

City Council

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City of Sebastopol**City of Sebastopol Policy on Personal Social Media Use by City Representatives**

The City recognizes that City officials, City staff and any other City personnel (“City representatives”) have the right to express their personal views through private social media use. However, City representatives bound by this Policy must understand that non-public information (e.g., proprietary information; confidential personnel matters; and attorney-client privileged information; etc.) may not be conveyed through social media unless and until the release of such information becomes lawful and has been authorized by the City in accordance with federal or state law.

City representatives do not need to obtain permission from the City to participate in social media in their personal capacity. City representatives are encouraged to check with City management if they have any questions related to personal use of social media.

The City is not responsible for the contents or accuracy of material posted when a City representative is using social media in a personal capacity. Publication of such content on a personal social media site does not constitute an endorsement by the City. City representatives acting in a personal capacity should do everything reasonably practicable to make certain that it does not appear to other social media users or the public that they are speaking for the City.

City representatives shall not use official City email accounts when establishing, setting up, or using social media sites for personal or non-City/non-official activities.

When City representatives bound by this Policy, including City officials, use social media in their respective personal capacities, they acknowledge that posts related to City business may be deemed public records under the California Public Records Act. Further, City officials should avoid blocking third parties or deleting posts and/or comments on personal social media accounts as many public officials have been sued on this basis under First Amendment principles.

Additional Restrictions Specific to City Officials

1. City officials must keep their social media presence separate from that of the City, and from that of other City officials. City officials shall include the following language on their personal social media sites to prevent confusion and false public expectations that their sites are affiliated with the City: “This page is not operated by the City of Sebastopol and is not a reflection of the City’s policies or opinions.” For City officials on the City Council, the language shall be as follows: “This page is not operated by the City of Sebastopol and is not a reflection of the City’s policies or opinions or those of the City Council.”
2. City social media sites will be managed consistent with the Brown Act. City officials shall only comment, like, share, retweet, etc. any published City social media posting when doing so encourages public participation or otherwise disseminates information in a manner consistent with this Policy, but should be wary of sharing opinions on those postings to limit the risk of a Brown Act violation and should never

share opinions on items before the City Council that require due process including but not limited to land use matters, and other matters involving life, liberty, or property interests. Officials shall not use electronic communications to engage in serial meetings in violation of the Brown Act.

- a. For example, if a project has been approved by the Planning Commission and will come before the City Council as a public hearing item for approval, City Councilmember A cannot post on social media their thoughts on said project before the time of that public hearing.
3. In compliance with the Brown Act, City officials will not comment or express their opinion via words or a digital sticker (emoji i.e. thumbs up or smiley face) on another City official's post regarding any issue within their subject matter jurisdiction, even when there is not a quorum of the board.
4. During an emergency, make sure to only share confirmed information on personal social media sites to avoid confusion and refer constituents to the official City of Sebastopol website or City social media sites for up-to-date information.

The City is not responsible for the contents or accuracy of material posted on City officials' personal social media sites, or for any comments made by City officials on City's Social Media Sites posted independently and without the City's consent or approval. Publication of such content does not constitute an endorsement by the City.