



SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Purpose

This policy details the use of social media by the City of Athens (the “City”) and applies to official use of social media by agency users on behalf of the City for agency purposes, including citizen engagement and public relations.

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance permitting those performing work on behalf of the City to take full advantage of social media while protecting the City and its employees by mitigating risks during the conveyance of information to members of the public.

The intended purpose of City social media sites is to disseminate information from the City about the City’s mission, meetings, events, activities, and current issues to members of the public. The City encourages the use of social media to further the goals of the City and the missions of its departments, where appropriate.

The City has an overriding interest and expectation in protecting the integrity of the information posted on its social media sites and expectation in deciding what is “announced” or “spoken” on behalf of the City on social media sites and the content that is attributed to the City and its officials. This policy establishes internal procedures for the use of social media.

Authorities:

- [National League of Cities Social Media Policy](#)
- City of Athens, TN Personnel Rules and Regulations
- [The Hatch Act, 5 U.S.C. §§ 7321-7326](#)
- [Privacy Act of 1974, as amended, 5 U.S.C. § 552a](#)
- [Tennessee Open Meetings Act](#)
- [Tennessee Open Records Act](#)

Definitions

Social Media - term used to refer to activities that integrate technology, social interaction and content creation. This media allows people to generate, organize, share, edit and comment on web content. Examples of social media include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Blogs, RSS, YouTube, LinkedIn, and other such electronic media platforms.

City Social Media Sites - means social media sites which the City establishes and maintains, and over which it has control over all postings, except for advertisements or hyperlinks by the social media site's owners, vendors, or partners. City social media sites are meant to supplement the City's required notices and standard methods of communication on the City's official website.

Posts or postings - information, articles, pictures, videos, or any other form of communication posted on a City social media site.

General Policy

1. The City's official website, www.cityofathenstn.com, will remain the City's primary means of internet communication.
2. The establishment of City social media sites is subject to approval by the City Manager. Upon approval, City social media sites shall bear the name and/or official logo of the City.
3. All content on City social media sites shall be reviewed, approved, and administered by the City Manager and/or the designated Public Relations Team.
4. City social media sites shall clearly state that such sites are maintained by the City and that the sites comply with the City's Social Media Policy.
5. City social media sites shall link back to the City's official website for forms, documents, online services, and other information necessary to conduct business with the City whenever possible.
6. The Public Relations Team shall monitor content on City social media sites to ensure adherence to both the City's Social Media Policy and the interest and goals of the City.
7. The City reserves the right to terminate any City social media site at any time without notice.
8. City social media sites shall comply with usage rules and regulations required by the site provider, including privacy policies.
9. The City's Social Media Policy shall be displayed to users or made available by hyperlink.
10. All City social media sites shall adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and policies.
11. City social media sites shall be in compliance with the Tennessee Open Records Act. Any content maintained on a City social media site that is related to City business, including a list of subscribers, posted communication, and communication submitted for posting, may be considered a public record and subject to public disclosure.

12. City social media sites shall be in compliance with the Tennessee Open Meetings Act. Members of the City Council shall not use the City social media sites or any form of electronic communication to respond to, blog, or engage in serial meetings, or otherwise discuss, deliberate, or express opinions on any issue within the subject matter jurisdiction of the body.
13. Employees representing the City on City social media sites shall conduct themselves at all times as a professional representative of the City and in accordance with all applicable City policies.
14. All City social media sites shall utilize authorized City contact information for account set-up, monitoring, and access. The use of personal email accounts or phone numbers by any City employee is not allowed for the purpose of setting-up, monitoring, or accessing a City social media site.
15. City social media sites may contain content, including but not limited to, advertisements or hyperlinks over which the City has no control. The City does not endorse any hyperlink or advertisement placed on City social media sites by the social media site's owners, vendors, or partners.
16. The City reserves the right to change, modify, or amend all or part of this policy at any time and without notice.

Social Media Administration

- City Manager
 - The City Manager shall have full authority over the establishment and/or termination of official City social media accounts and will provide guidance and direction for content posted on behalf of the City of Athens. The City Manager also has full authority over the development and enforcement of the City's social media policy and may designate City employees to serve as a Public Relations Team.
- Public Relations Team (PRT):
 - The City Manager may create and appoint members to comprise a Public Relations Team in order to accomplish the goals of social media outreach in accordance with City and Departmental goals. The team shall consist of City employees that have access to all City of Athens social media sites and shall be authorized page administrators where necessary.
 - The PRT will maintain a list of the City's social media sites, including login and password information.
- The following social media tools have been approved by the City and standards have been developed for their use:
 - Facebook
Facebook is a social networking site that continues to grow in popularity and functionality. Businesses and government agencies have joined individuals in using Facebook to promote activities, programs, projects and events. Standard City usage is

designed for City departments looking to drive traffic to the City's website in order to inform more people about City activities.

- Twitter

Twitter is a micro-blogging tool that allows account holders to tweet up to a limited number of characters of information to followers. By operating and maintaining a Twitter account, the City can communicate information directly to Twitter followers, alerting them to news and directing them to the City's website for more information.

- YouTube

The City will enable access to online video content, as this is the way many residents communicate and obtain information online. Key objectives for video content shall meet one or more of the follow goals: to further a City department's mission, provide information about City services, showcase City and community events, and explore City issues.

The use of other sites must first be approved by the City Manager and may be added to this Social Media Policy.

Content Standards

1. The content of City social media sites shall only pertain to City-sponsored, City-endorsed, or mission oriented programs, services, and events. Content includes, but is not limited to, information, photographs, videos, and hyperlinks.
2. Content posted to 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 Athens, whenever possible.
3. The City shall have full permission or rights to any content posted by the City, including photographs and videos.
4. Postings shall be made during normal business hours. After-hours or weekend postings shall only be made with approval of the City Manager or in conjunction with a planned, advertised event where City staff have been scheduled to work or in the case of emergencies.
5. Any employee authorized to post items on any of the City's social media sites shall review, be familiar with, and comply with the social media site's "Use Policies" and "Terms and Conditions."
6. Any employee authorized to post items on any of the City's social media sites shall not express his or her own personal views or concerns through such postings. Instead, postings on any of the City's social media sites by an authorized City employee shall only reflect the views of the City.
7. Postings must contain information that is freely available to the public and not be confidential as defined by any City policy, or state or federal law.

8. Postings may not contain any personally identifiable or protected information, except for the names of employees whose job duties include being available for contact by the public.
9. Postings to City social media sites shall not contain any of the following:
 - a. Comments that are not topically related to the particular posting being commented upon;
 - b. Comments in support of, or opposition to, political campaigns, candidates, or ballot measures;
 - c. Profane language or content;
 - d. Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, or status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation, as well as any other category protected by federal, state, or local laws;
 - e. Sexual content or links to sexual content;
 - f. Solicitations of commerce;
 - g. Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity;
 - h. Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems; or
 - i. Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party.
10. These guidelines shall be displayed to users or made available by hyperlink on all City social media sites. Any content removed based on these guidelines must be retained, including the time, date, and identity of the poster, when available.
11. The City reserves the right to implement or remove any functionality of its social media site, when deemed appropriate by the City Manager. This includes, but is not limited to, information, articles, pictures, videos, or any other form of communication that is posted on a City social media site.
12. Except as expressly provided in this Policy, accessing any social media site shall comply with all applicable City policies pertaining to communications and the use of the internet by employees, including email content.
13. All of the content on City social media sites must be approved by the City Manager prior to posting on City social media sites.

Social Media Usage Standards

1. The City shall have but one Facebook Page, one Twitter Account, and one YouTube Account. A separate Facebook Account shall exist to administer the Facebook page in order to allow the PRT to properly administrate without using personal accounts. Additionally, as necessary to gain access to the YouTube video service, a Google Inc. product, a Google Account registered under an official City of Athens email domain exists in order to provide access to YouTube. The use of personal accounts shall not be used unless absolutely necessary, e.g. the administrative page is unavailable, when posting to City social media sites.

2. For each City social media site, the main image or profile picture shall be the City logo. It may also be an appropriate photo provided by the City Manager. If the City logo is not used as the main image it should be in the background section or cover photo.
3. For each City social media site, all posts shall consist of proper grammar and will avoid the use of jargon and abbreviations. Social media sites are more casual than most other communication tools, but communications must at all times represent the City of Athens.
4. For each City social media site, the biography and/or background information will include a link to the City’s website and the following disclaimer posted:
 - a. “This is an official City of Athens social media account. For more information about the City of Athens please visit www.cityofathenstn.com. This site is intended to serve as a mechanism for disseminating information to the public on behalf of the City. Any direct messages or posts to this page and its list of followers may be considered a public record which is subject to disclosure pursuant to the Tennessee Open Records Act.”
5. For each City social media site, if the option for the public to comment is enabled, the site shall also include a Comment Policy with the following disclaimer:
 - a. “Comments posted to this page will be monitored and inappropriate content will be removed as soon as possible. Under the City of Athens Social Media Policy, the City reserves the right to remove material that violates content standards. The City disclaims any and all responsibility and liability for any materials that the City deems inappropriate for posting which cannot be removed in an expeditious and otherwise timely manner.”
6. For each City social media site, as much as possible, content shall mirror information presented on the City’s website. The PRT shall ensure that information is posted correctly the first time. The PRT will be responsible for ensuring content is not stale by renewing content or “bumping” previous content to the top of the feed.

Strategy & Approach

Calendar of Events

In order to effectively convey messages and prevent self-inflicted crowding out of City social media posts on follower newsfeeds, it is recommended to not post messages on City social media sites more than three (3) times daily, emergency or circumstantial messages excluded. Therefore, in order to efficiently conduct the City’s social media outreach while preventing content from staling out, a proposed weekly routine as suggested below ought to be adhered to in consideration of the amount of information a department would like to be posted:

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
A.M		Parks & Recreation	Comm. Dev.	Parks & Recreation	Public Works	Parks & Recreation	

P.M.		Human Resources	Police	City Manager's Office	Fire	Purchasing or Finance	
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Possible Departmental Posts:

<i>Office of the City Manager</i>	- Special Messages from the City Manager (Can be posted anytime) - Informational Items
<i>Community Development</i>	- Codes Enforcement Information - Cemetery Information
<i>Finance</i>	- Budget Calendar - Tax Payment Information
<i>Fire</i>	- Fire Safety Tips - Emergency Response Information (Can be posted anytime)
<i>Human Resources</i>	- Job Vacancy Announcements
<i>Parks & Recreation</i>	- Event Promotion - Program Information & Details
<i>Police</i>	- Police Safety Tips - Response Information (Can be posted anytime)
<i>Public Works</i>	- Leaf collection Schedule - Street Maintenance Information - Garbage Pickup Information - Animal Control Information
<i>Purchasing</i>	- Bid Announcements

Sharing and Re-Tweeting Information

Other organizations operating within the City may make mention of the City of Athens or may post information relevant to the City that is of benefit to the community, e.g. the Athens Utility Board or Athens City Schools. For the purpose of social media outreach to a broader audience, it would be appropriate to share or re-tweet posts from these organizations.

Below is a list of acceptable organizations to share or re-tweet:

- Athens Utility Board
- Athens City Schools
- McMinn County, TN Government
- Bona fide local media outlets
- Bona fide local community partners & organizations
- International City/County Management Association (ICMA)
- Tennessee City Management Association (TCMA)

Sharing or re-tweeting from organizations other than those listed above are allowable with City Manager approval.

***Note of Caution:**

Given the digital landscape and the unfortunate increase in online predatory behavior, be advised that when posting, sharing, or re-tweeting information or photos regarding or displaying minors (individuals younger than 18 years of age), that permission has first been granted by the minors' parents or guardians. Otherwise, it is best practice to not post, share, nor re-tweet such material.