

CITY OF VERGAS, MN

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the proper use of the City of Vergas's social media sites by its employees and establish procedures for creating an overall social media presence for the City in a positive and informative fashion for the general public. Social media users have the responsibility to use these resources in an efficient, effective, ethical and lawful manner pursuant to all existing City and departmental policies. This policy also provides guidelines and standards for individual employees regarding the use of social media for communication with citizens, colleagues and the world at large.

Policy

The City of Vergas will determine, at its discretion, how its web-based social media resources will be designed, implemented and managed as part of its overall communication and information sharing strategy. City related social media sites may be modified or removed by the City at any time and without notice, as described in this document.

Scope

This policy applies to any existing or proposed social media web sites sponsored, established, registered or authorized by the City of Vergas. This policy also covers all City employees, Council members, any appointed board or commission member and their use of social media.

Definition

Social media are internet and mobile-based tools for sharing and discussing information. Social media users can post photos, video, comments and links to other information to create content on any imaginable topic. This may be referred to as "user-generated content" or "consumer-generated media."

Social media tools include, but are not limited to:

- Sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Google Buzz, and MySpace
- Blogs
- Twitter
- Videosharing sites such as YouTube and iReport
- Photo sharing sites such as TwitPic and Flickr
- Wikis, or shared encyclopedias such as Wikipedia
- RSS feeds
- Mobile phone content uploaded to the Internet
- An ever emerging list of new technological tools

Goals

Social networking in government serves two primary functions: to communicate and deliver messages directly to citizens and to encourage citizen involvement, interaction, and feedback. Information which is distributed via social networking must be accurate, consistent, and timely and meet with information needs of the City's customers.

Management of Social Media

City employees with administrator access are responsible for managing social media websites. Facilities or departments wishing to have a new social media presence must initially submit a request to the City Clerk Treasurer in order to ensure social media accounts are kept to a sustainable number and policies are followed. All approved sites will be clearly marked as the City of Vergas site and will be linked with the official City website (www.cityofvergas.com). Employees are prohibited from establishing social networking sites on behalf of the City unless specifically authorized.

Responsibility

Administration of all social media web sites and online community accounts must comply with applicable laws, regulations, and policies as well as proper business etiquette.

City social media accounts accessed and utilized during the course and scope of an employee's performance of his/her job duties may not be used for private or personal purposes or for the purpose of expressing private or personal views on personal, political or policy issues or to express personal views or concerns pertaining to City employment relations matters.

City of Vergas social media and online community web site accounts are considered a City asset and logins to these accounts must be securely administered in accordance with the City Information Technology Policy. **The City reserves the right to shut down any of its social media sites or accounts for any reason without notice.**

A social media web site and online community accounts shall not be used by the City or any City employee or representative to disclose sensitive and/or confidential information.

All social media web sites and online community accounts created and utilized during the course and scope of an employee's performance of his/her job duties will be identified as belonging to the City of Vergas, including as a link to the City's official web site.

Rules of Use

When using social media sites as a representative of the City, employees will act in a professional manner. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Adhere to all City personnel and Information Technology Policies
- Use only appropriate language

- Be aware that content will not only reflect on the writer but also on the City of Vergas as a whole, including elected officials and other city employees. Make sure information is accurate and free of grammatical errors.
- Not providing private or confidential information, including names, or using such material as part of any content added to a site.
- Not negatively commenting on community partners or their services, or using such material as part of any content added to a site.
- Not providing information related to pending decisions that would compromise negotiations.
- Be aware that all content added to a site is subject to open records/right to know laws and discovery in legal cases.
- Always keep in mind the appropriateness of content.

Moderating Public Comments

Where moderation of comments is an available option, comments from the public may be moderated by City staff, with administrative rights, before posting. Where moderation prior to posting is not an option, sites will be regularly monitored by City staff.

City of Vergas's staff, with administrative rights, will not edit any posted comments, but will not post any comments that are abusive, obscene, defamatory, in violation of the copyright, trademark, right or other intellectual property right of any third party, or otherwise inappropriate or incorrect. The following are examples of content that may be removed by City staff before or shortly after being published:

- Potentially libelous comments
- Obscene or racist comments
- Personal attacks, insults, or threatening language
- Plagiarized material
- Private, personal information published without consent
- Comments totally unrelated to the topic of the forum
- Commercial promotions or spam
- Hyperlinks to material that is not directly related to the discussion

Personal Social Media Use

The City of Vergas respects employees' rights to post and maintain personal websites, blogs and social media pages, but does require employees to act in a prudent manner with regard to website and internet postings that reference the City of Vergas, its personnel, its operation or its property. Employees and others affiliated with the City may not use a city brand, logo or other city identifiers on their personal sites, nor post information that purports to be the position of the City without prior authorization.

City employees are discouraged from identifying themselves as city employees when responding to or commenting on blogs with personal opinions or views. If an employee does identify him or herself as a City of Vergas employee, and posts a statement on a matter related to City business, a disclaimer similar to the following must be used:

“These are my own opinions and do not represent those of the City.”

Occasional access to personal social media websites during work hours is permitted, but employees must adhere to the guidelines outlined in the City’s Information Technology policy. Employees should also review the Ownership section of this policy (below).

Ownership

All social media communications or messages composed, sent, or received on city equipment are the property of the City and will be subject to the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act. This law classifies certain information as available to the public upon request. The City of Vergas also maintains the sole property rights to any image, video or audio captured while a City employee is representing the City in any capacity.

The City retains the right to monitor employee’s social media use on city equipment and will exercise its right as necessary. Users should have no expectation of privacy. Social media is not a secure means of communication.

Policy Violations

Violations of the Policy will subject the employee to disciplinary action up to and including discharge from employment.