



# CITY OF PELLA

## Social Media Policy

The City of Pella's official website (<http://www.cityofpella.com>) is the City's primary online source for communicating information to the public. However, the City recognizes a business need to utilize social media sites as additional communication channels to help promote City programs, events, and services. The goal of the City's social media presence is to communicate to the broadest possible audience and also provide citizens with another way to communicate with the City pursuant to the terms of this policy.

### General Procedures

1. The City of Pella intends to utilize social media to achieve the following goals:
  - Supplement information from other City communication sources.
  - Disseminate time sensitive information as quickly as possible.
  - Facilitate two-way communication, promote transparency, and social engagement.
  - Broadcast the City's messages to the widest possible audience.
2. The City Clerk shall be responsible for the City's primary social media accounts.
3. Any department requiring frequent social communications may make a request to the City Administrator to start their own social media account(s). If approved by the City Administrator, the requesting department will be responsible to maintain the content and upkeep of the approved site(s). The City Clerk will have credentials and editing rights to all approved department social media accounts.
4. Employees representing the City of Pella on the approved social media sites must conduct themselves professionally and in accordance with this policy, and the Social Media Guidelines within the Employee Handbook, at all times.

### Standards for Operating and Maintaining a Social Media Presence

All City of Pella social media accounts and pages will adhere to the following content standards:

- Social media accounts and associated content should focus on City sponsored programs, events, and services.
- Departments' administration and use of social media accounts must comply with applicable laws, regulations, and policies, as well as proper business etiquette.
- Posts and monitoring (including responding to comments or questions) of social media accounts shall be done during regular office hours, with the exception of emergency situations or at the discretion of each Department Head.
- City sponsored social media accounts are to be consistently branded in order to communicate a clear association with the City and must contain the Disclaimer and Comments Policy as set forth in Appendix A. In situations where a social media site does not allow for prominent posting of the Disclaimer and Comments Policy, a link to a PDF copy of the policy shall be posted instead.
- A disclaimer shall be posted on any social media site stating: "This site is not monitored 24/7. If you have an emergency, dial 911. For non-emergencies, use our directory to contact the appropriate department: <http://www.cityofpella.com/directory.aspx>."
- If the social media site allows automatic responses to private messages, a response should be as follows: "Thank you for sending us a message! We strive to respond to messages within two business days. Should you need assistance prior to then, please use our directory to contact the appropriate department: <http://www.cityofpella.com/directory.aspx>."

### Accuracy

The City of Pella will make every effort to ensure the accuracy of the information provided on its social media pages. However, several factors beyond the City's control can affect the quality of the information displayed on the site. For that reason, the City does not guarantee the accuracy of the information provided on its social media page and is not liable for reliance on this information.

## **Responding to Comments**

In cases where comments are accepted, the staff member responsible for the page must monitor the site and respond accordingly during regular office hours, with the exception of emergency situations.

See below for guidance on when or how to respond to comments. When in doubt on how to respond to a specific comment, contact the City Clerk for guidance.

- Questions: respond with information or point the user back to the City's website or another resource. You may ask the user to contact you offline when appropriate if the issue is of a private manner or of little or no interest to the general public.
- General Comments: if the person leaves a general comment, no response is required.
- Complaints: if the complaint is inaccurate, politely provide correct details. In the case of a general complaint, thank the user for sharing feedback and give any other direction that may be needed. If the complaint is regarding a personal matter, inform the user that you would like to address the issue offline and provide contact information.
- Debates: if the user starts debating with a City employee, take the conversation offline.
- Utilize staff discretion on responding to posts that may be considered passive aggressive, antagonistic, or posts previously answered. You may choose to respond, or no response may be required, depending on the specific situation.

## **Removing Comments**

Comments violating the City's Disclaimer and Comments Policy, included as Appendix A, shall be removed promptly. When a person's comment is removed, the City should post a reason for removal (i.e. "A comment to this post was removed because it contained obscene language; this is in violation of the City's comment policy which can be found on our website (include a link to policy)."). Removed comments should be archived for our records by completing the tracking form found in Appendix B and submitting to the City Clerk. The City reserves the right to restrict or remove any content deemed in violation of this policy or any applicable law. Repeat violators may be blocked from commenting on City social media sites in the future.

## **Review Procedures**

The City Clerk will have credentials and editing rights to all City sponsored social media accounts. Each site will be monitored on a consistent basis to ensure the site is meeting its intended purpose, being updated regularly, and has appropriate content.

The City's social media accounts are subject to the State of Iowa open records laws, and any articles or content posted on such sites are subject to public disclosure.

## **Employee Conduct**

All City employees have a responsibility to help communicate accurate and timely information to the public in a professional manner. When using social media, City employees must follow all policies outlined here and in the Employee Handbook.



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## Appendix A to the Social Media Policy SOCIAL MEDIA DISCLAIMER & COMMENT POLICY

The purpose of this and other City sponsored social media sites is to communicate between the City, its individual departments and members of the public. The views, postings, or opinions expressed on this site do not necessarily reflect those of the City of Pella. The City reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to change, modify, or delete posts, comments, photos, and videos in accordance with this policy.

Comments containing any of the following inappropriate forms of content shall not be permitted:

1. The use of vulgar, profane, or obscene comments.
2. Demeaning specific individuals or groups of people.
3. Promoting, fostering, or perpetuating discrimination of protected classes or harassment of any kind.
4. Containing content intended to defame any person, group or organization.
5. Containing factual inaccuracies.
6. Qualifying as SPAM.
7. Not topically related to the particular social medium article being commented upon.
8. Expressing support for or opposition to political campaigns or ballot measures.
9. Containing sexual content or links to sexual content.
10. Soliciting commerce or advertisements including promotions or endorsements.
11. Conducting or encouraging violation of any federal, state, or local law.
12. Containing violent or threatening language.
13. Disclosing confidential, sensitive, or proprietary information.
14. Compromising the safety or security of the public or public systems.
15. Violating a legal ownership interest of any other party, such as trademark or copyright infringement.

If any record is deleted for inappropriate content, as defined within this Social Media Policy, it is the responsibility of the affected department to complete Appendix B "Removed Comments Tracking Form" to explain why the content was deemed inappropriate. This form should be turned into the City Clerk who will retain the document for a period of 1 year.

Users will be removed and/or blocked from the applicable social media site if they continue to post inappropriate content, as defined within this Social Media Policy, after one warning is given.

### **Advertising**

The City of Pella does not control or guarantee the accuracy, relevance, timeliness, or completeness of the information contained on a linked website. In addition, the City of Pella does not endorse the organizations sponsoring linked websites, the views they express, or the products and/or services they offer.

### **Privacy Policy**

The City of Pella does not share information gathered through its social media sites with third parties for promotional purposes. However, all content posted on this site is subject to disclosure under the State of Iowa open records laws. The City of Pella has the right to reproduce any pictures or videos posted to this site in any of its publications, websites, or any other media outlets. In addition, the City of Pella has the right to quote any comments or suggestions posted.



# CITY OF PELLA

## Appendix B to the Social Media Policy

### REMOVED COMMENTS TRACKING FORM

All comments removed from a City sponsored social media site will be documented by the affected department by completion of this form. The completed form, and a screen shot of the comment that was removed, should be submitted to the City Clerk. This form will be retained by the City Clerk for a period of 1 year.

1. City of Pella social media site affected: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Date of original post: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Screen name of user: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Entire comment that was removed (include screenshot or attach separate page if more room is needed):

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5. Reason for removal of comment (reference Appendix A listing of inappropriate content reasons):

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6. Date comment was removed: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Comment removed from the social media site by: \_\_\_\_\_

8. Other pertinent information (if applicable):

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Date this report was received by the City Clerk: \_\_\_\_\_