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CITY OF WHITE OAK
906 S. WHITE OAK RD.
WHITE OAK, TEXAS 75693
WWW.CITYOFWHITEOAK.COM

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

CITY'S SOCIAL MEDIA

PURPOSE

To convey information from the City to its citizens, to facilitate a sense of community and for residents and businesses to communicate with and obtain information about the City of White Oak online. The City of White Oak encourages the use of social media to reach a broader audience and to encourage citizen participation. **The City website will remain the primary avenue for release of information.**

POLICY GUIDELINES

- A. The City has an overriding interest and expectation in deciding who may "speak" and what is "spoken" on behalf of the City on social media sites. The City Coordinator will have the sole discretion to approve what social media outlets may be suitable for use by the City and its departments. Each department that maintains a separate media site shall provide the City Coordinator with site log-ins and passwords.
- B. All official City presences on social media sites or services are considered an extension of the City's computer information network and are governed by and subject to the City's Internet Access and Electronic Mail Policy contained in the City's Personnel Policy Manual.
- C. Respect copyrights and fair use. All postings must comply with applicable federal, state and local laws, and regulations and retention schedules according to the Texas Local Government Code, Chapters 201 through 205. Records required to be maintained pursuant to The Texas State Library and Archives Commission records retention schedule shall be maintained for the required retention period in a format that preserves the integrity of the original record and is easily accessible using the usual or approved City platforms and tools.
- D. Information collected at this site becomes public record that may be subject to inspection and copying by members of the public, unless an exemption in law exists according to the Texas Public Information Act.
- E. When possible, links to more information should direct users back to the City's official website for more information, forms, documents, or online services necessary to conduct business with the City.
- F. The City reserves the right to remove any content that is not within these guidelines, while retaining said content for the appropriate records retention according to state law.
- G. Each social media site shall include a statement which identifies the purpose and topic of the site and discussion not related to the purpose shall not be posted.
- H. Content Specifically Prohibited:
 - ❖ Profane language or content;
 - ❖ Any type of political activity;
 - ❖ Solicitations of commerce;
 - ❖ Conduct or encouragement of illegal, improper, or illicit purposes through visual, textual, or auditory posting including but not limited to sexual content or links to sexual content;

- ☞ Content that is confidential according to the Texas Public Information Act;
- ☞ Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, religion, gender, marital status, national origin, physical or mental disability, or sexual orientation;
- ☞ Information or references to the personal addresses, personal telephone numbers, personal e-mail addresses, family members, or other personal information of City officials or City employees;
- ☞ Commercial promotions or spam;
- ☞ Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems;
- ☞ Links to websites or "pages" of outside vendors that are not related to the purpose of the media site.

I. Posts on City social media sites by employees must remain professional in tone and be in good taste. Each City employee is responsible for content they post on social media sites.

J. Content Specifically To Be Included:

- ☞ Indication that the media site is maintained by the City;
- ☞ Contact information for the specific department that created the page, including address and phone number;
- ☞ Departmental media sites must clearly identify the department as a unit of the City of White Oak;
- ☞ A link to the official City website;

K. Employees representing the City via social media must conduct themselves at all times as a representative of the City and in accordance with the City's Personnel Policy Manual. Employees who fail to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner shall be subject to disciplinary procedures up to and including termination of employment. Employees using social media sites, whether as an administrator or as a responder to a posting, will follow these guiding principles:

- Maintain transparency by using your real name and job title, and by being clear about your role in regards to the subject;
- Write and post about your area of expertise, especially as related to the City and your assignments. When writing about a topic for which you are not the City's expert, make this clear to readers;
- Keep postings factual and accurate. If a mistake is made, admit to it and post a correction as soon as possible;
- Reply to comments in a timely manner, when a response is appropriate. When disagreeing with others' opinions, keep it appropriate and polite—a City employee is to **never** be involved in an argument with a citizen on a City maintained social media site;
- Post meaningful, respectful comments that are on topic;
- Understand that postings are widely accessible, not retractable, and will be around for a long time, so consider content carefully;
- Ensure your comments do not violate the City's privacy, confidentiality, and applicable legal guidelines for external communication. Never comment on anything related to legal matters, litigation, or any parties with whom the City may be in litigation without the appropriate approval;
- Ensure you have the legal right to publish others' material, including photos and articles pulled from other sites. Do not publish photos taken while on the scene of any incident. Respect brand, trademark, copyright, fair use, disclosure of processes and methodologies, confidentiality, and financial

- disclosure laws. Even when using material from copyright-free sources, include appropriate attributions;
- Make it clear that you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of the City, unless that is part of your duties with the City. Remember that your postings are ultimately your responsibility.

L. Content will be monitored to ensure adherence to the Social Media Policy.

EMPLOYEES' SOCIAL MEDIA

While the City of White Oak encourages its officials and employees to enjoy and make good use of their off-duty time, certain activities on the part of its officials and employees may become a problem if they have the effect of impairing the work of any official or employee; harassing, demeaning, or creating a hostile working environment for any official or employee; disrupting the smooth and orderly flow of work within the City; or harming the goodwill and reputation of the City of White Oak among its citizens or in the community at large. In the area of social media (print, broadcast, digital, and online), officials and employees may use such media in any way they choose as long as such use does not produce the adverse consequences noted above. For this reason, the City of White Oak reminds its officials and employees that the following guidelines apply in their use of social media, both **on** and **off** duty:

1. If an official or employee publishes any personal information about themselves, another official or employee of the City of White Oak, a citizen, or a vendor in any public medium (print, broadcast, digital, or online) that:

- Has the potential or effect of involving the official or employee, their co-workers, or the City of White Oak in any kind of dispute or conflict with other officials or employees or third parties;
- Interferes with the work of any official or employee;
- Creates a harassing, demeaning, or hostile working environment for any official or employee;
- Disrupts the smooth and orderly flow of work within the City, or the delivery of services to the City's citizens;
- Harms the goodwill and reputation of the City of White Oak among its citizens or in the community at large;
- Tends to place in doubt the reliability, trustworthiness, or sound judgment of the person who is the subject of the information; or
- Reveals private information;

the official(s) or employee(s) responsible for such problems will be subject to counseling and/or disciplinary action, up to and potentially including termination of employment, depending upon the circumstances.

2. No official or employee of the City of White Oak may use City equipment or Facilities for furtherance of non-work-related activities or relationships without the express advance permission of the City Coordinator.

3. Officials or Employees who conduct themselves in such a way that their actions and relationships with each other could become the object of gossip among others in the City, or cause unfavorable publicity for the City of White Oak in the community, should be concerned that their conduct may be inconsistent with one or more of the above guidelines. In such a situation, the employees involved should request guidance from the City Coordinator to discuss the possibility of a resolution that would avoid such problems. Depending upon the circumstances, failure to seek such guidance may be considered evidence of intent to conceal a violation of the policy and to hinder an investigation into the matter.

4. Should you decide to create a personal blog or participate in social media, be sure to provide a clear disclaimer that the views expressed in the blog/media site are the author's alone, and do not represent the views of the City of White Oak.
5. All information published on any official or employee blog/media site should comply with the City of White Oak's privacy and/or data policies. This also applies to comments posted on other social networking sites, blogs, and forums. All employees and/or potential employees shall make available access to publicly posted material if requested by his/her supervisor at any time.
6. Be respectful to the City of White Oak's, co-workers, citizens, vendors, and partners, and be mindful of your physical safety when posting information about yourself or others on any forum. Describing intimate details of your personal and social life, or providing information about your detailed comings and goings might be interpreted as an invitation for further communication - - - or even stalking and harassment that could prove dangerous to your physical safety.
7. Social media activities should be limited as time spent on the telephone or internet as it is when conducting personal business and it should never interfere with work commitments.
8. Your online presence can reflect on the City of White Oak. Be aware that your comments, posts, or actions captured via digital or film images can affect the image of the City of White Oak.
9. Do not discuss City citizens, vendors, issues, or business without express consent.
10. Do not ignore copyright laws or cite and/or reference sources inaccurately. Remember that the prohibition against plagiarism applies online.
11. Do not use any City of White Oak logos or trademarks without written consent. The absence of explicit reference to a particular site does not limit the extent of the application of this policy. If no policy or guideline exists, the City of White Oak's officials or employees should use their professional judgment and follow the most prudent course of action. If you are uncertain, consult your supervisor or manager before proceeding.
12. Do not disclose confidential or proprietary information.

If an employee has any doubt about posted subject matter, they should not post it.

DISCIPLINE

- A. Employees found in violation of any provision of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. Where laws are violated, the City may pursue criminal or civil action against the employee.
- B. The policies and guidelines outlined herein also apply to employees posting City-related information on personal (non-City) social media sites.
- C. All department heads are responsible for their subordinates' compliance with the provisions of this policy and for investigating non-compliance.

DEFINITIONS

- "Social Media" is information content that is intended to facilitate communications, influence interaction with peers and with public audiences, typically via the Internet and mobile communications networks. Types of social media include but are not limited to, instant messaging, blogging, microblogging, picture and video sharing, and wall postings.

- "Social Networking" is the practice of engaging business and/or social contacts by making connections via interactive Web-based applications;
- "Blog" is a web site that contains an online personal journal with reflections, comments, and often hyperlinks provided by the writer;
- "Post" is to display (an announcement) in a place of public view in writing on a social media site.
- "Comment" means a response to a City article or social media content submitted by any person or entity.
- "Link" is short for "Hyperlink" which connects a hypertext file to another location or file; typically activated by clicking on a highlighted word or icon at a particular location on the screen
- "Public Information" is any information collected, assembled, or maintained by the City in the transaction of official business. (Ch552, Texas Government Code)

DISCLAIMER

This policy is not a contract and the City reserves the right to make changes to this policy at any time.

Each employee will receive a copy of this policy. Employees are required to read, sign, and return the policy acknowledging receipt to their department head.

Acknowledging Receipt of Social Media Policy

I have received my copy of the City of White Oak's Social Media Policy and I have read and I understand the information contained herein.

I further acknowledge that disciplinary actions can and will result if I violate this policy. Employees found to be in violation of this policy will be subject to corrective action up to and including termination.

Date

Employee's Signature

Name [Please Print]