

Policy Regarding the Appropriate Use of Social Media

City of Ithaca

Purpose

The City of Ithaca recognizes social media as a prominent communication resource for many people. The City supports the appropriate use of social media tools to reach a broad audience, and to further the goals and mission of the City. In addition to serving as a means of disseminating information, social media can facilitate the discussion about City issues, operations and services among members of the public, City staff and elected officials via the Internet.

Social media tools include but are not limited to:

- social media sites such as Facebook, MySpace, Bebo, Friendster
- video and photo sharing websites such as Flickr, YouTube
- micro-blogging sites such as Twitter
- weblogs (commonly referred to as blogs)
- forums and discussion boards such as Whirlpool, Yahoo Groups or Google Groups
- online encyclopedias such as Wikipedia
- any other website that allows individuals to use simple publishing tools.

The City of Ithaca has an overriding interest and expectation in deciding what is posted on behalf of the City on social media sites. In that regard, this policy establishes rules and procedures for the use of social media by City staff and on City social media sites.

General Rules

1. All City of Ithaca social media sites, e.g., the Ithaca Youth Bureau's Facebook page and the GIAC Teen Program's MySpace page, shall be approved by the respective Department Head and reported to the Director of Information Technology, and shall be published using social media platforms and tools approved by the City.
2. The Department of Information Technology will maintain a list of social media platforms and tools that are approved for use by City departments and staff.
3. The Department of Information Technology will maintain a list of all City of Ithaca social media sites reported to it.
4. The City of Ithaca's website will remain the City's primary Internet presence. Whenever possible, informational content posted to City of Ithaca social media sites also shall be posted on the City's website.
5. All content published on City of Ithaca social media sites must comply with all City of Ithaca policies and standards, including, but not limited to:

- a. Sexual Harassment Policy
 - b. Workplace Violence Prevention Policy
 - c. Employee Standards of Conduct
 - d. Anti-Discrimination Policy
 - e. Code of Ethics
 - f. Diversity Statement
 - g. Electronic Mail Policy
 - h. Policy Regarding the Appropriate Use of City Computer, Network and Phone Resources
 - i. Information Technology security policies and procedures
 - j. Departmental policies, rules, regulations, and operating procedures
 - k. Other City policies.
6. Employees posting content or comments on City of Ithaca social media sites are required to identify themselves as City of Ithaca employees, and must conduct themselves at all times as representatives of the City and in accordance with all City policies. Employees are expected to be respectful of all individuals and communities with whom they interact online, and to be polite and respectful of others' opinions, even in times of heated discussion and debate.
 7. City policies, rules, regulations and standards of conduct apply to any employee who engages in social media activities of any type while conducting City business. Using a City e-mail address or any City-issued equipment, communicating in your official capacity, or engaging in social media activities of any type during work time constitute conducting City business.
 8. Department Heads may allow or disallow departmental employees to participate in social media sites as part of their job duties.
 9. Employees are strictly prohibited from disclosing confidential or protected information by means of social media.
 10. City of Ithaca social media sites are subject to New York State public records laws. Therefore, relevant City of Ithaca and New York State records retention schedules apply to social media content. Content required to be maintained pursuant to a relevant records retention schedule shall be maintained for the required retention period in a format that preserves the integrity of the original content and is easily accessible by using the approved City platforms and tools.
 11. Laws and policies regarding access to information for public disclosure or for legal purposes apply to social media content; therefore, such content must be managed and stored in a manner that allows for the retrieval of it in order to comply with those laws and policies.
 12. The City reserves the right to restrict or remove any content from its social media sites that it deems in violation of this policy, any other City policy, or any applicable law.

13. The City shall only use social media resources that allow the City to immediately edit or remove content from them.
14. The City shall not use social media platforms or tools in a manner that allows for non-moderated dialogue or non-reviewed postings.

Procedures for Creating, Maintaining and Posting to Social Media Sites

1. Each City of Ithaca social media site shall include an introductory statement that clearly specifies the purpose and topical scope of the social media site.
2. Whenever possible, content posted to City of Ithaca social media sites shall contain links directing users back to the City's official website for in-depth information, forms, documents and online services.
3. Content posted to social media sites shall be current, timely and accurate.
4. Users and visitors to any City of Ithaca social media site shall be notified that the intended purpose of the site is to serve as a mechanism for communication between City departments and members of the public. Articles and comments posted to City of Ithaca social media sites shall not contain any of the following forms of content:
 - a. Comments not topically related to the particular site or article being commented upon;
 - b. Profane language or content;
 - c. Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of age, creed, color, disability, ethnicity, familial status, gender, height, immigration or citizenship status, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, or weight;
 - d. Sexual content or links to sexual content;
 - e. Solicitations for a commercial business or for personal gain;
 - f. Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity;
 - g. Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems; or
 - h. Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party.

These guidelines shall be displayed to users or made available by hyperlink. Any content removed based on these guidelines must be retained, including the time, date and identity of the person who posted the content when available.

5. All City of Ithaca social media sites shall clearly indicate they are maintained by the City of Ithaca and shall have City of Ithaca contact information prominently displayed.
6. All City of Ithaca authors and public commentators shall be clearly identified. Enrollment of public commentators shall require valid contact information including a legal name, street address, and email address. Anonymous postings shall not be allowed, nor shall the use of pseudonyms or screen names be allowed.

7. All moderators for City of Ithaca social media sites shall be trained regarding the terms of this policy, including their responsibilities to review content submitted for posting to ensure compliance with the policy. Furthermore, the moderators will be provided with guidelines about how to effectively fulfill the duties of this role.

Enforcement

Any City employee found to have violated this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. Any violation shall be reported to the user's supervisor who will be responsible for deciding upon the appropriate discipline with guidance from the Human Resources Department.

Within their respective departments, the department heads are responsible for the proper implementation of this policy and for monitoring the use of social media.