

**CITY OF RICHARDSON  
INTERDEPARTMENTAL POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

**COMMUNICATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA**

**POLICY**

Social Media are defined as media designed to be disseminated through social interaction, created using highly accessible and scalable publishing techniques. Examples include YouTube, Flickr, Facebook, Wikipedia, Twitter, forums, message boards, mobile applications, blogs, email, etc.

In an effort to maintain the integrity and mission of the City, and to comply with the Texas Public Information Act and Texas Open Meetings Act as they pertain to Social Media, the City of Richardson has established policies to help guide its employees on the usage of Social Media. The purposes of this policy is to provide guidelines for:

- Procedures for establishing a departmental social media page;
- Best practices and conduct by City employees who will use social media venues;
- City employees who use social media outlets off duty or on private time;
- City employees who are authorized to use the internet for the purpose of updating a City and/or departmental social media outlet.

This policy is applicable to all employees of the City of Richardson. All employees must agree to abide by this policy as a condition of access and continued use of these resources.

**PROCEDURE**

**1. BASIC POLICY**

The Director of Communications for the City may create and maintain social media applications for the City of Richardson. Such sites may meet one or both of the following purposes:

- To provide residents of Richardson information about city events, activities, and issues
- To inform people outside our community about the many positive qualities of Richardson.

All City departments which operate Social Media will do so under the general guidance of the City's Director of Communications.

**A. Separate Sites**

Under certain circumstances, a City department may want to create and maintain social media applications that are separate from those maintained by the Director of Communications. Departments are required to obtain prior written approval from the Director of Communications

and their Department Director, before implementing departmental specific social media applications. Departments must provide to the Director of Communications specific justification and reasons for maintaining separate social media applications. If approved by the Director of Communications, steps will be taken to coordinate with the Information Services Department of the City to provide computer access to the social media site. The Director of Communications will coordinate with designated department employees to implement and monitor the site. Sites that do not continue to meet the City's intended goals and objectives may be removed at any time by the Director of Communications. The Director of Communications must be provided all login IDs and passwords and will maintain such list of all approved accounts, including login IDs and passwords.

### **B. Code of Conduct for Employees Authorized to Maintain a Social Media Outlet**

This section applies to those authorized employees posting on behalf of the City, as approved by both their Department Head and the Director of Communications. Employees are liable for anything they post to social media sites.

Ethical conduct: Employees will act and conduct themselves according to the highest possible ethical standards. A summary of the key ethical standards for use of Social Media are listed below:

- A. customer protection and respect are paramount;
- B. employees will use every effort to keep interactions factual and accurate;
- C. employees will strive for transparency and openness in interactions and will never seek to "spin" or "embellish" information;
- D. employees will provide links to credible sources of information to support interactions, if needed;
- E. employees will respect the established usage rules of the particular Social Media Venue utilized (e.g. Facebook's user policy); and
- F. employees will protect privacy and permissions.

**Authorized postings:** All City institutional pages must have a full-time appointed employee (or other authorized employee) who is identified as being responsible for content. Employees using Social Media venues to communicate officially on behalf of a Department shall have prior approval from their department head and Director of Communications.

**Authorization/permission:** Do not commit the City or any department to any action or initiative unless you have prior authorization to do so.

### **C: Employee Code of Conduct for Communication and Social Media**

**Do not post/comment on any social media site other than the City social media pages:** The City does not blog, or comment in any way, on non-City associated social media pages or sites. All comments made by employees on an external social media site shall be done off duty or on the employee's own time, and without the use of City equipment or resources. Employees making comments on external social media sites must not represent or portray

themselves as a City employee authorized to speak on behalf of the City. This does not in any way prohibit employees from exercising their first amendment right to free speech.

**Private use of online media:** In general, employees should refrain from posting information, including written statements, photographs and videos, about the City using their personal Social Media accounts. If you choose to do so, avoid any posting that might be interpreted as an official statement made on behalf of the City, on behalf of your department or that might compromise perceptions of your ability to do your job in an unbiased and professional manner.

*Employees of the City choosing to post information on publicly accessible media are expected to maintain a positive online image that is consistent with the goals and objectives of the City. Employees may exercise their first amendment right of freedom of speech, but may be subject to disciplinary action for posts that are unreasonably disruptive of the work place or that violate the City's policies.*

If on your personal Social Media site you have identified yourself, either through written statements, photographs or videos, as a City employee and you choose to comment on social topics not related to the City, then you should identify your views as your own and make clear that the views expressed are not those of the City.

You may not use the City logo or any other City images or iconography on personal media sites. If you choose to post photographs or videos on personal media sites, you should not depict the City logo, images or iconography, including images on clothing (e.g., City uniforms), in a manner that could be interpreted as portraying an act or statement made on behalf of the City in violation of this policy. You also may not use the City name, logo, images or iconography to promote a product, cause, or political party or candidate.

Private on line communications by employees should not be transmitted or received on City time or during duty hours, or using City resources.

**Think twice before posting:** Privacy does not exist in the world of Social Media. Consider what could happen if a post becomes widely known and how that would reflect on the poster and the City of Richardson. Search engines can turn up posts years after they are created, and comments can be forwarded or copied. If you wouldn't say it at a public meeting, at a conference or to a member of the media, consider whether you should post it online. **In all instances, ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself as a City professional, appropriate with the public trust associated with your position, and conforms to existing ethical standards.**

**Image and Reputation:** Remember that what's posted online is open to the public (even if you consider it to be private). Personal and professional lives merge online. City employees should recognize even though their comments may seem to be in their "private space," their words can become direct extensions of the City.

In addition, there are many reasons to connect with people online, but consider whom you

“friend” on sites like Facebook or “follow” on Twitter. You may believe that online “friends” are different from other friends in your life, but the public may not always see it that way.

**Strive for accuracy:** Get the facts straight before posting. Review content for grammatical and spelling errors. Employees shall not knowingly communicate inaccurate or false information. All efforts should be made by employees to provide only verifiable facts – not unverifiable opinions.

**Remember your audience:** Be aware a presence in the social media world is, or easily can be, made available to the public at large. This includes residents, perspective residents, visitors, Richardson based employers and their worker force, current employees and colleagues, and peers. Consider this before publishing to ensure the post will not alienate, offend, harm, or provoke any of these individuals or groups.

**Have a plan:** In order for a social media venue to be successful and relevant to users, it must contain current and up-to-date postings that reflect the nature and business of the specific department within the City. It is understood that some of the social media venues of the City may be seasonal in nature, and that daily postings may become periodic or taper off entirely during non-peak times. While there is no set timeline on the frequency of when a department should post or how often, employees must recognize that as a seasonal event/festival draws closer the frequency of postings will increase and the responsibility to post relevant information will become a necessity.

#### **D: Copyright Protection**

**Confidentiality:** Employees must protect all City information that is considered to be non-public in nature in accordance with the Texas Public Information Act or other applicable law. Employees who share or disclose information that is confidential information under the Texas Public Information Act or other applicable law are subject to disciplinary action including termination. **Examples include** the sharing of private information such as: addresses, phone numbers, or confidential medical information - such as that covered by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

**Copyright infringement:** When posting, be mindful and respectful of the copyright and intellectual property rights of others and the City.

**Photography:** Photographs posted on social media easily can be appropriated by visitors. Image postings should be at 72-dpi and approximately 800x600 resolution to protect the City’s intellectual property. Images at that size are sufficient for viewing on the Web, but not suitable for printing.

Original Signed By Bill Keffler  
Bill Keffler  
City Manager

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Date