



## Social Media Policy

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### ***Purpose***

To address the fast-changing landscape of the Internet and the way residents communicate and obtain information online, the City of Marion intends to use social media tools to reach a broader audience. The City views social media and associated networks as significant forms of public communication and encourages its use to further the goals and mission of the organization, where appropriate.

The purpose of this policy is three-fold. First, to establish guidelines for the use of social media by employees authorized to engage with citizens on behalf of the City. Additionally, to provide parameters by which any staff member can engage with the City's social media presence. And thirdly, provide guidance for employees that engage in social media on their own time.

### ***Definitions***

**Social Media** — term used to describe an increasing array of Web-based and mobile tools that allow users to interact with others by sharing information, conversations, photos, videos, and other content.

**Authorized Administrators** — employees authorized by the communications coordinator or designee to speak for the agency in an official capacity using social media tools and to manage and maintain the City of Marion's social media presence, pursuant to the employees' official duties.

**Blogs** — short for weblog, a type of website that is updated frequently and written in a conversational tone.

**Social Networks** — social media on which users can create profiles, upload video and other content and send messages. Examples include Facebook and LinkedIn.

**Microblog** — blog which allows only brief messages. For example, Twitter allows microblogs or "tweets" of 140 characters or less.

**Podcasts** — digital audio or video files made available for download or streaming from the Internet.

**Video Sharing Website** — website that lets users upload videos for private or public viewing. YouTube is an example.

***As it Applies To  
Authorized  
Administrators***

City policies, rules, regulations and standards of conduct apply to employees that engage in social networking activities on behalf of the City. Employees who engage in social media while representing the City of Marion are held to the same standards as any other public communication, such as comments to a TV, radio or newspaper reporter.

Authorized administrators shall be appointed by the city manager and include the communications coordinator and 3-5 employee volunteers/designees trained to speak for the agency in an official capacity. Authorized administrators will use social media tools to manage and maintain the City of Marion's social media presence, projecting a unified voice that is friendly, engaging, professional and reliable.

***Policy***

The City of Marion encourages the use of appropriate social media technologies to enhance communication, collaboration, and information exchange.

The City of Marion's website at <http://www.cityofmarion.org/> is the City's primary Internet presence.

The City of Marion's social media presence may include but is not limited to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, and blogs. These tools are not intended to replace traditional communication channels, but enhance them, taking into account the City's mission and goals, communications capabilities, audiences, technical capabilities, and potential benefits.

The purpose of the City of Marion's social media presence is to provide accurate information from and about the City to the public in a civil and unbiased manner, and to respond to questions related to such information. It will provide citizens and others who do participate with new ways to get information, and will help them engage with the City of Marion. In participating the City can help guide the conversation and provide fresh, relevant content on a regular basis. It is not an editorial page or blog for visitors to express personal opinions regarding such information.

The communications coordinator or designee shall have primary responsibility for establishing and maintaining the City of Marion's official presence. No other department or employee is authorized to create a social networking site for the purpose of representing the City without the written permission of the communications coordinator.

Authorized administrators representing the City are responsible for the content they publish on social media sites.

Wherever possible, links to more information should direct users back to the official website for more information, forms, documents or online services necessary to conduct business with the City.

***Communications  
Coordinator Role and  
Responsibilities***

The communications coordinator is responsible for administering the City of Marion social media program, including developing and maintaining program goals, strategies, guidelines and procedures to ensure it follows all appropriate laws and City of Marion policies, and contains accurate, timely and engaging content. The communications coordinator works with authorized administrators designated by the city manager, provides for their training, and monitors their social media activities.

***Authorized  
Administrators'  
Responsibilities***

Authorized administrators “speak” for the City of Marion through its social media presence and are the only employees authorized to post official content on behalf of the City. Authorized administrators shall follow the Social Media Guidelines, Appendix A, which are developed and maintained by the communications coordinator. Authorized administrators who post significant information, and shall ensure that the City’s social media presence is not the sole method by which that information is disseminated.

When authorized administrators need assistance from other departments to answer a post, they will work with such departments to put together a timely and accurate response.

***Permissible Use by  
Administrators***

The purpose of the City of Marion’s social media site is to provide accurate information from and about the City to the public in a civil and unbiased manner, and to respond to questions related to such information. It is not an editorial page or blog for visitors to express personal opinions regarding such information.

While the City of Marion’s social media presence shall be open to public comments, these comments shall be monitored regularly. Permissible information may include news releases, photos of events or construction progress, meeting announcements and notice of available publications.

***Permissible and  
Non-permissible  
Comments***

The City reserves the right to remove any content posted on its social media site that violates this policy or any applicable local, state or federal law. All comments, postings, etc. are subject to being retained and stored by the City for record keeping purposes.

Comments posted by the public on the City of Marion’s social media site express the opinions of the commentators or posters. Such comments do not necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of the City, and the publication of such comments does not imply endorsement or agreement by the City.

Comments containing any of the following inappropriate forms of content will not be allowed on the City of Marion’s social media site and are subject to removal by the communications coordinator or designee:

- Comments not related to the original topic;
- Content that promotes, fosters or perpetuates discrimination or hostility on the basis of race, creed, color, sex, national origin, religion, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status or mental or physical disability;
- Defamatory or personal attacks;
- Threats to any person or organization;

- Comments in support of, or in opposition to, any political campaigns or ballot measures;
- Solicitation of commerce, including but not limited to advertising of any business or product for sale;
- Conduct in violation of any federal, state or local law;
- Encouragement of illegal activity;
- Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems; or
- Content that violates a legal ownership interest, such as a copyright.

Comments that are threatening in nature will be forwarded as appropriate to law enforcement.

***Public Information,  
Intellectual Property  
Rights and Records  
Retention***

The City of Marion’s social media presence, including comments made by the public, is subject to Iowa’s public records laws. Therefore, content on the City’s social media site is a public record and is subject to public disclosure. Such content will be maintained pursuant to City policy so it may be produced in response to a record request.

These retention requirements apply regardless of the form of the record (digital, text, photos, audio, video, etc.) The communications coordinator shall be responsible for ensuring that social media is retained in the proper City of Marion record series.

Authorized administrators may submit photographs, audio or video to the City of Marion’s social media presence. The City of Marion must have the right to post the content. Intellectual property rights of content provided by the public will be governed by the terms of services of the third-party social media provider.

The City of Marion is not responsible for and has no control over the subject matter, content, information or graphics when viewing links attached to its social media sites.

Inappropriate content removed pursuant to these guidelines, including time, date and identity of the poster, must be retained to comply with Iowa’s public records law.

***Accessibility***

The communications coordinator shall use reasonable efforts to ensure that persons with disabilities may have access to the City of Marion’s social media presence. If the communications coordinator learns that a social media provider offers an accessible tool, the department will identify that alternate version on the City of Marion website and inform users that the tool is available.

***Employee Interaction  
with the City's Social  
Media Presence***

All City of Marion employees are expected to use professional judgment and exercise caution regarding any external communications, including the use of the City of Marion's social networking sites.

To maintain a consistent brand and unified voice for the City of Marion, posts and responses will be made using the official account, managed by the communications coordinator and authorized administrators.

Every effort will be made to fairly represent all departments on the social media site. Employees are encouraged to provide the communications coordinator or designee with timely updates or ideas for posts. As questions are posted, authorized administrators will work closely with each department to provide accurate responses.

Employees should not post in their official capacity on the City's social media site using personal social media accounts. Instead, they should work through the communications coordinator or an authorized administrator to share information as the City of Marion.

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***Personal Use of Social  
Media***

Employees should understand the perception of their City of Marion association in online social networks. If they choose to identify themselves as a City of Marion employee or have a public facing position for which their City of Marion association is known to the general public, they should ensure their profile and related content (even if it is personal and not an official nature) is consistent with how they wish to present themselves as a City of Marion professional.

Additionally, if they choose to list the City of Marion as their employer, it is recommended that a disclaimer such as: "The postings on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent the positions, strategies or opinions of my employer" be included on their page.

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***Corrective Action***

Employees have an obligation to the City of Marion to ensure that any public communication they make, including social media communications, must not negatively impact the reputation of the City, its partners, stakeholders, clients, etc. Violation of this policy may be grounds for corrective action, which may include suspension, restriction of access, or more severe penalties up to and including termination of employment per the City Personnel Policy or other governing policy or laws.

This policy and use of social media sites will be monitored by the communications coordinator and authorized administrators, and will be enforced by department supervisors.

### Goals:

- Build and extend our community
- Educate and inform Marion residents
- Provide open and transparent communication
- Promote conversation with residents
- Provide an opportunity to celebrate our success

### Ethical social media conduct:

- We will use every effort to keep our interactions factual and accurate.
- We will strive for transparency and openness in our interactions and will never seek to “spin” information to our benefit.
- We will provide links to credible sources of information to support our interactions, when possible.
- We will publicly correct any information we have communicated that is later found to be in error.
- We are honest about our relationship, opinions, and identity.
- We respect the rules of the venue.
- We protect privacy and permissions.

### Guiding Principles:

- Post meaningful, respectful comments, no spam, and no remarks that are off-topic or offensive.
- Respect proprietary information, content, and confidentiality.
- When disagreeing with others’ opinions, keep it appropriate and polite.
- Remain focused on customers, existing commitments, and achieving the City’s mission.
- Only public information can be disclosed on social media sites.
- Be professional; remember that you are an ambassador for our organization both on and off the job.
- Always remember that your online comments are permanently available to all, and may be republished in other media.

### Parameters for linking to other sites:

The purpose of the City of Marion’s social media presence is to provide information about the City’s government, services, and attractions. We provide links to other sites that also serve this purpose. The City is not responsible for and does not endorse the information on any linked web site unless the City’s web site states otherwise.

The City of Marion’s social media site may provide links to web sites:

- Maintained by a state, local or federal government agency or local school or library board.
- Maintained by an organization that receives direct financial support from the City.
- Maintained by companies that provide non-City utility services to community members.
- Maintained by organizations that sponsor or support a City-sponsored event or association.
- Reporting community or regional news.
- Providing a unique online tool to assist site visitors in accessing information on the site or in communicating with each other, e.g., Adobe Acrobat reader.

The City of Marion’s web site will not provide links to web sites for:

- Candidates for local, state, or federal offices.
- Political organizations or other organizations advocating a position on a local, state, or federal issue.
- Corporate (for-profit or not-for-profit) organizations unless they fit the criteria stated above.
- Individual or personal home pages.

#### **City of Marion Social Media Comments Policy**

The purpose of the City of Marion's social media presence is to provide accurate information from and about the City to the public in a civil and unbiased manner, and to respond to questions related to such information. It is not an editorial page or blog for visitors to express personal opinions regarding such information.

The City of Marion's website at <http://www.cityofmarion.org/> is the City's primary Internet presence.

The City reserves the right to remove any content posted on its social media site that violates the social media policy or any applicable local, state or federal law. Content removed pursuant to these guidelines, including time, date and identity of the poster, must be retained to comply with Iowa's public records law.

The City of Marion's social media presence, including comments made by the public, is subject to Iowa's public records law. Therefore, content on the City's social media site is a public record and is subject to public disclosure. Such content will be maintained pursuant to City policy so it may be produced in response to a record request under the applicable public records laws.

Comments posted by the public on the City of Marion's social media site express the opinions of the commentators or posters. Such comments do not necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of the City, and the publication of such comments does not imply endorsement or agreement by the City.

The City of Marion is not responsible for and has no control over the subject matter, content, information or graphics when viewing links attached to its social media sites.

Comments containing any of the following inappropriate forms of content will not be allowed on the City of Marion's social media site and are subject to removal by the communications coordinator or designee:

1. Comments not related to the original topic;
2. Content that promotes, fosters or perpetuates discrimination or hostility on the basis of race, creed, color, sex, national origin, religion, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status or mental or physical disability;
3. Defamatory or personal attacks;
4. Threats to any person or organization;
5. Comments in support of, or in opposition to, any political campaigns or ballot measures;
6. Solicitation of commerce, including but not limited to advertising of any business or product for sale;
7. Conduct in violation of any federal, state or local law;
8. Encouragement of illegal activity;
9. Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems; or
10. Content that violates a legal ownership interest, such as a copyright.

Comments that are threatening in nature will be forwarded as appropriate to law enforcement.

The City of Marion reserves the right to deny access to its social media site for any individual who violates the City of Marion's Comments Policy, at any time and without prior notice. The City reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of this Comments Policy or any applicable local, state or federal law.