

RULE XXI

SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEBSITE POLICY

SECTION 1. PURPOSE

The City of Forest Park is committed to openness and transparency and the engagement of the Forest Park Community regarding City programs, services, and policies. The city recognizes that social media and networking sites are important and widely used communication tools when it comes to disseminating information. However, use of social media and the internet also presents certain risks and, therefore, carries with it certain responsibilities. The City's social media and Website Policy provides guidance for the use of social media and networking sites, and applies to all forms of social media and networking sites. The city supports the following principles in the administration of social media:

- Community engagement
- Timely, accurate, and responsive information
- Positive public image
- Transparency and accountability

SECTION 2. DEFINITIONS

a. *Social Media & Networking Sites* – online and/or digital platforms that allow for the exchange of digital words, sounds, videos, and pictures between users on the Internet, such as blogs, social networking sites or Wiki. **Popular social media sites include, but are not limited to: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube.** **Other similar sites or services developed in the future can and shall be included in this policy.*

b. *Blog* – a type of website usually maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video.

c. *Content* – information that is posted and shared with your audience on social media and networking sites. Examples include photos, images, videos, infographics, etc.

d. *Copyrights* – Copyrights protect the right of an author to control the reproduction and use of any creative expression that has been fixed in tangible form, such as literary works, graphical works, photographic works, audiovisual works, electronic works, and musical works. It is illegal to reproduce and use copyrighted material through social media channels without the copyright owner's permission.

e. *Moderator* – Employee(s) authorized by the city to be responsible for ensuring the accuracy of posted information by regularly reviewing, responding to, and/or removing information posted on any of the City's social media sites.

f. *Website* – a collection of web pages and related content that is identified by a common domain name and published on at least one web server.

SECTION 3. STANDARDS

a. All social media sites and websites concerning or affiliated with the City of Forest Park shall only be used to provide information and updates regarding official city business.

b. It is important to represent the city with a consistent message across all forms of communication, including social media platforms.

c. It is strictly prohibited for any City employee to use a City authorized social media site or website for personal use.

d. The City of Forest Park's Social Media Ambassador Program enlists the support of assigned City employees who have access to post content on social media on behalf of the Public Information Officer (PIO). Once assigned and approved by the City Manager, these specific individuals will receive approved training by the PIO and are to use the City's social media sites for outreach and/or education-related purposes only.

e. The City's internet and computer resources are provided to department designees to allow them to complete their job duties and should be used for business purposes only. Employees may not respond directly to any social media posting by entering comments from their personal social media accounts. Responses, questions, or comments to those who have posted to a City-owned social media account must be coordinated with and posted by the PIO, unless otherwise directed by the City manager.

f. Content concerning official City business that is removed must be digitally retained, stored, and timely disposed of in the manner required to meet the requirements of Georgia's applicable public records laws.

g. Use of the City logos, photos, and graphics shall be in compliance with the most recent approved communications policy.

h. No copyrighted material shall be shared, posted, or uploaded on any social media site or website authorized under this policy unless the City has an active, legitimate license for such purpose or consent of the author.

i. Moderators are to quickly respond to their own mistakes by modifying posts, removing materials, or taking the proper actions to provide clear, accurate, and valuable information.

SECTION 4. TERMS OF USE

All users of City of Forest Park social media sites and websites must abide by and understand the following terms outlined in the section below.

a. All content posted on City of Forest Park social media sites and websites is considered a public record that is subject to Georgia's public records law and the U.S. Freedom of Information Act. Any content maintained on a social media website that is related to City business, including a list of subscribers or "friends" is public record. As such, the City is responsible for responding completely and accurately to any public records request for public records on its social

media activities. Content related to City business shall be maintained in an accessible format so that it can be produced in response to an open records request. Whenever possible, City social media websites shall clearly indicate that any articles and any other content posted or submitted for posting are subject to public disclosure. Content will be retained in accordance with the appropriate Georgia Local Government Records Retention Schedules.

b. City of Forest Park webpages for departments and/or divisions must be located on the City's official website (www.forestparkga.gov) and are to be coordinated through the Public Information Office.

c. Information posted on the City's social media sites and website must relate to programs, services, and/or events managed or primarily sponsored by the City of Forest Park mayor, city council, departments, divisions, and offices. Posting information regarding other governmental agencies and community centers is at the discretion of the PIO and/or City manager.

d. Each City social networking site must include an introductory statement that clearly specifies the purpose and topical scope of the social networking site. Wherever possible, content posted on the City's social media sites must contain hyperlinks directing users back to the City's official website for in-depth information, forms, documents, or online services necessary to conduct business with the City of Forest Park.

e. Each council member may post information or opinions about City or ward events and issues on their respective personal social media accounts and specified pages of the City's official website. However, these postings may not be used for campaign or personal purposes. **Further, due to public records laws, no council member shall criticize or comment on any other council member's opinion, position or vote in any posting on any official social media platform or web-based platform.**

f. All City departments, divisions, and offices shall have a Moderator.

g. Employees representing the city on social media and networking sites must identify themselves by name and, when relevant, by role at the City. All City of Forest Park policies are applicable to interactions on social media and networking sites when representing the City.

h. Departments, divisions, and offices are encouraged to utilize the City's website to provide convenient public access to current information, forms, and procedures.

i. The request to add an external link to the City's website shall be coordinated through the Public Information Office and/or, in some instances, the City's Information Technology Department. Primary consideration will be given to government agencies or committees specified by the mayor, city council and/or City manager. All those who request external links will be notified as to the direction of their request.

j. The City of Forest Park's website provides links to federal, state, and local governmental agencies and educational institutions including school districts, colleges, and universities.

k. Websites are considered official when:

- They are created and presented to communicate information on official City of Forest Park services, events, and programs.
- Contain official City of Forest Park branding or logos and/or events or programs managed by the city.
- Containing any of these official elements will appear under one of the official City of Forest Park domains. Unique subdomains and URLs are to be used only after approval has been obtained from the City manager.

l. City departments, divisions, and offices are prohibited from utilizing social media and networking sites and/or interactive communications (blogs, chat rooms, etc.) such as, but not limited to, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to promote City programs and services except as outlined by the City's social media and Website Policy.

m. Employees may not post any unsuitable or inappropriate content on any social media or networking site or the City of Forest Park's website. Inappropriate content includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- comments that are profane, abusive, threatening, harassing, intimidating, hateful, or intended to defame any person or organization
- content considered to be disrespectful or insulting to City officials, staff, or representatives
- comments that suggest or encourage illegal activity
- content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability, gender identity, or sexual orientation
- sexual content or links to sexual content
- content posted by persons whose profile picture or avatar, username, or email address contains any of inappropriate content
- solicitations or advertisements, including promotion and endorsement of any financial, commercial, or non-governmental agency
- information that may compromise the safety or security of the public, a public facility, or a public event
- public disclosure of personal and confidential information
- religious and political messages
- promotional messages for personal gain or personal solicitation
- harmful software, viruses, Trojan horses, or malware in any form
- data that could reasonably be expected to cause, directly or indirectly, strain on any computing facilities, or interfere with others' use of the service, such as chain letters and mass mailings (spam)
- inappropriate jokes, slurs, or innuendos
- content for the purposes of promoting a candidate for any elected or appointed office
- content that violates intellectual property rights of any party

n. The City reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of this policy or any applicable law.

o. Employees who fail to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner and/or who violate any of the provisions of this policy will be reported to department directors and/or Human Resources for appropriate disciplinary action.

SECTION 5. MODERATING CUSTOMER INPUT

Social media users are most engaged on sites that provide and encourage the exchange of information. These sites often provide users the ability to voice their opinions and reactions to posted information. This may result in comments or feedback from users that concern department Moderators or other staff. A department should not use this type of media if it is uncomfortable with the idea of users posting negative or unsavory comments about itself, its leaders, or programs. In other words, if the department is uncomfortable with the level of exchange on a particular site, the site may not be appropriate for that department.

To keep track of incoming feedback and customer contributed content, department and division Moderators should check their social media sites at least once a day. If a City social media site is created under guidelines or policies that limit the site to a particular topic (as opposed to general or all-purpose department communications), off-topic comments or contents may be deleted under the guidance of City legal counsel. Otherwise, Moderators may not delete or modify comments that are posted or otherwise sent or shared by outside parties on their social media sites.

SECTION 6. PRIVACY

As City social media sites grow in popularity and usage, issues of privacy become paramount. Departments (particularly those that handle sensitive or protected information) need to be mindful of citizens' privacy and identities.

Departments posting material featuring identifiable private individuals and children must get permission before publication. Releases or permissions should be in writing or by an email authorization from the source confirming that the City's use is acceptable.

SECTION 7. DISCLAIMER

Each City of Forest Park social media site must contain the below disclaimer:

This site is maintained by the City of Forest Park for the purpose of providing information and engaging the community. It is informal and should not be considered official communication from the city. For official information on the City of Forest Park and its programs, services and policies, please visit www.forestparkga.gov. The views of external participants commenting on this site do not necessarily represent those of the City of Forest Park.

The city monitors this site during regular business hours, Monday to Friday, 8:00am-5:00pm, excluding City holidays, however, we cannot commit to replying to all comments or moderating all discussions on this site.

All information provided by the City of Forest Park on this site is for informational purposes only and is subject to change without notice.

This site may also contain information that is posted here by a variety of public sources. Except as otherwise noted, these are the personal responsibility of the persons who post the entries. In no event shall the City of Forest Park be held responsible or liable, directly or indirectly, for any damage or loss in connection with the use of or reliance on any posting, content or information provided by another party on this site.

The City of Forest Park reserves the right, without notification and at our sole discretion, to remove any objectionable content posted by the public. Objectionable content includes but is not limited to: personal attacks and harassment of any kind; pornography; language that is considered threatening, defamatory, abusive, vulgar, hateful or racist; content that suggests or encourages illegal activity or incites violence. We may delete comments that are spam, are clearly “off topic” or that promote services or products.

Comments that make unsupported accusations will be taken out of the discussion. Any individual who repeatedly violates the terms of this policy will be blocked from posting to this page.

The appearance of external links on this page does not represent official endorsement by the City of Forest Park.

The city does not accept responsibility for ads, videos, promoted content or comments accessible from any external website and we do not control or guarantee the accuracy, relevance, timeliness or completeness of information contained on a linked website. We do not endorse the organizations sponsoring linked websites or the views they express or the products/services they offer.

Users are hereby notified that they are fully responsible for the content they provide on this site or any related links. The user is responsible for all copyright and intellectual property laws associated with this content.

The city has taken reasonable precautions to ensure there are no viruses associated with this page and advise we are not responsible for any loss or damage resulting from your use.

Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are third party service providers that may collect, store, and manage your personal information whenever you access and use this site. Please refer to their terms of service and/or privacy statements for particulars. Note that the City of Forest Park has no control over what is done with your personal information.

If you have any questions about the City's collection of personal information through this page please contact the City at (404) 366-4720.