



## **CITY OF GOLETA**

### **COMMUNICATIONS POLICY**

#### **Section 1. General Policy Statement**

The City of Goleta is committed to utilizing a variety of tools to communicate effectively with the media and the public. The benefits include:

- Informing the public of the services the City provides;
- Promoting the City's achievements, activities and events of significance;
- Expanding the general visibility of the City;
- Ensuring that accurate information is conveyed to the public in emergencies and with issues of a controversial and/or sensitive nature; and,
- Creating and maintaining credibility and ensuring public trust.

#### **Section 2. Purpose of the Policy**

The purpose of the City of Goleta ("City") Communications Policy is to provide guidance to City employees and the various agencies and companies that work or act on behalf of the City of Goleta about the City's expectations for official communications.

#### **Section 3. Definitions**

##### **Authorized Social Media Users**

A City employee who has been authorized to use official City social media accounts.

##### **City**

City of Goleta

##### **Communications on Social Media**

Includes, but is not limited to, ideas, photos, videos, news, links, responses, and other content expressed on social media.

##### **Defamatory Statements**

Includes, but are not limited to, untrue statements that are presented as fact about another individual or organization which damages their reputation.

##### **Legal Ownership**

Refers to intellectual property rights.

##### **Official City Account or Official City Social Media Account**

An account set up by the City that has been approved by the City Manager, Community Relations Manager/Public Information Officer (PIO) or designee.

### **Official City Content**

Content that is created by the City consistent with this policy.

### **Social Media**

An online platform through which users can establish an account and create online communities to share information. Examples of social media platforms are Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Nextdoor, Snapchat, Twitter, Periscope, Vine, and YouTube.

### **Traditional Media or Media**

The organizations which provide mass communication. Examples of media or traditional media are television, newspaper, newsletter, and radio.

## **Section 4. Media Policy**

It is the policy of the City to respond to media questions/inquiries efficiently, accurately and in a timely manner to help promote public understanding of City services, activities and issues. Effective communications with the media and the public shall be accomplished both responsively and proactively utilizing the following principles:

1. Honesty: we will always be open and honest and will never knowingly mislead the public, media or staff on an issue or news story.
2. Transparency: we promote openness and accessibility in our dealings with the media, whilst complying with the law and maintaining confidentiality when appropriate.
3. Balance: information provided to the media will be objective, balanced, accurate, informative and timely.
4. Language: we will seek to expand the availability of information in languages other than English to meet the needs of our community. The City's intent is to increasingly provide notices and materials for meetings and workshops in Spanish. The City will also provide Spanish interpretation for public workshops as much as possible with existing resources.

## **Section 5. General Media Guidelines**

The official spokesperson for the City is the Community Relations Manager/Public Information Officer (PIO). The City Manager, City Attorney or those staff officially designated by the City Manager, Community Relations Manager/PIO or designee have the authorization to speak on behalf of the City.

All media contact should be directed to the PIO or designee.

The City's overriding interest and expectation in deciding what is spoken, published, or broadcast on behalf of the City requires that official City content be limited to that provided by the City spokesperson or posted by and to official accounts.

A list of the official accounts shall be maintained by the Community Relations Division (CRD). The CRD shall also maintain a list of the login and password information for each official account.

Official Accounts shall comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and policies. This includes adherence to established laws and policies regarding copyright, records retention, California Public Records Act, First Amendment, privacy and information security policies established by the City.

## **Section 6. Content Guidelines**

When using official accounts, authorized users shall:

- Be respectful, professional, ethical, and comply with all City policies, local, state, and federal laws.
- Use proper grammar and avoid technical terms or abbreviations unless there is a common understanding of its meaning.
- Ensure the information communicated is accurate and complete. If a mistake is made, it should be disclosed and promptly corrected.
- Be transparent and truthful. Honesty—or dishonesty—will be quickly noticed in the social media environment. Always be careful and considerate. Once the words are posted, they cannot be retrieved.
- Be judicious. What you publish is widely accessible and will be around for a long time, so consider the content carefully. A social media post could be used in a legal action against the City or its employees.
- Stay current and be consistent with the goals of the City.

When using official accounts, authorized users shall not:

- Post personal information, except for names of City employees whose job duties include being available for contact by the public.
- Post something that makes you even the slightest bit uncomfortable. Ultimately, what you post is your responsibility. If you are uncomfortable with a post, contact your supervisor or the PIO to discuss your concerns.
- Post comments, photographs, or videos that could discredit or embarrass the City.
- Express personal views or concerns through postings.
- Reveal confidential information as defined by any City policy, or local, state, or federal law.
- Post anything that would infringe upon another's property rights, such as copyrighted material.
- Post anything that would injure another person's or entity's professional or personal reputation.
- Post any content that engages in political or religious advocacy or commentary, or supports or opposes any ballot issue or candidate for office.
- Post any content that is prohibited on an official City account.

## **Section 7. Prohibited Content**

The following is prohibited on official City accounts:

- Comments not topically related to the particular post being commented on;
- Profane or obscene language or content;
- Sexual content;
- Threats;
- Defamatory statements;
- Encouragement of illegal activity;
- Violations of a legal ownership interest of any other party;

- Solicitations of commerce;
- Statements in support of or opposition to political campaigns, candidates, or ballot measures;
- Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability, or sexual orientation; and
- Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems.

## **Section 8. Traditional Communications**

Traditional communication methods are one-way communications between the publisher or sender and the recipient, often using media (as defined above). Other forms of traditional communications include automated and personal phone calls, flyers/posters, email/text notifications, newsletters and a community bulletin board on government access television. The City uses tools such as press releases, press conferences, public service announcements, and story pitching to provide information to traditional media outlets. The City also operates its own government access television channel, Channel 19.

The City endorses the use of traditional communication methods as they provide a way to reach members of the public in a number of ways and should be used in conjunction, as appropriate, with social media.

## **Section 9. Social Media Communications**

Social media communications include content that is posted, uploaded, shared, created, published, or disseminated. Social media is the activity or technology that enables and/or integrates technology, social interaction and the publishing of words, images, video, audio or other digital content.

The City endorses the use of these tools, realizing the positive effect they have on employees, the public it serves, and the business of the City. Social media should be used in conjunction, as appropriate, with traditional communication methods.

## **Section 10. Communications and the City's Websites**

The City's communications, both traditional and social media, should drive people to the City's websites ([www.CityofGoleta.org](http://www.CityofGoleta.org), [www.GoletaMonarchPress.com](http://www.GoletaMonarchPress.com), [www.GoletaZoning.com](http://www.GoletaZoning.com) and [www.GoletaButterflyGrove.com](http://www.GoletaButterflyGrove.com)) for more in-depth information.

All official social media accounts shall link back to the City's official websites, to the extent possible, for in-depth information, forms, and online services to conduct business with the City.

## **Section 11. Authorized Social Media Users**

Only authorized personnel may publish on official social media accounts as authorized social media users. Social media users are authorized by the City Manager, PIO, or their designees.

Authorized social media users shall:

- Regularly review, be familiar with, and comply with the City’s policies on use of Official Accounts.
- Monitor, use, and interact on official accounts only during regular work hours; however, this restriction does not apply to employees that are classified as FLSA “Exempt”, or in the City Manager’s Office. In the event of an emergency incident, social media users may be asked to monitor, use and interact on official accounts outside of regular work hours and on weekends.

## **Section 12. Interacting with Other Social Media Accounts**

Interacting with other social media accounts can be a useful tool in informing residents about City activities, policies, and issues. However, authorized social media users should use sound judgment when interacting with other social media accounts because those interactions may easily be misinterpreted. ‘Interacting’ or ‘sharing’, as used here, includes, but is not limited to, “like(s),” “post(s),” “tweet(s),” or “following” on social media platforms.

Authorized social media users must do the following when considering interacting with non-City social media accounts:

- Read all information in the original and any other relevant post, tweet, or link thoroughly before interacting with it to ensure that it enhances community knowledge about City activities, issues, policies, and priorities. If the content does not specifically address the City, it should be of interest to the particular official account’s audience.
- Provide information that is consistent with the City’s goals.
- Clearly identify the external source of the information (post, tweet, link, etc.).

Authorized social media users are encouraged to interact with other social media accounts operated by the City, other government agencies, or businesses that are promoting the City’s projects or goals. The following are some examples of appropriate account interactions:

- Other governments or quasi-government agencies relevant to the subject matter
- Non-profit organizations providing services in the City of Goleta
- Relevant media outlets (local, regional, state, trade)

## **Section 13. Managing Public Comments on Social Media**

Public comments are allowed on official accounts. To the extent possible, an appropriate legal disclaimer shall be posted on an official account.

The authorized social media user shall delete any comment that contains prohibited content as described in Section 18 – Legal Disclaimers.

Individuals shall not be blocked and content on official accounts shall not be deleted simply because they are critical of the City, its officials, or employees, or because the agency or authorized user otherwise dislikes what the content says or represents. Content may be deleted only when it violates this Policy. Any content removed from an official account must be retained in accordance with the City’s Records Retention Policy, and the time, date, and identity of the poster shall be noted, if that information is available.

## **Section 14. Social Media Posts As Public Records**

Any content published on an official account, including but not limited to, lists of subscribers, posted communications, and communications submitted for posting, may be considered a public record for purposes of the California Public Records Act and the City's Records Retention Policy. The department responsible for maintaining the official account shall preserve and maintain records in an accessible format so that the records can be reviewed and, when appropriate, produced in response to a request for public records. Include a statement on the official account clearly indicating that any content posted may be subject to public disclosure upon request.

## **Section 15. Archiving Official City Social Media Accounts**

The City uses ArchiveSocial.com to archive the official social media accounts in compliance with the City's Retention Schedule.

## **Section 16. Establishing an Official City Social Media Account**

To establish an official City social media account, a request is made in writing to the City Manager and PIO or their designee. The PIO reviews the appropriateness of the platform for the City and determines, in concert with the City Manager, whether it is consistent with the vision and mission statements in this Policy. If approved, the PIO, sets up the account using authorized City contact information in conjunction with the Information Technology Department to insure the account is secure.

## **Section 17. Branding**

Because social media is freely available to anyone, branding official accounts is required. Include the following text statement on all official accounts: "This is the official [name of social media platform] account of the City of Goleta."

## **Section 18. Legal Disclaimers**

The following disclaimer or a link to this policy shall appear on every social media official City account. This account is intended to be a limited forum for communication and discussion between the City of Goleta and members of the public about specific topics. The City of Goleta reserves the right to remove comments that include profane or obscene language, sexual content, threats, defamatory statements, the encouragement of illegal activity, violations of the legal ownership interests of another party, solicitations of commerce, statements in support or opposition to political candidates or ballot propositions, content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination, or information that may compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems. Activity on this account is subject to all applicable federal, state, and local laws regulations.

## **Section 19. Personal Use of Social Media by Employees**

Employee personal use of social media is addressed in the Social Media Policy of the Personnel Rules.