

City of Willow Park

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY AND BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES

Social media accounts used by the city, or employees representing the city, fall under the direction of the Communications and Marketing Director. For the purpose of this policy, social media refers to the forms of communication through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content. Social media sites include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and NextDoor.

City social media forums provide an interactive means of sharing information that relates to the City and engaging in ongoing conversation. It is a useful tool, where applicable, for seeking feedback and engagement from our residents and other stakeholders.

Social media can be especially effective in communicating information in crisis situations when timeliness of the information is crucial.

While social media provides an effective forum for building relationships and for conveying small “bytes” of information, these accounts do not serve as the city’s primary means of communication with residents and businesses. The City of Willow Park utilizes well-established means (e.g. website, newsletter, AlertSense, public meetings) to effectively share information with a variety of audiences.

Social media is a particularly ineffective tool for communicating about complex issues. The City will use more appropriate means to communicate detailed information.

Current City Social Media Accounts

The city currently utilizes Facebook and YouTube for official City accounts. In addition, the Willow Park Police Department, Willow Park Fire Department, and Parks and Recreation Board have Facebook accounts.

Official City Account Guidelines

Any city employees or departments wishing to create a social media account on behalf of the city are required to submit a request in writing to the city Communications and Marketing Director. The request must include:

- the social media tool (Facebook, Twitter, etc.);
- the department’s social media administrator and contact information;
- the proposed account handle and password;
- and the purpose of the account.

Approved accounts must be clearly identified as a City of Willow Park account and clearly branded as such, using the city logo and colors where applicable. Accounts will be set up in

accordance with the requirements of the particular social media platform. This includes sign-ons, user handles, etc. that will reflect the account is the City of Willow Park. Sites will not use personal sign-ons or personal sounding user names. When possible, use “City of Willow Park-Department” (fill in the department name) as the user name and account title.

Each site or service should include a standard disclaimer referring to the City’s rights and actions about comments. The Social Media Posting Policy should read:

This social media account is a limited public forum. Comments posted to this page will be monitored. The City of Willow Park, Texas, reserves the right to remove comments that fall into the following categories:

- *Obscenity*
- *Defamation*
- *Threats*
- *Spam*
- *Promotion or engagement in illegal activities*
- *Promoting illegal discrimination*
- *Malware*
- *Copyright of Another*

Any questions related to the comment moderation on this forum may be directed to Communications and Marketing Director Rose Hoffman at rhoffman@willowpark.org.

Social media is, by definition, an interactive medium, and account administrators are expected to monitor and maintain their accounts as is appropriate. Accounts should be updated on a regular basis.

Posting and moderating guidelines:

- Before the first posting on any social media site, it is a good idea to observe the activity on the site for a while before posting. This allows the account administrator to get a feel for the style of the contributions, the nature of the content and any “unwritten” rules other contributors might follow. It also allows you to get to know your potential audience.
- Information should be published in the third person and be presented in a professional manner. Comments made by the city and/or staff should be made under the account handle and not the administrator’s personal handle.

- Comments should be reviewed regularly. Comments that conform to the Social Media Posting Policy will be posted on City social media sites. User comments shall not be deleted or removed based on the views expressed. Comments will not be edited.
- Comments that do not conform to the Social Media Posting Policy should never be deleted from social media sites. Instead, those comments should be hidden, in order to retain the comment in compliance with City record-retention policies. Additionally, moderators should create and retain documentation detailing the reason the comment wasn't posted.
- Any complaints or requests for service should be directed to the appropriate city staff member to be addressed. A standard reply may be used to direct users with concerns related to sensitive or complex issues. This standard reply shall read something like: "The City of Willow Park is very interested in insights and concerns expressed here. However, complex topics are not effectively addressed in forums such as this. Please contact (insert department name and contact email) if you wish to voice your concerns further or obtain additional information."
- Don't pick fights by escalating heated discussions in the comment thread. Responses should be conciliatory and respectful and quote facts. Don't allow yourself to be drawn into an argument. Don't use ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in the workplace.
- Use good judgement. What you post is widely accessible, not retractable, and will be around for a long time, reflecting on both you personally and the City of Willow Park.
- All postings on any city social media account are subject to approval and editing by the Communications and Marketing Director.
- The Communications and Marketing Director will maintain a up to date list of all social media tools, including log-ins and passwords, that shall be accessible by the City Secretary and/or City Manager.
- The Communications and Marketing Specialist and the City Secretary will ensure that all information sent or received through social media sites is maintained in compliance with the Texas Public Information Act as well as with the City's records management policy.

Guidelines for personal use of social media

Confidential, proprietary and non-released City information should not be included in employees' private social media activity. Private and personal information, pictures, and video about or depicting City employees, contractors, customers and constituents gathered through the employee's professional activities must never appear online.

An employee's public image in social media, which can be associated with the City, should meet the standards of the workplace rules of conduct. Offensiveness, disparaging comments, untruthful statements, demeaning behavior, nude or obscene pictures and/or video, and use of illegal substances are all examples of behavior that are considered inappropriate.

For employees with personal social media profiles and blogs:

- If an employee can easily be identified with, or identifies themselves as a City employee on their blog or other social media profile, they should make it clear that the views expressed on their accounts do not necessarily reflect the City's views. To help reduce the potential for confusion, the following notice — or something similar — should be put in a reasonably prominent place on their site: "The views expressed here are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of my employer."
- Additionally, employees should not associate their private accounts with their city email address. If employees post pictures of themselves containing images of City uniforms or insignia, they should ensure that it is in the best interest of the City. Images of city equipment, city work sites, and the city logo are only allowed in the case of sharing a post from an official city account to an employee's personal account.
- Employees should work with their direct supervisor if they have any questions about what is appropriate to include in their social media profiles.
- Employees are encouraged to be respectful to the organization, fellow employees, residents and other agencies.
- Employees not acting in their official capacity shall not represent or give the impression that they are acting in their official capacity.