



Policy Regarding Usage of Social Media

April 2024

I. Executive Summary

This document outlines the policies and procedures for use of all City of Bee Cave (City) social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Nextdoor and YouTube. The policy outlines operating standards for the creation and use of social media sites and content, along with standards related to personal and professional use as a City employee and committee or board member.

II. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide standards and procedures for the appropriate use of social media in conducting City business. While this generally applies to the most popular sites, such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, Nextdoor and Twitter, it is acknowledged that social media is an evolving communications tool and that new resources may become available or discontinued over time. This policy also covers use of social media by City employees both in their professional and personal capacities.

III. Definitions

- A. "Social Media" are third-party websites, which allow for the creation of content and dialogue around a specific issue or area of interest.

- B. “City Social Media Sites” are those pages, sections or posting locations in or on Social Media websites that are established or maintained by an employee of the City who is authorized to do so as part of the employee’s job, and that are used to conduct City business, communicate with officeholders or City staff, and/or communicate with or gather feedback from residents and other interested parties.
- C. “City Social Media Content” is information posted or provided to a City Social Media Site by a City employee (or authorized representatives) when such activity is a part of the employee’s or the representative’s job duties.

IV. General Governance of City Social Media Sites

- A. **Site Creation:** City Social Media Sites may contain information that represents the City’s position on policy issues and/or the positions of its leadership, or may create the appearance of representing such positions. For this reason, all City Social Media Sites shall be approved by the Communications Director in advance of creating the site. Those wishing to launch a new City Social Media Site or new pages on a City Social Media Site shall present a business case to the Communications Director explaining how the new site or page will further the goals set out in this Policy.
- B. **Password Information:** All City Social Media Site login and password information shall be kept in a secure location with the Communications Director and individually distributed to those authorized to use specific sites and pages. All such information is property of the City and must be provided to the Communications Director who shall keep such information secured.
- C. No City Social Media Site will be approved without the designation of a specific departmental representative assigned responsibility for maintenance of the resource.
- D. All City Social Media Sites must be catalogued by our 3rd party archive provider.
- E. Employees and representatives creating or posting information to a City Social Media Site must conduct themselves at all times as representatives of the City and in accordance with all relevant Human Resources policies and administrative bulletins, including memos and emails.
- F. Employees and representatives found in violation of any part of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.
- G. The Communications Director is authorized to disable a City Social Media Site or prohibit posting of City Social Media Content to a site in the exercise of reasonable discretion. Reasons for doing so include (but are not limited to) any violation of any part of this policy, unprofessional use of the resource, lack of use or disinterest by the public, or a department’s failure to maintain the site.

- H. Individual staff members and committee members managing or posting on City Social Media Sites or on specific topics related to city business shall participate in City-sponsored or approved ethics and social media training at least once a year. Such individuals shall also comply with any other trainings required by law due to access to City computers and systems.

V. Acceptable Uses

City staff representing the City on City Social Media Sites and applications in the course of their assigned duties and responsibilities are bound by existing city policies and standards, including but not limited to:

- Applicable state, federal and local laws, regulations, ordinances, charter provisions and City policies.
- All information and technology security guidelines, procedures and policies.
- Existing City standards of conduct, ethics, rules and policies.
- The Texas Public Information Act and other applicable state records-retention laws and City schedules for retention.

Personal Responsibility:

All city employees and representatives must be cognizant that how they present themselves on social media applications reflects on the City whether with respect to City Social Media Sites or personal ones. Public and private or personal and professional avenues of communication may easily become blurred and result in inappropriate use or content.

In all applications, the following shall apply:

- A. **Confidentiality:** Employees and representatives shall not post or use proprietary, confidential, sensitive or individually identifiable information or divulge City intellectual property (trademarks, copyrights, or patents) in any social media application.
- B. **Disclaimers:** If employees or representatives refer to or identify themselves as city employees or representatives on personal Social Media Sites, use of a disclaimer is mandatory (except on LinkedIn if the staff member identifies as a City of Bee Cave employee). (e.g. *"While I work for the City of Bee Cave, anything I publish is my personal opinion and not the opinion or position of the City of Bee Cave, or a reflection of the City's policies."*).
- C. **Personal vs. Professional Use:** Employees' personal social media shall remain personal in nature and shall not be used for work-related purposes or to conduct official City business. Employees shall not use their city e-mail account or password when accessing personal social media accounts (unless they are required to be linked, like Facebook).
- D. **Use of City Resources:** Employees may use city-owned assets and equipment or resources (computers and cell phones) to access City Social Media Sites on a limited basis, unless it is

otherwise part of their duties, in which case there is no limit on such access. Department directors will determine level of access assigned to authorized users and the limits of non-business use in their respective departments.

E. **Ethical Obligations:** City ethical rules shall be followed at all times.

Professional Responsibility:

All city-related communications made through social media applications shall remain professional in nature. Employees are expected to use good judgment and take personal and professional responsibility for any content they make public via social media.

Communication Quality:

Authorized employees shall use good judgment and accuracy in all City Social Media Content. Errors and omissions reflect poorly on Bee Cave and may result in liability for the City or City officials. In addition to the Professional Responsibilities listed above, authorized City staff shall refrain from any social media activity that is inconsistent with, or that reasonably could be expected to cause confusion, miscommunication, or false impressions in the community. Employees are cautioned to be respectful and professional to everyone, including fellow personnel, organizations, residents and businesses.

VI. Design and Content of City Social Media Sites

- A. City Social Media Sites are focused and limited in scope and topic, and complement rather than replace the City's existing web resources. General "departmental" pages and associated content shall be showcased to the best extent on the City's website.
- B. Information that is proprietary, attorney-client privileged, subject to state or federal privacy laws, and information not subject to disclosure under the Texas Public Information Act shall NOT be posted on a City Social Media Site. Any questions concerning this standard shall be directed to the Communications Director.
- C. A clear statement of the intent, purpose and subject matter of the site, as well as a statement clearly articulating that all content and comments posted to the site are subject to public disclosure laws, shall be clearly posted on any City Social Media Site where allowable.
- D. All City Social Media Sites shall clearly indicate the portion of the site that is maintained by the City and shall have appropriate City contact information accessible.
- E. Links placed to a City Social Media Site shall only link to a resource on www.beecavetexas.gov, a city-owned website, a state, federal or local government site, an educational website (.edu) or an organization with an official partnership or supportive business relationship with a City department or program. Exceptions to this rule may be made at the discretion of the

Communications Director and/or City Manager, based on the relevance and appropriateness of the request.

- F. Design elements (logos, background, images) shall be appropriate to the subject matter and consistent with the City's Graphic Brand Standards.

VII. Security

City staff needs to take every caution to prevent fraud or unauthorized access to City Social Media Sites. In almost every case there is an attacker who accesses a system without authorization, he/she does so with the intent to cause harm.

City staff using City Social Media Sites should never respond to a message if there is any suspicion it could be a bot or an attacker. The Communications Director and/or IT staff member should be consulted if there is any doubt. No staff member should ever click on a link in a message sent through a City Social Media Site.

Security related to social media is fundamentally a behavioral issue, not typically a technology issue. In general, employees providing the confidential information to third parties pose a risk to the City network. Employees need to be aware of current and emerging threats that they may face using City Social Media Sites and how to avoid falling prey.

Additionally, social media login information shall be kept in a secure location, with password information only shared to those staff members accessing specific accounts. Passwords shall be updated when the staff members that were in charge of those accounts leave the organization, or there is fear that the password information may be compromised. Two-factor authentication shall also be put in place to help limit risk where available.

VIII. Public Comments and Interactive Features

A. City Social Media Sites must be set up in a way that either maximizes public comments or limits the resource to organizational (i.e. City) postings only.

B. Membership to a City Social Media Site shall not be required of members of the public to post comments. If this is not possible, then a City e-mail contact must be posted as an alternative for providing comments.

C. Interactivity and commenting on sites fall within three distinct categories:

1. "Push" sites which do not allow public comments.
2. "Limited forum" sites that clearly define a specific topic for discussion.
3. "Open forum" sites that do not limit the topic of discussion.

D. A City department that creates a City Social Media Site allowing interactivity and public comments should provide a disclaimer on the site that posted comments do not necessarily reflect the views or position of the City. Editing of public comments posted on an “open forum” site by the department that maintains the site is permitted if the comments:

- Clearly violate the Social Media Site provider’s terms of service;
- Contain information about City business or operations that is confidential;
- Would reasonably be considered pornographic, obscene, or defamatory in nature;
- Directly promote or advocate violence or the threat of violence;
- Promote or advocate discrimination based on race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, national origin, physical or mental disability, or sexual orientation;
- Are solicitations of commerce or promotion of private business enterprises;
- Contain information or a link to inappropriate sexual content;
- Encourage or promote illegal activity; or
- Appear to violate the legal ownership interest of any other party.

E. In addition to the above, in a “limited forum” site comments may be edited if they are clearly off-subject, based on the posted scope and topic.

F. If photos, videos, or other media are solicited through a site, all must be accepted and posted unless they fail to meet the guidelines stated above.

G. All public comments and posted media files inclusive of any edited content must be archived and stored in accord with requirements of Texas and federal laws and City records retention policies.

IX. Centralized Social Media Resources for Facebook, Twitter, Nextdoor, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube

A. Unless a justified limited purpose situation is made and approved for a separate account, City Social Media Content posted on Facebook, X, Instagram, LinkedIn, Nextdoor or YouTube shall be coordinated through the City’s Communications Director.

B. The City’s official X site (aka Twitter) is @cityofbeecave and the official X site for the police department is @beecavepolice. The City’s Instagram is @cityofbeecave; the BCPD Instagram page is @protectingthehive. The library also has an Instagram page, and the Communications Department also runs a visitor Instagram page to promote City tourism. The City’s main Facebook channel is @cityofbeecave. Additionally, there are Facebook pages for Bee Cave Parks and Recreation (@beecaveparksandrecreation), the Bee Cave Police Department (@protectingthehive) and the Bee Cave Public Library (@TheBeeCavePublicLibrary). The City’s LinkedIn account is @cityofbeecave. Use of these Social Media Sites are governed by the following guidelines:

- Departments, officials or programs shall contact the Communications Director to coordinate posts to these resources (and other sub-pages that are not listed), unless it has already been

designated that a member of that department has been trained to use the City-Affiliated Social Media Site.

- A separate account may be approved if there is a limited, defined interest purpose for the targeted information.
- City of Bee Cave accounts may “follow” official governmental or educational accounts, or accounts owned by an organization with an official partnership or supportive business relationship with a City department or program. The Communication Director shall make the determination which such accounts to follow.

C. The City maintains an official YouTube channel that serves as the central repository for City-related videos, programs and PSAs. Use of this resource is governed by the following guidelines:

- Departments, employees or City committee members may request a “playlist” be created to feature their videos. Approval of playlists will be made by the Communications Director, in collaboration with the requesting department, employee or City committee.

X. Use of Social Media by Elected Officials and Appointed Board Members

- A. Elected Officials and Appointed Board Members or Directors shall refrain from conducting or commenting on City business on their personal social media pages, when acting in their official capacities. Elected Officials and Appointed Board Members or Directors may share content from City Social Media Sites on their personal pages, but should refrain from providing commentary to the links or otherwise commenting on City business on their private pages, where the public has limited access.
- B. No Elected Officials and Appointed Board Members or Directors shall operate a page where City issues are discussed that does not abide by public forum rules. A non-City related entity may run the page and impose their own rules, but that should not be done by an Elected Official and Appointed Board Member or Director.

XI. Photography and Video Recording

Photography or video recording is permitted at all City of Bee Cave facilities and events on city-owned property, except where posted otherwise. The City of Bee Cave reserves the right to require a person to

leave the premises, cease taking photos, or using a video device if city staff finds such behavior disruptive to normal users of the facilities. ¹

By their use of City of Bee Cave facilities, participants of programs and special events acknowledge there is no expectation of privacy in public areas, programs, and special events. Such participants acknowledge the City of Bee Cave may take photos and videos of themselves and their children for publication in the program brochure, website, and additional uses as the City deems necessary, unless the registrant or participant expressly files a written request as to the use of photos or videos of themselves and/or their children. All professional photography on city-owned property which is intended to be used for resale must be approved through the City of Bee Cave's Communications Department.

User Content

As between a participant or user of a City facility, the users must acknowledge there is no expectation of privacy or exclusivity of possession in such communication with the City by sharing using the City's websites and social media channels, (the "sites") or tagging the City, such as posting or sharing comments, photos, and videos (referred to as "user content").

In addition, by posting user content, users must give the City permission to use user content as follows: by granting to the City a license to reproduce, display, perform, distribute, create derivative works from and otherwise use user content in connection with the sites and for other marketing purposes, including without limitation in print, email, and other communications, city materials and other marketing. The City may display advertisements in connection with user content or on pages where user content may be viewed by others, and the City may use user content to advertise and promote the City.

The City's license for user content is non-exclusive. Such license is perpetual, meaning that our license lasts for an indefinite period of time.

Public Information Notice

The City will inform users posting user content that user content is displayed including social media handles and images. The City collects and processes this information as necessary for compliance with state law.

Business Marketing Request

All professional photography on city-owned property which is intended to be used for resale must be approved through the City of Bee Cave's Communications Department.

¹ Disruptions include, but are not limited to, interfering with other members of the public and their ability to use or enjoy an area at the same time, placing equipment or props which interfere with use of any area, preventing others from taking photographs or video images at the same time, and invading the personal space of individuals in furtherance of the photograph or video.