sexual overtones or innuendo
 - 12. Illegal discrimination against any individual or group
 - 13. Illegal or inappropriate use of firearms or drugs, or any illegal activity
 - 14. Questions or comments by persons who are impersonating city officials or using false identities
 - 15. Information harmful to children or of a nature to frighten children
 - 16. Promotion of cruelty to animals
 - 17. Information regarding online casino gaming, gambling or betting
- 6.8 City employees are prohibited from posting comments that violate Section 6.7 (1-17) above.
 - 6.9 City employees are also prohibited from posting on social media sites and/or photo and video sharing:
 - A. Photographs containing personal identifying information or other confidential information.
 - B. Photographs or videos of patients receiving healthcare services without first obtaining written consent.
 - C. Photographs or videos of children receiving childcare without first obtaining written consent.
 - D. Photographs taken at work if it would violate department policy; and/or federal, state or local law or regulations.

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7.0 Procedures

- 7.1 All new social media sites proposed for official City and department use shall be approved by the Communications Office or Department Director.
- 7.2 All social media sites created for official City and department use must allow staff designated under 7.4 below to immediately edit or remove content, as deemed necessary.
- 7.3 For each social media site approved for use the following documentation shall be developed and adopted:
 - A. Standards and processes for managing accounts on social media sites
 - B. Enterprise-wide design standards that identify the social media site as an official City site
 - C. City and department branding standards
- 7.4 Departments shall identify at least two (2) staff who will have administrator rights and will be authorized to speak on behalf of the Department and add, revise, publish, and/or upload information and content to a social media site.

8.0 Personal Social Media accounts

- 8.1 Employees and volunteers may have personal social media accounts.
- 8.2 Employees and volunteers are prohibited from posting personal information about another employee, volunteer or citizen learned from their position with the City in any form of social media. For purposes of this Directive, personal information means an individual's Social Security number, financial account number, driver's license number, address, telephone number, medical information (including family medical history), other highly sensitive information and information related to personnel actions regarding City employees, other than oneself.
- 8.3 Employees are personally responsible for any social media activity conducted using a City email address or on a City/department website or page, which can be traced back to a City domain, which uses the City's Information Systems and/or which expressly or implicitly identifies an individual as an employee of the City.
- 8.4 If from one's post on a social media site it is clear they are a City employee or volunteer, or if they mention the City/Department, or it is reasonably clear one is referring to the City/Department or a position taken by the City/Department, and one also expresses a political opinion or an opinion regarding the City/Department's positions or actions, the post should specifically note that the opinion expressed is one's personal opinion and not the City or Department's position.
- 8.5 The following actions are prohibited by the City, director, manager, and/or supervisors with the limited exception set forth in 8.6 below.
 - A. Requesting current or prospective employees to disclose their username or password to any social media account.
 - B. Requiring current or prospective employees to add another employee, supervisor, administrator, manager, deputy director, or director as a "friend", "follower" or other contact.
 - C. Taking any action or threaten adverse action against an employee for refusing to give his/her username or password to any social media account.
 - D. Failing to hire an applicant for refusing to give his/her username or password to any social media account.
- 8.6 The only exception to the prohibitions in 8.5 above are as follows:
 - A. The City, directors, managers and/or supervisors may view social media content that is posted publicly.
 - B. The City can request an employee's username and password for the purpose of accessing a social media account if the employee's social media activity is reasonably believed to be relevant to a formal investigation or related to proceedings by the employer of allegations the employee violated federal, state or local laws; regulations; or written policies, but the username and password, as well as any information learned from a review of the content on the social media account, may only be used as it relates to that specific investigation.

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9.0 Record Retention


The content included on department social media sites is City of Virginia Beach public information and applicable Library of Virginia Record Retention schedules apply. The department maintaining a social media site shall preserve records required to be maintained pursuant to the record retention schedules in a format that preserves the integrity of the original record and is easily accessible. Departments shall retain hard copies of deleted comments in accordance with City Records Management guidelines and document why the comment was deleted.

10.0 Freedom of Information

Content contained on City of Virginia Beach and department social media sites are subject to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act. Content maintained in a social media site that is related to City business, including a list of subscribers and posted communication, is a public record. Users and visitors to department social media sites shall be notified that any articles, comments and any other content posted or submitted for posting are subject to public disclosure.

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