

City of Homer Social Media Guide

Everything you and
your department
need to know to go
Social



Acknowledgment



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The purpose of this guide is to give you the tools and skills you need to represent and promote the City on social media in a professional, responsible and effective manner. Thank you to the Social Media Policy Working Group for their time and energy putting it together.



JO JOHNSON, OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK



MIKE ILLG, COMMUNITY RECREATION



ANN DIXON, HOMER PUBLIC LIBRARY

Many of the standards and best practices were adapted with permission from the *County of Marin Social Media Playbook*.

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Kachemak Bay and the Homer Spit, late summer.

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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

WHO SHOULD USE THIS GUIDE?

Administrators/users who are **NEW** to social media engagement

Administrators/users who are **ALREADY ENGAGED** in social media who want to take their participation to the next level.

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 Manager. Draft a memo requesting authorization, send it to the City Manager and copy the Public Information Officer.

The memo should address:

- Why does your department needs a social media site instead of relying solely on the City website?
- 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 (authorized user)?
- 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

All staff members responsible for social media will be offered a training by the Public Information Officer. Before staff can be authorized to be active on social media on behalf of the City, they must sign the social media policy authorized user form (see Appendix)



Highway sign "social media, use internet lane"

Participation Guide

The participation guide was adapted with permission from the County of Marin Social Media Playbook, www.marincounty.org.

1. 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.

2. 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 whenever possible, minimizing the use of jargon and acronyms that may not be widely understood by the public.
- If you are uncertain of the accuracy of information, take all steps possible to verify the facts before publishing.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. PROTECT CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

- 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.

6. 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.

Participation Guide Cont.

- Do not use your department’s social media presence to communicate among fellow employees.
- Avoid posting 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, or any of the other categories of information that are described in Homer City Code 2.84.040. If you are uncertain whether information is privileged or confidential, consult your department head 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.
- 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 post.

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 being helpful, respectfully disagreeing, and acknowledging that it is possible to hold different points of view. Inappropriate content can be removed
- See Response Considerations
- Contact the Public Information Officer with any questions.



Bright orange seastar on rock at a Homer beach.

Facebook Standards & Suggestions

HOW TO SET UP A FACEBOOK PAGE

- Set the 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.
- Use Facebook authorized apps for page management on mobile devices
- Do not set up a personal profile
- Display the City or department logo prominently on the page

FACEBOOK BASICS

- Likes are better than views
- Comments are better than likes
- Shares trump everything

VISUALS ON FACEBOOK

- Pictures are important - Landscapes are great, but faces better
- Tag organizations or politicians in photos to spread pictures to their wall
- Credit photographer if it is not your department or a purchased, stock image
- Try posting a short movie

POSTS

- Keep it simple
- Keep it brief: 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
- Use your name, people do not want to connect to a faceless government agency
- Schedule regular posts on a specific topic to help keeping 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
- www.facebook.com/facebooktips



Facebook account on a smartphone and tablet

Accessibility Guidelines

In an effort to make the City of Homer social media pages accessible to all individuals, take the steps below to help improve accessibility:

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



Low tide at Homer beach

Records Management

All information posted on City of Homer 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. In the case of a public records request, the Public Information Officer can search an online database for key words and download relevant posts. The City will also download the information on a regular basis and keep an archive on site. The records retention schedule for social media archives parallels website materials, 3 years. Keep the following things in mind to help compliance with managing records.

- Only share account user name and password with the Public Information Officer, Department Head or his/her designee. (While the number of people who have log in information should be

limited, at least 2 people in the department should have the ability to post in order to ensure continuation of posting.

- Account password shall be promptly reset when an employee is removed as an authorized user.
- Register all changes in account information with the Public Information Officer. He/she will maintain a login file with network, account login, password, registered email address, date established and person who created the account.

User Responsibility

Sometimes it can seem like a tough balancing act between respecting first amendment rights and ensuring City social media sites that allow public comment maintain their integrity. Content can and should be removed. If you are unsure about whether or not to remove a post, contact the Public Information Officer. See Section 3.2 of the Social Media Policy for more information.

REASONS TO REMOVE CONTENT

- Random or unintelligible comments
- Information containing ethnic slurs or profanity
- Information that is harassing, violent, or threatening
- Information that is defamatory, fraudulent or discriminatory
- Sexually explicit information
- Information that infringes on intellectual property rights such as copyright or trademark
- Information in support of, or opposition to, a candidacy for public office or ballot measure (exception: ballot measure if authorized by City Council)
- Solicitation of commerce or advertising
- Information violating or promoting the violation of a federal, state or local law.
- Information from children under 13 (users must acknowledge they are over 13 before posting on a City social media site)
- Information that may compromise safety or security of public systems
- Confidential information

WHEN REMOVING CONTENT

When removing content, notify the user that their post is being removed and document the removal. In many cases a friendly message can be sent to a user asking them to re-post without the specific violation of the Social Media Policy (profane language, for example). 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 Homer 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.”

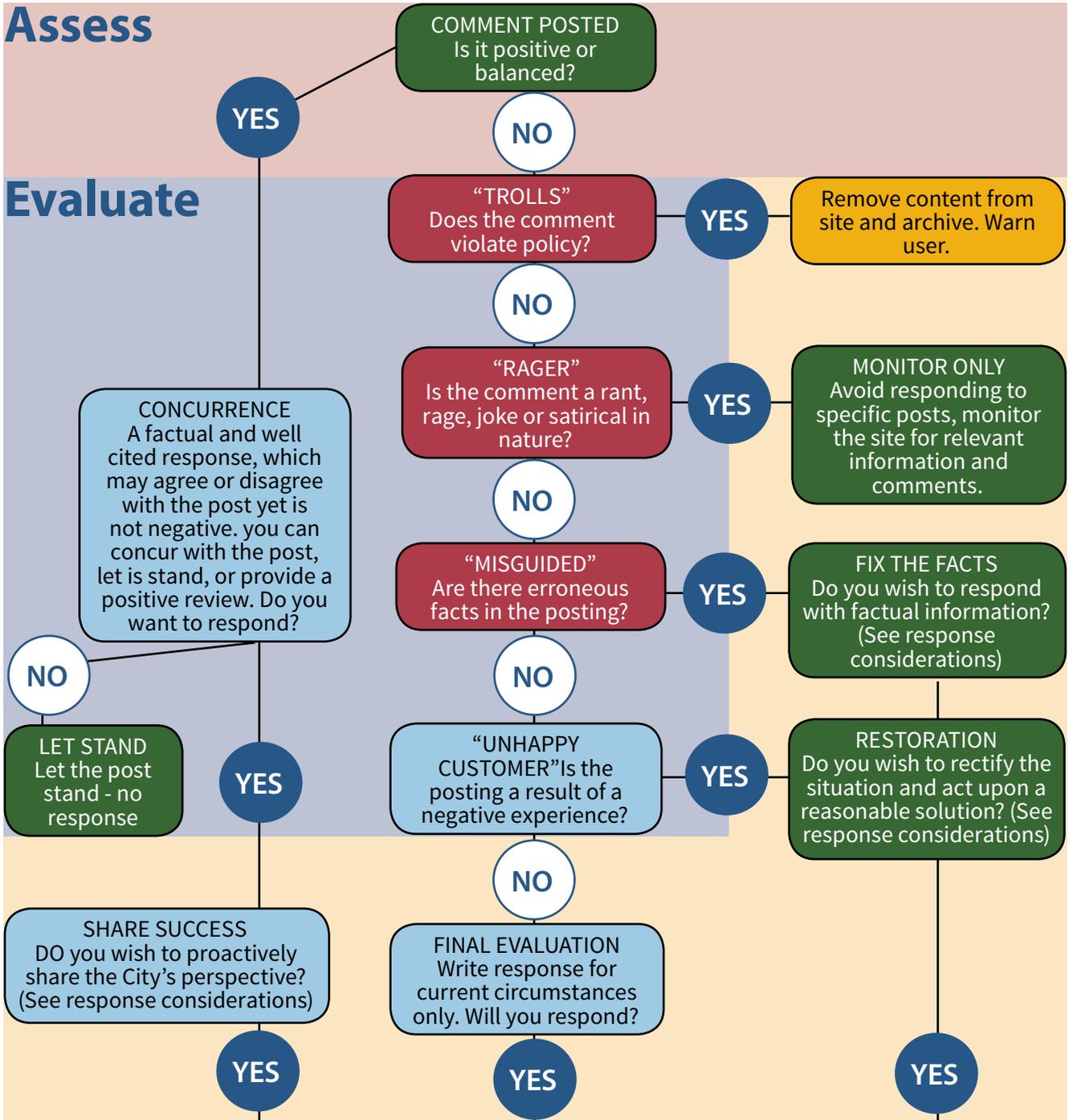
If a user violates the policy more than once and must be blocked, you can send the sample language below. It is always a good idea to include a link to the social media policy.

“Your recent post is in violation of the City of Homer social media policy. As this is a repeat violation, we have to block you from further posts. Thank you for understanding.”

Sometimes 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.

Assess

Evaluate



Response Considerations

TRANSPARENCY
Disclose your City connection

CITE YOUR SOURCES
Provide a link, where possible, when referencing a law, regulation, policy or other website

RESPECT YOUR TIME
Do not spend more time than the response is worth

STONE
Respond in a tone that reflects positively on the City of Homer

Chart courtesy County of Marin Social Media Playbook, p. 29

Personal Use of Social Media

The City of Homer 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 Homer posts. Take special care to:

- Avoid the appearance that you are representing an official position or policy of the City
- Do not use a City email address, web page or social media site to conduct personal business or promote personal interests
- Do not distribute personal or confidential information
- Do not use your City email address to register for a social media site without prior approval from the Public Information Officer

Network Security

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

- Call Information Technology
- Change login and password immediately
- Report incident to Public Information Officer
- Work with Public Information Officer to develop a communications strategy
- Acknowledge security breach to followers
- Look for signs of damage and make necessary corrections
- Consider using a
- two step verification process



Young man on a laptop with code in the foreground.

Appendix

City of Homer Social Media Policy

City of Homer Links Policy

Social Media Authorized User Form

CITY OF HOMER SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Section 1. Purpose

Section 2. Establishment of Social Media Sites and General Administration Procedures

Section 3. Use and Maintenance of City Social Media Sites

Section 4. City Creation, Maintenance, and Use of Social Media Sites

Section 5. Social Media Use by City Officials and Employees

Section 6. Definition

Section 1. Introduction and Purpose

The City of Homer (“City”) will seek opportunities to use social media to serve the interests of the City and its residents. The City will use social media as means to efficiently disseminate information about the City to the public, increase transparency of City operations, provide channels for the public to communicate with City government and expand public involvement in City government

This social media policy governs the creation, administration, and use of social media by the City in conducting the business of City government. The purpose of this policy is to promote and support the effective and constructive use of social media in City government without compromising the integrity or effectiveness of the City government, its officials and employees. To serve this purpose, this policy will provide guidelines ensuring proper use and administration of all City-created and/or operated social media sites.

Definitions of terms used in this social media policy appear in Section 6.

Section 2. Establishment of Social Media Sites and General Administration Procedures

1. A City department may establish and use a social media site only with the prior written approval of the City Manager or designee. The City information technology (“IT”) staff shall be responsible for account credentials for City social media sites. The department that establishes a social media site shall be responsible for the design, content, and updating and other administration of the site in accordance with this policy.

2. City social media sites shall expressly state that that they are maintained by the City and that any use or maintenance of the site is subject to this policy and to other City

rules and policies such as the ethics code, personnel rules, computer use policy and equipment use policy. This policy shall be available at the City Clerk's office and, wherever practicable, a link to this policy shall be included on the social media site.

3. Wherever practicable, City social media sites should contain the official City logo, and a link to the City's official website for forms, documents, online services, and other information necessary to conduct business with the City. The City's official website, <http://www.cityofhomer-ak.gov/>, is the City's primary internet presence, and in general information disseminated through social media also should be made available on the official website.

4. The City Manager shall designate a City employee as Public Information Coordinator. The Public Information Coordinator will monitor content on City social media sites to ensure adherence to this policy, other applicable City rules and policies, and the interests and goals of the City.

5. The City reserves the right to remove or restrict access to any content on a City social media site that violates this policy or any applicable law. Refer to Section 4 for further details regarding the removal of content from City social media sites.

6. The City shall make every effort to maintain and govern use of City social media sites in a consistent manner.

7. All City social media sites and the administration, use, and maintenance of these sites shall comply with all applicable federal and state laws as well as City laws, policies, and procedures. Such laws, policies and procedures include without limitation those concerning the unauthorized use of copyrighted material, protection of individual privacy, publication of defamatory statements and the prohibition of threatening or harassing communications.

8. City social media sites are subject to the State of Alaska Public Records Act (AS 40.25.100 – 40.25.295). As a result, any information posted on City social media sites, including but not limited to subscriber's lists, posted communications, correspondence between posters and City staff, and communications submitted for posting, may be a public record subject to public disclosure.

9. Information posted on a City social media site is subject to management and retention in the same manner as other City records. The City Clerk shall cause information posted on a City social media site to be inventoried, stored and destroyed in the same manner and at the same time as if the information was maintained in written, printed or photographic form.

10. The following constitutes the policies and procedures for official City of Homer social media sites as currently approved by the City Manager. The City of Homer reserves the right to change these policies and procedures at any time without prior notice.

Section 3. Use and Maintenance of City Social Media Sites

General Use of Social Media Sites

1. Identification of Social Media Site Content and Disclaimer

- A. Each City social media site shall identify itself clearly as a site operated, maintained and controlled by the City of Homer.
- B. Each City social media site shall clearly identify content on the site as being supplied either by the City or by a non-City source (such as a comment posted by a member of the public).
- C. Each City social media site shall contain a disclaimer to the effect that content identified as non-City content states only the opinion of its source, does not state the opinion or policy of the City, and is not approved or endorsed by the City.
- D. Each City social media site shall state that all content on the site is subject to the requirements of this policy, and that the City may remove from the site content which violates the requirements of this policy. Each City social media site shall prominently display a hyperlink to this policy.
- E. Each City social media site shall state that any photograph posted on the site that includes the identifiable picture of a person may be removed by the City at the request of that person (of if the person is a minor, the person's parent or guardian).

2. Information containing any of the following inappropriate forms of content shall not be permitted on City social media sites and is subject to removal and/or restriction without notice by the Public Information Coordinator:

- A. Information not related to the functions of the department that maintains the site, or to the original topic of a posting on the site, including random or unintelligible comments;
- B. Information, including photographs and other images, containing ethnic slurs or profanity; material or comments that are harassing, violent, threatening to any person, entity or property, defamatory, fraudulent, discriminatory or sexually explicit;
- C. Information that infringes on copyright, trademark, intellectual or any other property right or violates any other legal ownership interest in property;
- D. Information in support of, or in opposition to, the candidacy of any person for public office, and information in support of, or in opposition to, any ballot measure (except as authorized by the City Council in accordance with AS 15.13.145);
- E. Solicitation of commerce, including but not limited to advertising of any business or product for sale, but this does restrict information regarding the rendering of services for the City by City contractors;
- F. Information promoting the violation or directly violating any federal, state or local law;
- G. Information from children under 13 years old in accordance with the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act. Users acknowledge and attest that they are over that they are at least 13 years old by posting on a City social media site;
- H. Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems; and
- I. Information subject to a legal privilege of confidentiality that is posted without the consent of all persons who may assert the privilege.

3. All information posted to any City social media site must comply with and is bound by the laws and statements of rights and responsibilities imposed by the entity operating the social medium. The City reserves the right to report any violation of the social medium entity's policies, rules of use, or statements of rights and responsibilities to that entity.

4. Any information posted by a member of the public on any City social media site reflects the opinion of the commentator or poster only and publication of information does not imply endorsement of, or agreement by, the City, nor does such information necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of the City.

5. The City reserves the right to deny or limit access to City social media sites for any individual who violates this policy. If the City finds that this policy has been violated, the City may deny or limit the violating user's access at any time and without prior notice.

6. The City may discontinue the operation of a City social media site, or public access to a City social media site, at any time when the City Manager determines that continued operation of, or public access to, the site is not in the best interest of the City. When The City discontinues operation of a City social media site the City shall terminate internet access to the site, and archive its content as required by the City's records retention policy.

Section 4. City Creation, Maintenance, and Use of Social Media Sites

In addition to the general terms of use in Section 4 of this policy,

1. Commencing upon the adoption of this policy, no City department may establish or use or terminate a social media site, identity, profile, page or account without the prior written approval of the City Manager.

2. All information posted on a City social media site by a City officer or employee shall comply with this policy. No City officer or employee may post information on a City social media site before signing a statement that the officer or employee has read and will comply with this policy. A copy of each such statement shall be maintained on file by the Personnel Director.

3. City employees, representatives, agents, and all individuals acting on the City's behalf shall not use City social media sites for any communications or postings that are not directly related to a City business purpose.

4. Employees of the City must adhere to the City's Personnel Policies when responding to or posting content on the City's social media site(s), including policies related to discrimination or harassment, media relations, and computer use. In addition to complying with this Social Media Policy, including its terms regarding inappropriate forms of content, City employees must not post non-public or confidential information such as information related to co-workers, personnel data, medical information, or claims or lawsuits against the City. If there are questions about what is considered confidential, employees should check with the Human Resources Department.

Section 5. Social Media Use by City Officials and Employees

1. In using social media as an individual, a City official or employee shall use reasonable care to avoid the appearance that the official or employee is representing the official position or policy of the City.

2. No City official or employee may use a City email address, web page or social media site to conduct the official's or employee's personal business or to promote the official's or employee's personal interests.

3. In all communications on social media regarding City business, City officers and employees shall comply with rules restricting the dissemination of information in City records that is privileged or confidential.

4. City officers and employees may not use a City email address to register for social media sites other than for use in City business without the prior approval of the Public Information Coordinator.

Section 6. Definitions

In this policy:

"Blog" means a web-based forum with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other materials where the blog host posts material on the website, and others may provide comments.

"City Manager" means the City Manager or designee.

"City Social Media Sites" means all social media sites as defined in this policy that are created, maintained, or operated by or on behalf of a City department, City social media sites do not include sites created and operated by individuals in their private capacity.

"Cloud Computing" means the use of applications hosted across the internet by an independent service provider. An example of cloud computing is a Google Doc, in which the

word processing program is accessible through a web browser and the content in the document resides in Google's servers.

"Department" means a unit of City government under the supervision of the City Manager, the Mayor or City Council, any City commission or board.

"Mashup" means a web-based presentation of information that combines data and/or functionality from multiple sources. For example, a mashup would be a Google map showing average housing prices drawn from a City assessor's online database.

"Photo Sharing Sites" means websites which allow users to post and share digital photographs. These sites typically allow commenting and meta-data to be attached to photographs.

"Public Information Coordinator" means a member of City staff designated to monitor the content of all City social media sites, or that person's authorized designee.

"RSS Feed" means a web content format which, when used with an RSS aggregator, alerts users to new or exciting content on a website. They enable users to avoid the conventional methods of browsing or searching for information on websites. Once users subscribe to an RSS feed, they can gather material from websites of their choosing.

"Social Media" or "Web 2.0" means the collection of web tools that facilitate collaboration and data sharing. Web-based communities and hosted services include social-networking sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn), video and photo sharing sites (i.e. Instagram), wikis, blogs, virtual worlds, and all other emerging technologies that are used to communicate or share information with others electronically.

"Video Sharing Sites" means websites where users post video they have taken and others may view or comment on these videos once posted. Video sharing sites generally allow users to post and share digital photographs. These sites also permit viewers to integrate or display others' videos on their own sites.

"Wiki" means a collection of web pages that encourages users to contribute or modify the content. By using a simple web interface, a community can collaborate on developing a document or web page, no matter where they're located.

CITY OF HOMER EXTERNAL WEB LINKS POLICY

1. General

The City of Homer website is a tool to provide convenient public access to information related to City government. At times it serves the City's interest to include links on the City of Homer website to websites belonging to other organizations. The following constitutes the policies and procedures for links posted on official City of Homer website as currently approved by the City Manager. The City of Homer reserves the right to change these policies and procedures at any time without prior notice.

2. Purposes

The City of Homer may include external web links on the City website hosted by the Information Technology Department in accordance with the best interest of the City government, and state and federal law. The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines to determine which web links may be added to the City of Homer website.

3. Responsibility

- a. Department directors shall ensure that their department staff follows the procedure set forth in this policy.
- b. The Public Information Coordinator may review links on the City of Homer website to websites belonging to other organizations and remove such links that are not consistent with this policy.
- c. Human Resources shall maintain this policy.

4. Policy

- a. Any posting, publication or display on any City website hosted by the Information Technology Department of a web link to any non-City website must be limited to websites that:
 1. primarily provide information regarding City services, public recreational activities, or services for City employees; or primarily promote economic development and/or commerce in the City; or
 2. describe or refer to private sector goods and services that the head of the department that posts the link finds provide significant support to the department's mission, such as, in the case of the Parks and Recreation Department, privately operated classes and sports events.

3. are owned, maintained, and supported by a federal, state, or municipal government entity; or
 4. are temporarily displayed by designation of the City Manager to benefit the health and welfare of City residents when a natural disaster or other public emergency has occurred, or threatens to occur; or
 5. are provided through the library's website, and selected to facilitate research, learning and recreation pursuits.
- b. Any web link on any City of Homer website to any non-City website must display a disclaimer containing the following text before directing the user to the non-City website:

You are exiting the City of Homer Web Server.

Thank you for visiting.

Please note: The link you have selected is located on another server. The City of Homer has no control over the content posted on any linked external website and these sites may have separate terms of use and privacy policies. The City of Homer does not endorse this website, its sponsor, or any of the policies, activities, products, or services offered on the site or by any advertiser on the site.

5. Definitions

- a. External website – A website that is owned, maintained, and/or supported by an organization other than the City of Homer Information Technology Department or its contractor.
- b. City website – A website that is owned by the City of Homer and maintained, and supported by the Information Technology Department.
- c. Web link – A hyperlink that displays a new web page in the web browser window.



City of Homer

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Human Resources

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(f) 907-235-3148

Social Media Policy Authorized User Form

I have received a copy, read and understand the
City of Homer Social Media Policy
approved by City Council Resolution 15-025
on April 27, 2015

Employee: _____

Printed Name

Username(s): _____

Employee: _____

Signature

Date: _____

c: Personnel File