



# City of Cocoa

## Communications Policies and Procedures Manual



## **Purpose**

This Communications Policies and Procedures Manual is an administrative policy promulgated by the City Manager establishing communication guidelines applicable to all City employees (full-time, part-time and volunteers) which are under the direction and supervision of the City Manager pursuant to City Charter. It is not intended to apply to the City Council or any person not under the direction and supervision of the City Manager. The purpose of these guidelines is to coordinate and manage the communication activities of City employees related to official City business in order to ensure accuracy, consistency and timeliness in relaying information to employees, departments, members of the media, the citizens of Cocoa and the public at large.

## **Communication Goals**

- To use effective communications to improve employee and public understanding of City policies, initiatives and services.
- Communication should be a priority in the development and planning of programs and services and is necessary to the successful completion and implementation of these activities.
- Establish a uniform procedure for communications that will help ensure accuracy, citywide coordination and timely responses that will clarify and ensure continuity in messages and publications issued by the City of Cocoa.

## **Oversight and Guidance**

The City Manager's office and the Public Relations Specialist will oversee compliance with the City's Communication Policies and Procedures Manual and will assist employees with any questions regarding the policies included in this manual.

## **Media Relations Policy**

The media plays an important role in providing information to the public on matters of civic interest. The City's goal is to foster cooperation between the City of Cocoa and the media to ensure that information is accurate and timely.

1. All media inquiries to a department should be reported to the Public Relations specialist in a timely manner via e-mail. All media requests for public records must be filed with the City Clerk's office via a public records request per the established policies for obtaining public information. Please notify the Public Relations Specialist of any public records requests made by the media. If any guidance is needed on inquiries from the media, please



contact the Public Relations Specialist and notify the reporter that you will need to get back with them on the requested information. Remember this must be done in a timely manner so that the City is able to meet media deadlines, if any.

2. When speaking with the media, all employees must remember that they represent the City of Cocoa. All conversations should be polite, clear, professional in tone, and free of personal judgments and derogatory remarks. Despite the pressure of a reporter's deadline, personnel should not hesitate to say they do not know the answer to a question. City employees should not speculate, offer opinions or provide partial answers and should ALWAYS STAY ON THE RECORD.
3. A copy of all departments' news releases should be sent via e-mail to the Public Relations Specialist. If needed, the Public Relations specialist can then notify the City Manager and City Council. All press releases should include City contact information from the specific department sending the release.
4. Each department should archive their news releases on their respective departments "News Flash" section of the website.
5. In the event of a crisis or emergency, the City Manager's office and Public Relations Specialist must be notified immediately.

### **Publications**

The Public Relations Specialist must approve all communications intended for public distribution to ensure accuracy and a consistency of message and brand.

#### *FYI – Cocoa's Community Newsletter*

The FYI is currently published on a quarterly basis (January 1<sup>st</sup>, April 1<sup>st</sup>, July 1<sup>st</sup>, October 1<sup>st</sup>) and is focused on City news and initiatives. This is a community newsletter that is sent out via mail to those residents who have subscribed to the publication, e-mailed to those residents that have electronically requested the publication and posted electronically on the website. The Public Relations Specialist will remind each department approximately 45 days prior to printing of the upcoming deadline for information submission. Information that is pertinent information for citizens and the public at large is appropriate for this publication.



### *News Releases*

Each department can generate their own news releases or may request the Public Relations Specialist develop them. They should be concise and include City contact information. Each news release that is sent out must also be copied to the Public Relations Specialist.

### *Letterhead*

All correspondence both internal and external should be done on the approved and distributed City of Cocoa letterhead.

### *Advertisements and Collateral Materials*

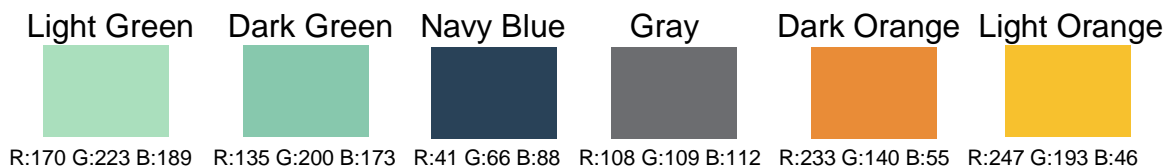
All advertisements and collateral materials (brochures, flyers, catalogs and other miscellaneous publications or graphics) should be coordinated beforehand through the Public Relations Specialist to keep a consistent message and brand. All advertisements must include the current City of Cocoa logo. Any need for the City of Cocoa logo for promotional items, clothing, etc. should be requested through the Public Relations Specialist so that the correct file type is sent to the designer.

### *Presentations*

All presentations done for the City of Cocoa, including for City Council should be done on the pre-approved templates. There are currently two approved templates that can be obtained through the Public Relations Specialist. Department specific templates can be requested through the Public Relations Specialist.

### *Color Scheme/Logos*

All documents should use the following color scheme:



The current available logos for use are as follows and can be obtained from the Public Relations Specialist:



## **Website**

The City of Cocoa maintains and manages its website [www.cocoaf1.org](http://www.cocoaf1.org) under the direction of the Public Relations Specialist. Each department is assigned an administrator that has privileges to manage their specific section of the website. The City website is intended primarily to provide public information concerning City services, activities and policies.

1. Each administrator is required to maintain his or her section of the website with the consistent format, messaging and brand of the City. Each department's section of the website must be continually monitored by its administrator and updated with current information including recent documents and contact information.
2. No department is permitted to host its own website.

## **Social Media Policy**

The City of Cocoa social media policy is described below. Anyone who maintains an official City social media site must agree to and sign the Employee Agreement for Use of Social Media form and submit it to the Public Relations Specialist to be kept on file.

### *Purpose*

The City desires to reach and communicate with a broader audience to further the goals of the City and the missions of its departments, where appropriate.

The City has an interest and expectation in deciding what is "spoken" on behalf of the City on social media sites. This Policy establishes guidelines for the use of social media and is intended to apply to social media sites including, but not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and other similar websites, blogging and other internet-based media sites.

### *Authorization Required*

All City social media sites shall require approval by the City Manager or the City Manager's designee before a City account may be created. Such approval shall be based on whether such site furthers the City's purposes as set forth in the above paragraphs of this Policy.



### *City Website*

The City's website ([www.cocoaf1.org](http://www.cocoaf1.org)) shall remain the City's primary and predominant internet presence.

The best, most appropriate City uses of social media tools fall generally into two categories:

- i. As channels for disseminating time-sensitive information as quickly as possible (example: emergency information).
- ii. As marketing or promotional channels which increase the City's ability to broadcast its messages to the widest audience possible.

### *Set-up of City Social Media Websites*

1. The Public Relations Specialist or his or her designee shall set up the City's main administration account for the authorized social media site using a City email address. All requests for use of a social media site shall be directed to the Public Relations Specialist and the Public Relations Specialist will remain an administrator on all City social media sites.
2. The Public Relations Specialist shall ensure that content posted to City social media sites will also be available on the City's website, to the fullest extent possible.

The Public Relations Specialist shall ensure that content posted by the City to its social media sites contains links directing users back to the City's website for in-depth information, forms, documents or online services necessary to conduct business with the City, to the fullest extent possible.

3. The Department Director or the Public Relations Specialist shall review and approve content that is intended to be posted to any City social media site and determine whether such content is appropriate for posting on such social media site. Employees may not post comments to a City social media site without prior authorization from their Department Director or the Public Relations Specialist.

The Public Relations Specialist shall determine whether the social media site allows the City to turn off the comments or posts feature. If such feature cannot be turned off, the City reserves the right to (1) reject the social media site for use by the City; or (2) terminate the use of any previously



approved City social media site at any time; or (3) edit or remove inappropriate content as set forth in this Policy.

4. The following statement shall be prominently displayed on all City social media websites:

**IMPORTANT NOTICE UNDER FLORIDA'S PUBLIC RECORDS LAW:** Please be aware that under Chapter 119, Florida Statutes, every response and submission to this website is a public record and may be posted for as long as the website administrator allows for such item to remain posted. If any submission is removed by the City as allowed by any City policy, please be advised that all of such removed submissions will be stored by the City offline and will be considered a public record available for inspection to the extent allowed by Chapter 119, Florida Statutes. Requests for public records may not be made via this site but must be directed to the City Clerk.

5. All City social media channels must comply with any existing City branding and messaging standards.
6. All social media sites shall clearly indicate that they are maintained by the City of Cocoa and have that specific department's contact information available on the site.
7. There will be one administrator per department and one designated back-up administrator for each department.

#### *Use of City Social Media Websites*

1. No employee may access a City social media site for the purpose of posting any content to such site without the prior written approval of their Department Director or the Public Relations Specialist. Employees desiring to access City social media sites shall read and sign the Employee Agreement for Use of Social Media form and submit the form to the Public Relations Specialist before the employee is allowed access. A copy of the form shall be maintained in the employee's personnel file.
2. All administrators must monitor the pages in a timely manner (typically at least once a day) to respond to messages and remove any messages deemed removable by this policy.



3. If a City social media site allows comments or posts by third parties, the City may terminate the City social media site at any time. If the City desires to continue the use of the social media site, the City reserves the right to edit or remove any inappropriate content posted to the site. The City also reserves the right to turn off the ability of third parties to post or comment, in its discretion. The City does not intend to create a public forum, but to maintain a forum related to topics posted by the City, with language appropriate for its citizens (including minors). Inappropriate content includes:
  - i. Comments not related to a topic posted by the City;
  - ii. Profane language or content;
  - iii. Content that promotes, fosters or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation;
  - iv. Sexual content or links to sexual content;
  - v. Solicitations of commerce;
  - vi. Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity;
  - vii. Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public;
  - viii. Content that violates a copyright, trademark or other legal ownership interest;
  - ix. Accusations of immoral or illegal conduct.

The City disclaims responsibility and liability to the fullest extent allowed by law for any inappropriate content or posting on any network or website.

4. Employees may not remove their name or domain information from postings on a City social media site nor access a City social media site anonymously to conceal their identity.
5. Employees may not post a personal email address to any City social media site.
6. All information posted on City social media sites is subject to Florida law, including but not limited to the Florida Public Records Act and the Sunshine law, and is subject to city resolutions, ordinances, and policies.
  - i. The City Clerk shall develop and maintain records retention schedules for information posted to City social media sites.





7. Questions posted to the social media sites should be answered in a timely and professional manner.
8. Information posted on City social media sites must pertain to the promotion of the City of Cocoa or policies pertaining to the City of Cocoa. Events, issues or promotions not directly sponsored by or related to the City of Cocoa are prohibited.

#### *Use of Non-City Social Media Sites*

1. Employees of the City are prohibited from “speaking” on behalf of the City and from identifying themselves as representatives of the City on non-City social media sites, except for a valid City purpose as authorized in the discretion of the City Manager or the City Manager’s designee in writing. An example of such valid City purpose may include online discussion between employees of the City and other governmental entities regarding a subject affecting the City. If the City Manager or the City Manager’s designee authorizes representation of the City on a non-City social media website, the employee so authorized shall:
  - i. Read, sign, and return to the Public Relations Specialist the Employee Agreement for Use of Social Media form prior to accessing the social media site for such purpose; and
  - ii. Be prohibited from posting inappropriate content as set forth in this policy.
2. The City disclaims responsibility and liability to the fullest extent allowed by law for any inappropriate content or posting on any network or website.
3. Employees are prohibited from accessing personal social media sites on City computers and electronic systems.

#### *Violations of Social Media Policy*

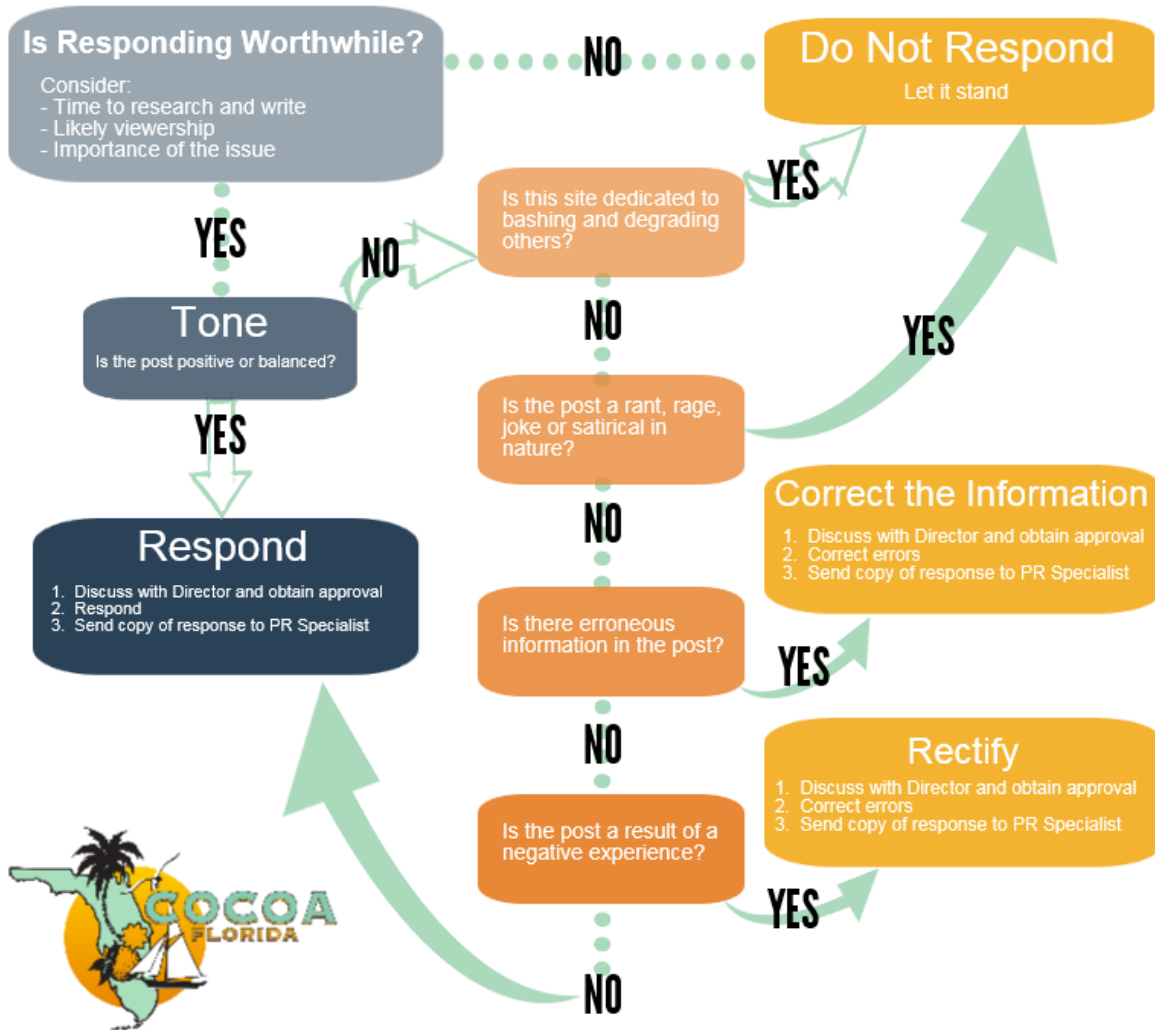
Any employee who violates this policy is subject to suspension or termination of employment with the City.



**Response Matrix**

Use this matrix when responding to comments or questions posted on social media or websites.

# Response Decision Matrix



### **Precedence of Council Policies and Actions; Conflicts**

Any policies and actions adopted by the City Council shall take precedence over this administrative policy. To the extent that there is any conflict between this administrative policy and any policy or action approved by the City Council, the conflicting policy or action adopted by the City Council shall prevail and be implemented. This administrative policy is not intended to modify or repeal any policy or action taken by the City Council.

### **Conclusion**

The Communication Policies and Procedures Manual is intended to be a living document and will be revised as needed by the City Manager's office. The City Manager's office is responsible for strategic communication and coordination of the flow of information to the Media and the public with the exception of immediate public safety issues and information publicly available. All items being disseminated to the public must be coordinated to keep the consistent message and brand of the City of Cocoa.

Approved



John A. Titkanich, Jr., AICP  
City Manager

Date 10/29/14

