

CITY OF Hiram
Online Media Policy for
Official City Business

SUBJECT: Online Media Policy for Official City Business	EFFECTIVE DATE:	
REFERENCE: Social Media Pages, Blogs, Twitter, Departmental Material, Agency and Official City Website		
SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS:		
DISTRIBUTION: City-Wide		#PAGES 8

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish the City of Hiram's position on the utilization of various online media platforms including the management, administration, and oversight of its online media program and contributors.

II. POLICY

The City of Hiram recognizes the use of online media as a means to further the mission, vision, and goals of the City. Utilizing online media platforms in successful and strategic ways can enhance the community and advance the best interests of the City of Hiram.

Online media provides a potentially valuable means of assisting the City of Hiram and City personnel in meeting community outreach, problem-solving and related goals of the City.

The personal use of online media can have a bearing on City personnel in their official capacity. As such, this policy provides information of a precautionary nature as well as certain prohibitions on the use of online media by City personnel.

The goals of the City of Hiram's online media program are as follows:

1. To promote positive interaction and engagement between the City of Hiram and the public.
2. To disseminate information to the community in a trusted and efficient manner.
3. To monitor and respond to community questions related to the subject of the post.
4. To monitor online media platforms for community and adherence to this policy.

III. DEFINITIONS

Blog - A self-published commentary on a particular topic that may allow visitors to post responses, reactions, or comments. This 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.

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

Profile - Information that a user shares about himself or herself on a social networking site.

Online Media - A category of internet-based resources that integrate user-generated content and user participation. This includes, but is not limited to, social networking sites; microblogging sites; photo and video sharing sites; Wikipedia; blogs; news sites; and City information and resources provided by the Official City of Hiram Georgia Website.

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.

Electronic Communications - Electronic Communications include, among other things, messages, images, data or any other information used in e-mail, instant messages, voice mail, fax machines, computers, pagers, telephones, cellular and mobile devices including those with cameras, intranet, internet, back-up storage, information on a memory or flash card, jump/USB or zip drive, any other type of internal or external removable storage drives or any other technology tool. In the remainder of this policy, all City-owned communication devices are collectively referred to as "Systems."

Social Media Coordinator - The City Manager, or designee thereof, shall serve as the Social Media Coordinator for the City of Hiram. The Social Media Coordinator will be responsible for managing and maintaining assigned City of Hiram social media platforms and monitoring programs in accordance with City goals. The Social Media Coordinator will work closely with the Social Media Contributors for the success of the social media program.

Social Media Contributors - The City of Hiram's social media program will be operated by staff members who will be designated by the City Manager as Social Media Contributors. The Social Media Contributors will assist in advancing the City's social media program by helping develop and post relevant content on a regular basis intended to resonate with the community. Additionally, they will assist with monitoring the City's social media platforms as well as publicly available social media sources. Social Media Contributors will work closely with the Social Media Coordinator for the success of the social media program.

Official Website Coordinator - The City Manager, or designee thereof, shall serve as the Official Website Coordinator for the City of Hiram. The Official Website Coordinator will be responsible for managing and maintaining assigned City of Hiram online media platforms and monitoring programs in

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accordance with City goals. The Official Website Coordinator will work closely with the Official Website Contributors for the success of the online media program.

Official Website Contributors - The City of Hiram's online media program will be operated by staff members who will be designated by the City Manager as Official Website Contributors. The Official Website Contributors will assist in advancing the City's online media program by maintaining current and relevant information on their respective department website page. This is done to ensure that the public has direct and accurate information about the City of Hiram's standard of procedures. Official Website Contributors will work closely with the Official Website Coordinator for the success of the online media program.

Terms of Use - The City of Hiram will maintain a Terms of Use Policy that contains specific guidelines for posting content on the City's various online media platforms as a guide for both Social Media Contributors as well as the Social Media Coordinator. The Terms of Use Policy will be updated as needed.

IV. RESPONSIBILITIES

The City Manager, or designee, will oversee the activities of the Social Media/Official Website Contributors.

Staff members selected by the City Manager to be Social Media/ Official Website Contributors will receive the City of Hiram's Terms of Use and Online Media Policy prior to being authorized to post content on any of the City of Hiram's online media platforms.

The Social Media/Official Website Coordinator will convene a meeting, as needed, with the available Social Media/Official Website Contributors to develop a calendar of scheduled content for the upcoming months. This calendar will take into consideration special events, national/state holidays, and specific designations for months as content is developed. This calendar is only for scheduled content and does not include real-time or breaking content that is posted.

The City Manager will arrange for online media training at least once a year for the City's Social Media/Official Website Coordinator and Social Media/Official Website Contributors.

V. PROCEDURES

A. Use of City of Hiram Online Media Accounts:

The City of Hiram maintains accounts on a variety of online media platforms, including (but not limited to) Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. These accounts will be used only for official business of the City of Hiram. An employee-use-only password will be maintained by the Social Media/Official Website Coordinator. This password will be changed anytime an employee with access to online media passwords leaves employment with the City.

The City of Hiram's online media platforms constitute limited public forums. The City of Hiram will establish Terms of Use that will govern public interaction with all official City of Hiram online media accounts providing guidelines for content and comments. The Terms of Use also provides guidance for the City's Social Media/ Official Website Contributors and Social Media/ Official Website Coordinator.

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When permitted by the online media platform, the Terms of Use will be publicly posted. The Terms of Use will be updated as needed.

B. Department-Sanctioned Presence:

1. All City of Hiram online media sites or pages shall be approved by the City Manager in accordance with City of Hiram policies.
2. Online media pages shall clearly indicate they are maintained by the City of Hiram and shall have contact information displayed.
3. Online media content shall adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and policies including information technology and records management policies.
4. Content of online media pages is subject to Open Records laws.
5. City personnel representing the City of Hiram via online media outlets shall conduct themselves as representatives of the City of Hiram and shall adhere to all City standards of conduct. They shall identify themselves as City of Hiram staff.
6. Content that is humorous in nature may be posted for community outreach purposes. However, humor can be very subjective and may be misconstrued by the viewer. Caution shall be used when posting humorous material. Humor shall not be directed at other individuals or groups in a negative or mocking way.
7. Material posted by others may be shared or “re-posted” if said material is in direct relation to an official City of Hiram Event, Partnership or Sponsorship. It is important however, that no content will be shared which is posted by any person or organization that engages in conduct or speech which violates the Terms of Use outlined in this policy.
8. Every effort should be made to acknowledge or respond to comments on City of Hiram postings, or posts related to or mentioning the City of Hiram when appropriate. No response should be made to comments or replies which are abusive or designed to provoke anger or controversy (commonly known as “trolling”), where a response will only provoke further inappropriate comments.
9. Free speech is a constitutionally protected right, and the City of Hiram encourages the public to share ideas, opinions and comments on its online media accounts. Social media/ Official Website Contributors responsible for online media management will be mindful of this, and protective of community discourse and debate conducted in a civil manner, in accordance with the Terms of Use listed in this policy.
10. Posts or comments on any official City online media platform which violate the Terms of Use incorporated in this policy should be removed as soon as practical by the Social Media/ Official Website Coordinator or designee.
11. City personnel shall not conduct political activities or private business on City of Hiram online media.
12. The use of City computers, telephones and other electronic communications devices to access online media is prohibited without the authorization of the City Manager.

13. City personnel shall use personal electronic communications devices and computers to manage the City of Hiram's online media sites only with the express written permission of the City Manager.
14. City personnel shall observe and abide by all copyright, trademark and service mark restrictions in posting materials to online media.
15. Online media can be used for community outreach by providing pertinent information that is helpful to the community.
16. Online media may be used for time-sensitive notifications of road closures, special events, weather emergencies, missing or endangered persons, and posts from other City department online media pages.

C. Online Media Critical Incident Management

In the event of a critical incident, whether criminal, natural, or accidental, the effective use of online media to inform the public in a timely manner is vital. The City of Hiram Social Media/ Official Website Contributor Team will share any information put out by the City of Hiram Police Department or their reliable choice for information.

1. Once the Incident Command System (ICS) is initiated, the Incident Commander or his designee will notify the Social Media/ Official Website Coordinator or an on-duty Social Media/ Official Website Contributor of the incident and determine what information should be released to the public immediately. This information may include:
 - a. Shelter-in-place or evacuation orders
 - b. Road closures and traffic notifications
 - c. Severe weather or disaster notifications

VI. INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION:

1. Nothing in this policy is intended to or will be applied in a manner that violates any employee's constitutional rights, including rights to freedom of speech, expression, and association, or federal or state rights to engage in any statutorily-protected activity.
2. Any employee unsure about the application of this policy to any particular social media activity should seek guidance from their supervisor before engaging in such activity.
3. This policy is intended for internal use of the City only and should not be construed as establishing a higher duty or standard of care for purposes of any third party civil claims against the City and/or its employees. A violation of this policy by an employee provides only a basis for corrective and/or disciplinary action against such employee by the City.

VII. CONSEQUENCES OF POLICY VIOLATIONS:

Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including **termination of employment as well as possible civil liabilities and/or criminal prosecution**. Where appropriate, the City may advise legal officials or appropriate third parties of policy violations and cooperate with official investigations. The City prohibits retaliation against anyone who reports possible policy violations or assists with investigations.

VII. ONLINE MEDIA TERMS OF USE

City of Hiram Official Website, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube

The official social media pages for the City of Hiram are intended to serve as a mechanism for communication between the public and the City on the listed topics, and are designated as a Limited Public Forum to further the mission of the City of Hiram. However, these pages are not the primary method of communication with the City. Any notices or requests for City services must be made via official communication methods identified on the City's website, www.citytofhiramga.gov, or by traditional methods of notification recognized by the City.

We encourage members of the public to like or follow our pages, respectfully interact and share ideas as long as they follow the City's terms of use.

Prior to posting comments on any City Limited Public Forum pages, users must review and agree to the Community Standards of Facebook at Facebook Community Standards and also the Terms of Use of the City of Hiram Facebook page. A submitted comment or posting on any of the online media pages of the City of Hiram shall constitute an acknowledgement and agreement of these standards. The City of Hiram has a right to report violations of Social Media Community Standards to the appropriate Social Media outlet.

IX. Personal Use of Social Media Policy

The online presence and activities of employees on their own personal social media platforms may reflect upon the City. What you say, how you say it, and what images you project in words and pictures can impact the public's view of you as an employee of the City. It may also affect the business of the City and its ability to serve the public. For these reasons, the City has prescribed a set of rules to be followed for an employee's use of personal social media while at the same time respecting the employee's constitutional freedoms:

- Any comment on or related to any City business or any issue or event reasonably understood to be one of concern to the public generally should contain a clear statement that the view(s) expressed are those solely of the individual and do not constitute and should not be understood to be the view of the City.
- All expressions on social media sites should comply with the City's Confidential Information policy and Ethics and Conduct policy.
- Employees should refrain from comments that conflict with the City's Mission Statement.
- At no time may the City's logo or other trademarked images be used.

- Employees should refrain from making any comments that are obscene or defamatory.
- Employees should comply with all rules, guidelines, and security measures of the social media platform.
- Employees may not divulge information gained by reason of their public employment; make statements, speeches, appearances, and endorsements; or publish materials that could reasonably be considered to represent the views or positions of the City without express authorization of the City Manager.

X. DENIAL OF ACCESS

The City of Hiram welcomes a person's right to express his or her opinion. However, all comments and posts to these pages are monitored and reviewed by the City for compliance with our terms of use. The City of Hiram reserves the right to restrict, remove, or delete any comments or posts found to be in violation of our terms of use.

Individuals who follow the City of Hiram Online Media pages who repeatedly violate the terms of use, may be banned and prohibited from posting future comments.

The City of Hiram is not responsible for any postings or comments deemed inappropriate that cannot be removed in a timely fashion.

XI. TERMS OF USE

While the public's submissions will not be edited by City personnel, the City reserves the right to remove those that include the following:

1. Comments unrelated to the purpose and topical scope of the page. The page is not intended for comments that do not relate to the purpose or topical scope of the page;
2. Obscenity;
3. Pornography;
4. Incitement to imminent lawless action;
5. Comments disclosing identifiable medical information;
6. Speech presenting a grave and imminent threat to public safety or property or that may imperil an ongoing criminal investigation or prosecution;
7. Fighting words;
8. Discriminatory language or promotes discrimination based on race, color, creed, age, gender, religion, physical or mental disability, or sexual orientation;
9. Threats against other persons;
10. Comments encouraging or promoting fraudulent activity;
11. Defamation (libel/slander);
12. Solicitations to commit, or speech integral to, criminal conduct;
13. Promotion or advertisement of a business or commercial transaction;
14. Promotion in favor of, or in opposition to, a candidate campaigning for election to a political office or a ballot referendum;

15. Copyrighted material (if posted without the copyright holder's consent); or
16. Spam or links to other sites.

XII. ENDORSEMENTS

Following or friending persons, a business or an organization is not an endorsement by the City of Hiram. Instead, it is only intended as a means of communication.

A comment posted by a member of the public on any City of Hiram Online 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 Hiram, nor do such comments necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of the City of Hiram.

XIII. OPEN RECORDS

City maintained online media sites and pages are a public forum. Any content posted is subject to public records retention and disclosure pursuant to Georgia open records laws. The City of Hiram practice is to delete posts at a rolling 12-month schedule.

All comments posted to any City Facebook site are bound by Facebook's Statement of Rights and Responsibilities, located at <http://www.facebook.com/terms.php>, and the City reserves the right to report any violation of Facebook's Statement of Rights and Responsibilities to Facebook with the intent of Facebook taking appropriate and reasonable responsive action.

These Terms of Use are subject to amendment or modification by the City of Hiram at any time.

Jody Palmer, City Manager

City of Hiram