

City of Ferndale Social Media Policy (Internal)

Code and statutory authority:
Public Records Act, Chapter 42.56 RCW
Public Officers & Agencies, RCW 42.17.130

PURPOSE

Social Media, the use of third party hosted online technologies that facilitate social interaction and dialogue, enhances the City of Ferndale's ability to communicate city-related information directly to the community and news media. It is the most direct way for the city to provide information in real time to a broad audience. Social Media includes social networking sites like Facebook, Reddit, and Instagram, micro-blogging tools such as Twitter and audio-visual networking sites such as YouTube. The City encourages the use of Social Media sites and tools by selected city employees to further the goals of the City and the missions of its departments, where appropriate.

This policy establishes guidelines for the City of Ferndale's use of Social Media.

DEPARTMENTS AFFECTED

All City departments.

PROCEDURES

1. Creating Department Social Media Sites

1.1 The City of Ferndale should utilize social media to effectively advance the goals of the city. All city social media channels, pages, and accounts must be clearly identified as official city channels. All new channels, pages, and accounts must be authorized by the City Administrator and Communications Officer. The Communications Officer shall maintain a list of authorized users and pages.

1.2 Department Heads must authorize and appoint a specific staff member(s) to post, maintain, and act as moderators for the social media site. Department Heads are responsible for ensuring their staff follows the procedures set forth in this policy.

1.6 In compliance with sections 3.2 and 3.3, department staff are responsible for regularly posting information, monitoring comments, removing any prohibited content as set forth in section 3.2.2, and saving content required under the Public Records Act as described in Section 3.3.

1.7 A Comment Policy Notice must be displayed on all Social Media sites that allow posts, indicating the discussion is moderated, and inappropriate content will be removed. A City External Social Media Policy shall be developed, and linked to as an attachment from the city's website explaining these comment policies.

2. Information Posted on Social Media Sites

2.1 City-Posted Information

2.1 (a) The most appropriate uses of City Social Media sites are: (1) for time-sensitive and emergency information; and (2) as a communications/promotional/marketing tool which increases the City's ability to broadcast its message to the widest possible audience.

2.1 (b) Designated moderators must maintain accurate City information on Social Media sites by frequently reviewing and updating it as necessary and appropriate.

2.1 (c) In order to ensure appropriate retention of public records, most content posted by the City departments on City Social Media sites should not be original source content (content that has not been created anywhere else; only exists on the Social Media site), but rather a secondary copy of information that is posted either on the City website or contained in an electronic record or a hard copy. From time to time, content may be created exclusively for the city's social media site. In those cases, the material is stored in electronic format on the social media site. Best practice calls for information regarding city business to be linked directly from the city's website. Staff may also link to relevant articles from local news media websites. Any third-party article or information that may be sensitive should be approved by the city's Communications Officer, who may coordinate such posting in conjunction with a review by the City Administrator or Mayor.

2.1 (d) A link to the City's website, www.cityofferndale.org or the Police Department website, www.cityofferndale.org/police-department must be included on all Social Media sites, directing users back to the City of Ferndale or Police Department website for in-depth information on the posted content, including the appropriate way to file a public records request.

2.1 (e) Councilmembers, Commissioners and other officials and appointed, advisory body volunteers shall not use social media sites to violate the Open Public Meetings Act; participating in online discussions may constitute a meeting under the Open Public Meetings Act.

2.2 Information Posted by Outside Individuals

2.2 (a) For all City Social Media sites that allow posts, those sites are limited public forums, moderated by City of Ferndale staff to ensure content posted by outside users is appropriate.

2.2 (b) Posted content (including comments, photos and links) must be related to the topic(s) posted by the City to be considered appropriate.

2.2 (c) Inappropriate and prohibited content subject to immediate removal from the site, includes content that:

- Promotes or advertises commercial services, entities or products.

- Is obscene.
- Discusses or encourages illegal activity.
- Promotes, fosters or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation.
- Provides information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems.
- Violates a legal ownership.

2.2 (d) Inappropriate content must be removed immediately and retained as required under the Public Records Act and described in section 2.3 by the site moderator.

2.3 Retention of Posted Information

2.3 (a) Information posted on the city's social media sites is subject to the Public Records Act and associated retention schedule. Original source content posted on social media sites must be retained based on the requirements of the current Local Government Common Records Retention Schedule (CORE).

2.3 (b) The Communications Officer is responsible for ensuring retention of the original source content in organized, searchable electronic file folders. The records should be retained in such a manner that entire folders can be deleted after retentions requirements as outlined in the state CORE manual have been met.

2.4 Comments Posted by Outside Users

2.4 (a) All comments posted by outside users on city social media sites, including those that are inappropriate and removed by staff, must be retained.

2.4 (b) In addition, when staff removes inappropriate content, they need to include their name and the date and time the content was removed.