

## **Section XX Social Media Policy**

### **1.0 Purpose**

The District recognizes the role that Social Media tools may play in the personal lives of the District personnel and Elected Officials; and the effect Social Media may have on personnel in their official capacities. This policy establishes the District's position on the use and management of District authorized Social media and Personal Social Media, as well as providing guidelines on its management, administration, and oversight. This Policy provides guidance of a precautionary nature as well as stating specific restrictions and prohibitions on the use of Social Media by District personnel and Elected Officials.

The Policy is not intended to address one particular form of Social Media, but rather, Social Media in general and in general terms, as technology will outpace the District's ability to discover emerging technology and create policies governing their specific uses.

### **2.0 Use of Social Media for Official District Purposes**

#### **General**

The same principles and guidelines found in the District policies apply to employee activities online. Before creating online content, keep in mind that if your conduct adversely affects your job performance, the performance of co-workers or otherwise adversely affects members of the public served by the District, people who work on behalf of the District, or the District's legitimate business interests, the District may take disciplinary action against you, up to and including termination.

To the extent that your Social Media impacts District personnel, the community, and/or ratepayers follow District policies and regulations, including but not limited to those that protect individual privacy rights, anti-discrimination and harassment policies, anti-workplace violence and other relevant policies. Employees using District-provided internet resources shall do so only in support of official District business

Any users of the District's Social Media channels must comply with applicable federal, state and local laws. This includes adherence to established laws and policies regarding copyright, records retention, California Public Records Act, e-discovery law, First Amendment, privacy laws, and information security and therefore must be able to be managed, stored, and retrieved to comply with these laws.

The District has an overriding interest in protecting the integrity of information posted on Social Media platforms or websites that are attributed to the District and to its officials. One of the purposes of this Policy is to establish guidelines, standards and instructions for the use of Social Media sites by the District.

Messages and content posted on a District Social Media site may constitute speech on behalf of the District, but such speech takes place on a non-District venue. Therefore, the District Board of Directors finds and intends that speech posted on a Social Media site venue by District representatives and comments by the public posted on a social media site venue in response, do not create a public forum or limited public forum on any portion of the District's websites, equipment or other District property.

### **Public Comment Policy**

Employees or elected officials using Social Media for official District purposes are prohibited from posting:

- 1) Information about actual or potential claims and litigation involving the District
- 2) The intellectual property of others without written permission
- 3) Photographs of employees or members of the public without written permission
- 4) Defamatory material
- 5) Any personal, sensitive, or confidential information about anyone
- 6) Obscene, pornographic, or other offensive/illegal material or links
- 7) Racist, sexist, and other disparaging language about a group of people
- 8) Political campaign materials or comments
- 9) Threatening, harassing, hateful, or mean-spirited comments
- 10) Information that is not public in nature
- 11) Information or comments that are potentially libelous
- 12) Personal Attacks, insults, threatening language
- 13) Commercial promotions or spam
- 14) Off-topic or link to material that is off topic
- 15) Embed imagers and external sources

All social networking sites shall clearly provide notice of the following:

- 1) The types of postings that are violation of the District's Social Media Policy (as listed above).
- 2) The District reserves the right to remove postings that violate its Social Media policy.
- 3) The District only monitors postings during regular business hours and thus information conveyed after hours will not be received and responded to (if applicable) until the next business day.
- 4) Postings are subject to disclosure as public records.

The following are guidelines for employee or elected officials in responding to comments when using Social Media for official District purposes:

- 1) Be honest/transparent
- 2) Post only within one's area of expertise
- 3) Post only useful information
- 4) Keep it professional – avoid confrontation
- 5) Be accurate

- 6) Correct errors, and if modifying an earlier post, identify the change
- 7) Be responsive to citizen concerns

### **Roles/Responsibilities**

Human Resources will maintain a list of approved social media pages that have been approved by the General Manager and will have authority to edit or remove inappropriate comments or content from the District's social media pages.

The District's Public Relations Consultant will monitor the content of the social media pages and the District's Human Resources Manager will monitor and respond to comments.

### **Public Records and Retention**

All social media postings will be in compliance with the District's existing public records and retention policy. To facilitate compliance, the following apply:

- 1) Post all original content to the District's website and use the social media site as a secondary outlet.
- 2) Link back to the official District Website for additional information.
- 3) Employees who post public records to a social media site will ensure that the original document is retained in a manner that complies with public record policy.

## **3.0 Personal use of Social Media**

### **General**

District personnel and Elected Officials are free to express themselves as private citizens on Social Media sites to the degree that the speech does not impair or impede the performance of District duties, impair discipline and harmony among co-workers. A public official's personal social media site may transform into a limited public forum when acting on official public business. Use caution when posting about public business on your personal page. Use good and ethical judgement.

While Social Media offers great opportunities for District employees and Elected Officials to communicate and collaborate, both internally and externally, it also brings equally great responsibilities. Social Media blurs the lines between personal and professional as no other technology has before. By virtue of identifying yourself as a District employee or Elected Official within a social network, you are now connected to your colleagues, managers, and community members. Your online postings should always represent your personal point of view and not that of Marina Coast Water District. When posting your point of view, you should neither claim nor imply you are speaking on the District's behalf. When appropriate, please be clear to indicate that the

views expressed on your posts are your own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the District.

**Do Not Promote the District Anonymously:** Do not create a link from your blog, website or other Social Media/Networking site to a District website without identifying yourself as an employee or an Elected Official. If the District is the subject of content you are creating, be clear and open about the fact that you are an employee or Board Member. Make it clear that your views do not represent those of the District, your co-workers, rate payers or individuals working on behalf of the District. Include a disclaimer such as “The postings on this site are my own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the District”.

**Responsibility to Clarify:** If an employee or Elected Official relay their own opinions on a Social Media platform, and the opinions are questioned by the media or public as being connected with the District, then the person who wrote their opinions should respond and should clarify their opinion(s) are not associated with District.

### **Personal Use of Social Media by Elected Officials**

Elected Officials should follow the guidelines of the ethics code training (i.e. Fair Political Practice Commission), when using social media. Informal communication with constituents is generally acceptable, but discussion of public business is risky, especially if it involves other Elected Officials. Elected Official use of social media to discuss public business may violate the open meetings law or may violate the law against using government resources for political purposes. To address these risks, the following policies apply:

- 1) It is prohibited that Elected Official use any social media (personal, professional or the District’s official social media) to discuss public business.
- 2) A social media site used by an Elected Official to communicate with constituents must include a link back to the District’s official website for detailed information.
- 3) Elected Officials who use social media for campaigning must establish separate social media for that purpose and not access that social media through the District’s technology