



SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

ADOPTED NOVEMBER 2024



Purpose

Because much of our community utilizes social media for news, communications and important information, the City of Texas City has developed its own social media accounts to help inform the public about City programs, events and news.

Comments left on City of Texas City social media sites reflect the views of the commenters, not the views of this agency.

The purpose of this Social Media Policy is to establish standards, requirements and expectations regarding any official City of Texas City related social media usage. This policy applies to all official City of Texas City social media sites.

This policy also encompasses City employees' use of social media as part of their job duties, as well as accessing social media through City technical resources.

Social Media Definition

Social media means web-based technologies used to broadcast messages and participate in dialogues. Examples of social media software applications and social networking applications include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a) Facebook™ and Facebook Messenger™
- b) Instagram™
- c) YouTube™
- d) X™ (formerly Twitter)
- e) Threads™
- f) Reddit™
- g) LinkedIn™
- h) Pinterest™
- i) Nextdoor™
- j) Collaboration applications such as Wikipedia™

General Guidelines

The City of Texas City welcomes honest, civil, and productive discussions. We ask commenters to consider that City of Texas City social media feeds are viewed by all ages, sometimes including children. Please avoid profanity, slurs, personal attacks, bullying or other false information.

1. Any content posted on City of Texas City social media sites, including comments, replies and private messages are public record and may be subject to applicable public records release.
2. The City of Texas City's social media accounts are not monitored 24 hours a day, and we cannot guarantee that all comments and messages will be responded to. No one should utilize our social media accounts to seek emergency services; anyone in need of emergency assistance should call 9-1-1.
3. These terms and conditions apply to all City of Texas City social media sites.

Content Moderation

The City of Texas City invites the public to view, provide comments and engage with social media posts. As a general rule, the City of Texas City will not hide or delete comments simply because such comments are critical of the City of Texas City, a City department or its officials. However, the law allows the hiding and/or deleting of comments that are not protected speech under the First Amendment and relevant caselaw. Prohibited content includes:

- Comments advocating violence or illegal activity;
- Comments containing or linking to obscenity;
- Comments that encourage our agency to illegally discriminate based on race, age, religion, gender, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, veteran status or any other protected class;
- Comments containing links to malware and/or malicious content;
- Duplicate comments posted repeatedly within a short period of time;
- Comments containing defamation against a specifically named person or organization;
- Comments that contain images or other content that violates the intellectual property or copyright rights of someone else, if the owner of that intellectual property notifies the City that the property was posted in a comment on the City's social media accounts;
- Comments that contain a hyperlink to any website other than those owned by the City of Texas City. This will be done without regard to the viewpoint of the comment containing such a link or the content of the site to which the link redirects.

When a content containing any of the above content is posted to a City of Texas City social media account, a copy or electronic record of that content may be retained or archived, pursuant to the City's records retention policy.

If City of Texas City staff hides or deletes a user's comments pursuant to these terms and conditions, the user has the right to appeal that decision by sending a letter to the City Attorney within five (5) business days.

Upon receipt of an appeal, the City Attorney will determine whether the comment contained content protected by law. If the appeal is successful the comment may be restored for public view, if possible, or the user may be permitted to repost the comment. If a determination is made that the comment was not protected by law, the user will be notified that the appeal was denied.

If it is determined that a user has violated these terms and conditions on three or more occasions within a twelve-month period, the City of Texas City may block or ban the offending user from the social media account where the violations occurred.

Public Information Act

The Texas Public Information Act was updated in 2013 to explicitly include internet postings and other electronic communications with Senate Bill 1368, meaning that social media content falls under Texas public records laws.

Records Retention

Records created through the use of social media sites are records subject to the Local Government Records Act, Subtitle C., Texas Local Government Code, et. seq., as amended, as well as the Texas Public Information Act. To ensure social media records are kept in accordance with these regulations, the City of Texas City contracts with a third-party provider to capture social media records in a continuous, automated process throughout the day, which minimizes a potential loss of data due to deletion and/or changes to the social networking site. All City of Texas City social media accounts must be archived through this third-party provider.

Creating and Maintaining Official City of Texas City Social Media Accounts

New social media accounts representing the City of Texas City and/or its various departments – including accounts that could reasonably be assumed to be an official City of Texas City account – on any platform require the permission of the City of Texas City’s Communications Department. Departments may not create their own social media sites without approval from Communications.

When considering a presence on social media, it’s important to consider goals, objectives, and audiences. Content should be timely, relevant, and consistent. Before creating an account, the director or department head should consider whether the department would be better served by working with Communications to utilize the City’s primary social media pages.

Prohibited Platforms

In accordance with Senate Bill 1893, the City of Texas City prohibits the installation or use of TikTok (or any successor application) on any device owned by the City of Texas City. The installation of other apps or programs owned by TikTok’s parent company, ByteDance, on City-owned devices is also prohibited. These prohibited programs include, but are not limited to, CapCut, Hypic, and Lemon 8.

On December 7, 2022, Governor Greg Abbott required all state agencies to ban the video-sharing application TikTok from all state-owned and state-issued devices and networks over the Chinese Communist Party’s ability to use the application for surveilling Texans. Governor Abbott also directed the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) and the Texas Department of Information Resources (DIR) to develop a plan providing state agencies guidance on managing personal devices used to conduct state business.

Following the issuance of the Governor’s directive, the 88th Texas Legislature passed Senate Bill 1893, which prohibits the use of covered applications on governmental entity devices.

Pursuant to Senate Bill 1893, any political subdivision of this state, including a municipality, county, or special purpose district, must establish a covered applications policy. Therefore, this policy applies to all City of Texas City full- and part-time employees, contractors, paid or unpaid interns, and other users of City networks. All City employees are responsible for complying with this policy.

A covered application is:

- The social media service TikTok or any successor application or service developed or provided by ByteDance Limited, or an entity owned by ByteDance Limited.
- A social media application or service specified by proclamation of the Governor under Government Code

Section 620.005.

Except where approved exceptions apply, the use or installation of covered applications is prohibited on all City-owned or -leased devices, including cell phones, tablets, desktop and laptop computers, and other internet-capable devices.

The City will identify, track, and manage all City-owned or -leased devices including mobile phones, tablets, laptops, desktop computers, or any other internet-capable devices to:

- a. Prohibit the installation of a covered application.
- b. Prohibit the use of a covered application.
- c. Remove a covered application from a City-owned or -leased device that was on the device prior to the passage of S.B. 1893 (88th Leg, R.S.).
- d. Remove an application from a City-owned or -leased device if the Governor issues a proclamation identifying it as a covered application.

The City will manage all City-owned or leased mobile devices by maintaining the ability to implement the security measures listed below as applicable:

- a. Restrict access to “app stores” or unauthorized software repositories to prevent the installation of unauthorized applications;
- b. Maintain the ability to remotely wipe non-compliant or compromised mobile devices;
- c. Maintain the ability to remotely uninstall unauthorized software from mobile devices; or
- d. Other City-implemented security measures as needed.

To provide protection against ongoing and emerging technological threats to the City’s sensitive information and critical infrastructure, DPS and DIR will regularly monitor and evaluate additional social media applications or services that pose a risk to this state. DIR will annually submit to the Governor a list of social media applications and services identified as posing a risk to Texas. The Governor may proclaim items on this list as covered applications that are subject to this policy. If the Governor identifies an item on the DIR-posted list described by this section, then the City will remove and prohibit the covered application. The City may also prohibit social media applications or services in addition to those specified by proclamation of the Governor.

The City may permit exceptions authorizing the installation and use of a covered application on a City-owned or -leased device consistent with the authority provided by Government Code Chapter 620. Government Code Section 620.004 only allows the City to install and use a covered application on an applicable device to the extent necessary:

- (1) For providing law enforcement; or
- (2) For developing or implementing information security measures.

If the City authorizes an exception allowing for the installation and use of a covered application, then the City must use measures to mitigate the risks posed to the State during the application's use including any measures that the City deems appropriate and reasonable to support the purpose of this policy. The City shall document whichever measures it took to mitigate the risks posed to the State during the use of the covered application.

The City of Texas City requires any employee or official to consult with the City Attorney and the Chief of Police prior to seeking an exception to installing an application covered by this policy. An employee found to have violated this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, including termination of employment.

Logins and Passwords

All City social media accounts should be created using a City of Texas City email address. No personal accounts or personal email addresses should be used with any City social media accounts. The director of the department must always know the current login and password. In addition, a designated member of the Communications Department should be added as an administrator with full access and rights to the page.

Account Administrators/Contributors

Only current City of Texas City employees may be administrators, contributors, etc. on a City of Texas City social media page. It is the responsibility of the managing department to remove any former employees from these roles. Volunteers, business owners, members of the community are not permitted to have any administrative access to City of Texas City social media accounts.

Directors may delegate authority to employees to serve as account administrators to determine and establish social media activity for their department. However, the Communications Department is responsible for distribution of public information on behalf of the City of Texas City. The Communications Department and the Mayor's Office have the ultimate authority over social media activity covered by this Policy.

Content

Any outgoing messages shall be based on current, accurate, complete and relevant information. The City of Texas City will take all reasonable steps to assure the validity of information communicated via any channel, but it is the employees' responsibility to assure accuracy in the first instance. Anecdotes and opinions shall be identified as such.

City of Texas City employees shall protect privileged and confidential information from public disclosure on social media sites. Internal communications, personal information belonging to customers and citizens, and privileged information may not be published online in any form. For help in determining what information may be publicly disseminated, contact the Communications Department or the City Attorney's Office.

Content posted online should not violate any applicable laws (i.e. copyright, fair use, financial disclosure, or privacy laws).

Messages posted shall not contain content that may reasonably be considered offensive to other individuals. Offensive material includes, but is not limited to: sexual comments, racial slurs, gender-specific comments, or any comments, jokes or images that may offend someone on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, pregnancy status, national origin, ethnicity, citizenship status, age, physical or mental disabilities, political affiliation or beliefs. Any use of social media to harass or discriminate is strictly prohibited by the City of Texas City.

Content should be relevant and up-to-date. If original content has not been posted on a City of Texas City social media page in a month or longer, the Communications Department will evaluate if the account is needed and/or useful.

Use of City Equipment/Resources

Use of the Internet with City of Texas City networking or computing resources must only be used for business-related activities. Per the Information Technology Department's Acceptable Use Policy, using a City device and/or City networks for personal social media is not approved.

Employees' Personal Use of Social Media

These guidelines are meant to ensure that personal social media use does not negatively impact the work or workplace relationships of City of Texas City employees:

- Employees should refrain from personal use of social media while on duty.
- An employee who chooses to use City of Texas City technical resources for personal social media activity should be advised that he/she has no right of privacy as to any information created using the City's technical resources. Such information may be subject to disclosure through open records requests.
- Employees may not use their City of Texas City email address in conjunction with a personal social media account.
- Employees do not need to identify themselves as City of Texas City employees on their personal social media accounts. If an employee chooses to do so, that employee shall make it clear to any readers that the views expressed are theirs alone and do not represent the views and opinions of the City.
- When discussing the City of Texas City or City of Texas City-related matters, an employee should make it clear that he/she is speaking for themselves and not on behalf of City of Texas City, unless they have been explicitly approved and/or instructed to do so. When possible, a disclaimer should accompany the content. An example disclaimer could be, "The opinions and content are my own and do not necessarily represent the City of Texas City's position or opinion."
- The use of discrimination (including age, sex, race, color, creed, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, gender expression, national origin, citizenship, disability, or marital status or any other legally recognized protected basis under federal, state, or local laws, regulations, or ordinances) in published content that is affiliated with City of Texas City will not be tolerated.

Given the nature of social media, it is reasonable to expect that one's social media posts may be viewed, copied, forwarded, printed or otherwise shared with multiple people. Employees should refrain from posting any information, rumors, gossip, photos, video or audio of coworkers, clients, customers and vendors of the City, unless they have consent from the other individual(s).