



# City of Cranston Social Media Policy

## I. Purpose

- a. The following are guidelines set forth by the City of Cranston regarding the personal usage of social media to ensure proper discretion be used pertaining to the City of Cranston, its departments, and employees. This policy applies to city employees, including but not limited to full-time employees, part-time employees, interns, volunteers, and vendors, who work for the City of Cranston.

## II. Policy

- a. When posting on any platform or social media forum, employees should work to ensure any posts published are respectful and fair to co-workers and the public. This can be achieved by avoiding any type of discriminatory remarks, harassment, threats of violence, or other similarly inappropriate or unlawful online behavior. Any posts that contradict these guidelines or violate the City of Cranston's anti-harassment policy, may cause the employee to be subject to progressive discipline up to termination based on the City of Cranston Civil Service Rules and associated collective bargaining agreements where applicable.

## III. Definitions

- a. Blog – self-published diary or commentary on a particular topic that may allow visitors to post responses, reactions, or comments. The term is short for “Web log”.
- b. Page – specific portion of a social media website where content is displayed and managed by an individual or individuals with administrative rights.
- c. Post – content an individual shares on a social media site or the act of publishing content on a site.
- d. Profile – information that a user provides about themselves on a social networking site.

- e. Social Media – a category of Internet-based resources that integrate user generated content and user participation. This includes, but is not limited to social networking sites, microblogging sites, photo or video sharing sites, wikis, blogs, and news sites.
- f. Social Networks – online platforms where users can create profiles, share information, and socialize with others using a range of technologies.
- g. Speech – expression or communication of thoughts or opinions in spoken words, writing, expressive conduct, symbolism, photographs, videos, or related forms of communication.
- h. Social Media Forums - an online discussion site where people can hold conversations in the form of posted messages. They differ from chat rooms in that messages are often longer than one line of text, and are at least temporarily archived.

#### **IV. Use of Social Media**

- The following are important guidelines designed to help all City employees make responsible decisions when it comes to using social media.
  - a. Employees should be aware that privacy does not exist within the world of social media regardless of privacy settings on social media forums. This means posts, pictures, videos, audio clips, and other content could be accessed or made available to those it was not originally intended for. With this in mind, careful consideration should be taken with posts pertaining to the City of Cranston, departments, co-workers, or work-related topics.
  - b. Employees should never represent themselves as a spokesperson for the City of Cranston or its departments, without explicit authorization from a supervisor or City official. If an employee creates any post directly or indirectly relating to the City of Cranston, a city department, city staff, or operations, that employee must ensure that they have made clear this opinion does not reflect the opinion of the City of Cranston and get approval from their department head prior to posting. Any post doing so should include a disclaimer such as “The opinions expressed within this post are my own and do not represent the views of the City of Cranston, its elected officials, or employees.”
  - c. Any confidential information acquired by a City of Cranston employee as a result of their employment with the City cannot be disclosed through any social media outlet, forum, or network. Such confidential information includes, but is not limited to internal reports, confidential communications, policies, procedures, and any type of personal or medical confidential information.
  - d. Employees should be aware that any personal social media accessed through City-owned systems is visible and monitored by the City of Cranston. Employees should not be accessing personal social media during work hours unless it pertains to their job responsibilities.
  - e. City email addresses should never be used to register social media accounts, blogs, or other online media forums, unless it is part of the employee’s duties.
  - f. Engaging in any type of social media activity that involves discriminatory language or acts, harassment, threats of violence, anything considered libel, slander, or defamation, or any other form of inappropriate or unlawful conduct will not be tolerated by the City of Cranston.

- g.** City personnel are free to express themselves as private citizens on social media sites to the degree that their speech does not impair working relationships of the City, for which loyalty and confidentiality are important, impede the performance of duties and harmony among co-workers, or negatively affect the public perception of the City.
- h.** City personnel are cautioned that speech on – or off – duty, made pursuant to their official duties is not protected under the First Amendment and may form the basis for discipline if deemed detrimental to the City.
- i.** City personnel shall not post information pertaining to any other member of the City of Cranston without their permission.

#### **V. Civil Litigation**

Employees should be aware that they may be subject to civil litigation for purposefully taking part in any of the following activities.

- a.** Intentionally posting or publishing false information that harms the reputation of another person, group, department, or organization.
- b.** The unauthorized use of someone’s likeness, attributes, or name for exploitative purposes.
- c.** Or plagiarizing someone else’s work, or posting another’s trademarks, confidential business information, or other original ideas, without explicit permission from the owner or creator.

#### **VI. Reporting Violations & Responsibility**

- a.** Any employee becoming aware of or having knowledge of a posting or any website or web page in violation of the provision of this policy shall notify his or her supervisor immediately for follow-up action.
- b.** It shall be the responsibility of all personnel to familiarize themselves and comply with this policy.

**This policy will be in effect as of October 9, 2020 and will supersede any previous policy or communication on the topic.**