

PURPOSE

The City of Alameda wants to use the internet to improve its ability to communicate information to residents and businesses to promote the City and further its goals of providing better services and programs. One opportunity for doing so is the use of social media. Social media refers to the use of the internet, particularly websites and other tools that allow persons with access to the internet (“users”) to contribute content, with or without third-party control or regulation, which other users can access. Examples of social media include Facebook, Twitter, NextDoor, Nixle, AC Alert/Everbridge, SeeClickFix, Instagram, Flickr, YouTube, and Vimeo.

The use of social media by government presents opportunities to enhance communication, and even to create or facilitate new ways for the public to participate in government. At the same time, and for the same reasons, social media can be used destructively, to discourage participation and thereby suppress unpopular ideas, and can be hijacked for purposes other than those for which they are intended. Moreover, by using social media, the City may be enabling users to post their own content to City-maintained social media sites. Therefore it is critical that the City's use of social media generally – and of each individual social media platform – be designed and managed carefully to ensure that it serves its intended purpose. It is equally important that the City retain, and if appropriate exercise, its ability to terminate any given platform if it has ceased to fulfill its intended purpose. For social media sites that allow non-City users to post comments, it is particularly important to define the purpose of the site and of any City content posted to it on which users can comment or to which they can reply. This policy describes how City of Alameda departments may – and may not – use social media, and it establishes internal procedures for the use of social media.

Although this policy describes standards for operating various social media tools, it does not cover content, a critical element of success. Staff should note that the effectiveness of any communication relies primarily on the quality, clarity and consistency of the message itself. The platform or tool is simply the means by which the message is delivered.

The City's use of social media is not intended to replace its existing web presence, but to supplement it as a tool for additional outreach. Social media is a distribution tool for online content and should be used to link to and drive traffic to www.alamedaca.gov. Departments should use social media to link to outside sites when necessary to provide information, such as for rapidly developing critical situations or emergencies.

GENERAL PROCEDURES

- The City Manager's office will develop City branding and enterprise-wide design standards.
- The Public Information Officer will maintain a list of the City's social media sites, including authorized users and login and password information.
- The City must be able to immediately edit or remove content from social media sites.
- City social media accounts may not represent an individual in their capacity as a City employee, they must only represent a department or the City.
- Any department that wants to use social media must designate a primary person and backup to that role. Such designations must be kept up to date.

- A department that wants to use social media must have a media plan that encompasses all of its existing publications, such as news releases, newsletters, public notices, etc.

The following social media tools have been approved by the City: Twitter, Facebook, Nextdoor, Instagram, LinkedIn, Nixle, AC Alert/Everbridge, SeeClickFix, YouTube, and Vimeo. The use of other sites must be approved by the City Manager or designee.

Use of Social Media by Departments

1. The City's website (<http://www.alamedaca.gov>) will remain the City's primary and predominant internet presence.
2. The most appropriate use of social media is as informational channels to increase the City's ability to broadcast its online messages to the widest possible audience.
3. It should be noted on all social media sites that posts do not represent the official position of the City.
4. Content posted to the City's social media sites will be made available on the City's website as appropriate.
5. It is encouraged to have content posted to the City's social media sites contain hyperlinks directing users back to the City's website for in-depth information, forms, documents, or online services necessary to conduct business with the City.
6. As is the case for the City's website, the department's director or designee will be responsible for the content and upkeep (including maintenance and monitoring) of any social media site that the department may create.
7. User comments must be monitored on a regular and frequent basis.
8. Content must be posted to social media sites on a regular or frequent basis.
9. The City's social media sites will contain records subject to the California Public Records Act. The department maintaining a social media site is responsible for responding completely and accurately to any public records request for such public records, and shall promptly consult with the City Attorney's Office when such requests are received. Where applicable, sites should clearly indicate that any articles and any other content posted or submitted for posting may be subject to public disclosure upon request. Users shall be notified that public disclosure requests must be directed to the relevant department's director or designee.
10. California law and relevant City records retention schedules apply to social media content. Departments maintaining social media sites shall preserve records required to be maintained pursuant to the City's records retention schedule.
11. Any exceptions to these policies will be approved by the Public Information Officer, dependent on the policy.

CONTENT

The City of Alameda disclaims liability for ads, videos, promoted content or comments accessible from any external web page. The responsibility for external content or comments rests with the organizations or individuals providing them. Any inclusion of external content or comments on social media sites does not imply endorsement by the City of Alameda. Comments posted to this site will be monitored during regular City business hours only. The City disclaims any and all responsibility and liability for inappropriate content posted to its social media sites that cannot be immediately be removed.

The following types of content are prohibited to both administrators and commenters on social media sites operated by the City, and the City reserves the right to remove any such content as soon as possible without notice:

- User-generated content unrelated to the stated purpose of the social media site and not topically related to City programs, services, projects, issues, events and activities, or the particular post being commented upon;
- Obscene content, “fighting words,” or terrorist threats as defined by the California Penal Code;
- Defamatory statements as defined by applicable law;
- Posts and comments that include vulgar, offensive, threatening or harassing language, personal attacks or unsupported accusations;
- Obscene or sexual content or links to obscene or sexual content illegal activity or encouragement of illegal activity;
- Political statements, including comments that endorse or oppose political candidates or ballot propositions;
- Religious statements, including comments that endorse or oppose any type of religious opinions or activities;
- 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;
- Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems;
- Private, personal information published without consent of the individual identified;
- Confidential content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party;
- Advocacy with respect to specific political parties, candidates elected or appointed officials, or ballot measures, whether local, state or national;
- Solicitations for commerce, and posts and comments that promote or advertise commercial services, entities or products except as stipulated in City marketing plans and determined by the City to be essential to longstanding citywide efforts and economic development;
- Photos or other images that fall in any of the above categories; and
- Links to materials or external sites that fall under one of the aforementioned categories.

All comments and private messages received via City of Alameda social media sites are public records and subject to public disclosure.

The City reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of this policy or any applicable law. Any content removed based on these guidelines must be retained, including the time, date and identity of the poster when available in accordance with the City’s policy on the retention of such information.

Appeals

In the event the City decides not to display a posting on social media, an aggrieved person may submit a written appeal within seven (7) days to the Public Information Officer. A decision by the Public Information Officer may be appealed in writing to the City Manager within ten (10) days of issuance the appeal decision. The decision of the City Manager is final.

Endorsements

Social media include various tools that endorse or validate posts by others, including, but not limited to, the ability to follow, like, or favorite on Twitter, Facebook, Nextdoor, SeeClickFix, Instagram, or Flickr. City social media tools will not be used to endorse in this manner political parties or campaigns or any sort, elected or appointed officials, candidates for public office, or ballot measures. City social media will not be used to endorse products or companies that seek commercial gain.

Violation/Enforcement

Any employee or other agent of the City found to have violated this policy may also be found in violation of the City's Proper Use of Electronic Systems & Tools policy and may be subject to account termination without prior notice and will have his/her rights removed/disabled and/or may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. Violation of state and local laws will be referred to the proper authorities. In addition, any violation may result in the removal and/or suspension of the social media site that has been compromised.

Entering Into Contracts for Social Media

Most online sites require users to agree to terms of service that include such provisions as:

- 1) Indemnification and Defense. When a public agency creates an account on a social media site, it typically must agree not to sue the site, nor allow the site to be included in suits against the agency. Many sites also require the account owner to pay the site's legal costs arising from such suits.
- 2) Applicable law and venue. Most terms of service also assert that a certain state's laws (usually California, but not necessarily always) apply to the terms of use and that state's courts will adjudicate disputes.

Some companies are willing to negotiate on the substantive provisions in the terms of use, but they may be hesitant to negotiate separate agreements with dozens of agencies.

The terms of service represent a binding contract; responsible department staff should assure that they have taken the steps necessary to bind the agency to such an agreement.

The City Manager or designee will approve the use of any social media platform.

City of Alameda Social Media Accounts (UPDATED November 6, 2017):

- Twitter @CityofAlameda
- Facebook /CityofAlameda
- Nextdoor <https://nextdoor.com/agency-detail/ca/alameda/city-of-alameda/>
- Instagram /loveourisland

City Clerk's Office:

- Facebook /Alamedacityclerk
- Instagram /alamedaweddings

Library:

- Facebook /alamedafreelibrary
- Twitter @alamedafree
- Instagram /alamedafreelibrary

Alameda Police Department:

- Facebook /AlamedaPD
- Twitter @AlamedaPD

Alameda Fire Department:

- Facebook /Alameda-Fire-Department-174511785980658
- Twitter @AlamedaFireDept

Alameda Recreation and Parks Department:

- Facebook /playARPD
- Twitter @PlayArpd

Community Development Department:

- Twitter @AlamedaBusiness

Base Reuse:

- Facebook /AlamedaNAS
- Twitter @AlamedaNAS

Public Works Department:

- SeeClickFix <https://en.seeclickfix.com/us-ca-alameda>

Alameda Municipal Power:

- Facebook /AlamedaMuniPower
- Twitter @AlamedaMuniPwr