



# City of Gustavus

# Social Media Guide

April, 2019

\*Most of the content in this guide was borrowed, with permission, from the City of Homer Social Media Guide.

## **INTRODUCTION**

## **DEPARTMENT WORK PLAN**

What departments need to think about before launching their own social media site

## **PARTICIPATION GUIDE**

For authorized users

## **FACEBOOK STANDARDS & SUGGESTIONS**

Tips for setting up a page and helpful tips

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How to make your posts accessible to more users

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City of Gustavus Social Media Policy

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# Introduction

This guide will help you engage and interact more effectively online by showing you how to:

- Determine appropriate participation in social media
- Tips and best practices
- Maintain compliance with public records act
- Decide if content needs to be removed

## Things to consider

### **WHAT YOUR DEPARTMENT SHOULD CONSIDER BEFORE GOING SOCIAL**

If your department is interested in going social, you need written approval from the City Administrator. Draft a memo requesting authorization, send it to the City Administrator and copy the Mayor.

The memo should address:

- Why does your department need a social media site?
- What social media platform does your department want to use?
- Who on your staff will be responsible for posting, removing content, and overall site management?
- How frequently will content be posted?
- What is the name of your social media site?
- Will you allow the public to comment? If so, consider how to handle posts, both positive and negative.

Staff must complete social media training and sign the CoG Social Media Authorized User Form before they may be authorized to represent the City on social media. (See Appendix for forms.)

Each approved site will maintain a minimum of three official site administrators including the City Administrator and two others. All three site administrators shall be responsible to ensure only active city representatives have official administrator status and that a minimum of three administrators is maintained.

# How to Administer a Facebook Page

## SETTING UP A FACEBOOK PAGE

- Set page up as a government page.
- Set the page up to not allow “Friends,” only “Likes.”
- Display the mission of the department or an overview of the program that informs the content and intent of the site.
- Display the City or department logo prominently on the page
- Set the page to not allow people to “tag” themselves or others

## FACEBOOK BASICS

- Likes are better than views
- Comments are better than likes
- Shares are better than views, likes and comments

## VISUALS ON FACEBOOK

- Pictures are important – Landscapes are great, but faces are better
- Credit photographer if it is not your department or a purchased, stock image
- Try posting a short movie

## POSTS

- Keep it simple
- Keep it as brief as possible: 80-120 words. Direct to website for more info
- Think about the value behind each post
- Use tools and planners to make sure you are actively posting
- If a post is time-sensitive, be sure that the dates during which it is effective are included in the post
- Be conversational, personal and authentic
- Try to make posts both personable and professional, using staff names and faces when available and appropriate
- Schedule regular posts on a specific topic to help keep the page fresh
- Share links to breaking news about your department
- Post a reaction to a post or press release from another organization instead of just reposting it

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Facebook Government Guide](#)
- [www.facebook.com/marketing](http://www.facebook.com/marketing)
- [www.facebook.com/facebooktips](http://www.facebook.com/facebooktips)

# Participation Guide

## ADD VALUE TO YOUR DEPARTMENT

- Enhance the public’s knowledge of services the City provides.
- Improve communication with the public.
- Further the accomplishments of your department’s mission.
- Encourage civic engagement.
- Strengthen sense of community.
- Increase operating transparency.
- Solve a problem.

## CONSIDER YOUR CONTENT

- As informal as social media sites are meant to be, if they’re on a government domain or government identity, they’re official government communications.
- Posts should use proper grammar and standard style, minimizing the use of jargon and acronyms that may not be widely understood by the public or could be misunderstood.
- Take all steps possible to verify the facts before publishing.

## PROVIDE PROPER REPRESENTATION

- While posting in your role with the City and as part of your designated job responsibilities, you should identify yourself as a City representative.
- Make clear when you are speaking for yourself, and when you are speaking on behalf of the department. Only speak on behalf of the department when your commentary is based on your department’s explicitly written standards, policies, and practices, or you have received prior permission.

## SHARE LINKS AND SOURCES

- Use links to direct users back to the primary sources (e.g. website) for in-depth information, forms, and related documents or online services designed to facilitate business with the City.
- When you make a reference to a law, regulation, policy, or other website, where possible provide a link or at a minimum, the citation.
- Whether it is citing a source with a link in a blog post, re-tweeting, or giving a “shout out,” be sure to credit and thank the original creator.

# Participation Guide Continued

## **PROTECT CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION**

- Never post confidential information about employees or members of the public. Confidential information includes names, unless permission is given by the named party.
- Ask permission to publish or report on conversations that occur within your department.
- Never post information about policies or plans that have not been finalized unless you have received permission.
- Do not identify a partner or supplier by name or provide information that might be proprietary in nature without their knowledge and/or permission.

## **RESPECT YOUR AUDIENCE AND CO-WORKERS**

- Respect the privacy of others and carefully consider the discussion of any topics that might be objectionable or inflammatory.
- Do not use your department's social media presence to communicate among fellow employees.
- Do not post information that is privileged or confidential. This includes personnel file information, personally identified medical/health care information, and communications regarding the internal development of departmental decisions or policies. If you are uncertain whether information is privileged or confidential, consult your department head or your supervisor or the city administrator for a determination that the information is not privileged or confidential before posting it.

## **RESPOND TO YOUR MISTAKES**

- Be the first to correct your own mistakes. Timely correction of errors on inaccurate information is essential.
- In regards to incorrect or inaccurate posts made by a site administrator, once something is posted, it should stay posted. Only spelling errors or grammar fixes can be made without making the change evident to users. If you choose to modify an earlier post, make it clear that you have done so – do not remove or delete the incorrect content; provide the correct information and apologize for the error. Ways to accomplish this include strike through the error and correct or creating a new post with the correct information, and link to it from the old post.

**Participation Guide Continued**

## **EXERCISE DISCIPLINE**

- Your online activities should not interfere with your job or your responsibility to the public and your co-workers.

## **HANDLE INQUIRIES AND NEGATIVE COMMENTS PROMPTLY**

- Effective ways to handle negative comments include providing accurate information in the spirit of behind helpful, respectfully disagreeing, and acknowledging that it is possible to hold different points of view.
- Inappropriate content can be rejected and/or removed.
- Depending on the situation, not responding and simply monitoring may be appropriate.
- See Response Considerations
- Contact your Department Head or supervisor with any question

# **Accessibility Guidelines**

Take the following steps to ensure City social media pages remain accessible to all individuals:

- Provide captions for videos
- Descriptively title photographs
- Avoid the use of acronyms

# **Records Management**

All information posted on the City of Gustavus social media sites are subject to the State of Alaska Public Records Act. The City has contracted with an online records retention service to archive every post or activity on a social media page. Keep the following things in mind to help compliance with managing records.

- Do not share account user name and password unless necessary to do so with other approved site administrators.
- Register all site administration changes with the City Administrator.

# Site Administrator Responsibility

It can seem tough balancing between respecting first amendment rights and ensuring City social media sites allow public comment to maintain their integrity. Content can and should be removed as needed. If you are unsure about whether or not to remove a post, contact the City Administrator. See the City Social Media Policy attached in the Appendix for more information.

## REASONS TO REMOVE CONTENT

- is off-subject or out of context
- contains obscenity or material that appeals to the prurient interest
- contains personal identifying information or sensitive personal information
- contains offensive terms that target protected classes
- is threatening, harassing or discriminatory
- incites or promotes violence or illegal activities
- contains information that reasonably could compromise individual or public safety
- advertises or promotes a commercial product or service, or any entity or individual
- involves political campaigns or candidates

## WHEN REMOVING CONTENT

When removing content, notify the user their post is being removed and document the removal. In many cases, a friendly message can be sent to the user asking them to re-post without the specific violation of the Social Media Policy. Suggested verbiage to include in a message to a user posting inappropriate content is provided below:

*Your post is in violation of the City of Gustavus Social Media Policy and has been removed. Please refrain from posting inappropriate content in the future. If you do not, we may have to block you from future posts. Thank you for your understanding."*

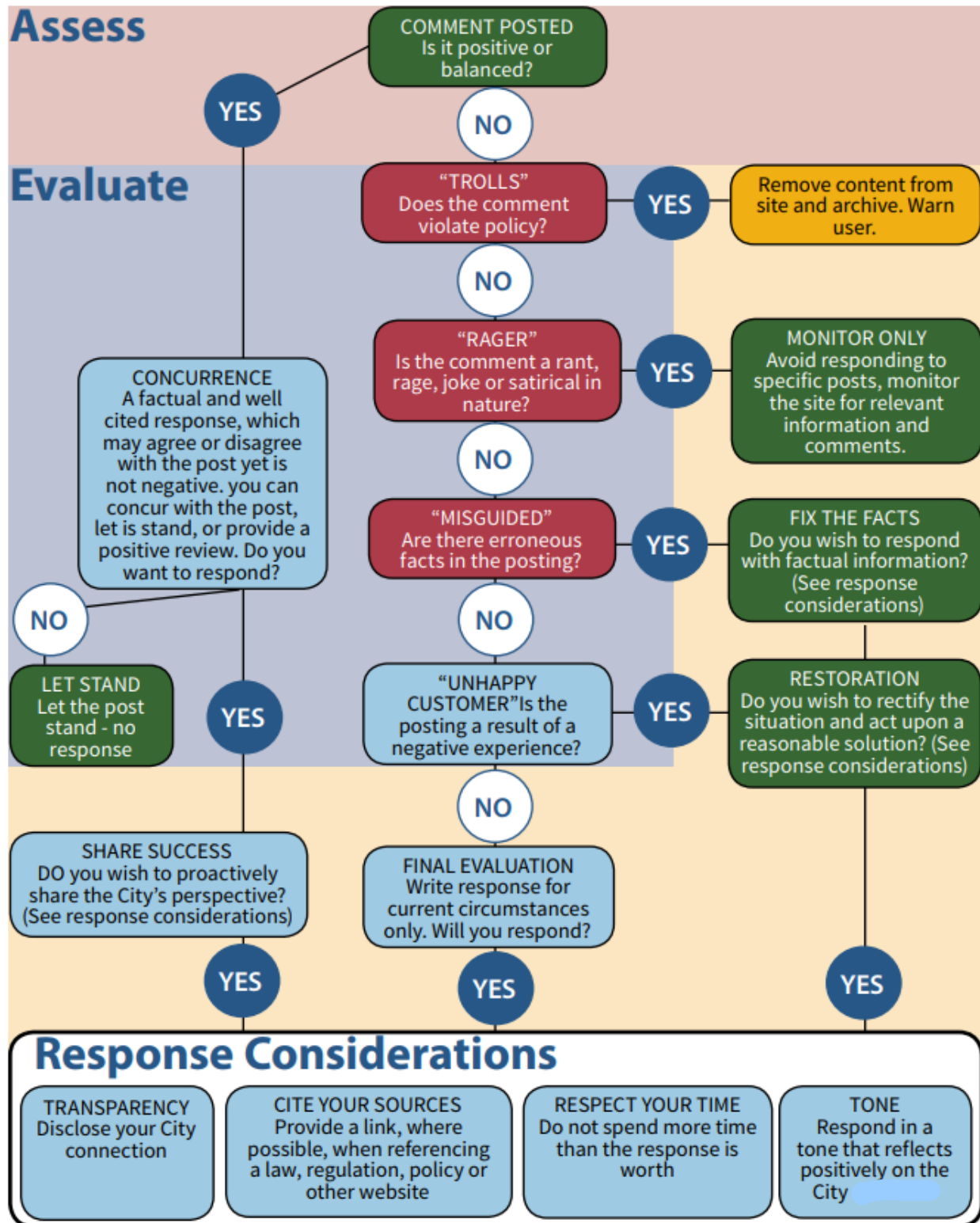
If a user violates the policy more than once and must be blocked, you can send the sample language below. It is always a good idea to include a link to the Social Media Policy.

*Your recent post is in violation of the City of Gustavus Social Media Policy. As this is a repeat violation, we have to block you from further posts. Thank you for your understanding.*

It can be difficult to decide when and how to respond to a comment. People feel engaged when a comment is responded to, so an effort should be made to provide meaningful and appropriate response. The decision-making chart on the following page can help guide response considerations.



# Response Flow Chart



# Personal Use of Social Media

The City of Gustavus Social Media Policy contains guidelines for use of social media as an individual. It is important to be aware that although you may be posting on your personal account, you should take special precautions because of your affiliation with the City to ensure that your personal posts are not confused with official City of Gustavus posts. Take special care to:

- Be clear that you are not representing an official position or policy of the City when you post on your personal account
- Do not use a City email address, web page or social media site to conduct personal business, promote personal interests, or to make personal communications
- Do not distribute personal or confidential information
- Do not use your City email address to register for a social media site without written approval through the CoG Social Media Site Approval Form (found in this appendix.)

# Network Security

If you suspect the security of your department's account has been compromised:

- Call the City's Information Technology provider
- Change login and password immediately
- Report incident to the City Administrator
- Work with the City Administrator to develop a communications strategy
- Acknowledge security breach to followers
- Look for signs of damage and make necessary corrections
- Create a two-step verification process for the account

# Appendix

City of Gustavus Social Media Policy - ATTACH ONCE APPROVED

City of Gustavus Social Media Site Approval Form

City of Gustavus Social Media Policy Authorized User Form

**City of Gustavus Social Media Site Approval Form**

**Social Media Platform** \_\_\_\_\_ \*New sites will only be approved for platforms with a section in the Social Media Guide about how to administer an account on that platform.

**Social Media Web Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**Approval Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**\*The City Administrator reserves the right to remove site administrator rights at any time.**

**Site Administrators – \*Attach signed Social Media Authorized Form for all administrators**

Administrator #1: City Administrator Name: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Administrator #2: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Administrator #3: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**How frequently will content be posted?**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Will you allow the public to comment? If so, consider how to handle posts, both positive and negative.**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**City of Gustavus Social Media Policy Authorized User Form**

I have read, acknowledge and agree to the City of Gustavus Social Media Policy approved by City Council Resolution XX-XX on June 10, 2019

Employee's Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Employee's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_