

	City of Seabrook - Personnel Policies and Procedures	
	SOCIAL MEDIA POLICIES	
	Revision 1	Effective Date: Original: February 2012 Revised: November 2020

1) **PURPOSE**

To define the social media and social networking policy for the City of Seabrook. The City utilizes social media to further the goals of the City and the missions of its departments, where appropriate and when approved. The City has an overriding interest and expectation in deciding what is “spoken” on its behalf on social media sites. This policy establishes a framework for the use of social media and assists employees on how to effectively and responsibly navigate issues unique to social media. This policy is intended to supplement existing policy regulation and law, where applicable.

2) **DEFINING SOCIAL MEDIA**

Social media, referred throughout this policy, is defined as a category of Internet-based resources that integrate user-generated content and user participation. This includes, but is not limited to, social networking sites (Facebook, Instagram, Nextdoor, LinkedIn, etc.); micro blogging sites (Twitter, etc.); photo and video sharing sites (Flickr, Snapchat, Tumblr, TikTok, YouTube, Periscope, Facebook Live, etc.); messaging apps (WhatsApp, WeChat, Kik, Skype, Facebook Messenger, etc.); wikis (Wikipedia, etc.); blogs; and news sites (Digg, Reddit, etc.). This is not a comprehensive list and shall include any new technology that is released.

3) **APPLICABILITY**

These policies are applicable to **ALL** City of Seabrook employees who utilize any social media directly or indirectly on behalf of the City. This policy also applies to **ALL** City of Seabrook employees who personally utilize social media or other Internet activity that may impact the City’s credibility, reputation, employee morale, services or goals of the City of Seabrook. Social media usage must not interfere with or conflict with job duties or performance, reflect negatively on the City or violate any City policies. This policy applies without regard to whether the use of social media occurs during working or non-working time, or on duty or off duty use. Similarly, the policy applies regardless whether city equipment or city time is used.

4) **PROFESSIONAL USE**

All City-related communication through social media applications should remain professional in nature and should be conducted in accordance with the City’s communications policies, practices and expectations. Employees are expected to use good judgement and take responsibility for any content published to social media.

For those who have access to official City social media sites, employees are prohibited from using official City social media or social media networking sites for political purposes, to conduct private commercial transactions, to engage in private business activities or for personal, non-City related use.

Inappropriate usage of official City social media and social networking sites could be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination. If social media and social networking sites are used for official City business, all such sites, regardless of any personal views, are required to comply with federal, state and local laws and City policies and standards.

Only individuals authorized by the City Manager and Director of Communication, may publish content to a City media outlet or other technology platform.

a) **Authorization**

All new City social media sites shall (1) be approved by the City Manager and the Director of Communications; (2) be published using approved social networking platforms and tools; (3) grant administrative rights to an authorized member of the Communications Department (4) operate with a written social media strategy and content calendar; and (5) be administered by the contact or their designee. Departments/divisions requesting authorization of a social media account must complete a City of Seabrook Social Media Account Request form (**ADDENDUM A**) and a written social media strategy and content calendar prior to the authorization of a social media account.

Each City employee authorized to post on a City social media site must comply with this policy and submit a City of Seabrook Social Media User Authorization form (**ADDENDUM B**) to the office of Communications and complete required training provided by the Office of Communications. Only authorized City employees are allowed to post to City social media sites.

b) **Employee User Accounts**

When creating or using a social media site which requires individual identification, authorized users should clearly identify themselves, if possible by: (1) full name; (2) title; (3) department; and (4) contact information. Unauthorized use of an authorized employee's identification or access credentials/information is a violation of this policy and may be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination. User accounts should not be linked to personal social media sites.

c) **Oversight and Enforcement**

Employees representing the City through social media sites or participating in social media features on City websites must maintain a high level of ethical conduct and professional decorum. Failure to do so is grounds for revoking the privilege to participate in City social media sites and/or may be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including discharge/termination.

Authorized employees should use good judgement and accuracy in all City social media communications. Errors and omissions reflect poorly on the City and may result in liability for the City. Authorized employees should refrain from any social media activity that is inconsistent with, or that reasonably could be expected to negatively impact the City's reputation or standing in the community. Employees are cautioned to be respectful and professional to everyone, including fellow personnel, organization, residents, businesses and visitors.

Communication and messaging should:

- Have a clear purpose
- Speak well to the reader

- Be honest, transparent and respectful
- Is clear and concise without unnecessary verbiage
- Provides value to the reader
- Use proper spelling, grammar, syntax and punctuation
- Is informative and educational
- Offers links, pictures or reference opportunities for more information, where reasonable
- Has benefit to both the City and public

City employees recognize that the content and messages they post on social media sites are public and may be cited as official City statements. As City employees, pay special attention to sources when sharing other posts and/or retweeting. Social media must not circumvent other City policies, including new social media policy requirements.

City employees may not block or mute followers on official social media channels and should report user concerns/issues/violations directly to the social media site provider. City employees may not delete or hide public comments unless they are in violation of federal, state or local laws or the City of Seabrook Social Media Site Terms and Conditions (**ADDENDUM B**). The Social Media Site Terms and Conditions must be posted/linked on all City social media sites.

City employees may not publish information on City social media sites that include but not limited to:

- **Confidential or proprietary information**
 - An example would be pages of a vendor's bid marked confidential that has proprietary information.
 - Another example would be publishing or posting private facts and personal information about someone without their permission that has not been previously revealed to the public, is not of legitimate public concerns, and would be offensive to a reasonable person.
- **Content that violated a legal ownership interest in another party**
 - Using another's trademark, logo or likeness without their permission would be an example of this.
 - Another example would be publishing the creative work or photography of another without permission or giving proper copyright credit.
- **Profanity, racist, sexist, obscene or derogatory content or comments**
 - An example of profanity would be language considered vulgar by societal standards.
 - An example of racist, sexist, or derogatory content would involve comments made toward co-workers and/or members of the public that denigrates a particular race, religion, national origin, sexual orientation or gender identity.
- **False or defamatory comments**
 - These would include instances where comments aimed at co-workers and/or members of the public denigrate a person's character or reputation and are untrue.

- Another example would be publishing or posting false information that harms the reputation of a group or organization.
- **Comments in support or opposition to political campaigns or ballot measures**
 - The Texas Election Code prohibits an employee of a political subdivision from knowingly spending, or authorizing the spending, of public funds for political advertising; meaning there should be NO mention of support or opposition of a proposition on a local government’s social media site. *As a protection of the First Amendment, employees are able to use their personal social media accounts to support or oppose an election proposition; however, employees are prohibited from doing so on a city device or while on duty or during work hours.*
 - An example of this would be to post campaign materials in support of a political candidate.
- **Content that solicits or promotes commercial services or products**
 - An example of this would be promoting a business, property or development not located within city limits or as outlined within current economic development and tourism marketing procedures.
- **Legal information: anything to do with pending litigation or legal issue, including attorney-client privileged communications and/or attorney work product**
 - This would include pending litigation matters where the City is a party or any legal advice or work product provided from legal counsel for the City/EDC absent specific prior authorization.
- **Information not subject to disclosure under the Texas Public Information Act and other relevant state and federal law**
 - Examples would include social security numbers and protected health information. *Contact the Office of the City Secretary for a complete list of information not subject to disclosure.*
- **Threat of physical harm or intentional disruption of City operations**
 - An example of this includes information that may compromise the safety and security of the public, public systems, or employees.
- **Advocating for or causing the damage or destruction of City property, illegal discrimination, or harassment (including sexual harassment)**

d) **Emergency Communications**

In an emergency or crisis, all pre-scheduled posts should be suspended until cleared to resume normal postings.

e) **Records Retention and Open Records**

Social media sites contain communications sent by and received by the City and its employees. These interactions are considered public records subject to disclosure, in accordance with the Texas Public Information Act. Regular retention requirements apply regardless of the form of the record (for example, digital text, photo, audio, and video). The City preserves records pursuant to

an adopted records retention schedule for the required retention period in a format that preserves the integrity of the original record and is easily accessible. The City may use an automated archiving solution to comply with applicable public records law and to fulfill record retention requirements.

Note that these requirements and obligations to preserve and retain extend to circumstances where employees post information pertaining to public business with their private social media accounts. In such instances, these records should be forwarded in accordance with any City record retention policy and procedures. Additional information in regards to personal use of social media sites may be reviewed in “Section 5: Personal Use” within this policy.

f) **Security**

Authorized City employees need to take every caution to prevent fraud or unauthorized access to social media sites. In almost every case where an attacker accesses a system without authorization, he/she does so with intent to cause harm, including:

- Making unofficial posts, tweets or messages that will be seen by the public as official messages.
- Encouraging users to either click links or download unwanted applications that the attacker has added to the site.
- Accessing, compromising or disabling a city system.
- Redirecting users to sites that look like a City site but are used to gather data that could be used for unauthorized purposes (e.g. phishing).
- Using a compromised site to spread malware.
- Acquiring confidential information about city employees or citizens (e.g. social engineering).

Security related to social media is fundamentally a behavioral issue, not typically a technological issue. In general, employees unwittingly provide information to third parties and pose a risk to the City’s network and security. Authorized employees must be aware of current and emerging threats and are required to complete monthly Security Awareness training. Failure to complete the required Security Awareness training each month may result in the revoking of social media privileges on City social media sites.

5) **PERSONAL USE**

While City employees may have personal social media sites they must be cognizant of how they present themselves on social media sites. All personal social media sites should remain personal in nature and be used for personal and non-work related messaging and engagement.

a) **Personal Account Setup**

City employees must never use their City email account or password in conjunction with a personal social media site and are highly encouraged to use a disclaimer such as “The postings on this site are my own and do not reflect or represent the opinions of the City for which I work.” Personal sites may not be designed in such a way as to cause users to believe the site is City-administered or City-sponsored, including unauthorized use of the City of Seabrook logo or trademarks.

b) Personal Responsibilities

While the City respects an employee's First Amendment rights; ultimately the employee is solely responsible for what is posted online. Before creating content, employees should consider some of the risks involved, keeping in mind that any conduct adversely affecting job performance, the performance of fellow employees or that otherwise adversely affects members of the public, customers, suppliers or people who work on behalf of the City may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

- Be respectful, fair and courteous.
- Be honest and accurate; never post any information or rumors known to be false about the City.
- Posts should not be viewed as malicious, obscene, threatening or intimidating, that disparage members of the public or that might constitute harassment or bullying.
- Posts should not contain offensive messages based on race, sex, religion or any status protected by law or City policy.
- Refrain from the use of official employment insignias, logos, uniforms or similar identity items in posts which may reflect negatively on the image of the City.
- Express only personal views.
- Employees should never represent themselves as a spokesperson for the City Council, a City board or committee, City administration, or any City department, unless authorized by the City Manager to do so.
- Employees are prohibited from disclosing confidential information with regards to the City of Seabrook's computer systems, projects, facilities, or employees on any personal social media site in any way. This includes photographs or depictions of activities, including investigations and incidents.
- While employees are able to use their personal social media accounts to support or oppose an City election proposition or candidate; they are prohibited from doing so on a City device or while on duty or clocked in. Additional disclaimers are encouraged when posting political support that states "This post is my own and does not necessarily reflect the view of the City for which I work."
- If a member of the media contacts an employee through a personal social media site, please contact the Director of Communications. Generally, employees should not speak to the media on the City's behalf unless authorized to do so.

c) City Resources

Employees may use City-owned assets and equipment or resources (computers and cell phones) to access personal social media sites on a limited basis. Employees must be aware that by using a City-owned device to access a personal social media site that their personal social media account and information stored on the City device is subject to disclosure under the Texas Public Information Act. Department directors maintain the right to determine if social media sites may be accessed on a City-owned device or if personal social media sites may be accessed during business hours. Violations of a department's policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

d) Record Retention and Open Records Request

Whether unwittingly or intentionally posting or sending messaging regarding City-related matters to/on personal social media sites, employees understand that all posts and messages relating to

City business are considered a public record and are subject to the Texas Public Information Act. Employees are solely responsible for maintaining any record relating to City business on a personal social media site. All employees are required to submit a SB 944 Acknowledgment form (ADDENDUM D).

6) DISCLAIMER

- a) Under this policy, the City disavows, and is not responsible for any sites, posts, opinions, or content not coordinated and approved by the Director of Communication or City Manager.
- b) If City employees post data purporting to be on behalf of the City while using a social media site without prior approval, the City is not responsible for said posted content, such content is not to be construed as reflecting the views or opinions of the Mayor, City Council or City staff, and such action may be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including termination.
- c) If, at any time, there is any uncertainty about how to apply this policy or if questions arise regarding participation in social media, all employees are directed to seek the guidance from Human Resources. Social media is in a state of constant change and the City of Seabrook recognizes that there will likely be events or issues that are not addressed in this policy. Therefore, the responsibility falls to each individual to use good judgment, and when in doubt, to ask for clarification or authorization before engaging in questionable online conduct. Any employee who observes questionable or inappropriate social media conduct or posts, whether on a City official site or on a personal or private site that could be a violation of this policy or potentially negatively impact the City of Seabrook, are directed to report this information to Human Resources.

CITY OF SEABROOK SOCIAL MEDIA POLICIES - ADDENDUM A



City of Seabrook Social Media Account Request

Departments, divisions and programs of the City of Seabrook that wish to create and/or maintain an official City of Seabrook social media site must complete a copy of this request form and submit it to the Office of Communications prior to activating any social media account. All social media administrators must adhere to the City of Seabrook Social Media Policies as approved by the Seabrook City Council.

Employee Name: _____

Employee Title: _____

Department/Division/Program account is request for: _____

What social media sites are you requesting an account for?

__ Facebook __ Twitter __ LinkedIn __ Instagram __ Other: _____

**If approved, the Office of Communication will assist in setting up the account and Communication staff shall have admin privileges for the account at all times.*

What is the intended purpose of the social media account?

Can the City's main account be used to share your messages? Why or Why Not?

Who is your target audience?

What are your goals for growing the number of account followers?

How often will you post?

Social media accounts require a significant time commitment and are challenging to grow and maintain. Please provide a social media strategy and a tentative 3-month social media content calendar including visuals (photos, graphics, etc).

Employee Signature: _____

Date: _____

Director of Communication: _____

Date: _____

City Manager: _____

Date: _____

CITY OF SEABROOK SOCIAL MEDIA POLICIES - ADDENDUM B



City of Seabrook Social Media User Authorization

Employees of the City of Seabrook who wish to have access to an official City of Seabrook social media account must complete a copy of this authorization form and submit it to the Office of Communication prior to access to any social account. All Social Media Users must adhere to the City of Seabrook Social Media Policies.

Employee Name: _____

Employee Title: _____

Requesting access to social media site under the heading (example FB City of Seabrook-Your City Government or FB Seabrook Police Department-Texas):

**Users must use a City email address and create a professional profile. Users may not use a personal social media account to administer an official City social media site.*

	I have read and understand the City of Seabrook Social Media Policies.
	I will not violate any section of the City of Seabrook Social Media Policies, and I understand if violation occurs that I may lose my social media authorization or receive additional disciplinary action.
	I agree to complete the monthly Security Awareness Training and understand not completing training may result in the revoking of my social media privileges.
	I will not block or mute followers on any official social media site.
	I will not delete or hide public comments unless they are in violation of federal, state or local laws or the City of Seabrook Social Media Site Terms and Conditions and I understand that all comments should be archived per the Texas Public Information Act.
	I understand all social media content, posts and comments are considered public records and will be retained in accordance with the City's adopted records retention schedule.
	I agree to regularly communicate with my audience at least two (2) times a week and will comply with the social media strategy outlined for the social media site and understand that my account may be disabled if I do not comply.

Employee Signature: _____

Date: _____

Director of Communication: _____

Date: _____

City Manager: _____

Date: _____

CITY OF SEABROOK SOCIAL MEDIA POLICIES - ADDENDUM C



**City of Seabrook
Social Media Site Terms and Conditions**

Social media is not an appropriate option for reporting urgent matters of any type. If you have an emergency please call 9-1-1 immediately. Please contact the appropriate City department with urgent needs/or complaints. Contact information for City departments may be found online at www.seabrooktx.gov.

These terms and conditions apply to all official City of Seabrook social media sites. All postings on an official social media site are considered public record and may be treated as such under the Texas Public Information Act. Communication made through social media sites shall in no way be deemed to constitute legal notice to the City of Seabrook or any of its agencies, officers, employees, agents or representatives with respect to any existing or potential claim or cause of action.

Moderating and posting comments will occur during regular business hours Monday through Friday. Comments submitted after hours or on weekends/holidays will be read the following business day.

All City of Seabrook social media sites are a moderated channel, meaning all comments will be reviewed for content. The City of Seabrook may hide or remove content that violates a federal, state or local law or content that violates these terms and conditions. Improper behavior per the terms and conditions of the host social media site will be reported when necessary.

Content which may be hidden (all comments are subject to record archiving):

- Profane language or content (profanity filters may be used to automatically hide profane language).
- Personal attacks on an individual's character or appearance.
- Content that promotes, foster, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, mental status, status with regard to public assistance, physical or mental disability, sexual identification or orientation, or national origin.
- Sexual content or links to sexual content.
- Solicitations of commerce; advertisements.
- Conduct of or encouragement of illegal activity.
- Threats to an individual or group.
- Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems.
- Content that contains personal identifying information or sensitive personal information.
- Promotes or endorses political campaigns or candidates.
- Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party.
- Individually identifiable information (i.e. address, phone number and social security number).

The City of Seabrook logo is a copyrighted graphic and cannot be used in any manner without prior written consent of the City of Seabrook.

If you have specific questions regarding a City of Seabrook program or service that involves details you do not wish to share publicly, please find departmental resources at www.seabrooktx.gov.



SB 944 Acknowledgement

I, _____, understand the Texas State Legislature recently passed Senate Bill 944 which amends the Texas Public Information Act.

I understand that this bill requires me, an officer or employee of the governmental body, that any City business or City-related business that I conduct on any personal device or account (cell phone, email, facebook, twitter, etc.) must be preserved as public information.

I understand that any City business or City-related business information on my personal device or account may be turned over to the Public Information Officer for the City (City Secretary) or I may choose to hold the information for the required retention, under the State's adopted retention schedules.

I understand that failure to preserve City business or City-related business information on my personal device or account is a violation of the Texas Public Information Act may include both civil and criminal penalties.

Employee or Officer of the
City of Seabrook

Date