

Prepared by: PIO, IT, and City Clerk's Office

**RESOLUTION NO. 2019-12**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF VENICE, SARASOTA COUNTY, FLORIDA, ADOPTING A COMMUNICATIONS POLICY; SUPERSEDING RESOLUTION NO. 2012-01; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE**

**WHEREAS**, it is the policy of the City of Venice to provide the public and the media complete, consistent, accurate, relevant and timely information about city programs, services, projects, events and topical issues; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Venice uses Social Media Services or sites ("SMS") to support community engagement and make important contributions to customer service and outreach; and

**WHEREAS**, this policy establishes restrictions for using SMS and notifying employees that certain social media activities engaged in by employees have the potential to create risks and legal issues for the city and/or its employees given the technical realities of the Internet and the present legal environment related to the Internet; and

**WHEREAS**, when contacted by representatives of the media, directors and employees are provided clear direction on how to proceed, and should be aware they are representing the City of Venice and are responsible for their comments and actions.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF VENICE, FLORIDA**, as follows:

**SECTION 1.** The above whereas clauses are ratified and confirmed as true and correct.

**SECTION 2.** The following Communications Policy attached hereto as Exhibit "A", is hereby adopted.

**SECTION 3.** This Resolution supersedes Resolution No. 2012-01.

**SECTION 4.** This Resolution shall take effect immediately upon its adoption.

**APPROVED AND ADOPTED AT A REGULAR MEETING OF THE VENICE CITY COUNCIL HELD ON THE 23RD DAY OF APRIL 2019.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
John W. Holic, Mayor

ATTEST

\_\_\_\_\_  
Lori Stelzer, MMC, City Clerk

I, **LORI STELZER**, MMC, City Clerk of the City of Venice, Florida, a municipal corporation in Sarasota County, Florida, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a full and complete, true and correct copy of a Resolution duly adopted by the City Council of said city at a meeting thereof duly convened and held on the 23rd day of April 2019, a quorum being present.

WITNESS my hand and the official seal of said City this 23rd day of April 2019.

(SEAL)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Lori Stelzer, MMC, City Clerk

Approved as to form:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Kelly Fernandez, City Attorney

## EXHIBIT "A"

### City of Venice Communications Policy

#### Social Media

The City of Venice allows the use of social media to further the goals of the city and the missions of its departments/offices, where appropriate. Users and visitors to Social Media Services or sites ("SMS") shall be notified that the intended purpose of the SMS is to serve as a mechanism for communication between city departments/offices and members of the public. The City of Venice has an overriding interest and expectation in deciding what information/content is distributed on behalf of the city to SMS managed by the city and maintained by authorized city staff. This policy is intended only to regulate the use and content of SMS managed by the city and not intended to regulate the usage or content of any city employee's personal social media sites.

It is the policy of the City of Venice to provide the public and the media complete, consistent, accurate, relevant and timely information about city programs, services, projects, events and topical issues. The City of Venice uses SMS to support community engagement and make important contributions to customer service and outreach.

The purpose of this policy is to inform employees of the restrictions involved with using SMS and to provide notice to employees that certain social media activities engaged in by employees have the potential to create risks and legal issues for the city and/or its employees given the technical realities of the Internet and the present legal environment related to the Internet.

#### Definitions:

- Social Media Services ("SMS") includes, but is not limited to, electronic communication tools such as social networks, blogs, video sharing, podcasts, wikis, message boards, and online forums.
- Technologies include: picture and video sharing, wall postings, email and instant messaging.
- Examples of Social Media Services or sites include: Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat (social networking); YouTube (social networking and video sharing); Dropbox (photo sharing); and Twitter (social networking and micro blogging).
- Social Networking means the practice of communicating electronically through SMS.
- Social Media Account means any registration, login credential, tool, forum, website, or network that is created or maintained by the City of Venice to support any form of SMS.
- User is any City of Venice employee who has been authorized by the city manager or his designee, or the Public Information Officer (PIO) or designee, to disseminate information on city-managed SMS; to create, edit or maintain a Social Media Account and the posts it contains in the conduct of City of Venice business. A User engages in content distribution.

- Post means any email, message, picture, graphic, image, notification, feed, stream, transmission, podcast, video, instant message, text message, blog, micro blog, status update, wall post, comment, and other forms of electronic communication that has been uploaded, posted to, displayed on, or transmitted by, any City of Venice SMS.

**Use of Social Media by All Employees:**

- A. All social media platforms function at the mercy of an unreliable and easily penetrated Internet. Users should, under no circumstance, assume that content posted to city-managed SMS is private. Content related to city business is subject to the Florida Public Records Act.
- B. City of Venice Social Media Accounts can only be created under the authority of the city manager, his designee, or the PIO. Authority may be granted to a designee of the PIO.
- C. City of Venice staff authorized to post to city-managed SMS are considered additional public spokespersons for their division, department and/or city. Only content that is consistent with city values and accurate and sensitive to legal issues of defamation and privacy may be disseminated. Users are expected to adhere to best practices when using social media as outlined below.
- D. Users may not use threatening, defamatory, slanderous, or obscene speech or language, libelous or unlawful speech, language which constitutes extortion or bribery, or intemperate, abusive, or insulting language. Endorsement of products or services of any kind by Users is prohibited. Unauthorized distribution of work-related products such as video, photos or documents is prohibited. Any User who violates this subsection is subject to discipline inclusive of termination.
- E. Users should have no expectation of privacy when using SMS on city property, while using city owned or issued equipment, while using city Wi-Fi systems, or city-issued devices.
- F. Content posted to city-managed SMS shall not contain:
  - 1) Speech that is prohibited and/or subject to governmental regulations and includes, but may not be limited to communications which may be construed as lewd and obscene, profane, libelous, insulting, humiliating, abusive, hostile and or considered fighting words;
  - 2) An expression of intention to inflict evil, injury, or damage;
  - 3) Repeating, disseminating or sharing confidential information;
  - 4) Sexual content or links to sexual content;
  - 5) Non-city endorsed solicitations of commerce;
  - 6) Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity;
  - 7) Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems; and
  - 8) Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party;
  - 9) Content stating, sharing or posting discriminatory comments which may be construed as creating a hostile or abusive working environment;
  - 10) Comments intended to incite debate and/or are not topically related to the particular social media article being commented upon, which items may be hidden;

- 11) Content in support of or opposition to political campaigns or ballot measures.
- G. Designated City of Venice staff, including Users for the Venice Police Department and Venice Museum & Archives pages, will manage the use of Internet-based SMS. Requests for SMS will be considered for uses that further the goals and objectives of the city, promote public safety, or provide public information. All postings through SMS must conform to all city media and public relations practices. The following guidelines will apply to the use of SMS:
- 1) When using Social Media Accounts, the PIO or designee will identify the source of the publication as City of Venice government.
  - 2) Communications will be polite and respectful at all times and comply with the policies provided above.
  - 3) All information shared or posted will reflect the policy, position and point of view of the City of Venice as an agency and organization, and not that of any individuals associated with the city.
  - 4) Only the PIO or designee will be granted access to the properly authorized SMS, including the city's website, and all postings will be at the discretion of the PIO or designee and the city manager.
- H. Use of SMS must comply with the State of Florida's public records and sunshine laws.
- I. Wherever possible, content posted to City of Venice SMS will also be available on the city's main website.
- J. Wherever possible, content posted to City of Venice SMS should contain links directing Users back to the city's official website for in-depth information, forms, documents or online services necessary to conduct business with the City of Venice.
- K. All City of Venice SMS shall comply with appropriate City of Venice policies and procedures.
- L. Any content maintained in SMS that is related to city business, including a list of subscribers and posted communication, is a public record. Content related to city business shall be maintained in an accessible format so that it can be produced in response to a public records request per the provisions of Florida Statute Chapter 119. Wherever possible, such sites shall clearly indicate that any articles and any other content posted or submitted for posting are subject to public disclosure.
- M. The city's content guidelines must be displayed to Users or made available by hyperlink for all city-managed SMS. Any content removed based on these guidelines must be retained, including the time, date and identity of the poster when available, pursuant to a relevant records retention schedule for the required retention period on a city server in a format that preserves the integrity of the original record and is easily accessible. The city reserves the

right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of this communications policy or any applicable law.

- N. Contact the PIO for clarification or information regarding the use of social media. Contact the Human Resources Department for additional information on the City of Venice Personnel Procedures and Rules.

### **Media/Public Relations**

- A. When contacted by representatives of the media, directors may discuss issues related to their areas of expertise. In doing so, employees with the authority of a supervisor or director should be aware that they are representing the City of Venice and that they are responsible for their comments and actions.
  - 1. Information provided to the media should be factual and not speculative.
  - 2. No employee will be required to speak with the media.
  - 3. Employees who are uncomfortable speaking with the media should refer the reporter to their director or the PIO, or designee.
  - 4. After responding to a media request, the employee should notify the PIO of the interview via phone call, email, or other expedient means.
  - 5. While elected officials may represent their personal opinions in the media, all city employees and appointed agents of the city must represent the official position of the city in connection with their responsibilities. Where the discussion involves policy, the employee/agent should represent the city's codified policy position and not personal opinion or conjecture.
- B. The City of Venice's website, [www.venicegov.com](http://www.venicegov.com), will remain the city's primary and predominant Internet presence.
- C. All news releases from the City of Venice shall be forwarded to the PIO or designee for review and dissemination to the news media. It will be the responsibility of the PIO to determine the best outlet(s) for posting all news releases, including, but not limited to, mainstream news agencies, the city's website, approved Social Media Services, and other appropriate locations. News releases should be verified for accuracy with the appropriate city staff before they are sent to the PIO.
- D. Department newsletters produced for external audiences shall be submitted to the PIO or designee, for review before publication.
- E. Official city position papers, whether in the form of letters to the editor, guest editorials or otherwise, shall be issued only by the city manager, or the PIO, or designees. This does not include opinion pieces by individual elected officials written to represent the position of that individual. City staff may not write opinion pieces for elected officials.