

CITY OF TAYLOR



SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS

Adopted

By

Resolution R25-24 on October 23, 2025

RESOLUTION NO. R25-24

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TAYLOR, TEXAS, ADOPTING COUNCIL SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY TO PROVIDE GUIDANCE TO MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL IN THE LAWFUL AND APPROPRIATE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Taylor recognizes that social media is a powerful tool for communication with residents, businesses, and stakeholders; and

WHEREAS, the City Council desires to promote the responsible use of social media by Council Members, consistent with the requirements of the Texas Open Meetings Act, the Texas Public Information Act, the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, and other applicable laws; and

WHEREAS, the City Council finds it appropriate to adopt guidelines to assist Council Members in the effective, transparent, and lawful use of social media; and

WHEREAS, the City Council intends for this policy to serve as an internal guidance and a statement of best practices, not as an ordinance or regulation enforceable against the public;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TAYLOR, TEXAS, THAT:

Section 1. Adoption of Policy. The City Council Social Media Policy, attached as Exhibit “A” and incorporated herein by reference, is hereby adopted as the official guidance for members of the City Council in their use of social media in their capacity as elected officials of the City of Taylor.

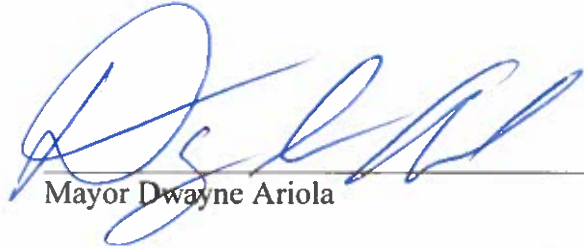
Section 2. Nature of Policy. The Policy is intended solely as guidance to Council Members and shall not be construed as creating enforceable legal rights or obligations beyond those established under applicable state or federal law.

Section 3. Updates. The City Council reserves the right to amend, supplement, or replace the Policy by resolution, upon recommendation of the City Attorney or City Manager, as social media platforms and applicable laws evolve.

Section 4. Severability. If any provision of this Resolution or the attached Policy is found invalid or unenforceable by a court of competent jurisdiction, such finding shall not affect the validity of the remaining provisions.

Section 5. Effective Date. This Resolution shall take effect immediately upon its adoption.

PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED this 23rd day of October, 2025.



Mayor Dwayne Ariola

ATTEST:



City Clerk Lucy Aldrich



EXHIBIT A
Social Media Participation Policy
City of Taylor City Council

The term “social media” refers to forms of electronic communication through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages and other content. Some examples include, but are not limited to, Internet-based platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.

Many local governments use social media as a tool to communicate with citizens. Rather than waiting until a regularly scheduled council meeting to receive citizen input, city officials are able to instantly interact with them via social media. Although this technology greatly increases communication outreach and efficiency, some restrictions are required in order to comport with federal and state law.

Commenting on City Accounts

The City of Taylor recognizes that its social media accounts operate as limited public forums. Comments will not be removed based on viewpoint. However, the City reserves the right to remove comments that contain any of the following prohibited content:

1. Vulgar, physically threatening or harassing language.
2. Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, religion, gender, marital status, familial status, national origin, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, source of income or other protected status under applicable law.
3. Inappropriate sexual content or similar links.
4. Private or otherwise confidential information.
5. Content that promotes illegal activity or encouragement of actions that may compromise public safety.
6. Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party.
7. Comments not topically related to the original article or post.
8. Comments in support of or opposition to political candidates, campaigns or ballot measures during an election season.
9. Promoting or advertising a commercial transaction, organization or event that is not sponsored or in direct relationship with the City.
10. Organized political activity.
11. Information that may compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems.

Notice of Removal: When possible, the City will preserve an archived copy of any removed comment along with a notation of the reason for removal.

Use of Personal Accounts

As a policy-making body, Council members are given more latitude than City employees to publicly express thoughts and opinions on local issues. However, as an elected official, you should be aware of additional risks related to your general participation on social media.

1. Open Meetings Act – Communications between a quorum of Council members about public business, no matter the forum or time, can constitute a “meeting” to which the Texas Open Meetings Act applies. If the Act applies to a discussion, an agenda must be posted 3 business days in advance, and the public must be allowed to attend.

Therefore, you should consider the following when using personal social media accounts:

- a. Remove elected titles from profiles used to identify a personal social media account, and clearly state how constituents should communicate regarding public matters.
- b. Include an introductory statement in the profile or about section of your account that defines the purpose and topical scope of your page:

“This account is intended for personal use only. The views, postings, positions or opinions expressed on this site are my own and do not represent those of the City of Taylor. If you are a citizen of Taylor and would like to discuss city business, please go to [official page] or contact me at [official email].”

- c. Redirect information to official government sources and avoid making posts related to your official duties or governmental bodies.
 - d. Redirect political dialogue requests an alternative means of communication (i.e. email, phone or other preferred social media account).
 - e. Avoid commenting on local issues where other Council members are also participating in discussion.
 - f. Avoid making posts and/or comments on behalf of the City and/or the City Council.
 - g. Avoid making posts and/or comments in your official capacity as an elected official.
 - h. Avoid making posts and/or comments regarding City business.
2. Public Information Act – State law clarifies the definition of “public information” as information that is written, produced, collected, assembled, or maintained in connection with the transaction of official business, which includes email, Internet posting, text message, instant message, and other electronic communication.

Therefore, you should consider the following:

- a. Hide, rather than delete, clearly inappropriate public comments on your personal or official social media account, if possible. In some cases, these comments may still be subject to verification or public disclosure in the future. When in doubt, don’t delete it.

- b. Avoid responding to inappropriate comments or personal attacks on social media. If the commenter persists, redirect them to an alternate method of communication (i.e. email).
 - c. Be aware that a personal social media account, depending on its content, may still be subject to the Public Information Act.
3. First Amendment – More constituents are posting comments on elected officials’ personal pages to voice concerns on public issues. Once an elected official’s social media page is opened for political discussion, it is transformed into a public forum for speech and debate, instantly granting every user a First Amendment right to comment.

Therefore, you should consider the following:

- a. Limit open-ended political and city business discussions from your personal social media accounts and redirect dialogue requests to an alternate channel.
- b. When in doubt, don’t block users. Especially those with whom you have previously engaged. If you must, consult with legal counsel first, and then document your actions and reasons for blocking.

Use of Official Accounts

If you choose to create a social media account to engage with constituents, the best practice is to keep this account distinct and separate from other personal accounts that you maintain.

Elected officials increasingly use social media for reelection purposes as well. However, mixing campaign and constituent communications from the same account could put you at risk for violating laws that prohibit using government resources for political purposes.

Therefore, you should consider the following:

- 1. Make it official – Your account profile, description and photo should clearly indicate your position as a member of the Taylor City Council and your intent to use the account as a way of communicating with constituents.
- 2. Your account is a public forum – Your engagement with the public on social media as an elected official establishes your platform as a limited public forum, which affords users the right to comment on content you publish. It also means that any speech restrictions or censorship is subject to strict scrutiny, and First Amendment activities generally may not be prohibited. So, when in doubt, don’t delete it.
- 3. Prohibited content is defined by City policy – For consistency, consider managing prohibited content on your accounts in the same way City-administered accounts are managed.
- 4. Campaign separately – Council members in office should not use City administered or funded social media accounts for electioneering. It’s equivalent to campaigning from the dais during a public meeting, which may violate state law.
- 5. Involve legal counsel – If you are unsure about publishing certain content or feel you are justified in the removal of content, involve legal counsel before making a decision.

General Guidelines

1. **Be transparent** – Your honesty will be quickly noticed in the social media environment. If your private sector work could present a conflict of interest, be the first to point it out. And be clear about why you support, or don't support, certain policies or programs.
2. **Be judicious** – Make sure your efforts to be transparent do not violate any applicable legal guidelines for external communication. Consult with legal counsel before sharing conversations that are meant to be private or internal to the City or any other public entities. What is published is widely accessible, not easily retractable, and will be around for a long time, so consider the content carefully. Also, be aware that the social media account and anything published on that social media account may be subject to the Public Information Act.
3. **Be responsible** – What you write is ultimately your responsibility. Pause. If you are about to publish something that makes you even the slightest bit uncomfortable, don't publish. If you are still unsure, you might want to check with the Public Information Officer or legal counsel. Ultimately, what you publish is yours, but so is the responsibility and potential consequence.
4. **Mistakes happen** – If you make a mistake, admit it. Be upfront and quick with your correction. If you are posting to a blog, you could choose to modify an earlier post. Make it clear that you have done so.

Records Retention

1. Because of your position as an elected official, activity on your social media accounts may create public records. Any content (messages, posts, photographs, videos, etc.) created or received using a social media account may be considered a record.

Therefore, you should consider the following:

- a. The City does not archive or manage Council member social media accounts. You are solely responsible for the retention and archival of content published to your individual accounts.
 - b. When in doubt, don't delete content without consulting with legal counsel first.
2. Social media content administered by City employees, and intended for public access and comments, will follow a minimum retention period of two years, as established by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission. This includes Council member comments posted on City accounts.
 3. When applicable, the City will use a software-assisted social media capture tool to obtain and archive an authentic copy of monitored content. This includes Council member comments posted on City accounts.

Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, unless otherwise stated, the following definitions apply:

1. **Comment** – a message posted by site visitors, either in response to an existing topic or introducing a new topic. In general, the content of comments is controlled solely by the user, but often can be deleted, accepted or rejected prior to publishing by the site or page administrator.

2. **Connections** – Any deliberate links between a user and a social media channel or page, whether it is initiated by the individual or by the site moderator. Terms used by various sites to describe a connection include friend, fan, follower or subscriber.
3. **Limited forum** – a public forum created by the government voluntarily for expressive activity that may be restricted as to subject matter or class of speaker. Forum restrictions must be able to withstand strict judicial scrutiny of its effect on First Amendment rights.
4. **Post** – In relation to social media accounts or online activity, anything published in an online forum or social media account.
5. **Social media** – Internet based third-party platforms that facilitate interaction and engagement among individuals in a network or virtual community. Social media offers a participatory environment and includes user-generated content such as videos, photos, videos, blogs, and wikis.
6. **Official Account** – A social media account created, maintained, or used by a City Council member in their official capacity as an elected official of the City of Taylor, and which is used to communicate about City programs, services, policies, or public business. An official account is considered a limited public forum, subject to the First Amendment, the Texas Open Meetings Act, and the Texas Public Information Act.
7. **Personal Account** – A social media account created and maintained by a City Council member in their personal capacity, which is not used to conduct or discuss City business. A personal account may contain personal opinions or information unrelated to official duties. However, if a personal account is used to discuss City programs, policies, or public business, the account or portions of its content may be subject to the Texas Public Information Act.

Violation of Policy

This policy is not meant to circumvent or bypass any of the other processes, policies or laws that are applicable to the City Council. Social media activity and conduct by Council members should not only comply with these policy terms, but all other processes, policies and laws that may apply as well. Violations of this policy may result in referral to the City Attorney for review, and in cases involving state or federal law, may subject the Council member to legal liability.

Policy Updates

The City Council reserves the right to update these terms of use at any time.