

City of Woodcreek

Social Media Policy

Overview

The City of Woodcreek has an official City presence on two social media sites – Facebook and Nextdoor. These accounts are managed by the City Manager who is designated the administrator, but they may delegate the duties of posting and maintenance of the profiles to other city employees. The Mayor may utilize the posting feature of social media profiles for official City communications.

Purpose

The purpose of social media pages used by the City is to share information about city business and events, celebrate the achievements of our community, share about other community events outside of those sponsored directly by the City which could be relevant or beneficial to residents, and provide updates about issues and events that impact our citizens. In times of crises or emergency, the City's social media pages will be used to disseminate critical information to promote the health, welfare, and safety of residents.

Rules of Engagement

Comments and reactions will be limited to specific posts seeking public input. There shall be no public posting on the City social media profiles by anyone other than the City Manager, Mayor, or other designated City Employee.

The administrators reserve the right to remove posts that violate community guidelines and/or violate the privacy of staff. A comment may be removed if it:

- Threatens physical violence or is obscene, vulgar, or sexually explicit
- Promotes illegal use of drugs, alcohol, or other controlled substances
- The materials endorse actions endangering the health or safety of others
- The post contains untrue and potentially harmful statements about a city employee or identifies a specific employee in a defamatory, abusive, or negative way, or violates an employee's privacy
- Violates the law or encourages others to do so or advocates imminent lawlessness or disruptive action and is likely to incite or produce such action
- Violates the intellectual property rights of another person or entity
- Contains hate speech or similar language that offensively attacks any group, including racist, homophobic, sexist, obscene or sexually explicit remarks
- Violates federal or state law or any Board policies regarding the protection of employee privacy or the confidentiality of employee

- Is for fundraising activities and are from a group not affiliated with the City.
- Advertises or promotes goods or services or is “spam”
- Creates reasonable cause to believe that posting the information will cause material or substantial disruption or interference with City business or the rights of others

Guidelines for City Responses

Direct Message Communication and Open Comments

The City’s social media platforms exist for the purpose of sharing information with the public, and are not the best venues for individuals to report concerns to or seek information from the City. Questions, requests for information, and reports of concern should be directed to the City via the official City email, phone, or by going to City Hall directly.

The City of Woodcreek is not responsible for user-generated content on posts open for comments. Therefore, the opinions expressed in that content do not necessarily reflect those of the City or its employees.

When a City of Woodcreek employee responds to a comment, in his/her capacity as a City of Woodcreek employee, the employee’s name and title should be made available, and the employee shall not share personal information about himself or herself, or other City employees.

The City of Woodcreek employees, Mayor and City Manager may or may not check inbox communications via social media platforms on a regular or timely basis. Communication from residents on these platforms will not be viewed as formal communications with the City nor shall the City be bound by the Public Information Act in regard to the timeline or content of a response to a citizen comment via the direct message feature on social media platforms. ALL communications received in the messenger or in-box feature of a social media platform will receive the same blanket response once it has been viewed:

“This is not an official means of communication for individuals to contact the City of Woodcreek . To contact City Staff please email: Woodcreek@woodcreektx.gov or call: 512.847.9390 or go to City Hall at: 41 Champions Circle, Woodcreek, TX 78676-3327. The City will not respond to the direct content of this communication.”

Disclaimer

The City of Woodcreek Social Media Policy will be updated over time as the use of social media evolves.

This is a policy document meant to guide city staff and government officials. It is not legally binding and does seek to diminish first amendment rights. All parties are encouraged to use their personal social media pages to exercise their personal rights.

General Policy for Use

1. City social media sites should make clear that they are maintained by the City of Woodcreek and that they follow the City's Social Media Policy.
2. Wherever possible, City social media sites should link back to the official City of Woodcreek website for forms, documents, online services and other information necessary to conduct business with the City of Woodcreek.
3. The City Manager, or their designee, will monitor content on City social media sites to ensure adherence to both the City's Social Media Policy.
4. The City reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of this Social Media Policy or any applicable law. Any content removed based on these guidelines must be retained by the City Manager for a reasonable period of time, including the time, date and identity of the poster, when available.
5. These guidelines must be displayed to users or made available by hyperlink.
6. The City will approach the use of social media tools as consistently as possible and shall refrain from using the platforms for political or personal gain.
7. The City of Woodcreek's website at <https://www.woodcreektx.gov/> will remain the City's primary and predominant internet presence.
8. All City social media sites shall adhere to applicable federal, state and local laws, regulations and policies.
9. City social media sites are subject to The Public Information Act (Chapter 522 of the Texas Government Code). Any content maintained in a social media format that is related to City business, including a list of subscribers, posted communication, and communication submitted for posting, may be a public record subject to public disclosure.
10. Employees representing the City government via City social media sites must always conduct themselves as a representative of the City and in accordance with all City policies.
11. Comments on topics or issues not within the jurisdictional purview of the City of Woodcreek may be removed.
12. The City does not endorse any links or advertisements that may show up on this Facebook page.

Comment Policy

By posting or commenting on the City of Woodcreek's Facebook or Nextdoor (when allowed), you agree to the terms of use of the City of Woodcreek's social media comment policy as provided herein.

1. As a public entity the City must abide by certain standards to serve all its constituents in a civil and unbiased manner.

2. The City of Woodcreek’s social media pages are intended to be “family friendly,” so please keep your comments clean by following the rules of engagement outlined above in this document.
3. The intended purpose behind establishing City of Woodcreek social media sites is to disseminate information from the City, about the City, to its citizens. It is not intended to be a citizen complaint channel or to serve as a replacement for official channels of communication to receive information from citizens. Citizens shall not expect the City to respond to comments or direct messages via social media platforms in a specific time frame or in accordance with the Public Information Request Act guidelines. Those types of communication MUST be via email: Woodcreek@woodcreektx.gov or call: 512.847.9390 or go to City Hall at: 41 Champions Circle, Woodcreek, TX 78676-3327
4. A comment posted by a member of the public on any City of Woodcreek social media site is the opinion of the commentator or poster only, and publication of a comment does not imply endorsement of, or agreement by, the City of Woodcreek, nor do such comments necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of the City of Woodcreek.
5. The City of Woodcreek reserves the right to deny access to City of Woodcreek social media sites for any individual, who violates the City of Woodcreek’s Social Media Policy, at any time and without prior notice.
6. Comments posted to this page will be monitored and inappropriate content as defined above will be removed as soon as possible and without prior notice.
7. All comments posted to any City of Woodcreek social media sites are bound by the terms and conditions of those respective platforms.
8. By posting or commenting on the City of Woodcreek social media platforms you agree to our terms of use. You participate by your own choice, taking personal responsibility for your comments, your username and any information you provide therein.
9. The City of Woodcreek reserves the right to report any violation of Facebook or Nextdoor’s Statement of Rights and Responsibilities and/or Community Standards to those entities. The City of Woodcreek is not responsible for the actions taken by Facebook or Nextdoor in these should the report lead to a loss of the social media account or some other penalty
10. To report an inappropriate comment, please call the City Hall at 512.847.9390 and/or report the comment directly to Facebook or Nextdoor using that feature on the platform.

If you are experiencing an emergency please dial 911 and DO NOT RELY on the City of Woodcreek’s social media pages to seek or receive immediate assistance.

In the event of a public emergency, the City of Woodcreek will make every effort to update social media pages with relevant and important information to help protect citizens and

promote safety. Do NOT rely on these sources alone for news and/or other information. They are NOT meant to replace National and Statewide Emergency Communication efforts.

LEGAL RESOURCES AND GUIDELINES

If a municipality decides it would like to allow commenting on its Facebook page, the next consideration is how much commenting it wants to allow. If the municipality only wants to open up public comments on specific posts or for a specific period of time, it is creating a “designated” or “limited” public forum. In a “designated public forum” situation, the municipality would open up commenting on specific posts and limited to certain topics. See [Good News Club v. Milford Central School, 533 U.S. 98 \(2001\)](#) (allowing a university to restrict use of its meeting rooms to events pertaining to education and community welfare as long as the restrictions were content-neutral). In a “limited public form” situation, the municipality would open up comments for a specific period of time on any topic. If a municipality allows public commenting on all topics and at all times, the municipality has created a “traditional public forum” akin to the courthouse steps.

If a municipality allows public commenting in any form, the municipality must decide how to moderate the comments and determine when to delete or hide comments. In a limited forum, the deletion of a comment “must not discriminate against speech based on viewpoint, and must be reasonable in light of the forum’s purpose.” [Good News Club v. Milford Central School, 533 U.S. 98 \(2001\)](#). In a designated forum or traditional forum, there must be a narrowly drawn “compelling state interest” to restrict free speech. [Perry Educ. Ass’n v. Perry Educators’ Ass’n, 460 U.S. 37 \(1983\)](#). Therefore, the municipality must only delete or hide comments that violate such “compelling interests.” Examples include the protection of the public welfare, threats, offensive, racist or derogatory words. [Gitlow v. New York, 268 U.S. 652 \(1925\)](#); [Virginia v. Black, 538 U.S. 343 \(2003\)](#); [Denver Area Educ. Telecommunications Consortium, Inc. v. F.C.C., 518 U.S. 727 \(1996\)](#).

SOURCE: <https://www.gklegal.com/blog/should-municipalities-allow-public-commenting-on-their-facebook-pages/>

ADDITIONAL LINK TO LEGAL RESOURCES:

<https://www.tml.org/DocumentCenter/View/426/When-Can-My-City-Delete-a-Facebook-Comment-and-Other-Social-Media-Issues-PDF>