

Background:

What is social media? Social media refers to information that is created and distributed by individual users and is spread when users share the content with each other. Generally, social media is more concise, less formal, timelier than traditional media and easy to use. It also, in most cases, has zero to minimal financial obligation.

Most social media leverages the best of the Internet and supporting technologies. Technologies include Web logs (“blogs”), picture-sharing, vlogs (video blogs), wall postings, e-mail, instant messaging, text messaging, music-sharing and Voice over Internet Protocol (VOIP). Currently, the most popular social media websites include: Facebook (social networking), LinkedIn (social/professional networking); YouTube (social networking and video); Flickr (photo sharing), Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter and a variety of others.

By using social media applications, the City can maximize its opportunities to inform and engage with the community. This rapidly evolving information technology will allow the City to communicate more effectively, share important information quickly, and find out what the community wants to know about the City.

Why use social media? Social media platforms offer many advantages:

- Encourage citizen participation
- Encourage transparency
- Enable rapid response
- Enable improved City services, programs and activities by listening to our customers
- Strengthen community outreach
- Respond to the community
- Ensure City messages are distributed by our voice
- Provide opportunity for vast distribution
- Help achieve business goals (i.e. recruitment, etc.)
- Monitor and respond to hot topics and emerging issues
- Proactively share success stories to address current issues, projects and initiatives
- Create a stronger presence within the community

Purpose:

To address the rapid pace of Internet technology and the way residents communicate and obtain information online, the City of Manassas, through the City Manager's Office and Communications, may participate in interactive media (a.k.a. social media) formats to reach a broader audience. The City encourages the strategic use of interactive or social media to further the goals of the organization and the mission of its departments, where appropriate. In an effort to promote consistency in messaging across City departments, the Communications Office, through the City Manager, shall act as the exclusive authorizing department to approve use of social media platforms. The City will utilize social media tools when and if appropriate to accomplish stated goals. As the City develops a social media presence, the use of social media platforms by individual City Departments will be considered and encouraged where appropriate. However, agencies and departments are not permitted to create, to participate in, or otherwise to utilize any social media presence without prior approval from the City Manager through the Communications Office. In making a determination with regard to the request, the City Manager and Communications will consider the strategic goals of the requesting agency and ascertain whether a social media platform is a preferred strategy for accomplishing the stated goals of the agency.

The City of Manassas government social media pages are integrated with the City website publishing software. Social media pages, such as Facebook and Twitter, can act as templates that contain links to the City's website.

The best, most appropriate Manassas City uses of social media tools fall generally into two categories:

1. As channels for disseminating time-sensitive information as quickly as possible (example: emergency information).
2. As marketing/promotional channels which increase the City's ability to broadcast its messages to the widest possible audience.

This policy applies to, but is not limited to, all individuals, departments, teams or groups who create, post, moderate, or maintain internet-based communications pertaining to City business. It covers individuals who are full-time or part-time employees, interns, temporary workers, volunteers, consultants, contractors, and/or constitutional officers of other entities who have been contracted or authorized to perform work on behalf of the City of Manassas.

Policy – Rules of Engagement:

Any official City of Manassas presence on social media is considered an extension of the City’s information network. To communicate messages on behalf of the City about programs, services, and activities effectively and appropriately through social media platforms, all employees will adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Creating a Social Media Presence for an Agency. Before creating a department-specific social media presence, the director of the department is required to contact the Communications Office and receive approval from the City Manager who will determine whether a department-specific social media platform is an appropriate and preferred strategy for accomplishing the stated goals. Departments granted permission for social media presence must maintain consistency with overall communications initiatives. Failure to maintain and adhere to consistent messaging may lead to revocation of agency social media use.

2. Messages Distributed via Main City Social Media Platforms. The Social Media Team is responsible for all postings and regular maintenance thereof on the main City social media platforms. Departments are encouraged to submit suggested postings to Communications that they feel would be useful for social media. The primary considerations given to content is that it is in the best interest of the City, serves a legitimate business purpose, is accurate, is relevant, is interesting, and is timely.

3. Messages Distributed via Department Social Media Platforms. Once approved to use social media, departments are responsible for establishing, publishing, and updating their pages on the appropriate social media sites. It is the responsibility of departments to ensure that their content is accurate and up-to-date. The Social Media Team will monitor content on each of the City social media sites to ensure the following: appropriate term usage, message and branding is consistent with the goals of the City of Manassas. The social media team has the authority to remove any or all content.

4. Allowing the Public to Post/Respond. For social media to be effective, it is predicated on the need to foster a true sense of networking. This means that users should be afforded the opportunity to have a voice in the social network – even if it is in disagreement with the organization. With regard to Facebook, and similar social media platforms, the public will not be permitted to post new threads on the City of Manassas page. However, we encourage responses to posts made by City staff and responders that are in a respectful manner. We do, however, reserve the right to delete any submissions that contain:

- Vulgar language, including graphic, obscene, explicit, racist or sexist comments
- Personal attacks of any kind

City of Manassas Social Media Policy Guidelines



- Abusive, hateful or slanderous comments to any person, ethnicity, religion, organization or nation
- Spam
- Comments clearly off topic
- Comments that suggest, endorse or encourage illegal activity
- Promotion, solicitation or advertisement of particular services, products or political organizations
- Infringement of copyrights or trademarks
- Personally identifiable or sensitive information, including medical information.

We also recognize that social media communities are almost always self-correcting. If the post includes incorrect or insensitive information, then often times, other fans/followers will respond with positive information, which creates a sense of community and credibility. The City will also supply the correct information, as needed.

5. City Employee Responses: City employees, as citizens and not within the course of their employment, may post responses similar to the public. In addition, the following guidelines should be followed:

- Employees may not disclose any confidential information or information lawfully withheld from public disclosure by the City concerning City business or other City personnel.
- Employees not authorized to post in their official capacity on behalf of the City must coordinate their actions with the Communications.
- Employees may not post any content obtained within the course of their employment regarding matters involved in litigation or potential litigation.
- Employee posts should be made consistent with the City's professional standards.
- Employee posts may not interfere with or jeopardize the efficient and effective operation of City business.

Using Twitter

The Social Media Team will tweet relevant information on a regular basis. Departments are encouraged to submit Tweet requests to Communication with the following guidelines:

- Potential uses for Twitter include, but are not limited to: sharing published news releases; publicizing programs, activities and/or events sponsored by the City of Manassas; publicizing holiday hours or other information normally found on the City’s website; and issuing emergency alerts, road closures or weather alerts affecting City residents.
- Some tweets may include a link where additional information can be obtained. Wherever possible, the link will go to the City’s website – preferably directly to a page containing more information about the Tweet. For more general information, we will link to a page with an alias. Twitter messages are limited to 140 characters, including spaces. Space is limited.
- The best Tweets are messages that contain current information that is valid for a short period of time. Using third party applications, the messages can be scheduled to go out at the beginning of or during an event. The Social Media Team will work with staff to craft each message and release them at the appropriate times, maximizing their reach and effectiveness.

Using Facebook

The City should be represented on Facebook with an official “page” – not with “groups” or personal “profiles.” Official City of Manassas pages should include the City of Manassas seal or logo. Employees should be mindful of the content of their personal profiles – particularly if they choose to become a friend of the City Facebook page, since customers may find and review these profiles.

Facebook Disclaimer:

The City of Manassas Facebook page will contain the following disclaimer:

This is the official Facebook page for the City of Manassas government. We monitor this page 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays, and some on weekends. We look forward to connecting with you, and encourage respectful comments and feedback.

Description

The City of Manassas, Va., is located less than 30 miles from the heart of Washington, D.C. The City of Manassas is home to the largest regional airport in the state of Virginia, a 7,000 square foot Museum on eight acres displaying permanent and temporary historical exhibits, and the Harris Pavilion – an entertainment venue during warm weather and an ice rink from December to March. The City is also home to one-

of-a-kind shops, unique restaurants, the arts and historic landmarks.

General Information

Comments Policy: We encourage posts that are made in a respectful manner. We do, however, reserve the right to delete any submissions that contain:

- Vulgar language, including graphic, obscene, explicit, racist or sexist comments
- Personal attacks of any kind
- Abusive, hateful or slanderous comments to any person, ethnicity, religion, organization or nation
- Spam
- Comments clearly off topic
- Comments that suggest, endorse or encourage illegal activity
- Promotion, solicitation or advertisement of particular services, products or political organizations
- Infringement of copyrights or trademarks
- Personally identifiable or sensitive information, including medical information

Using YouTube

The City of Manassas' YouTube site is for City videos, training videos and recruitment. All official City of Manassas presences on YouTube are considered an extension of the City's information networks. There will be one Manassas City government Channel on YouTube, which all departments may use. Each department will not have separate YouTube Channels as it relates to government work. To communicate messages about City government programs, services and activities effectively and appropriately through YouTube, employees must follow these guidelines:

- **Contact the Social Media Team.** If you are considering creating and/or producing a video (videos must be 10 minutes or shorter), have a video you would like to post, or have an idea for a video for YouTube, you are required to contact the Communications Office, who will address the following questions: What's your message? What's your goal? Are you adding value? Is YouTube the appropriate way to get this message out? This policy does not apply to those videos posted by City employees who have their own YouTube Channel and wish to post videos unrelated to work.
- **Be professional.** The City's YouTube account is for business only and, therefore, will not be used to leave personal or disparaging remarks, to engage in political activity or to act in any manner that may damage the City's reputation.
- **Copyright Laws apply to all YouTube content.** Your video must not have copyrighted material in it. Permissions to use music, choreographed moves,

graphics/logos or other works of authorship must be granted by the holder of the copyright before video content will be posted. It is the responsibility of the department requesting video material for posting to obtain requisite copyright permissions. According to YouTube, “[YouTube] takes copyright issues very seriously. [YouTube] prohibits users from uploading infringing material and [YouTube] cooperates with copyright holders to identify and promptly remove infringing content.”

Using Photo-Sharing Website

The City of Manassas will host a photo-sharing website for both storage and social interaction. City departments will be able to post pictures of events, ceremonies and programs on the site (Flickr). This is a great communications tool for the City of Manassas. It can be used for the website, and newsletter and has many other publicity implications for City departments.