



# The City of Morgantown

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Communications Department

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## City of Morgantown Social Media Policy

### 1. Overview

#### 1.1 Purpose

The City of Morgantown Social Media Policy (Social Media Policy) establishes guidelines for the creation, management, and use of social media sites representing the City of Morgantown (City) as a means of communicating City information to citizens, visitors, and other entities.

The purpose of City social media sites is to provide information from the City and its associated departments to the public on common information channels.

The City has a right and responsibility to ensure that the information distributed through social media on its behalf is accurate and serves the public interest.

#### 1.2 Definitions

For the purpose of the Social Media Policy, the following terms have the definitions given in this section:

**1.2.1 Social Media:** Social media is content created by individuals using accessible and scalable technologies through the Internet. Examples of social media include but are not limited to Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, LinkedIn, RSS, YouTube, and Instagram. For purposes of the Social Media Policy, Social Media also includes message boards, internet forums, and comment sections on posted articles.

**1.2.2 City Employee:** Any person who is a City administrative official; who is employed by the City; or who is a member of a City board, commission, or agency.

**1.2.3 City Administrator:** The Communications Director or an authorized City official or employee responsible for administering user access and management of City social media accounts. The administrator serves as the top manager for social media sites. They manage all the settings and can serve as moderator.

**1.2.4 City Moderator:** An authorized City official or employee who creates or is responsible for the daily operation of social media sites. The moderator posts regular articles, messages, or information on social media sites. The City Moderator may review, authorize, remove, and/or deny submissions by Commenters for posting to a City Social Media Account in accordance with the terms of the Social Media Policy.

**1.2.5 Article:** An original posting of content to a City Social Media Account by a City Moderator of City Employee authorized to post original content.

**1.2.6 Commenter:** Any person who submits a comment for posting in response to the content on a City Social Media Account.

**1.2.7 Comment:** A response to an Article submitted by a Commenter.

**1.2.8 City Social Media Account:** An account on Social Media (example: Facebook page, Instagram account, Twitter account, etc.) that represents the City or distributes content or information on behalf of the City, its officials, departments, boards, commissions, or agencies. A page maintained by a member of City Council for purposes of posting or discussing matters related to the business of the City shall not be a City Social Media Account under this Policy, but such a page remains a limited public forum and the Council Member maintaining the page may not discriminate with respect to the viewpoint of speakers or content of speech on such a page in accordance with applicable laws and decisions governing limited public forums.

## **2. General Policy**

### **2.1 Emergencies**

The use of social media does not alter or change the emergency or life safety report protocols currently in place. Social Media should not be used in place of the Monongalia County Emergency Management Agency (MECCA911) or other official emergency services agency or protocol designated by the City.

### **2.2 City Social Media Regulation**

**2.2.1 Approval and administration:** City Employees may only create or post Articles on City Social Media Accounts with prior approval of the City Manager or Communications Director. Other Comment by City Employees on City Social Media Accounts is governed by this Policy. The Communications Director will maintain a list of all authorized City Social Media Accounts and will designate a(n) Administrator(s) for each account. The Administrator(s) will regularly monitor the Social Media Account to ensure adherence to the City's Social Media Policy and the interest and goals of the City of Morgantown in compliance with applicable laws and policies. Each Administrator shall have demonstrated a complete understanding of this Social Media Policy and must have subject matter and technical experience appropriate to the Administrator role.

**2.2.2 Maintenance and contact notice:** City Social Media Accounts will affirmatively state they are created and maintained by the City. Each Social Media Account will

display appropriate contact information for the City considering its purpose and the terms of the social media site provider.

**2.2.3 Public Notice and Standards:** When possible, City Social Media Accounts will link to City website(s) with the forms, documents, online services, and other information relevant to the City business of that account.

**2.2.4 Conduct:** City Employees posting Articles or Comments to Social Media Accounts must remain subject to the City Personnel Rules and should carefully review this Policy's Sections 3. Social Media Standards and 4. Employee Guidance for Participating in Social Media.

**2.2.5 City Rights:** City Social Media Accounts create limited public forums that are subject to reasonable regulations. The City may restrict or remove from its Social Media Sites any content posted in violation of this Social Media Policy or applicable law. Restriction or removal of content will respect the City's obligation not to discriminate against particular viewpoints or speakers and will apply neutrally to establish appropriate restrictions on the time, place, and manner of speech to promote the public interest in accurate, meaningful, and free expression of information related to City business. Material that may be removed in accordance with this Policy includes, but is not limited to: posts that defame or harass others, posts that are not germane to the public topic under discussion, posts that contain inaccurate or misleading information

**2.2.6 Applicable law and policies:** This Policy and City Social Media Accounts will comply with governing federal, state, and local laws and regulations. No provision of this Policy will be read to violate a governing law or regulation.

**2.2.7 Public record and disclosure:** Any content posted on City Social Media Accounts may be considered a public record subject to public disclosure. This may include subscriber information, posted content, and content submitted for posting.

**2.2.8 Policy Violation:** Employees who violate this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

**2.2.9 Prohibited content:** City social media content and comments containing any of the following forms of content shall not be allowed for posting:

**2.9.1** Comments not topically related to the particular site or social media article being commented upon;

**2.9.2** Profane language or content;

**2.9.3** Content that promotes, fosters or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, sex, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation, or otherwise in violation of the City's Nondiscrimination Ordinance, codified at Article 153 of the City Code;

**2.9.4** Sexual content or links to sexual content;

**2.9.5** Solicitations for commercial purposes, except when made as part of a permitted partnership or agreement with the City, and provided that this limitation shall not operate to preclude legitimate requests for information by the public regarding providers of commercial services;

**2.9.6** Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity;

**2.9.7** Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems; or

**2.9.8** Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party.

**2.2.10** This Social Media Policy may be revised at any time.

### **3. Social Media Standards**

#### **3.1 Content**

**3.1.1** Comments submitted by members of the public must be directly related to the content of the articles. Submission of comments by members of the public constitutes participation in a limited public forum. City social media moderators shall allow comments that are topically related to the article being commented and thus within the purpose of the limited public forum, with the exception of the prohibited content listed in section 2.2.9 Prohibited content above.

**3.1.2** All entities affiliated with the City of Morgantown are responsible for establishing, publishing, and updating their content on social media sites. Although it will be each entity's responsibility to maintain the content, the City Communications Director may monitor, alter, or remove the content on each of these pages to ensure:

**3.1.2.1** A consistent citywide message is being conveyed and adherence to the City Social Media Policy.

**3.1.2.2** That content based on best practices and industry norms.

**3.1.2.3** That posts, articles, and comments do not violate this policy or other law.

#### **3.2 City Moderator and Commenter Identification**

**3.2.1** All City social media Moderators and public commenters participating in City social media shall be clearly identified. Posts by any person who is not identified or is using an alias or otherwise not identifiable as an individual person may be removed.

#### **3.3 The Role of the City Moderator**

**3.3.1** Social media can be used by the City to canvass the views of the community and stakeholders. These processes may attract comments that are offensive, inappropriate, or irrelevant and that require some form of moderation.

**3.3.2** All City social media accounts should have the Section 3.4 Ethical Social Media Commenter Conduct policy available through the social media account being used, along with a notice that the City Moderator may remove or reject any posts either pre- or post-publication that do not comply with the Section 3.4 Ethical Social Media Commenter Conduct policy or 2.2.9 Prohibited content section.

**3.3.3** The City Moderator should post new comments to correct commenter's factual errors, or to clarify inaccurate information when possible. The City and its Moderators understand that this does not guarantee the accuracy of posts, articles, or comments on City social media.

**3.3.4** Moderators will abide by the following guidelines:

**3.3.4.1** The moderation process must be objective and impartial and avoid any perception that posts are being censored for political reasons;

**3.3.4.2** The moderation process must be sensitive to the diversity of the public and avoid any perception that it is being applied in a discriminatory manner; and

**3.3.4.3** The moderator must inform commenters as to why a post has been removed or rejected and give them an opportunity to resubmit an edited version.

**3.3.5** Administrators may use the City Moderator guidelines set forth in this policy.

### **3.4 Ethical Social Media Commenter Conduct**

**3.4.1** Mutual commenter respect is paramount.

**3.4.2** Commenters should use every effort to keep interactions factual and accurate.

**3.4.3** Commenters should strive for transparency and openness in interactions.

**3.4.4** Commenters should provide links to credible sources of information to support interactions, when possible.

**3.4.5** Commenters should publicly correct any information communicated that is later found to be in error.

**3.4.6** Commenters should protect their personal privacy and that of others by not including personal information (such as email addresses, private addresses, or phone numbers).

**3.4.7** Commenters should not be abusive, nor harass or threaten others.

**3.4.8** Commenters should not make defamatory or libelous comments.

**3.4.9** Commenters should not use insulting, provocative, or hateful language.

**3.4.10** Commenters should respect the rules of the social media site.

**3.4.11** Commenters shall abide by the section on 2.2.9 Prohibited content.

## **4. Employee Guidance for Participating in Social Media**

### **4.1 Professional standards**

**4.1.1** The lines between public and private, official, personal and professional employee roles in social media are somewhat blurred. By identifying yourself as a City of Morgantown employee or representative, you are creating perceptions about your expertise and about the City by stakeholders, customers, business partners, and the general public.

**4.1.2** Each City Employee should take into consideration the reflection of the City's social media postings on the city government and public, and should seek to ensure that all content associated with you is consistent with your work and with the City's values and professional standards.

**4.1.3.** This policy shall not be used to limit the free speech rights of employees commenting on matters of public concerns solely in their personal capacities, and not acting or purporting to act on behalf of the City. This policy also shall not operate to prohibit employees from discussing the conditions of their employment in violation of the federal Fair Labor Standards Act or other applicable law.

### **4.2. Employee Social Media Use Guidelines:**

An employee who identifies on a social media account the employee's affiliation with the City, and does not disclaim speaking on behalf of the City in the social media profile or in a specific post, will be deemed to be using social media as a City employee. Employees who choose to participate in social media as a City employee must adhere to the following guidelines:

**4.2.1** City policies, rules, regulations, and standards of conduct apply to employees who engage in social media activities while conducting City business. Use of your City e-mail address and communicating in your official capacity will constitute conducting City business.

**4.2.2** Boards and Commissions shall obtain prior approval of the Communications Director if they intend to create a social networking site or service to conduct City business. Any approval shall include the condition that the Communications Director, or a designee, is granted continuing administrator privileges to the account and shall designate at least one Moderator, in addition to the Communications Director, to moderate the content of the account.

**4.2.3** Boards and Commission with social media sites shall grant continuing administrative access to the Communications Director. Passwords and other account information may not be changed without permission of the Communications Director, and no additional administrative privileges may be granted without permission of the Communications Director.

**4.2.4** Boards and Commissions have the option of allowing members to participate in social media sites as part of their job duties. Participating members must not use social media to conduct business outside of public meetings in violation of the Open Governmental Proceedings Act.

**4.2.5** City employees must protect their privacy, the privacy of citizens, and the information the City holds. Follow all privacy protection laws, and protect sensitive and confidential City information. Protected information that may not be disclosed includes – among other information – personally-identifiable health information and individualized tax information that is protected from disclosure to the public.

**4.2.6** City employees must follow all copyright laws, public records laws, fair use and financial disclosure laws, and any other laws that apply to the City or the employee.

**4.2.7** City employees may not advocate for the use of a particular private commercial vendor or service.

**4.2.8** City employees must make it clear when they are speaking for themselves and not on behalf of the City. If employees publish content on any website outside of City control and it has something to do with the work they do or subjects associated with the City, use a disclaimer such as this: “The postings on this site are my own and don’t necessarily represent the City’s positions or opinions.”

**4.2.9** City employees must not use discriminatory language, profanity, or personal insults, nor engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in the City’s workplace. Avoid comments or topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory.

**4.2.10** City employees should identify themselves in their official capacity and should ensure their profile and related content is consistent with how they wish to present themselves to colleagues, citizens and other stakeholders.

## **5. Applicability**

This Social Media Policy applies to any persons employed or appointed by the City of Morgantown, volunteers, and interns. The City of Morgantown Social Media Policy applies to any current or proposed social media sites used by city departments or boards and commissions.

Adopted: \_\_\_\_\_

Effective date: \_\_\_\_\_

Last Revised: \_\_\_\_\_

By: \_\_\_\_\_

City Manager