

COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT GUIDE

POLICIES + PROCEDURES



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Mission Statement

To be the primary source of information regarding the City of Beaumont through the creation and distribution of effective messages and compelling stories, which foster positive community engagement and interaction.

Communications Overview - City of Beaumont

Communication with citizens is a basic obligation of the government and an essential component of the democratic process. Good public communication is not just a goal that stands apart from the City's other activities; it is an integral part of achieving success in every City project and initiative. We want the residents to come to us and trust us as the best source of information on anything related to issues in Beaumont.

Goals

- Better communicate to the public what the City has done and what the City is doing.
- Increase transparency and build trust between the citizens and the City.
- Raise awareness of City departments, divisions, programs, and services available.
- Improve the public perception of Beaumont through positive interactions and proactive messaging.

Ultimately, as public servants, we work for the citizens of Beaumont. However, the flow of communication must go both ways, and a mutually beneficial relationship should be established with our residents. The City should not rely on anyone else to communicate with citizens and tell its story. The City should control the narrative and make a point to tell our story – continuously, comprehensively, and enthusiastically.

Along with telling its own story, the City must take responsibility to proactively initiate communications and dialogue rather than reactively respond to issues and events as they occur.

The City Communications Department will provide information to citizens utilizing a variety of mediums to reach as many residents on as many channels as possible – print, web, social media, and municipal cable channels. The office works closely with local print and broadcast media organizations to better convey messages and deliver information about City government in a timely, proactive manner and keeps citizens informed, aware and educated about a variety of topics from City services and programs offered to events, issues, emergency information and crisis communications.

Guiding Principles

- Provide relevant, accurate, and timely information to citizens, businesses, and organizations.
- Encourage active citizen participation in local government programs and services.
- Increase community knowledge of City operations.
- Ensure Information reaches as many residents as possible through a variety of mediums and channels.

Priorities

- **Priority #1: Lead Strategic Communication Efforts**
Work directly with City Council, city departments, and staff to ensure communication and outreach efforts, objectives, and outcomes align with the goals of the organization.
- **Priority #2: Create Opportunities for Effective Stakeholder Participation and Collaboration**
Encourage engagement through audience-appropriate, two-way communication channels.
- **Priority #3: Provide Open and Timely Communication**
Proactively share accurate, unbiased information promptly through a variety of mediums and channels.
- **Priority #4: Reinforce Brand Identity**
Develop consistent messaging that builds and solidifies Beaumont's brand and tells the City's story through one unified voice.
- **Priority #5: Ensure a Well-Informed City Workforce**
Keep City employees informed and involved in public engagement so they can assist in telling Beaumont's story.
- **Priority #6: Provide Measurements of Progress and Success**
Track website and social media analytics to evaluate communication efforts and effectiveness in order to guide future communications programs and projects.

Communications Team

The City of Beaumont uses a decentralized approach that places responsibility for the initiation of many communication activities directly in the hands of each department by empowering the subject matter expert.

However, this system also requires accountability and openness. The City Communications Department is not the only designated spokesperson for the City of Beaumont and aims to provide best practices for anyone communicating on behalf of the City in order to maintain consistent messaging and tone. The City's communications team inherently includes the following individuals:

- City Communications Department, Police Department and Emergency Operations Center (which each have their own set of policies and procedures to follow);
- Mayor, members of the City Council, and other Council-appointed officials;
- City Manager, Department Directors, and Division Managers; and
- Any employees authorized by their Department Director to speak to the media.

Target Audience

<p>External Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Citizens• Visitors• Business leaders• Community organizations• Schools• Regional influencers• Media	<p>Internal Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employees• Mayor and City Council• City Boards, Commissions and Committees
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Communications Procedures

The purpose of marketing materials, media releases, newsletters, and advertising is to communicate about major developments or to release information that is new and important to the City, including programs and initiatives especially in regard to public health, safety and essential services.

Every department should feel empowered to create their own content and promote their own initiatives. Outside of Emergency Services (Police, Fire, EOC) and Events when sending on behalf of clients, the City Communications Department must review and approve all communications intended for public distribution prior to release. All projects involving media contact, social media interaction, public relations, marketing, video production, promotional materials, and/or photography must be internally reviewed before distribution to ensure the accuracy of information is consistent, professional, uses key core messages, protects Beaumont’s brand, and that all departments work collaboratively to achieve coherent and effective communications and maximize reach.

Content Creation Process

A department seeking to have the City Communications Department help promote an event or initiative by resharing a post on the main City social media pages, assisting with media outreach, or creating assets (videos, blogs, press releases, etc) for them, should allot time for production, review, and scheduling. Requests and all relevant information should be provided seven (7) days before project launch. The Communications Department will give reasonable consideration to all requests and prioritize them given the resources available.

If a department wishes to have the City Communications Department create assets or a press release for them, they should:

1. Contact the City Communications Department with their desired timeline, point of contact, and key messaging (the who, what, where, when, how, and most importantly why the public should care).
2. Allow sufficient time for asset creation and approval.
 - a. A minimum of one business week for social media announcements, articles, blogs, or press releases prior to the desired distribution date.
 - b. A minimum of two business weeks for short videos (less than 2 minutes) and longer for bigger projects.
3. Media releases prepared by the City Communications Department will have final approval by the City Manager and/or his designee. Approval will also be obtained from any staff member(s), Mayor or Council member(s) quoted in the media release.

If a City Department wishes to release their own news, they should:

4. Provide the City Communications Department with a draft for review along with a desired date for release and the main point of contact for questions/inquiries.
5. Allow sufficient time (at least two business days) for content review and approval by the City Communications Team. They will edit (grammar, punctuation, use of core messages, overall look, integration, and application of the logo) to ensure messaging is in line with the City of Beaumont's Communication standards and doesn't conflict with any other major City news. In the event of an emergency, Emergency Services (Fire, Police, EOC) will take the lead on releasing information at their discretion.
6. Comply with all legislated requirements regarding access and disclosure of information. The [Texas Open Meetings \(Act\)](#) "requires meetings of governmental bodies to be open to the public, except for expressly authorized closed sessions, and to be preceded by public notice of the time, place, and subject matter of the meeting.
7. Comply with the Copyright Act to ensure the ownership rights associated with works subject to copyright are fully respected in all communications.
8. Comply with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to ensure access to information.

Role of the Communications Department

The role of the City Communications Department is to establish, nurture, and sustain a high level of trust in Beaumont's City government among residents, businesses, visitors, and other key stakeholders. Below is an overview of the functions of the Department and its communications process.

- Strategic Communication Planning - Telling the story of Beaumont by sharing essential services and goals of the City through a cohesive and coordinated editorial calendar.
- Communications Support and Creative Services for City departments - Assist the various City departments and entities with messaging and promotional materials.

- Public Relations - Work to develop relationships and engage with community members and media on behalf of the City.
- Brand Management - Ensure the Beaumont brand is being used consistently in tone and messaging across all mediums and platforms.
- Emergency Communications - Assist the Emergency Management Communications (EMC) with quick and effective deployment of information and serve as a liaison between the relevant Departments and the media, during unexpected crises or events.
- What the City does not do is promote private citizens, organizations, or businesses unless the City is a partner with a vested interest in the relationship or the vast majority of Citizens are affected or benefit from the relationship or information being distributed (ie. the Exxon Parks donation and public-private partnerships like Muralfest). We will always refrain from promoting personal interests. This is up to the discretion of the Communications team and Executive Office.

Visual Identity

In compliance with the City of Beaumont’s Logo, Crest & Images Policy, a clear and consistent visual identity assists the public in recognizing and accessing the policies, programs, services, publications, and initiatives to present a strong, unified, and consistent brand identity. City Communications personnel will provide design support and strategies as needed.

Internet and Electronic Communication

- The Internet and other electronic communication are important tools, which allow 24-hour access to information and support two-way communication.
- The City’s website is managed by the City Communications Department in collaboration with the IT department.
- The City of Beaumont will make every effort to provide as much information as possible via the website. When external requests to have specific information posted on the website are received by staff, each request will be reviewed and evaluated and, if appropriate, the information will be posted to the applicable section.

Communications Strategy Roadmap

Objective 1: Regularly communicate Beaumont City Council decisions and actions.

Strategy 1: Provide consistent and regular updates on City government decisions and actions.

- Tactic 1: Comply with Texas Open Meeting Act and post official City agendas per state law
- Tactic 2: Provide on-air (Channel 4) and live streaming video of City Council meetings and workshops via our website.
- Tactic 3: Provide post-meeting recaps on social media.
- Tactic 4: Distribute media alerts and press releases for major projects approved by Council or City Manager.

Objective 2: Make information regarding City programs and services readily available and easy to comprehend.

Strategy 1: Provide an accessible and informative website presence that is easy to use.

- Tactic 1: Work with our designated website developer and designer to maintain functionality and uptime on all public websites.
- Tactic 2: Coordinate and train staff responsible for website information updates and maintenance.
- Tactic 3: Analyze website statistics and usage and adjust as needed.
- Tactic 4: Evaluate redesign options and development upgrades every 4-5 years as per site longevity standards.

Strategy 2: Monitor communication preferences and accessibility needs of City stakeholders.

- Tactic 1: Analyze current communication channel statistics for patterns and deficiencies.
- Tactic 2: Make reasonable communication accommodations available and upon request in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and translations when available.

Objective 3: Increase awareness, interest, participation and engagement in City programs and activities.

Strategy 1: Provide consistent and accurate updates about programs, events, and services through a variety of channels and mediums.

- Tactic 1: Oversee release of information and coordinate cross-promotional efforts with Departments.
- Tactic 2: Produce and distribute updates on Channel 4.
- Tactic 3: Maintain informative and updated City websites (see appendix).
- Tactic 4: Monitor and engage in official City social media outlets (see appendix).
- Tactic 5: Utilize both print and digital formats for citywide distribution and/or subscription.
- Tactic 6: Utilize available technology to multiply information release and reach to stakeholders.
- Tactic 7: Regularly assess various communication platforms effectiveness.

Strategy 2: Stay up to date with emerging technologies and communication trends.

- Tactic 1: Consider membership in professional and municipal communicator associations such as Texas Association of Municipal Information Officers (TAMIO) and 3CMA (City-County Communications and Marketing Association), NATOA (National Association of Telecommunication Officers and Advisors), TATO (Texas Association of Telecommunication Officers and Advisors), Lone Star Emmy Chapter, or others that are similar.
- Tactic 2: Identify new sources for best practice information, training, and tools through participation in regional and online seminars and programs through organizations such as Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), Government Social Media, Social Shake-Up and others.
- Tactic 3: Identify and implement new communication platforms as needed.

Strategy 3: Create a positive feedback loop that encourages open dialogue with the public.

- Tactic 1: Develop communication partner relationships with community, civic, religious, and business organizations in Beaumont.
- Tactic 2: Produce and distribute specialty content to reach select audiences.

- Tactic 3: Respond in a timely manner to relevant questions, requests, and concerns through the 311 mobile app and social media channels.
- Tactic 4: Provide a variety of options for residents to communicate with the City.
- Tactic 5: Take the conversation offline by hosting workshops and forums around the City as needed.

Objective 3: Produce quality communication that adheres to industry best practices and standards.

Strategy 1: Evaluate City-wide communications on an ongoing basis.

- Tactic 1: Coordinate updates and revisions to communication materials across departments to adhere to uniform guidelines.
- Tactic 2: Utilize joint departmental calendars to track recurring events and activities.
- Tactic 3: Utilize social media scheduling platforms to streamline posting.
- Tactic 4: Develop and maintain message strategy, tone and voice guidelines for each department's channels and platforms.
- Tactic 5: Track growth and progress through monthly reporting.

Objective 4: Unify City Communication outreach efforts.

Strategy 1: Increase awareness amongst City employees of communication structure.

- Tactic 1: Conduct a consultative outreach meeting with each Department Head and marketing staff.
- Tactic 2: Host regular meetings with departments and marketing staff to review their needs.

Strategy 2: Educate employees on various aspects of Social Media.

- Tactic 1: Review policy on employee use of social media and current industry trends and tools and modify as necessary.
- Tactic 2: Coordinate with Human Resources to provide basic communications training for staff and new employees at orientation.
- Tactic 3: Provide ongoing best practices training for employees who manage social media accounts on behalf of the City.

Strategy 3: Develop and Update Brand Identity Manual.

- Tactic 1: Conduct an audit of current graphic identity.
- Tactic 2: Conduct comparative research on other municipalities' graphic identity policies and usage.
- Tactic 3: Biannually review and revise communications policies to include supplemental information on branding guidelines.

Objective 5: Increase employee awareness and build organizational confidence in core City service and values.

Strategy 1: Coordinate with Human Resources to develop a strategic plan for internal communication objectives, structure and methods to develop effective communication for reaching all levels of employees – from desk to field.

- Tactic 1: Conduct an audit of the current method to reach varying levels of employees.
- Tactic 2: Research communication tools available to enhance communication efforts across all levels of employees and add new avenues as necessary (like e-newsletters).
- Tactic 3: Assess effectiveness and use of employee intranet.

Media Relations

The City Communications Department prepares or reviews and distributes current news and information to the media and citizens related to City services, programs, events, and projects in a timely, accurate and proactive manner.

Media releases are emailed to both print and broadcast media organizations. They are also posted on the City's website. Releases are also disseminated to City Council, staff, and individuals registering to receive them via subscribing for "City News" alerts.

The City strives to maintain open, positive working relationships with publishers, editors, reporters, station managers and assignment editors.

Outside of the four Departments that have their own internal Marketing/Communications staff (PD/EOC, Fire/EMS, CVB, Events), any other media inquiry (request for a quote, interview, story, etc.) should come through the Media/Public Relations Department first for vetting. If a member of the media reaches out to you, refer them to the Communications Department office at 409-880-3717.

We will take down their contact information and the topic of discussion (Name, contact info, and request). If it's a story we'd like to peruse, we will pass that information on to the appropriate City staff member to speak on the topic.

At that point, please reach out to schedule the discussion as soon as you can as they are likely on a deadline. If you'd like our help crafting a quote or tips on what to say or not to say feel free to write something up for review or call our office to chat.

If you see your story or interview, send a link to the live article/story to the Communications Department after it's been posted for reporting.

The Police, Fire and Emergency Operations Departments have their own internal staff members assigned to answer questions and provide statements/comments specifically related to incidents.

Media Spokesperson Policy

Any City employee who is authorized to speak for the City that is contacted by a member of the media should limit their discussion of City operations to areas where they have specific knowledge and refer additional questions to the appropriate team member.

Response Standard

The media representative works on deadlines and the City will make every effort to accommodate them in a timely manner in order to have a measure of input over the message on the topic at hand and maintain excellent media relations.

Readily Available Requests

When an employee is contacted by the media requesting readily available information about City operations that is known to be public, the employee will make a reasonable effort to provide it. Such information includes, but is not limited to, City staff names, titles and extensions; public meeting dates, locations and agendas; provisions of City ordinances or City Charter; and copies of materials prepared by the City for public distribution. If the employee is unsure whether the requested information is considered public, they should forward the request to their Department Director.

All media inquiries should also be reported to the City Communications Department and your Department Director.

Confidential Matters

Items of confidential or litigious matter will not be addressed or discussed with the media. Such items include, but are not limited to the following:

- medical records, certain personnel records,
- pending employee discipline investigations,
- actual proceedings of Executive Sessions of City Council,
- draft correspondence (preliminary notes or intra-City memoranda not yet finished),
- records pertaining to pending litigation where the City and/or City employee is a party,
- legal opinions of City Attorneys,
- certain law enforcement records,
- certain fire and EMS records,
- matters related to internal and external security measures,
- third-party proprietary information held by the City,
- civil claims and lawsuits involving the City,
- economic development matters, prior to their release to the public,
- and any ongoing investigations.

Any request from the media on these matters should be referred to the Communications Director and the

City Attorney's office.

Guidance on Information Sharing with the Media

The City Communications Department shall be notified immediately of any contacts or requests for information from television, print, online or radio media. Questions concerning policies that are under consideration by the City Council shall be referred to the City Communications Department and addressed by the City Manager or his or her designee.

Department Directors should only address questions from the media on sensitive issues relating to their area of expertise, including topics that may affect future City policy and/or matters that may ultimately result in Council action, only after obtaining authorization from the City Manager or his or her designee.

Unless otherwise required under applicable law, reports prepared by City staff for submission to City Council shall not be shared with the media or the general public until the topic has been presented at a City Council meeting.

Social Media for the City of Beaumont

The City supports the use of social media as a way to enhance communication and information sharing. Social media facilitates discussion of City issues, operations, and services by providing the public with the opportunity to interact with their City government in a variety of ways. A social networking presence has become a powerful tool for vibrant and transparent communication and reaches those that may not consume traditional media as frequently as other segments of the population. This policy establishes the City's position on its management, administration, and oversight. When properly used, social media can be an effective tool for the City to:

- Openly, directly, and publicly communicate with citizens;
- Develop new and/or improved relationships with constituents and community partners;
- Seek input from citizens on key issues or services;
- Promote educational information directly to the public; and
- Recruit employees and volunteers.

The policy in Appendix D establishes a framework for the use of social media and is intended to supplement existing policy regulations, and laws, where applicable. These policies apply to all City department pages, facilities pages, and channels managed by the various divisions within the City of Beaumont, not just the official City of Beaumont pages and profiles (a list of currently approved pages is listed in Appendix A).

Policies for City Employee Professional Use of Social Media

All official City-related communication through social media and social networking outlets must remain professional in nature and must always be conducted in accordance with the City's communications policy

and best practices. For those that have access to official City sites, employees are prohibited from using official City social media or social networking sites for political purposes, to conduct private commercial transactions, to engage in private business activities, or for personal, non-City related use.

Inappropriate usage of official City social media and social networking sites could be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination. If social media and social networking sites are used for official City business, all such sites, regardless of any personal views, are required to comply with City policy and standards.

Only individuals authorized by the City may publish content to a City website, social networking outlet or other technology platforms. All designated members of the City Communications team must be added as an admin to each of the city owned social media pages to be able to provide assistance managing and reporting, and so we never lose access in the instance of staff changes.

New Social Channels

All new City social media sites shall:

1. Alert the City Communications Department regarding the new site and its purpose
2. Be published using approved social networking platforms and tools
3. Grant administrative access to designated members of the City Communications Department
4. Operate with a written social media strategy and content calendar
5. Be administered by the contact or their designee

Each City employee authorized to post on City social media sites must first complete a best practices training session by the Communications Department. Your department is responsible for requesting one of these in advance of starting a new profile or page. Only trained City employees or designated agents are authorized to post to City social media sites.

Oversight and Enforcement

Employees representing the City through social media outlets or participating in social media features on City websites must maintain a high level of ethical conduct and professional decorum. Failure to do so is grounds for revoking the privilege to participate in City social media sites, blogs, or other social media features.

Information must be presented in accordance with professional standards for good grammar, spelling, brevity, clarity, and accuracy, and avoid jargon, obscure terminology, or acronyms. Posts should reflect the tone of the City:

- Positive
- Aspirational
- Confident in pursuit of excellence

- First-person (but always “we,” and never “I”)
- Warm, as if “friends”

City employees recognize that the content and messages they post on social media websites are public and may be cited as official City statements. As City employees, pay special attention to sources when sharing other posts and/or retweeting. Social media must not be used to circumvent other City communication policies, including news media policy requirements.

City employees may not publish information on City social media sites that includes:

Confidential or Proprietary information

- An example would be pages of a vendor’s bid marked confidential that has proprietary information.
- Another example would be publishing or posting private facts and personal information about someone without their permission that has not been previously revealed to the public, is not of legitimate public concern, and/or would be offensive to a reasonable person.

Content that violated a legal ownership interest in another party

- Using another’s trademark, logo, or likeness without their permission would be an example of this.
- Another example would be publishing the creative work of another or photography without permission or giving proper copyright credit.

Profanity, racist, sexist, obscene, or derogatory content or comments

- An example of profanity would be language considered vulgar by societal standards.
- An example of racist, sexist or derogatory content would involve comments made toward co-workers and/or members of the public that denigrates a particular race, religion, national origin, sexual orientation or gender identity.

False or defamatory comments

- These would include instances where comments aimed at co-workers and/or members of the public denigrate a person’s character or reputation and are untrue.
- Another example would be publishing or posting false information that harms the reputation of a group or organization.

Comments in support of or opposition to political campaigns or ballot measures

- An example of this would be to post campaign materials in support of a political candidate in the

comment section of a City social media post.

Content that solicits or promotes commercial services or products

- An example of this would include posting an advertisement on a City sponsored social media platform.
- Promoting a business outside of a documented sponsorship agreement would also be an example of this.

Legal information: anything to do with pending litigation or legal issues, including attorney-client privileged communications and/or attorney work product

- This would include pending litigation matters where the City and/or City employee is a party.

Information not subject to disclosure under the Texas Public Information Act and other relevant state and federal laws

- Examples would include social security numbers and protected health information.

Threat of physical harm or intentional disruption of City operations

- An example of this includes information that may compromise the safety or security of the public, public systems, or employees.

Advocating for or causing the damage or destruction of City property, discrimination, or harassment (including sexual harassment)

- Examples would include comments that provoke or incite civil unrest, and remarks that a reasonable person would find offensive that are aimed at a protected class.

Emergency Communications on Social

In an emergency, refer to the Crisis Communications plan. Suspend all pre-scheduled posts until cleared to resume normal posting. Review Appendix B to help assess social media crisis.

Records Retention and Open Records

Social media sites contain communications sent by and received by the City and its employees. These interactions are considered public records subject to disclosure, in accordance with the Texas Public Information Act. Regular retention requirements (Policy 116.000) apply regardless of the form of the record (for example, digital text, photos, audio, and video). The City preserves records pursuant to a relevant records retention schedule for the required retention period in a format that preserves the integrity of the original record and is easily accessible. Note that these requirements and obligations to preserve and retain extend to circumstances where public employees post information pertaining to public business with their

private social media accounts. In such instances, forward records of these postings to a City email address so information can be stored to public servers.

City Employee Use of Personal Social Media Accounts

The City of Beaumont recognizes that many individuals use social media sites for their own purposes, but it is paramount for the public to understand the difference between an employee’s personal opinion and the official view of the City. You can clarify that the views expressed in your postings are your own by using a disclaimer such as: “The postings on this site are my own and don’t reflect or represent the opinions of the City of Beaumont.”

Avoid communicating in a way that may cause users to believe the site is a City-administered or City-endorsed viewpoint. Be conscientious to:

- Avoid wearing official City of Beaumont logo insignias, uniforms, or similar identifying items on your social media channels unless at an officially designated City event or positively promoting the City.
- Do not use your City email account in conjunction with a personal social networking site unless as a designated site administrator for an official City of Beaumont account.
- Avoid disclosing confidential information regarding any City systems, processes, procedures, projects, facilities, employees, or the like. This includes photographs or depictions of activities, including investigations and incidents.
- Do not access social media for personal matters using City devices during the work hours.

Monitoring

If you come across positive or negative comments about the City, consider forwarding them to the City Communications Department.

Media Inquiries from Social Media

Personal blogs/websites or personal social media posts may generate media interest. If a member of the media contacts you about a City-related posting or requests City information of any kind, contact the City Communications Department or your Department communications person.

City of Beaumont Social Media Guidance

This policy is not meant to address one particular form of social media, but rather social media in general, as advances in technology will occur and new tools will emerge.

Policy – Official City Use

- a. Where possible, each social media page should include an introductory statement (such as About on Facebook) that clearly specifies the purpose and scope of the City department’s presence on the website.
- b. Where possible, the page(s) should provide a link to the City department’s official website.
- c. All department social media sites or pages shall add the City Communications Department as an administrator.
- d. Where possible, social media pages should clearly indicate they are maintained by the City department and should have City department contact information prominently displayed.
- e. Department personnel representing the City and their department via social media outlets shall:
 - 1. Conduct themselves at all times as representatives of the City and, accordingly, shall adhere to all City standards of conduct and observe conventionally accepted protocols and proper decorum.
 - 2. Identify themselves as an employee of the City.
 - 3. Not conduct political activities or private business.
 - 4. Not promote non-City organizations, individuals, private businesses, or entities.
 - 5. Not make statements of personal opinion or speculation and maintain a professional tone.
- f. Social media content shall adhere to all applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including all information technology and records management policies.
- g. Where possible, social media posts should state that the opinions expressed by visitors to the page do not reflect the opinions of the City.
- h. Pages shall clearly indicate that posted comments will be monitored and that the City reserves the right to remove those that violate site terms and conditions.

- i. Pages shall clearly indicate that any content posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure.
- j. Employees shall observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and service restrictions in posting materials to electronic media.
- k. Employees must obey the Terms of Service of any social media platform employed.
- l. Inappropriate usage of social media can be grounds for disciplinary action.
- m. Additional and/or special policies may apply to law enforcement and other first responder personnel.
- n. The use of City computers or other electronic devices by employees to access personal social media is limited to logging into their personal account to access administration of a City's social media outlet.

Social Media Best Practices

- a. Think twice before posting: Privacy does not exist in the world of social media. Consider what might happen if a post becomes widely known and how that may reflect on the City. If you are unsure about posting something or responding to a comment, ask your Department Director or the City Communications Department.
- b. Strive for accuracy. Get the facts straight before posting them. Review content for grammatical and spelling errors.
- c. Be respectful: Understand that content contributed to a social media site could encourage comments on discussion of opposing ideas. Be aware that responses to such comments will reflect upon the City.
- d. Remember your audience: Consider before posting whether the post will alienate, harm or provoke unwanted responses.
- e. On City outlets, post regularly to maintain fresh content, encourage interaction and check comments daily in order to moderate/delete/or respond to comments as outlined in the policy.
- f. Add value to the City of Beaumont through your interaction. Provide worthwhile and timely information in a professional manner.

Elected Officials Social Media Pages

Social media is considered public record, which is why it's critical for elected officials to understand the legal implications that may arise from mixing City related business with personal accounts as the Open Meetings Act does apply. The rules regarding interactions on social media for elected officials are strict and simply asking for citizen input on a personal profile can change the nature of that account from a legal perspective.

To protect yourself and stay compliant, we recommend having a public page. There are two types of public pages elected officials may have – Campaign Pages (ie. Elect xx For Council) and/or Elected Official pages, which would have to be co-managed by the City (ie. The Official City of Beaumont Ward 2 Page). An Elected Official page is the only avenue where you are legally protected by the City and authorized to share official City business.

There are specific guidelines for what types of content you're allowed to post on each type of page along with the rules of engagement to ensure accessibility and the First Amendment are followed. We're not here to police – merely to make sure our elected officials understand the risks and help mitigate any potential problems.

Pages that discuss official City business must follow the same rules as those of the City (see Appendix C), and require elected officials to stay within the laws and ethics regarding the semi-public space of social media. They also must follow best practices as outlined in the Social Media policies section regarding oversight and enforcement, confidential or proprietary information disclosure, and record retention to avoid legal challenges.

Sites Rules and Commenting

The same rules apply to elected officials as to moderators of the official City channels. You may not block or mute followers on official social media channels. Whether you like what they say or not, comments are also considered open record, and can only be hidden if they're in violation of the City's Site Terms and Conditions (see Appendix D). However, it is important to know hiding comments does mean the City can no longer track the conversation or see that thread.

Training

The City Communications Department will offer elected officials social media training regarding the City policies, relevant laws, and ethics for elected officials and/or staff prior to taking the oath of office. If training cannot be scheduled prior, the City Communications Department will retain sole control of the Elected Official page until training can be completed.

City Crisis Communications

In the event of an emergency, due to severe weather or something that threatens the overall health and welfare of the citizens of the City of Beaumont, all normally scheduled communications will be paused and content and messaging will be managed by the Emergency Operations Center until the crisis is deemed over.

The City Communications Department will work under the direction of the Beaumont Office of Emergency Management to provide emergency information to the public and the media before, during and after a natural or man-made disaster using FEMA/NIMS guidelines to effectively communicate to community members at home and in the workplace.

When emergency communications related to public safety needs to be disseminated, the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) will work from a functional or virtual Joint Information Center (JIC) with other departments from Police, Fire, and other local organizations (such as the American Red Cross, the County, etc.), as well as personnel from the City Communications Department, City Manager's Office, Public Works and Public Health, to effectively produce and provide information to the public in times of emergency and during the recovery process.

Emergencies not related to public safety will be managed by the City Communications Department. For non-public safety related crisis situations the City Communications Department will establish a team that incorporates the impacted departments and individuals.

Appendix A

City Owned and Managed Social Media Channels and Websites

As of June 7, 2023

Including but not limited to the following:

<u>City Websites</u>	
City of Beaumont	Beaumonttexas.gov
Economic Development	Beaumonttxdevelopment.com
Convention and Visitors Bureau	Beaumontcvb.com
Go Beau (CVB manages)	Gobeau.co
Beaumont Events	Beaumonteventstx.com
Beaumont Police	Police.beaumonttexas.gov
Beaumont Police P to C (police to citizen)	p2c.beaumonttexas.gov/p2c/
Beaumont Fire	fire.beaumonttexas.gov
Beaumont Transit	beaumonttransit.com
Henry Homberg Golf Course	henryhomberggolfcourse.com
City Softball League/Field Rentals	TeamSideline.com/Beaumont
Beaumont Municipal Tennis Center	BmtTennisCenter.com

City Facebook Pages

City of Beaumont	https://www.facebook.com/beaumonttx/
Convention and Visitors Bureau	https://www.facebook.com/VisitBeaumontTX
Meet Beaumont (CVB manages)	https://www.facebook.com/meetbmt
Cattail Marsh Wetlands Education Center (CVB manages)	https://www.facebook.com/CattailMarshWEC
Beaumont Events	https://www.facebook.com/beaumonteventstx
The Jefferson Theatre (Beaumont Events manages)	https://www.facebook.com/jeffersontheatretx
The Lakeside Center (Rec manages)	https://www.facebook.com/Lakeside-Center-112735627526919
Beaumont Police Department	https://www.facebook.com/beaumontpolice
Beaumont Fire Department	https://www.facebook.com/beaumontfire
Beaumont Office of Emergency Management	https://www.facebook.com/BeaumontTexasOEM
Beaumont Public Library System	https://www.facebook.com/BeaumontPublicLibraries

Tyrrell Historical Library	https://www.facebook.com/Tyrrell-Historical-Library-236313203155911
Beaumont Municipal Airport	https://www.facebook.com/flybeaumont
Beaumont Animal Care	https://www.facebook.com/beaumontanimalcare
Beaumont Recreation (formerly Beaumont Municipal Tennis Center)	https://www.facebook.com/bmtrecreation
Go Beau (CVB Manages)	https://www.facebook.com/gobeaublog
Eat BMT (CVB Manages)	https://www.facebook.com/eatbmt/
Henry Homberg Golf Course (being consolidated into "Rec" page)	https://www.facebook.com/HombergGC
Beaumont Municipal Court (being archived soon)	https://www.facebook.com/Beaumont-Municipal-Court-1727939157515582
Beaumont Public Health	https://www.facebook.com/BeaumontPublicHealth
City of Beaumont-EMS (being archived soon)	https://www.facebook.com/The-City-of-Beaumont-EMS-501096870043859

<u>City Twitter Accounts</u>	
City of Beaumont	https://twitter.com/Cityofbmt
Convention and Visitors Bureau	https://twitter.com/VisitBeaumontTX
GoBeau Blog (CVB manages)	https://twitter.com/gobeaublog

Beaumont Events	https://twitter.com/beamontevents
Beaumont Police Department	https://twitter.com/beamont_police

<u>City Managed Tik Tok Accounts</u>	
Convention and Visitors Bureau	https://www.tiktok.com/@visitbeaumonttx
Beaumont Events	https://www.tiktok.com/@beaumonteventstx
Beaumont Public Library	https://www.tiktok.com/@beaumontpubliclibraries

<u>City Instagram Accounts</u>	
City of Beaumont	https://www.instagram.com/Cityofbmt/
Convention and Visitors Bureau	https://www.instagram.com/visitbeaumonttx/
Meet Beaumont (CVB manages)	https://www.instagram.com/meetbmt/?hl=en
GoBeau Blog (CVB manages)	https://www.instagram.com/gobeaublog/?hl=en
Cattail Marsh Wetlands Education Center (CVB manages)	https://www.instagram.com/cattailmarsh/?hl=en
Beaumont Events	https://www.instagram.com/beamonteventstx/
Beaumont Public Library System	https://www.instagram.com/beamontlibrarysystem/
Beaumont Animal Care	https://www.instagram.com/beamont_animal_care/
Beaumont Municipal Airport	https://www.instagram.com/flybeaumont/

EatBMT (CVB Manages)	https://www.instagram.com/eatbmt/
Tyrrell Historical Library (Library Manages)	https://www.instagram.com/tyrrell.historical.library/

<u>Other Accounts</u>	
Next Door	https://nextdoor.com/agency-detail/tx/beatmont/city-of-beaumont-1/
Linkedin	https://www.linkedin.com/company/city-of-beaumont-tx/

Note: For privacy reasons on Next Door, government accounts cannot access individual neighborhood pages. We can only release information and respond to comments and messages that are sent to the City.

Appendix B

Demographic information on the City of Beaumont

As of December 2021

Population	115,282 118,151	2020 Decennial Census 2019 ACS – 5 Year Estimate
Median Age	33.9	2019 ACS – 5 Year Estimate
Median Household Income	\$50,632	2019 ACS – 5 Year Estimate
Race / Ethnic Diversity		2020 Redistricting Data
Black/African American	47.3%	
White	31.09%	
Asian	3.80%	
American Indian/Alaska Native	.60%	
Some other Race	9.55%	
Two or more Races	7.66%	
Hispanic or Latino	13.48%	
Primary Languages Spoken		2019 ACS – 5 Year Estimate
English	80.7%	
Spanish	14.6%	
Other	4.7%	
Homeownership Rate	58.1%	2010 ACS – 5 Year Estimate
Households with Families (2 or more people)	84.4%	2019 ACS – 5 Year Estimate
Possess a Bachelor’s degree or higher (age 25+)	24.5%	2019 ACS – 5 Year Estimate
Households with Adults over 65	26.3%	2019 ACS – 5 Year Estimate
Households with Children under 18	31.3%	2019 ACS – 5 Year Estimate

Determining Social Media Crisis Level

Responding on social media requires maintaining clarity about the issue at hand and doing all you can to keep the conversation civil, respectful, and responsive. Understanding when an issue is elevating beyond normal discourse and into dangerous territory is critical.

Consider these five levels of crisis management on social media a guide. Other issues in the community and the individuals involved may escalate a particular issue beyond this guide.

It's critical to note that the rules change based on where the message is posted (an official City owned or managed channel versus private groups where we, as individuals, are members). There are times when the only way to communicate is by commenting as an individual (either because of safety, misinformation or the limitations of the social media channel) but this is only to be used as a last resort.

In private groups where it is only possible to comment as an individual, every effort must be made to make it clear when you are speaking in an official City capacity. Because of the danger of blurring the distinction between personal and official on social media, commenting as an individual should only proceed with clear guidance from the City Communications Department and be done so by authorized individuals.

Level one: Initial confrontation

Description: A post is getting more than the usual number of shares and comments, which may raise safety or political concerns.

Action: Encourage the individual to contact the relevant City department directly by phone, email or report the issue via the 311 app so their concerns can be addressed.

Level two: Misinformation

Description: This post or commentor is spreading misinformation. If the misinformation is negatively impacting business or perception but does not involve public safety, this requires clarification - repeatedly if needed.

Action: Clarify misinformation and keep an eye out for the same message to appear on other social media accounts. Prepare a statement in case this issue escalates and make notes of the dates and actions taken.

Level three: Escalation

Description: This post or commentor's message is starting to spread outside the confines of social media and is getting a large amount of attention. It is likely to generate media interest.

Action: Alert all relevant Department communicators and empower them to address questions where they arise. Prepare a statement for the media and be prepared to post a response on the City website to clarify the City's position.

Level four: Impact beyond social or safety considerations for the City

Description: There is increasing confusion, calls to the City, and inquires.

Action: Post a statement on social and prepare Departments with the statement to share on their pages if deemed appropriate. Prepare elected officials and relevant Department Heads with the statement and a FAQ if appropriate. Consider contacting an independent third party or expert (ex. The Health Department) to address any concerns raised.

Level five: Media is requesting interview

Description: The media has picked up on the issue and is contacting you to do a story.

Action: Provide the media with your full statement and if appropriate, your responses to the commentator and a timeline. Provide other media with the same information and ensure the information is consistent and can be found on multiple City communication channels. Keep elected officials informed.

**CITY OF BEAUMONT
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL**

Policy Number: 7.18

Subject: Social Media Policy, Terms and
Conditions

Effective Date: June 12, 2023

Approved by: Kenneth R. Williams
City Manager

Chris Catalina
Human Resources Director

I. PURPOSE

The City of Beaumont utilizes social media as a way to inform the public about matters of public interest in Beaumont. As an official communication channel of the City, we have a vested interest in assuring the accuracy and consistency of information presented on our social media sites.

These terms and conditions establish guidelines for the public's use of our social media sites. Current and official City of Beaumont social media accounts and profiles are listed in Appendix A of the Communications Guide but may change from time to time. All official accounts are designated as an official city account in their profile or bio.

II. DEFINITIONS

A. Social Media – A category of Internet-based resources that integrate user-generated content and user participation that allow sharing, commenting, and engagement by the public. This includes, but is not limited to, social networking sites (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn); micro blogging sites (Twitter); photo and video sharing sites (Flickr, Snapchat, Tumblr, Tik Tok, Yik Yak, WeChat, YouTube, Periscope, Facebook Live); messaging apps (Whats App, Kik, Skype, Facebook Messenger); wikis (Wikipedia); blogs; and news sites (Digg, Reddit). The City may or may not use any or all of these channels at any given time.

B. User – Any member of the public who views or interacts with one or more of our social media accounts.

C. Comments - Any digital content, information, links, images, videos, or any other form of communicative content posted in reply or response to a social media account post on one of our social media sites.

D. Obscene - Content that the average person, applying contemporary community standards, would find that (a) the work, taken as a whole, appeals to lewd or salacious interests; (b) the work depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct specifically defined by the applicable state law; and (c) the work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.

III. RULES/PROCEDURES

A. The Social Media, Policy, Terms and Conditions apply to all City of Beaumont social media sites. When possible, a hyperlink to the policy will be shared on social media accounts.

B. All City social media sites are limited public forums. To submit official comments for the City Council on agenda items, contact the City Council via email: council@BeaumontTexas.gov. Meeting updates may be shared via social media; it is not a required channel for official City notices or business to be posted.

C. Comments made by the public to these sites will be reviewed but not edited by City personnel. The City of Beaumont reserves the right to hide and/or delete comments that do not adhere to the terms and conditions herein set forth in this policy.

D. The City shall have full permission or rights to any content posted on its social media sites, including photographs and videos.

E. Any social media posts including comments and replies to those posts and any direct or private messages are considered public records and could be subject to applicable public records release.

F. City of Beaumont social media accounts are not monitored 24/7, and the City does not guarantee a response to any comments or messages.

G. While comments posted on City of Beaumont social media sites and direct messages are monitored, posting a comment or messaging the page is never the best or quickest way to receive assistance. No one should utilize City social media accounts to seek emergency services; anyone in need of emergency help should call 9-1-1.

H. Comments posted by a member of the public are the opinion of the user only, and publication of a comment does not imply endorsement of, or agreement by, the City of Beaumont, nor do such comments reflect the opinions or policies of the City of Beaumont.

IV. RESPONSIBILITIES

A. User

1. Comments should be related to the posted topic on the City of Beaumont's social media page or post. For general comments or questions concerning the City or a specific department, for service request, contact 311 via telephone, dial 3-1-1 or via email: 311@BeaumontTexas.gov.

2. Avoid posting profanity, slurs, personal attacks, bullying and knowingly sharing false information.

3. Users can submit questions, comments, and concerns related to the matter presented or to the business of the relevant department; responses are not guaranteed as City of Beaumont social media accounts are not monitored 24/7.

4. Users are subject to the Terms of Service (TOS) of the individual social media websites. Information (photos, videos, etc.) shared with or posted to official City of Beaumont pages are subject to the TOS of the site and may be used by the owners of the site for their own purposes. For more information, consult the individual social media website's TOS.

5. Individuals posting photos or videos warrant they have taken the photograph or video and have obtained the necessary permission from any third party if that third party or third party's intellectual property appears in the photograph or video.

6. Photos and videos remain the user's property, but by posting a photo or video, the user agrees to allow the City of Beaumont to display and use their photo or video on the City's social media sites and grant the City a perpetual, worldwide, non-exclusive license to reproduce, distribute, display, and create derivative works of that media in connection with the City of Beaumont and promotion for the City of Beaumont. By posting a photo or video, the user releases and holds the City harmless from any and all liability arising from or related to the posting the photo(s) or video(s).

B. City of Beaumont

The City of Beaumont reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that it deems, in its sole discretion, to be in violation of the policy or any other applicable city, state or federal law (including but not limited to copyright and/or trademark law), to be the intellectual property of any third party, or to pose a threat to the City's technology system or its security.

Prohibited Content - The City of Beaumont may hide or delete comments that:

- a. Expressly advocates direct violence or other illegal activity.
- b. Contains obscene or sexual content.

- c. 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/gender identification as well as any other category protected by federal, state or local laws.
- d. Contains links to malware and/or malicious content that affects the normal functioning of a computer system, server or browser.
- e. Duplicative comments posted repeatedly within a short period of time deemed as spam.
- f. Contains defamation against a specifically named person or organization, either as determined by a court or comments that are patently defamatory by easily discovered facts.
- g. Contains images or other content that violates the intellectual property or copyright rights of someone else if the owner of that property notifies the City of Beaumont that the property that the property was posted in a comment on City social media accounts.
- h. Contains hyperlinks to any website other than those controlled by the City of Beaumont regardless of the viewpoint of the comment.
- i. Content not topically related to the subject or article being commented upon.
- j. Solicitations of commerce including but not limited to advertising of any business or product for sale, commercial or promotion.
- k. Information that may compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems.
- l. Content that violates the legal ownership of any other party.
- m. Private or personal information published without consent.

2. Accountability

The City of Beaumont is committed to regularly reviewing policy, relevant case law and providing regular training to employees who manage social media on behalf of the City. The City of Beaumont is committed to holding employees and citizens accountable to the ever-changing social media landscape.

- a. When a comment containing any prohibited content is hidden or deleted, a copy or electronic record may be retained or archived pursuant to the City of Beaumont records retention policy, along with a brief description of the reason the content was removed.
- b. If the City of Beaumont determines the same user has violated the set terms and conditions on three (3) or more occasions within a twelve (12) month rolling period, the City of Beaumont reserves

the right to block or ban the offending user from the social media account and platform where the violations occurred. If a user is blocked or banned, City staff will: reasonably attempt to notify the user; describe the violation(s); and explain the appeal process.

If the appeal process is successful and the user has not violated this policy three (3) times within a rolling twelve (12) month period, the City will unblock or unban the user from the social media account and platform. If the appeal is not successful, the decision will stand.

c. The user has the right to appeal that decision by sending an email to Communications@BeaumontTexas.gov within five (5) business days. The City Attorney will have two (2) weeks to determine whether the comment contained content protected by law. If the appeal is successful, the comment may (if possible) be restored for public view or the user may be permitted to repost the comment. Upon a determination that the comment is not protected by law, the user will be notified that the appeal was denied.

City Logo Style Guide

The City logo is our brand and an important component of the City's identity. The logo must be used in its original ratio and not stretched out of ratio to fill a space.

The City's logo should appear on all relevant City documents, marketing materials, signage, vehicles, and materials produced by and for the City. For questions about this policy, or for permission to reproduce the City's logo, contact the City Communications Department.

Use the logo correctly

The City's logo may not be used by any entity outside the City organization without permission from the City Communications Department. The logo may not be altered in any way.

- When scaling the artwork, the logo must remain proportionate to the original.
- NEVER alter the colors from the original design.
- When reproducing the logo on a dark background, always use a lighter color logo for contrast.

One-color logo

This logo is used for one-color applications such as reversing from a dark background, or one-color embroidery. The color of the reversed logo color does not always have to be white, but it must be all the same color.