

## **City of Palos Verdes Estates**

### **Social Media Use Policy**

*(Council Approved January 2016)*

#### **I. Purpose**

This Social Media Policy (“Policy”) establishes guidelines for the establishment and use by the City of Palos Verdes Estates (“City”) of social media sites as a means of conveying information to members of the public in recognition of common ways that residents and businesses communicate and may expect to obtain information about the City.

The intended purpose of City Social Media sites is to disseminate information from the City about the City’s mission, meetings, activities, events, services and current issues to the residents of Palos Verdes Estates. It recognizes the fast-changing landscape of the Internet and the way residents and businesses communicate and obtain information about the City.

The City has an overriding interest and expectation in protecting the integrity of the information posted on social media sites and the City’s official website.

#### **II. Definitions**

“Social media sites” means content created by individuals, using accessible, expandable, spontaneous, and upgradable publishing technologies, through and on the Internet. Examples of social media include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, NIXLE, Nextdoor, Blogs, YouTube, LinkedIn, Instagram, and Flickr.

“City Social Media Sites” means social media sites and accounts that the City establishes and maintains, and over which it has control over all postings (i.e., except for advertisements or hyperlinks by the social media site’s owners, vendors, or partners over which the City has no control or oversight). City social media sites shall supplement, and not replace, the City’s required notices and standard methods of communication.

“Posts” or “postings” means information, articles, pictures, videos, messages, blogs or any other form of communication posted on a City social media site.

#### **III. General Policy**

- 3.1 The City’s official website is [www.pvestates.org](http://www.pvestates.org) and it shall serve as the City’s primary means of internet communication.
- 3.2 The establishment of City Social Media Sites is subject to approval by the City Manager. Upon approval, City Social Media Sites shall bear the name and/or official logo of the

City. New social media networks under consideration will be reviewed and approved by a Social Media Review Team designated by the City Manager.

- 3.2.1 City social media network accounts shall be created using an official City email account.
- 3.3 City Social Media Sites shall clearly state that such sites are maintained by the City and that the sites comply with the City's Social Media Policy.
- 3.4 City Social Media Sites shall link back to the City's official website for forms, documents, online services and other information necessary to conduct business with the City whenever possible.
- 3.5 Content on City Social Media Sites is subject to oversight by the City Manager or his/her designee(s). Authorized users shall review the City's social media policies and procedures and are required to acknowledge their understanding and acceptance of their scope of responsibility via signing an acknowledgement form to be returned to the City Manager.
- 3.6 The City Manager will designate staff to monitor content on City Social Media Sites to ensure adherence to both the City's Social Media Policy and the interest and goals of the City.
- 3.7 All City Social Media Sites shall utilize authorized City contact information for account set-up, monitoring and access. The use of personal email accounts or phone numbers by any City employee is not allowed for the purpose of setting-up, monitoring, or accessing a City Social Media Site.
- 3.8 City Social Media Sites shall be managed consistent with the **Ralph M. Brown Act**, located at California Government Code 54950. As such, members of the City Council, Commissions and/or Boards shall not respond to "like", "share", retweet or otherwise participate in any published postings, or use the site or any form of electronic communication to respond to, blog or engage in serial meetings, or otherwise discuss, deliberate, or express opinions on any issue within the subject matter jurisdiction of the body.
- 3.9 City Social Media Sites are subject to the California Public Records Act. Any content maintained on a City Social Media Site that is related to City business, including a list of subscribers, posted communication, and communication submitted for posting, may be considered a public record and subject to public disclosure. Content related to City business shall be maintained in an accessible format and so that it can be produced in response to a request.
- 3.10 City Social Media Sites shall comply with usage rules and regulations required by the site provider, including privacy policies.

- 3.11 The City’s Social Media Policy shall be displayed to users or made available by hyperlink to the City’s website where the Social Media Policy will be posted.
- 3.12 All City social media sites shall adhere to applicable federal, state and local laws, regulations and policies. This includes adherence to established laws and policies regarding records retention, conflicts of interest, copyright, Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), California Public Records Act, First Amendment, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), Hatch Act of 1939, privacy laws, employment related laws, plus County established Administrative Rules and Regulations No.1.25 – Social Media Use and Personnel Management Regulations (PMR) such as but not limited to No. 20 – Employee Standards of Conduct, No. 21 – Equal Employment Opportunity and Anti-Harassment, No. 23 – Electronic Use, and No. 26 – Workplace Security, Safety, and Violence in the Workplace.
- 3.13 City of Palos Verdes Estates employees and designees representing the City on City Social Media Sites shall conduct themselves at all times as a professional representative of the City and in accordance with all City policies.
- 3.13.1 This policy is not intended to and will not be applied to improperly restrict employees from engaging in non-City social media conversations and postings during non-City time, so long as these postings do not violate government policies intended to prevent workplace discrimination, safety or harassment policies. Employees conducting social networking discussions related to City business matters in off-City time shall indicate that viewpoints are personal and do not necessarily reflect City opinion.
- 3.14 The City’s Social Media Sites shall comply with any existing City’s conflict of interest code, applicable ethics rules and related policies.
- 3.15 The following social media tools have been approved by the City and standards have been developed for their use (See “Standards for Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, NIXLE, and Nextdoor”):
- 3.15.1 Facebook
- 3.15.2 Twitter
- 3.15.3 YouTube
- 3.15.4 NIXLE
- 3.15.5 Nextdoor
- 3.16 The City reserves the right to change, modify, or amend all or part of this policy at any time.

#### **IV. Content Guidelines**

- 4.1 The City makes every attempt to ensure content is thoroughly reviewed and approved before posting on City Social Media Sites.
- 4.2 Social Media Coordinators may be appointed by the City Manager or Department Heads and given authority to use social media on behalf of the department and responsibility to ensure the appropriateness of content.
- 4.3 The content of City Social Media Sites should only pertain to City-sponsored or City-endorsed programs, services, and events. Content includes, but is not limited to, narrative information, photographs, videos, and hyperlinks.
- 4.4 Content posted to the City's social media sites must contain hyperlinks directing users back to the City's official website for additional or more in-depth information, forms, documents or online services necessary to conduct business with the City of Palos Verdes Estates, whenever possible.
- 4.5 The City shall have full permission or rights to any content posted by the City, including photographs and videos.
- 4.6 Postings shall be made during normal business hours. After-hours or weekend postings shall only be made in disaster / emergency situations or with approval of the City Manager or his/her designee(s).
- 4.7 Any employee authorized to post items on any of the City's Social Media Sites shall not express his or her own personal views or concerns through such postings. Instead, postings on any of the City's Social Media sites by an authorized City employee shall only reflect authorized, accurate and timely content consistent with City Council actions, City policy, the goal of disseminating information, and providing municipal services to residents.
- 4.8 Postings must contain information that is freely available to the public and not be confidential as defined by any City policy or state or federal law. Sharing or posting content owned by others shall be performed in accordance with copyright, fair use and established laws pertaining to materials owned by others. This includes, but is not limited to, quotes, images, documents, links, etc.
- 4.9 Postings shall NOT contain any personal information, except for the names of employees whose job duties include being available for contact by the public and the employee(s) authorized to post the information.
- 4.10 Under the authority of the City Manager, the City reserves the right to remove content if deemed offensive or not within the Social Media Guidelines. Postings to City Social Media Sites shall NOT contain any of the following:

- 4.10.1 Comments that are not topically related to the particular posting being commented upon;
  - 4.10.2 Comments in support of, or opposition to, political campaigns, candidates or ballot measures;
  - 4.10.3 Profane language or content;
  - 4.10.4 Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, or status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation, as well as any other category protected by federal, state, or local laws;
  - 4.10.5 Sexual content or links to sexual content;
  - 4.10.6 Solicitations of commerce or advertisements including promotion or endorsement;
  - 4.10.7 Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity;
  - 4.10.8 Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems; or
  - 4.10.9 Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party.
- 4.11 These guidelines shall be displayed to users or made available by hyperlink to the City's website and on all City social media sites. Any content removed based on these guidelines must be retained, including the time, date and identity of the poster, when available.
- 4.12 The City reserves the right to implement or remove any functionality of its social media sites, when deemed appropriate by the City Manager or his/her designee. This includes, but is not limited to, information, articles, pictures, videos or any other form of communication that is posted on a City Social Media Site.
- 4.13 Except as expressly provided in this Policy, accessing any social media site shall comply with all applicable City policies pertaining to communications and the use of the internet by employees, including email content.

## **City of Palos Verdes Estates**

### **Standards for Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Nixle, Nextdoor**

January 2016

The following standards are designed to provide guidance and help govern the City's use of five popular and/or city-utilized social media channels – and are to be utilized in conjunction with the City's established Social Media Use Policy. The City intends to use these channels as an additional resource to communicate official City information with residents, local businesses, community groups and others who have an interest in the City, rely on City services or seek information about the City and its government operations. In absences of approved standards for other social media channels used by City departments, employees are encouraged to utilize the intent and general principles, where appropriate, as prescribed below when using these other social media channels.

#### **FACEBOOK Standard**

##### **Purpose**

Facebook is a social networking site. The primary purpose of the City's Facebook account is to share news, helpful tips and event information with local residents. This content may include written daily updates, news stories repurposed from other official City communications, announcements about City events, statements from City officials and council members, and other items of interest to local residents. These standards should be used in conjunction with the City's Social Media Use Policy. As Facebook changes these standards may be updated as needed.

The City's official Facebook page will be designed and maintained consistent with the City's website design standards. The City's Facebook page will include a link back to the city's official website.

##### **Content Standards**

- At this time, the City shall have one (1) official Facebook account representing all of the City's departments. This will provide the most interaction as well as ensure a consistent flow of communications.
- The City Manager or his/her designee is responsible for monitoring the Facebook page. Posts shall be approved by the City Manager or designee.
- Facebook posts can range from 50-400 characters. Additional information should redirect back to a page on the City's website. Facebook posts should include a photo wherever possible.
- Should the "comments" function be turned on, the Facebook page will include a link to a "comment policy" tab. The following disclaimer will be posted:
  - "Comments posted to this page will be monitored. Under the City of Palos Verdes Estates Social Media Policy, the City reserves the right to remove inappropriate comments including those that have obscene language or sexual content, threaten or defame any person or organization, violate the legal ownership interest of another party, support or oppose political candidates or ballot propositions, promote illegal activity, promote commercial services or products or are not topically related to the particular posting."
- Replies to comments on Facebook posts by the City Manager or designee shall be timely and limited to providing factual information that might clarify or answer resident questions, consistent with existing protocols.
- The City shall not "like" any Facebook comments or posts.

- Facebook Applications shall not be used unless it serves a business purpose, adds to the user experience, comes from a trusted source and is approved by IT.
- The City shall not create Facebook Events as a means of inviting residents to engage or attend an event. Rather, Events are created simply to post city-related calendar items, such as council meetings, community events, etc.
- The City shall identify and select other City and related government or school sites that also provide information relevant to local residents as preferred “liked sites” on its official page.
- The City shall maintain an electronic record or printout on a quarterly basis a record of the list of followers and messages for purposes of public records retention.

## **TWITTER Standard**

### **Purpose**

Twitter is a micro-blogging tool that allows account holders to tweet up to 140 characters of information to followers. The primary purpose of the City’s Twitter account is to share news and event information with the community and to engage with news organizations during high-priority events and emergencies. It should not replace the City’s official emergency channels, but should supplement them. These standards should be used in conjunction with the City's Social Media Policy.

### **Content Standards**

- At this time, the City shall have one official Twitter account representing all of the city’s departments.
- The Twitter account shall serve three primary purposes:
  - Get emergency information out quickly
  - Promote City-sponsored events
  - Refer followers to content hosted on the City’s website
- The City Manager or his/her designee(s) is responsible for developing content and monitoring the Twitter account. All posts shall be approved by the City Manager or designee.
- Tweets shall be relevant, timely and informative.
- Whenever possible, Twitter content should not exceed 100 characters to enable followers to easily share (retweet) content. Additional information should redirect back to a page on the City’s website.
  - Twitter content should not redirect users back to Facebook or other social media sites.
- The City Manager and designees shall be responsive to constituents who communicate via Twitter's @reply or direct message functions. Communication with followers will be timely and consistent with existing protocols.
  - Twitter is not a substitute for public service. As needed, the City will encourage followers to communicate important items that require more involved responses directly to the appropriate department via email or telephone.
- The City may “retweet” (share) content from other City organizations only.
- The City may also “retweet” (share) links and content from regional news organizations (e.g., KABC-TV, Los Angeles Times, KNX 1070).
- The City shall maintain an electronic record or printout on a quarterly basis a record of the list of followers and @reply messages for purposes of public records retention.

## **Video Posting Guidelines – YOU TUBE**

### **Purpose**

Online video provides an effective way to share information with City residents and businesses. Video content should further the mission of the City and its departments by providing information about City services and events, illustrating solutions to City issues, and educating constituents about upcoming projects. These standards should be used in conjunction with the City's Social Media Policy.

### **Content Standards**

- The City shall have one official YouTube channel representing all of the city's departments and official City content. All video posted to the City's YouTube channel will comply with the City Social Media Standards.
- All YouTube video posts will be approved by the City Manager or his/her designee.
- Once a video clip is posted to YouTube, it may be embedded onto the City's website using YouTube embedding tools.
  - Configuration:
    - The "Show suggested videos when the video finishes" checkbox will be unselected in the embed code from YouTube.
    - Comments on a video may either be turned off on YouTube or allowed. The City will retain any comments posted to the video (see below).
- For purposes of records retention, the original video file must be saved per the City's retention policy.
  - Videos from external sources are not accepted for retention.
- For purpose of records retention any comments on video clips posted on YouTube must be retained.
  - The YouTube account should be set up to send emails containing any comments posted to a video to a City email account for archival.

## **NIXLE Standard**

### **Purpose**

Nixle provides a one-way communications channel from the City to subscribers. The primary purpose of the City's Nixle account is to share critical news of immediate relevancy with local residents. Nixle's service for local police departments, city and municipal governments, and local agencies and community groups enables immediate delivery to residents and community visitors, through SMS, web, and email distribution.

Content from the City of Palos Verdes Estates may include reports of police or emergency service activities, weather-related alerts, and other events of significance to the City's general population. These standards should be used in conjunction with the City's Social Media Use Policy.

### **Content Standards**

- At this time, the City shall have one (1) official Nixle account representing all of the City's departments.
- The City Manager, Police Chief, or his/her designee(s) are responsible for developing content. All posts should be approved by the City Manager, Police Chief or designee.
- In general, content shared via Nixle is unscheduled as it relates to urgent or emergency situations. However, content templates for various situations may be drafted and prepared in advance.



- When practical, Nixle posts shall include contact phone numbers or monitored e-mail accounts for citizens to follow-up directly for further information (e.g., police department telephone number).
- The City shall maintain an electronic record or printout on a quarterly basis a record of messages for purposes of public records retention.

## **NEXTDOOR Standard**

### **Purpose**

Nextdoor is a free, private social media network intended to foster communication between neighbors – members subscribe to a private neighborhood website based on their verified home/ mailing addresses. The primary purpose of the City’s Nextdoor account is to post and exchange information that is germane to a specific Palos Verdes Estates neighborhood.

### **Content Standards**

- At this time, the City shall have one (1) official Nextdoor account representing all of the City’s departments.
- The City can post information to any Palos Verdes Estate neighborhood site; however, the City can only view comments and reply to its own posts. The City cannot view or engage in discussions outside of the City’s own posts on any Nextdoor page.
- The City Manager or his/her designee(s) is responsible for developing content. All posts should be approved by the City Manager or designee.
- Content appropriate for Nextdoor that may include neighborhood-specific activities being performed by the City and its contractors (e.g., tree trimmings, street maintenance), event announcements, and emergency bulletins.
- Content that is created for and shared via Nixle and Facebook may also be appropriate to share using Nextdoor.
- Replies to comments on Nextdoor posts by the City Manager or designee shall be timely and limited to providing factual information that might clarify or answer resident questions, consistent with existing protocols.
- Optionally, the City’s elected councilmembers may register for individual accounts under the City’s Nextdoor license to share information relevant to constituents. These posts from individual councilmembers may not be political in nature, including but not limited to endorsements (implied or otherwise) of political candidates or invitations to political fundraisers.
- The City shall maintain an electronic record or printout on a quarterly basis a record of the list of reply messages for purposes of public records retention.