



SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

PURPOSE:

The City of New Bern is using social media. Our purpose in participating in this communication arena is to build relationships with citizens and visitors; increase and enhance communication and collaboration; share and exchange information on a real-time basis; streamline processes; reach audiences who don't typically utilize more traditional means of communication (i.e. attend Board or Commission meetings, email, newsletter, etc.); foster productivity; and build the City's reputation as a community of progressive thinkers. To undertake this initiative, the City must be open to new opportunities and remain flexible in the ongoing development and debut of social media outlets. Reasonable guidelines are listed below for use of broadbased social media as well as the City's vision for social media implementation.

The Public Information Officer and the Information Technology Manager will continually review and assess the appropriateness and feasibility of social media for city-related use as new technology is developed. This assessment is imperative before any city departments will be permitted to use the technology and its social media applications.

OUR VISION FOR USAGE:

Social media forums provide an interactive means of sharing information that relates to the City of New Bern:

- While these forums allow us to build relationships and engage the public in ongoing conversation, they will not be used as the City's only method of communication with citizens, visitors, businesses and others.
- Social media can be especially effective in communicating emergency information during crisis situations when timing is crucial.
- Social media can be *ineffective* as a means of discussing controversial or complex City issues. The City of New Bern will use more appropriate means to communicate detailed information about these types of issues with citizens and others.
- Practical and legal consideration may prevent or prohibit discussion of certain topics through social media.
- Social media should be used as a feedback and inquiry tool for the public. Thoughtful consideration should be given in offering criticism of the organization (not individuals). We recognize that not all comments will be flattering of the City, however, we reserve

the right to remove posts that are deemed as a personal attack and/or are inflammatory, obscene, demeaning, or use offensive language.

- Social media is a valuable investigative tool when seeking evidence or information about missing or wanted persons, gang participation, online crimes (cyberbullying, cyberstalking) and photos or videos of a crime posted by a participant or observer.
- Social media can be used for community outreach and engagement by providing information about city programs and opportunities as well as crime prevention, home safety, online-reporting opportunities, maps and data, energy efficiency information, etc.
- Social media can be a valuable recruitment mechanism for persons who use the Internet to seek employment and other volunteer positions.

DEFINITIONS:

Blog: a self-published diary or commentary on a particular topic that may allow visitors to post responses, reactions, or comments. The term is short for “Web log.”

Page: the specific portion of a social media website where content is displayed and managed by an individual or individuals with administrator rights.

Post: content an individual shares on a social media site or the act of publishing content on a site.

Profile: information that a user provides about himself or herself on a social networking site.

Social Media: a category of Internet-based resources that integrate user-generated content and user participation. This includes, but is not limited to, social networks, social networking sites, blogging and microblogging sites, photo- and video-sharing sites, wikis, blogs, and news sites.

Social Networks: online platforms where users can create profiles, share information, and socialize with others using a range of technologies.

Speech: expression or communication of thoughts or opinions in spoken words, in writing, by expressive conduct, symbolism, photographs, videotape, or related forms of communication.

Web 2.0: the second generation of the World Wide Web focused on shareable, user-generated content, rather than static webpages. Some use this term interchangeably with social media.

Wiki: web page(s) that can be edited collaboratively.

MAINTENANCE OF CITY OWNED ACCOUNTS:

Management of social media accounts will rest primarily within the Information Technology Department and secondarily with the Public Information Officer. Maintenance and monitoring of social media accounts will rest primarily with the Department Head. A limited number of city staff members shall have access to social media accounts and passwords, permission and capability to post as the “City of New Bern” or a department thereof. Requests to initiate or participate in social media outlets should be made to the Information Technology Department and Public Information Officer.

- Designated city staff members may post comments/replies without advance review or permission of City Management. However, if staff expresses a concern about the comment/response or requests advance review, those may be made to the appropriate department head or Public Information Officer.

- Other city staff members may request that authorized staff post a message from the City of New Bern on their behalf.
- Department personnel representing the City via social media outlets shall adhere to City standards of conduct. They shall refrain from posts that may be interpreted as a personal attack, and/or are offensive, obscene, inflammatory, irresponsible, or demeaning, or that otherwise express bias against any race, religion, or any protected class of individuals.
- Departments & city staff that use social media are responsible for complying with applicable federal, state & local laws, regulations and policies. This includes adherence to laws and policies regarding public records retention, personnel privacy, First Amendment, HIPAA privacy, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and information security policies established by the City of New Bern.
- Elected officials and other staff members are not to post, without advance approval, to the City of New Bern pages as representatives of the organization.
- Staff should resist the temptation to engage in back-and-forth conversation regarding complex, sensitive, controversial, or heated issues. Staff may determine that other means/tools would be more appropriate for responding to citizens' posts, or that it is best not to respond at all.
- If designated staff determine that an issue has reached "critical mass" within the social media forum, they may request a City response from the Public Information Officer or City Manager.
- Confidential information should not be posted.
- Employees shall observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and service mark restrictions in posting materials to electronic media.
- Posts to City accounts or pages by employees using their personal accounts are permitted, however, the employee is encouraged to disclose their relationship with the City. Employees are encouraged to include a disclaimer, for example: "Views expressed are strictly my own and do not represent the views of the City of New Bern and/or the (name of department)." For safety and security purposes, department personnel such as Police and Fire who use their personal accounts to participate in social media, are cautioned about revealing their employment.
- City staff should consider whether liking, sharing, retweeting, or commenting on any social media posts could be perceived as an endorsement of or about the City, its employees, constituents, other public officials, suppliers, vendors, or contractors.
- Standard replies may be used during sensitive or complex issues, where the user may need additional direction. Consider this, as an example: "The City of New Bern appreciates your feedback and concern expressed here. However, complex or controversial topics are not effectively discussed via social media forums like this one. Please contact (employee name) at (employee contact phone number) if you wish to voice your concerns further or obtain additional information."
- City personnel should expect that any information created, transmitted, downloaded, exchanged, or discussed in a public online forum may be accessed by the department at any time without prior notice.
- Employees who become aware of or have knowledge of a posting or of any website or webpage in violation of this policy shall notify his or her supervisor immediately.
- If staff discovers unauthorized activity on their social media platform, i.e. the account is hacked, staff should:

- Immediately notify the I.T. Manager.
- Immediately try to regain access to the account.
- Once access to the account is obtained, change the password.
- Delete messages posted by hackers.
- Let followers know the account was hacked and what is being done to fix the issue.
- Review third-party apps. These could be used by hackers to gain access to accounts.

POLICY:

Social media provides a new and valuable means of assisting the City in meeting and maintaining community outreach, problem-solving, investigative needs, crime prevention, and other objectives. This policy outlines reasonable and potential uses for social media in the workplace. The personal use of social media can have bearing on departmental personnel in their official capacity. And as such, this policy provides precautionary information as well as prohibitions on the use of social media by department personnel.

All use of social media and social networking must be approved by the Information Technology Department and the Public Information Officer and be in compliance with this policy.

- Where possible, each department’s social media page shall include an introductory statement that clearly identifies the purpose and scope of the department’s presence on the site.
- Where possible, the page(s) should link to the City’s official website.
- Where possible, social media pages shall prominently display the department’s contact information.
- The City shall not edit others’ posts.
- Conversation shall remain civil and respectful always. Posts deemed as offensive, inflammatory, demeaning, inappropriate, or that use vulgar language shall be removed. Personal attacks or discriminatory posts are not permitted. If a post is in violation of this policy, it may be removed.
- The City shall not post inaccurate or untruthful information. If an inadvertent inaccuracy is discovered, attention shall be paid immediately to publish a correction.
- In order to maintain social forum accessibility for all users, posts from the same individual or organization shall be limited to no more than three (3) per day.
- In general, individual complaints, concerns, or service requests will not be addressed via social media.
- Social media content shall adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including all information technology and records management policies.
 - Content is subject to public records laws. Relevant records retention schedules apply to social media content. N.C. Gen. Statute § 132-1 *et seq.*
 - Pages shall clearly indicate that any content posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure.

Employees should be mindful that when using social media, their speech becomes part of the worldwide electronic domain. Therefore, adherence to this policy is required in the professional

use of social media. Violation of this policy may result in the removal of information from social media outlets, removal of access to this service, and/or further disciplinary action.