| CITY OF MARGATE POLICY |
| PUBLIC INFORMATION |
| **PUB 6.0**
Revision Date: April 19, 2016
Approved by: Douglas E. Smith, City Manager |

PURPOSE: Through this policy, the City of Margate shall establish basic guidelines for use of its current (and any new) social media outlets to ensure proper use.

Social media forums provide an *interactive* means of sharing information that relates to the City of Margate. They provide an easy-to-use means of engaging citizens and others.

Social media can be especially effective in communicating information in crisis situations when timeliness of the information is crucial.

The goals of the City of Margate Social Media Policy are:
- To increase public awareness of the City's programs, policies and services
- To promote the value and importance of the City's programs, policies and services among government officials, civic leaders, residents and the public
- To maintain open, professional and responsive communications with members of the public and the news media

This policy, and its provisions, apply to and serve as a guide to all City employees, departments and contracted entities that share information on behalf of the City while engaging in any social media activities implied or directed.

All social media communications messages and comments are subject to public records law. All of the City's social media sites shall comply with Chapter 119 and any other applicable sections of the Florida State Statutes. The City of Margate will use a third-party service provider to automatically capture and retain all social media interaction on City-owned social media accounts.

DEFINITIONS: An **Authorized User** is an employee, who has been authorized by their Department Director and approved by the City Manager to access and post updates to the City's social media accounts.
Comments are short notes about a post.
Hashtags(#) are words or phrases used within a message to identify a keyword or topic of interest and facilitate a search for it. Hashtags are preceded by the pound sign (#) and can be a word or a short phrase (i.e. #OurMargate).
A **Post** is a message the organization wants to share with those who "like" the organization's Facebook page or who "follow" the organization on Twitter. On Facebook, a post is most commonly called a **Status Update**. And, on Twitter, a

post is called a **Tweet.** Posts will appear on the organization's activity feed and can include pictures, links, videos, or any related media.

Social media are websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking.

A **Social Media Account** is any registration, login credential, or network that is created or maintained for the purpose of establishing or perpetuating a social media presence.

Social Networking is the use of dedicated websites and applications to interact with other users, or to find people with similar interests to oneself or interest in one's organization. Facebook and Twitter are social networking sites.

Tag or tagging someone or an organization means a link is created to that person's or organization's profile. The person/organization that is tagged in a post will be notified and the post may be added to the person's/organization's timeline or newsfeed.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

The City Manager or designee is ultimately responsible for the maintenance and monitoring of all City of Margate social media accounts in accordance with this policy. The City Manager's Office is the primary point of contact for each department and will provide an overview and training of this social media policy and its implementation.

The City Clerk's Office will oversee the records management program with support from the City Manager's Office.

The Information Technology Department will provide the necessary technology services, security, guidance and technical assistance for effective social media usage.

Authorized users are responsible for actively engaging in social media by posting pertinent information on behalf of the City on a consistent basis and in compliance with this social media policy.

POLICY: It is the policy of the City of Margate to adopt a procedure to guide all interaction with social media platforms and its accompanying guidelines that provides a standard approach to the collaboration and sharing of information on and in various public domains to provide consistent communication across all media.

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Social Media Usage
- While social media provide an effective forum for building relationships and for conveying small "bites" of information, these platforms do not serve as the City's sole or even primary means of communication with residents, businesses, and others. The City's social media accounts are intended to be used for informational purposes only.
- Social media is a particularly ineffective tool for communicating about complex issues. The City will use more appropriate means to communicate detailed information about complex issues and to discuss concerns with citizens and others.
- Practical and legal considerations may sometimes constrain, prevent, or prohibit discussion of certain topics, such as court cases, through this medium.
- Comments that offer thoughtful criticism of the organization (not individuals) and City initiatives shall not be removed or altered except as provided for in this policy.
- The City reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of this policy or any applicable law. The City's social media articles, posts or comments containing any of the following forms of content shall not be allowed and shall be removed as soon as possible:
  - Profane language or content
  - Comments not topically related to the post being commented upon
  - Personal or character attacks
  - Content that promotes, fosters or perpetuates discrimination
  - Sexual content or links to sexual content
  - Advertisements not authorized by the City
  - Hyperlinks to third party websites unless posted by the City's approved authorized staff users for links to partnered/sponsored organizations and bona-fide governmental agencies, or other legitimate organizations as the City deems appropriate.
  - Illegal conduct or encouragement of illegal activity
  - Information that may compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems
  - Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party
  - Content related to a political campaign including, but not limited to: content pertaining to fundraising activities promoting or opposing any person campaigning for election to a political office
- Users shall be informed that by posting to the City's social media sites the City relinquishes any and all responsibility and liability for any materials

that the City deems inappropriate for posting, which cannot be removed in an expeditious and otherwise timely manner

- These guidelines must be readily available to users by hyperlink to the City's website. Any content removed based on these guidelines must be retained, including the time, date and identity of the poster when available, in accordance with the City's policy on the retention of such information.

General Procedures and Maintenance of City-owned Accounts
- The City of Margate will utilize one central account with desired social media networks (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, and others). Individual departments and employees, through the City Manager or designee, will utilize the central account to convey desired communication.
- An introductory statement that clearly specifies the purpose and topical scope of the City's social media presence will be included in all platforms used.
- Management of social media accounts and initiatives shall lie primarily within the City Manager's Office.
- A limited number of staff members, shall have access to social media accounts and passwords and permission to post as "City of Margate." Approved staff must complete the Authorized User Form and receive approval from his/her Department Director and the City Manager's Office. City staff members who are not Authorized Users may request that the City Manager or designee post a message from the City of Margate on their behalf.
- The City Manager's Office will provide training on social media usage for authorized users in other departments.
- The City shall not post purposefully inaccurate information. If an inadvertent inaccuracy is posted, a correction will be published as soon as possible.
- Designated City staff members may post comments/replies without advance review or permission of City management. However, if staff members have concerns or desire advance review, they may request such from the City Manager or designee.
- The City will not edit others' comments. However, if others' comments are not in compliance with the standards for content listed above, the comments will be removed. Any content removed based on this guideline will be retained, including the time, date and identity of the poster when available, in accordance with public records laws.

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Guidelines for Authorized Users
- Social media posts made by the City must pertain to City news or City-sponsored/partnered events only.
- As part of the interactive approach to using social media, the City Manager or designee may follow, message, like, share and retweet posts that contain content that is relevant to the City's mission.
- The City's authorized users will approach the use of social media tools as consistently as possible.
- At all times, authorized users shall use good judgment when posting. Employees must refrain from posts that may be interpreted as offensive, obscene, demeaning, or inflammatory as outlined on pages 3-4. Confidential information shall not be posted.
- At times, authorized users may determine other means/tools are more appropriate ways to respond to citizen/fan comment or may determine that it is best not to respond to a comment at all.
- In general, individual complaints, concerns, or service requests will not be addressed via social media.
- When deciding whether or not to respond to a social media comment, please follow the guide on Page 7.
- Authorized users shall not engage in back-and-forth conversation regarding topics that are complex, controversial, or otherwise sensitive.
- Authorized users, in consultation with the City Manager, will determine when an issue raised by others has reached a "critical mass" that requires a City response on the account.
- A standard reply may be used to direct users with concerns related to sensitive or complex issues. This standard reply shall read something like: "The City of Margate is very interested in insights, concerns expressed here. However, complex topics typically are not effectively discussed in forums such as this. If you wish to voice your concerns further or obtain additional information, please complete a comment card on the City's website at margatefl.com, submit an issue via the "Our Margate" smartphone app or contact the City at 954-972-6454."

Guidelines and Limitations for all Users
- All City employees, including authorized users of the City's social media accounts, and City officials shall govern themselves in a professional manner that reflects positively on the City when using social media. Users should always focus on providing high-quality customer service and worthwhile information in a timely manner.

- The conversation shall always remain civil and respectful and all authorized users, employees, and City officials must refrain from using content in violation of this policy as outlined on pages 3-4.
- Inaccurate information posted by non-employees may be addressed and corrected, on a factual basis only.
- Repeated violations to this policy shall result in removal of access to the service and be grounds for disciplinary action for City employees.
- This Social Media Policy shall be revised as needed. Posts/comments to the City of Margate's social media accounts shall constitute acceptance of this policy.

EXCEPTIONS: This policy may be revised from time to time.

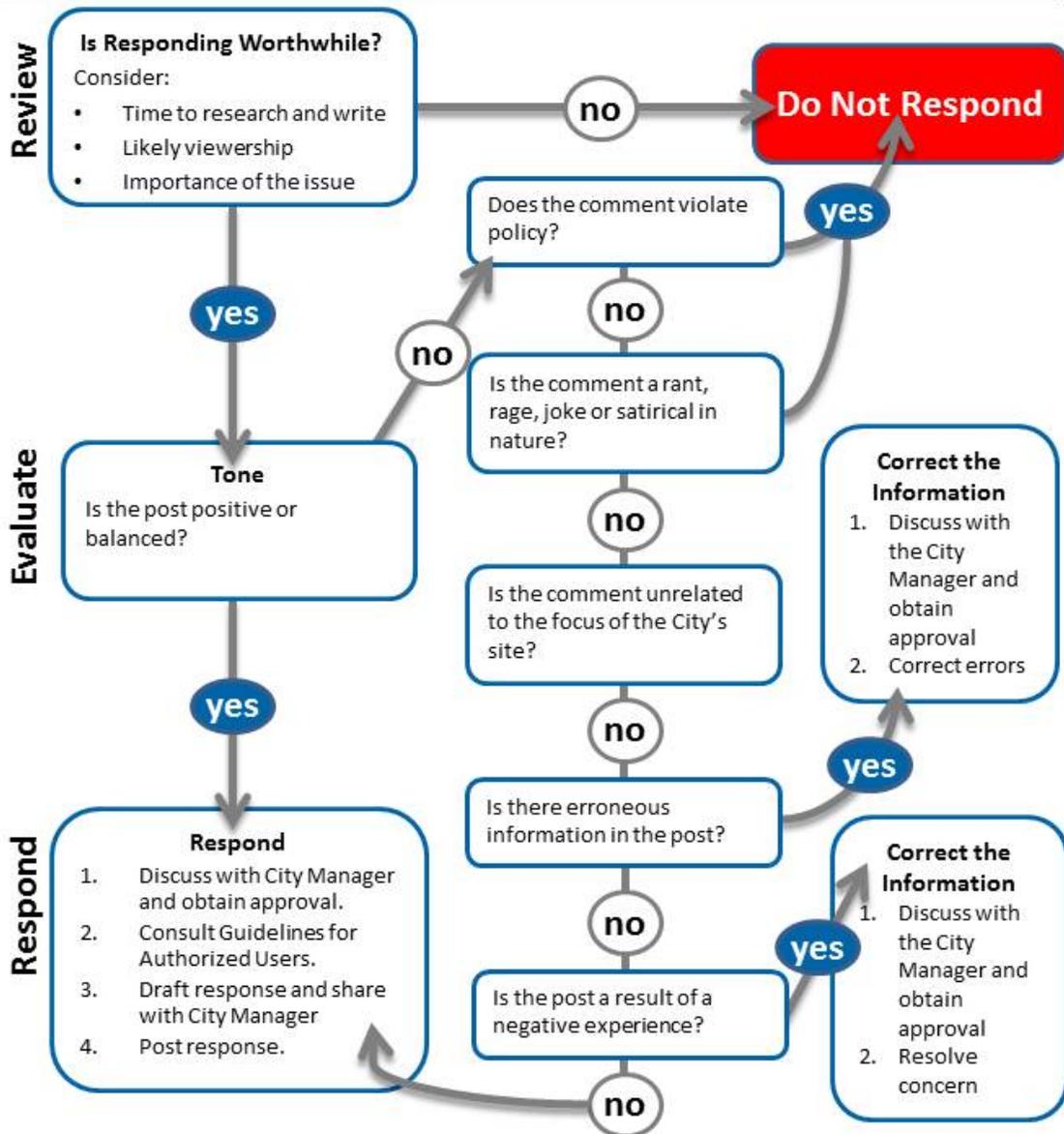## Should I Respond Online to Social Media Comments Posted on a City of Margate Account?

Review

Is Responding Worthwhile?
Consider:
- Time to research and write
- Likely viewership
- Importance of the issue

no → **Do Not Respond**

yes

Does the comment violate policy? — **yes** → Do Not Respond

no

Evaluate

Tone
Is the post positive or balanced?

no →

Is the comment a rant, rage, joke or satirical in nature?

no

Is the comment unrelated to the focus of the City's site?

no

Correct the Information
1. Discuss with the City Manager and obtain approval
2. Correct errors

Is there erroneous information in the post? — **yes** → Correct the Information

no

yes (Tone)

Respond
1. Discuss with City Manager and obtain approval.
2. Consult Guidelines for Authorized Users.
3. Draft response and share with City Manager
4. Post response.

Respond

Is the post a result of a negative experience? — **yes** →

Correct the Information
1. Discuss with the City Manager and obtain approval
2. Resolve concern

no

Response Considerations
Be Transparent – Disclose your affiliation with the City of Margate
Cite Your Sources – Stick to the facts and cite sources by including hyperlinks, video, images, etc.
Respect Your Time – Do not spend more time than the response is worth.
Use a Professional Tone – Respond in a tone that reflects positively on the City of Margate.

Adapted from the Air Force Web Posting Response Assessment, Air Force Public Affairs Agency – Emerging Technology Division