

# **City of Ramsey Social Media Policy**

## **Purpose**

This policy seeks to ensure proper administration of the City of Ramsey's social media sites by its representatives. Social media will be used to enhance the City of Ramsey's website ([www.cityoframsey.com](http://www.cityoframsey.com)) which is the City's primary and predominant internet presence. Social networking in government serves two primary functions:

- To communicate and deliver messages directly to citizens and;
- To encourage citizen involvement, interaction and feedback

Information which is distributed via social networking must be accurate, consistent, and timely and meet the information needs of the City's intended audiences.

## **Control and Use**

The City has limited control of social media accounts with third parties (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, etc.). At the same time, there is a general expectation by the public that the City has a social media presence by which to share information about current City projects and business. For municipal purposes, the City's social media accounts will be used for incidental, non-vital communication and general information only. It is not the purpose of the City's social media accounts to be a medium for transactions of city business. The one exception is in the case of a natural or man-made disaster, if it is determined by the City that the best means of communicating with the public is through the social media account(s). For this reason, based on the City's Records Retention schedule (determined by the Minnesota Data Practices Act) social media posts and messages are only required to be kept until read.

The City of Ramsey wishes to establish a positive and informative social media presence. City representatives have the responsibility to use the City's social media resources in an efficient, effective, ethical, and lawful manner pursuant to all existing City policies and standards including:

- City of Ramsey Personnel Policy
- City of Ramsey Mission and Vision Statements
- City of Ramsey Guiding Principals
- City of Ramsey Core Values

Wherever possible, content posted to City of Ramsey social media sites will also be available on the City's website. Wherever possible, content posted to City of Ramsey's social media platforms should 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.

## **Policy**

The City of Ramsey will determine, at its discretion, how its web-based social media resources will be designed, implemented, and managed as part of its overall communication and information sharing strategy. All social media content should follow the City's adopted Strategic Communications Plan.

City of Ramsey social media accounts are considered a City asset and administrator access to these accounts will be securely administered in accordance with the City's Information Technology Policy. The City reserves the right to shut down any of its social media sites or accounts for any reason without notice.

All social media websites created and utilized during the course and scope of an employee's job duties will be identified as belonging to the City of Ramsey and include a link to the City's official website. The City of Ramsey does not create or maintain social media accounts for its elected officials.

## Scope

This policy applies to all City staff members, elected and appointed officials, volunteers and others who serve as a permanent or temporary representative of the City. This policy applies to any existing or proposed social media websites sponsored, established, registered, or authorized by the City of Ramsey.

The City does not create, collect, disseminate, or regulate use of any other social media accounts, including the personal accounts of its elected officials and staff. Questions regarding the scope of this policy should be directed to the City Administrator.

## Definitions

**Social media:** Social media platforms are internet and mobile-based applications, websites, and functions, other than email, for sharing and discussing information, where users can post photos, video, comments, and links to other information to create content on any imaginable topic. This may be referred to as "user-generated content" or "consumer-generated media."

Social media includes, but is not limited to:

- Social networking sites and apps such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Nextdoor
- Blogs
- Social news sites such as Reddit and BuzzFeed
- Video and photo sharing sites and apps such as YouTube, Instagram, SnapChat, and TikTok
- Wikis, or shared encyclopedias, such as Wikipedia
- All past and future web- or application-based platforms generally regarded as social media or having many of the same functions as those listed above

**Employees/Agents:** As used in this policy, "employees and agents" means all City representatives, including its employees and other agents of the city, such as independent contractors or councilmembers.

**Social Media Manager:** "Social media manager" means any city employee or agent with administrator access who, when posting or responding to a post, appears to be the City social media account owner.

## Rules of Use

City social media managers are responsible for managing City social media accounts or websites. Facilities or departments wishing to have a new social media presence must initially submit a request to the Communications and Events Coordinator in order to ensure social media accounts are kept to a sustainable number and policies are followed.

- a. All approved sites must be clearly marked as the City of Ramsey site and will be linked with the official City website ([www.cityoframsey.com](http://www.cityoframsey.com)). No one may establish social media accounts or websites on behalf of the City unless authorized in accordance with this policy.
- b. The City's social media page must conspicuously display or link to a public notice that informs the public of the purpose of the social media presence and the terms one agrees to in accessing, using, or posting to the City's social media page.
- c. Administration of all City social media websites will comply with applicable laws, regulations, and policies as well as proper business etiquette.
- d. City social media accounts covered by this policy will not be used by social media managers for private or personal purposes or for the purpose of expressing private or personal views on personal, political, or policy issues or to express personal views or concerns pertaining to City employment relations matters.
- e. No City social media account may be used by the City or any social media manager to disclose private or confidential information. No social media website should be used to disclose sensitive information; if there is any question as to whether information is private, confidential, or sensitive, contact Human Resources.
- f. Outside of situations of disaster, no City social media account will be used for transactions of City business. In the event a user initiates a request, application, or question through social media that affects City business or requires another City policy or process to be followed, follow up with that user by phone, email or other channels. If comments are allowed, in the event of a question of general interest, a response may be given in comments, the initial post may be edited, or a subsequent post may be created to include the information.
- g. City of Ramsey's social media managers will not edit any posted comments by another user. However, comments posted by members of the public may be removed if they fall into at least one of the following categories:
  - Comments or hyperlinks to material not related to the item posted
  - Comments in support of or opposition to political campaigns
  - Comments in support of or opposition to religious groups or worship services
  - Profane language
  - Plagiarized material
  - Obscene or pornographic content
  - Direct threats to persons or property
  - Material asserted to violate the intellectual property of another person
  - Private, personal information about a person published without their consent
  - Information that may compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems
  - Statutorily private, confidential, or nonpublic data
  - Commercial promotions or spam
  - Content that encourages illegal activity
  - Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party
  - Hyperlinks to material that falls into one of the foregoing categories
  - Any content as deemed unlawful or inappropriate by the City Attorney

A member of the public who disputes the legality of any portion of this policy may dispute the particular portion in writing. The City should acknowledge the claim promptly and, upon consultation of the city attorney, respond to the claim concerning legality of the policy portion as soon as reasonably possible.

The City reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of this social media policy or any applicable law. Any material removed from the social media site must be archived by the individual removing the material, including the time, date, and identity of the poster, when available. If possible, archived data should reflect the context of the situation from which it was removed.

The City of Ramsey reserves the right to block or delete any user who continually and habitually violates any or all of the social media policy points. A list of deleted or blocked users should be archived by the individual removing the user.

The City of Ramsey reserves the right to remove or edit social media posts as information evolves.

Standards for the Administration of Social Media sites:

- a. All new social media tools proposed for the City of Ramsey use will be approved by the City Administrator.
- b. The Communications and Events Coordinator will maintain a list of all City of Ramsey social media tools, including login and password information. Staff will inform the IT manager of any new social media sites or administrative changes to existing sites.
- c. The social media site administrator may designate additional staff members as editors to the page, if desired. (For example, a representative from the Public Works department may be designated as an editor to the City's Facebook, allowing him or her to make regular posts to the page during the snow plowing season.)
- d. Each designated staff member will be responsible for responding in a timely manner to any questions or comments that arise on material that they post. If that staff member is unable to respond in a timely manner, the site administrator will be responsible.
- e. When appropriate, designated staff members will make a good faith effort to provide an educated answer to any questions submitted via social media. In response to a question, designated staff members should always provide the appropriate department or staff member's contact information to learn more.
- f. The designated staff member responding to a question or comment may take the conversation offline if they deem it necessary or appropriate for the situation.
- g. Comments that violate the social media policy must be removed by the social media site administrator.
- h. Any material posted by a designated staff member on behalf of another department must receive approval of the content by that department leader, or their designee.

## **Data Ownership and Retention**

All communications or messages within social media accounts covered by this policy composed, sent, or received on City or personal equipment are the property of the City and will be subject to the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act. This law classifies certain information as available to the public upon

request. As no transactions of city business shall be conducted through social media accounts (outside of disasters), in accordance with the City's records retention schedule, the City shall retain social media messages only until read.

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## SAMPLE PUBLIC NOTICE

The purpose of the City of \_\_\_\_\_'s social media presence is to provide members of the community with information in more places and more ways than were traditionally available. All content of this site is public and is subject to disclosure pursuant to the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act. Please be aware that anything you post may survive deletion, whether by you or others. Do not post sensitive or personally identifiable information, such as social security numbers.

Following or "friending" persons or organizations is not an endorsement by the City and is only intended as a means of broadening communication. The City is not responsible for content found at links to third parties, nor the views or opinions expressed by third-party comments.

Please be advised that comments falling into the following category or categories may be removed:

- Obscene or pornographic content
- Direct threats to persons or property
- Material asserted to violate the intellectual property of another person
- Private, personal information about a person published without their consent
- Information that endangers the public by compromising a public safety security system
- Statutorily private, confidential, or nonpublic data
- Commercial promotions or spam
- Hyperlinks to material that falls into at least one of the foregoing categories

Should your comment be removed by the City and you believe it does not fall into one of the above categories, contact \_\_\_\_\_ in writing to explain how the comment does not fall into one of these categories.

Should you wish to challenge the legality of any portion of this notice or the City's social media policy, you may contact \_\_\_\_\_ in writing and explain the basis for the challenge in detail.

If you have any other questions about the City of \_\_\_\_\_'s social media page, contact \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.

By accessing, using, or posting to this City of \_\_\_\_\_ social media page, you acknowledge you have been advised of the foregoing.