

Employee Social Media Policy for the City of Burlington (Edited 7/7/2014)

1. Purpose

Social media is becoming an increasingly popular platform that is utilized by a significant portion of the population. Individuals have essentially unlimited access to these platforms through smart phones and other connected devices. The ability of staff members to instantly post highly visible comments on these platforms has the potential to create negative implications for the government entities.

Municipalities must consider that the demarcation of private and public expression by their employees is blurred through social media. Historically, public employee comments regarding government outside the workplace would be interpreted as their own. Now, government employee comments on Twitter, Facebook, and other forms of social media could be interpreted as official government speech.

The purpose of this policy is to address non-official city government personnel use of personal social media during and after working hours. The city respects the legal rights of its employees to use their own devices and time to express their opinions through social media but also must clarify that responsibilities of municipal employees do not always end with their work day.

2. Definitions

Social Media: forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social media networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content.

Social Media Sites: include but are not limited to websites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Foursquare, LinkedIn, MySpace, Google +, Flickr, etc. Social media sites are ever evolving with trends and technological advances.

Comment: a message left on a social networking site, typically in reference to a “post.”

Post: a message, photo, link, video, or other media placed on a social media site. For example, Facebook users can “post” to the “wall” of the government page.

3. Guidelines

3.1 **Personal Use of Social Media**

In general, what a city employee does on his/her own time is his/her own business, but the responsibilities of a city employee do not always end when the employee is off the clock. Employees may choose to personally participate in social networking sites. These accounts must

remain personal in nature and be used to share personal opinions or non-work related information. This helps ensure a distinction between sharing personal and organizational views. In addition, employees should never use their government e-mail account or password in conjunction with a personal social networking site. If employees identify themselves as a city employee on social media platforms, then they should indicate that views expressed on that platform are not official views of the City of Burlington Government. If employees publish any content on any website that relates to city business or subjects associated with the city, then employees should provide a clear delineation between the publicly posted views of the individual as a citizen by using a disclaimer such as, “The views expressed on this site (or post) are my own and do not necessarily represent the City of Burlington’s positions strategies or opinions.”

3.2 Personal Responsibilities & Ethics when using Social Media

Employees are personally responsible for the content they publish on blogs, social media networks or any other form of user generated content. Employees therefore cannot use social media to harass, threaten, discriminate or disparage against employees or anyone associated with or doing business with the City of Burlington. Information posted or otherwise made accessible to City of Burlington management is considered employee conduct that is subject to the agency’s customary standards of employment. Conduct that could undermine the reputation, credibility, or the public’s confidence in the City of Burlington or its employees is subject to disciplinary action.

Employees utilizing social media for personal use shall not use the City of Burlington seal or other official city marks nor should they use the city government’s name to promote or endorse any product, cause, or political candidate.

4. Compliance

Employees who do not comply with these policies are subject to disciplinary action consistent with personnel regulations. Failure to abide by policies established for use of social media may....