

City of Carmel-by-the-Sea

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Policy 2025-001

Office of the City Administrator

Carmel-by-the-Sea, CA 93921



City of Carmel-by-the-Sea Social Media Policy

I. Purpose

The purpose of this Social Media Policy (“Policy”) is to establish the social media policy guidelines and procedures for the City of Carmel-by-the-Sea’s participation in, administering, and City staff use of City Social Media Sites (“City social media”) created, operated, maintained, and managed by the City Administrator and any authorized designated individuals conveying information to members of the public on behalf of the City.

The City has an overriding interest and expectation in protecting the integrity of information posted on City social media and in deciding what is “announced” or “spoken” on behalf of the City on social media sites. The City encourages the use of social media by designated staff to facilitate communication, foster transparency, community engagement, and further the goals of the City and the mission of its departments.

II. Definitions

- A. “Social media sites” or “social media” refers to internet-based resources that have a participatory element by integrating user-generated content, allowing people to communicate, share information, share photos, share videos, share audio, and exchange text and other multimedia files with others through some form of online or cellular network platform. Examples include, but are not limited to, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, Flickr, and TikTok.
- B. “City Administrator” shall mean the City Administrator and/or their designee.
- C. “Authorized Employee” means any City employee who has been authorized by a Department Head or the City Administrator to operate and post on a City social media site.
- D. “City social media sites” or “City social media” refer to social media sites established, operated, managed, and maintained by the City.
- E. “City Staff” or “Staff” refers to all Authorized Employees, consultants, providers, and contractors acting in an official capacity when communicating with the public on behalf of the City on City social media.

III. General Policy

- A. The City’s official website (<https://ci.carmel.ca.us>) will remain the City’s primary and predominant internet presence.

- B. The City will use official City social media sites as communication tools to disseminate accurate, direct information about City business to the public and as informational channels to increase the City's ability to broadcast its messages to the widest possible audience. The City will approach the use of Social Media tools as consistently as possible.
- C. City, by its use of social media sites and by the creation and implementation of this Policy, intends to create a limited public forum. All content and responsive comments, when enabled, are limited to City business. Repetitive comments or comments in violation of this Policy shall be removed from public view and archived. Comments may or may not be enabled, at City's discretion.
- D. 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.
- E. City social media sites shall bear the name and/or an official seal or logo of the City or the appropriate department.
- F. Whenever possible, City social media sites should clearly state that such accounts are maintained by the City and comply with the City's Social Media Policy.
- G. Wherever possible, content posted to the City's social media will also be made available on the City's website.
- H. Wherever possible, content posted to the City's social media shall 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.
- I. Wherever possible, the City's Social Media Policy should be displayed to users or made available by hyperlink.
- J. Operating any City social media site shall comply with all applicable City policies pertaining to communications and the use of the internet by City Staff.
- K. Authorized Employees on City social media sites shall conduct themselves at all times as a professional representative of the City and in accordance with all City policies. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action.
- L. Authorized Employees shall:
 - a. Be transparent and truthful when posting. Always be careful and considerate.

- b. Be timely – Authorized Employees should regularly review the City’s social media sites they are assigned to ensure content is current, accurate, and appropriate.
 - c. Be cautious – ensure efforts are transparent, do not violate the City’s privacy, confidentiality, and legal guidelines and requirements. Do not publish any material that is confidential or internal to the City.
 - d. Be upfront and quick with a correction, and promptly notify the relevant Department Head.
- M. The City Administrator may, in their sole discretion, revoke the Authorized Employee status of any member of the City’s Staff at any time. Similarly, in relation to a Department Head’s own department, a Department Head may, in their sole discretion, revoke the Authorized Employee status of any member of that department at any time
- N. City social media accounts shall adhere to applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and policies.
- O. City social media sites shall comply with usage rules and regulations required by the site provider, including privacy policies.
- P. City social media sites shall be managed consistent with the Brown Act. Members of the City Council, Commissions and/or Boards shall comply with the requirements of the Brown Act in regard to social media including Government Code Section 54952.2 (b) (3) as it may be amended from time to time. Members of the City Council, Commissions and/or Boards may respond to, react (e.g., “like,” “love”, “thumbs up,” or any other emoji/reaction), “share,” “repost” or otherwise participate in any published postings by City staff which are solely informational, but may not respond to or react to any postings by other members of the legislative body. City social media sites are subject to the California Public Records Act, the Freedom of Information Act, subpoenas, and court orders. 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, is a public record and may be subject to disclosure in accordance with applicable law.
- Q. California state law and relevant City records retention schedules apply to social media tools and content. Each department will be responsible for maintaining the records for its social media sites. All social media records shall be preserved for the required retention period in the City’s archiving system in a format that preserves the integrity of the original record and is easily accessible.

- R. The City Administrator shall monitor content on City social media to ensure adherence to both the Policy and the interest and goals of the City.
- S. The City reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of this Policy, any other City policy, or any applicable law.
- T. The City reserves the right to terminate any City social media site at any time without notice.
- U. The City reserves the right to deny access to the social media site for any individual who violates this Policy at any time and without prior notice
- V. The City reserves the right to change, modify, or amend all or part of this Policy at any time.

IV. City Social Media Authorization and Establishment

- A. The establishment of City social media accounts by any department is subject to approval by the City Administrator. The City Administrator is responsible for authorizing City Staff to use social media on behalf of the City.
- B. Department Heads will inform the City Administrator in writing of their department's proposal to create a new social media site. The site may not be activated until written approval by the City Administrator is received. Department Heads will create and maintain complex passwords, and will update those passwords periodically.
- C. Authorized users shall be provided a copy of this Policy and are required to acknowledge their understanding and acceptance by signing and returning a copy to the City Administrator and retaining a copy for their record.
- D. Additionally, Staff is authorized to create, manage, and maintain a City social media site will contact, in writing, the City's IT Manager providing the written authorization to establish a City social media site and shall include the account name and address, login information, intended use of the account, and the names and contact information of employees responsible for maintaining the account.
- E. The IT Manager shall maintain a list of all City social media site addresses, handles, and official account names, maintain names of all Authorized Employees of these accounts, and maintain a list of associated user identifications. The Department Heads shall provide all this information to the IT Manager at the time the department creates any social media site, and immediately whenever any such information is changed.

- F. 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 account.
 - a. Access to City social media sites should be during work hours, on City-owned equipment, and should be restricted to official business only. However, there may be circumstances under which authorized employees may be required to post, check, view, or respond to notifications or communications related to a City's social media sites while off duty, such as during emergencies or City events.
- G. Devices, such as, but not limited to, computers, laptops, tablets, and mobile devices used to administer City social media sites shall have up-to-date software to protect against destructive technical incidents, including but not limited to, cyber, virus, and spyware/adware attacks.
- H. Department Heads or their designee will inform the City Administrator and IT Manager in writing of administrative changes to existing sites or approval of any new social media sites.
- I. Daily maintenance and monitoring of social media sites is the responsibility of the applicable City Department Head or their designee.

V. Content Guidelines

1. The content of City social media sites shall only pertain to City, City-sponsored, or City-endorsed programs, services, and events. Content includes, but is not limited to: information, photographs, videos, and hyperlinks.
2. The City shall have full permission or rights to any content posted by the City, including photographs and videos.
3. Any employee authorized to post items on any of the City's social media shall review, be familiar with, and comply with the social media site's use policies and terms and conditions.
4. The City assumes no liability for any inaccuracies these social media sites might contain and does not guarantee that the social media will be uninterrupted, permanent, or error-free.

5. The department responsible for the implementation of the social media site shall monitor its respective site for comments requesting responses from the City and for comments in violation of this Policy.
6. Designated departmental staff will be responsible for the content and upkeep of any social media sites their department creates. Only authorized staff may use social media on behalf of the City and/or a City department.
7. Although posts and comments are encouraged on the City's social media sites that allow posts/comments, all posted content must relate to discussion of City programs, services, projects, issues, events, and activities.
8. Any authorized Staff to post items on any of the City's social media sites shall not express their 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.
9. Postings or comments to City social media sites shall NOT contain any of the following. The following listed inappropriate forms or content shall not be permitted and are subject to removal and/or restriction on public comment forums:
 - a. Any personal information, including photos and memes, except for the names of employees whose job duties include being available for contact by the public;
 - b. Information that may compromise the safety or security of the public, public systems, or employees;
 - c. Comments or content that are off-subject or out of context;
 - d. Comments or content not related to the business of the City, including random or unintelligible comments;
 - e. Comments or content in support of, or opposition to, political campaigns, candidates, or ballot measures;
 - f. Profane language, sexual content, pornography, obscenity, or links to any such content;
 - g. Content that promotes, fosters or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, disability, sexual orientation/identity, political affiliations, citizenship, marital status, military/veteran status, national origin, physical or mental disability, as well offensive terms or content that targets protected classes by federal, state, or local laws;
 - h. Solicitations of commerce, including but not limited to, advertising of any business or product for sale;

- i. Content that incites, promotes, or encourages illegal activity; content in violation of any federal, state, or local law;
 - j. Content that violates a legal ownership interest, such as copyright, 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 by the responsible department designee.
- 11. Generally, no photos of identifiable individuals should be posted on the City’s social media sites without a signed photo release or consent from that individual, unless the photo was taken at a public event, the individual had no reasonable expectation of privacy, or the photo is otherwise a public record under State or Federal law. If the City intends to use photos from community events on a City social media site, the best practice is to ensure a posted notice regarding this planned use at that City event.
- 12. Communications made through the City’s social media in no way constitute a legal notice or an official notice or comment to the City of Carmel-by-the-Sea. To provide an official notice or comment about a specific City project or program, please contact the appropriate department.
- 13. Any social media used by the City must provide a mechanism for Staff to remove posts that violate City policy. Any social media that does not provide such a mechanism cannot be used.
- 14. The City reserves the right to implement or remove any functionality of its social media site, when deemed appropriate by the City Administrator. 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.
- 15. The City will approach the use of social media tools as consistently as possible, in accordance to an approved style guide and procedure.
- 16. The use of a “like” (or similar) feature between the City and a private person or entity does not indicate the City’s endorsement of that person or entity’s actions or comments. The City’s interactions with members of the public on social media do not constitute an official endorsement of those comments or policies.
- 17. City social media sites are not to be used as campaign tools. However, they may provide objective information about election procedures, ballot instructions, polling locations, candidate forums, and debates as a means of conveying information to members of the public regarding upcoming elections. State and federal campaign

laws and City policies and ordinances governing elected officials' activities shall be followed.

18. The sharing of posts or information from other public entities shall be allowed if such sharing helps the City meet its goals or objectives, or if it has been determined by the Department Head or their designee to be beneficial to the community.
19. The following documentation will be developed and adopted by the City Administrator for City Social Media Sites:
 - a. Operational and use guidelines;
 - b. Standards and processes for managing accounts on social media sites; and
 - c. Enterprise-wide design standards.