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	Revision #	N/A
	Implementation Date	MM/DD/YYYY
	Last Reviewed/Update Date	MM/DD/YYYY

Social Media Comment Moderation Standard Operating Procedure

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The City invites residents and visitors to share their comments, ideas, and concerns across all social media platforms. However, it is not always clear when and how to respond to these comments. Please use the following standard operating procedure as a resource to determine if and how to respond to comments on official city or departmental social media platforms.

PRE-REQUISITES

This standard operating procedure pertains to social media liaisons. Social Media Liaisons are City of Denton employees who administer a social media platform on behalf of the city. To be considered an approved platform, the department must have an approved Business Case Request Form with the Marketing and Communications Department and must be in good standing with the City’s Social Media policy.


ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Social Media Liaison:** Responsible for the day-to-day management of departmental social media pages and are responsible for upholding the organization’s standards across all digital communications. Social Media Liaisons are also responsible for moderating comments on the social media platforms they manage in accordance with this policy. Social Media Liaisons are also considered employees, as defined below.
- **Subject Matter Expert:** The individual whose job responsibilities or functional oversight make them the organizational authority on a given topic, and they must be consulted to ensure all social-media responses are accurate, appropriate, and aligned with official guidance.
- **Director:** The individual who oversees an entire department (or departments).
- **Executive Leadership:** The individual who provides executive oversight to specific groupings of directors and their respective departments. This can include, but is not limited to, the City Manager, Deputy City Manager, Assistant City Managers, and Chief Communications Officer.


PROCEDURE

Stage 1 Identify Sentiment: The social media liaison should identify the sentiment or intent of the comment.

- **Positive comments:** Express agreement, appreciation, encouragement, or admiration toward the post or its content.

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- Supportive or affirming tone
- Uses encouraging language (“great,” “helpful,” “thank you”)
- Often includes gratitude or congratulations
- Inquisitive (not rhetorical) comments: Genuine questions seeking clarification, more details, or additional information
 - Direct questions (who, what, where, when, why, how)
 - Neutral, curious tone
 - Seeks facts or sources rather than challenging intent
- Neutral comments: Factual or observational statements without strong sentiment; acknowledges the post without praise or criticism.
 - Straightforward, informational
 - Minimal emotional language
 - Often brief or matter-of-fact
- Off Topic comments: Unrelated to the subject of the original post; introduces different topics or self-promotion.
 - No clear connection to the post
 - Promotional or personal tangents
 - May divert discussion away from the thread’s purpose
- Critical comments: Points out issues, gaps, or concerns; ideally constructive and respectful, aimed at improvement.
 - Focused on content, process, or outcomes (not people)
 - Offers reasoning or suggestions
 - Professional tone; avoids personal attacks
- Negative comments: Expresses disapproval or dislike without constructive suggestions; may be dismissive or hostile in tone but not necessarily violating guidelines.
 - Strongly critical sentiment
 - Little to no solution focus
 - May use sarcasm-lite or derisive language (without slurs/threats)
- Sarcasm, satire, GIF comments: Uses irony, exaggeration, humor, or visual memes/GIFs to mock or make a point
 - Ironic or mocking tone
 - Exaggeration, emojis, GIFs, memes
 - Meaning often depends on context and community norms
- Abusive, attacking, foul, violation of community guidelines as noted in Section IV F of the City’s social media policy.: Personal attacks, offensive language, slurs, threats, or content violating community guidelines (e.g., harassment, hate speech, targeted insults).
 - Targets individuals or groups

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- Uses profanity, slurs, demeaning or threatening language
- Violates platform or organizational policy; may warrant removal/reporting
- Quick Classification
 - Focus on intent & tone: Is the comment seeking information, offering feedback, or attacking?
 - Look for solution orientation: Critical vs. negative often hinges on whether suggestions are offered.
 - Check relevance: If it doesn't relate to the post, it's off topic even if positive.
 - Policy triggers: Slurs, threats, harassment, or targeted insults classify as abusive or violation.
- If the social media liaison is unsure, please reach out to Marketing and Communications for guidance on how to categorize the comment.

Stage 2 Response Approval: The social media liaison should draft a comment response and gather appropriate approvals from subject matter experts.

- If the question relates to another department:
 - The social media liaison should collaborate with the subject matter expert (SME) in that department to draft an accurate response.
- If the question relates to the liaison's own department:
 - The liaison should consult SMEs within their own department for assistance in preparing the response.
- For sensitive comments or questions:
 - The response may need approval from the department director or executive leadership.
 - If the liaison is unsure whether approval is required, they should consult Marketing and Communications.
- Marketing and Communications awareness:
 - In both cases, if the comment or question is sensitive, the liaison should also inform Marketing and Communications for awareness purposes.

Stage 3 Respond: Post response.

- Following the approvals process, the social media liaison may post their response to the comment.
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RELATED DOCUMENTS

- City of Denton Community : www.cityofdenton.com/communityguidelines
- 505.03 Social Media Policy



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PROCESS VISUALIZATION

