

RESOLUTION 25-42

A RESOLUTION TO ADOPT THE CITY OF SPRING HILL SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

WHEREAS, the City of Spring Hill recognizes the importance of utilizing social media as a communication tool to engage with residents, businesses, and stakeholders; and

WHEREAS, the City seeks to ensure that social media usage by City departments and employees is conducted in a manner that is consistent with legal requirements, professional standards, and the City's mission and values; and

WHEREAS, a formal Social Media Policy has been developed to establish guidelines for the appropriate use, management, and oversight of official City social media accounts and content; and

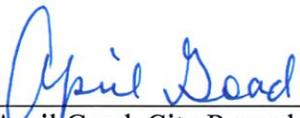
WHEREAS, the Board of Mayor and Aldermen has reviewed the proposed Social Media Policy and finds it to be in the best interest of the City of Spring Hill to formally adopt the policy for implementation across all City departments;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Social Media Policy, attached hereto as Exhibit A and incorporated herein by reference, is hereby adopted as the official policy governing the use of social media by the City of Spring Hill and its departments.

Passed and Adopted by the Board of Mayor and Aldermen of the City of Spring Hill, Tennessee on the 18th day of February, 2025.


Jim Hagan, Mayor

ATTEST:


April Goad, City Recorder

LEGAL FORM APPROVED:


Patrick Carter, City Attorney



REQUEST: Approval of Resolution 25-42

SUBMITTED BY: Lucas Wright, Communications Director

DATE: February 5, 2025

RE: Approval of a New City Social Media Policy

ATTACHMENTS: Resolution, Proposed Policy

PURPOSE:

To approve an updated Social Media Policy for the City of Spring Hill, to replace Sections 3.06 and 3.06.01 in the City of Spring Hill, TN Employee Handbook.

BACKGROUND:

The current City of Spring Hill Social Media Policy has not been updated since 2011, when the BOMA passed ordinance 11-02 to adopt the personnel policy for the City. Since then, the overall landscape of social media has changed drastically, underscoring the need for fresh language and more strict policy.

The foundation of this policy is derived from the MTAS Model Social Media Policy. This policy has also been approved by legal counsel.

On Monday, February 3, the policy was discussed during the work session of the BOMA meeting. No changes were suggested.

The highlights of this policy include:

- Proper internal avenues for the creation and maintenance of official City social media accounts
- Formalizing the current standard practice regarding comment section moderation
- Social Media record keeping standards for the City
- Guidelines for City employees when using personal Social Media accounts

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

N/A

SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND INTERNET POSTING

SECTION 1: POLICY STATEMENT

This policy applies to every employee currently employed by the City in any capacity who posts any material whether written, audio, video or otherwise on any website, mobile device application, blog or any other medium accessible via the Internet. Use of the City's social media to support or oppose individual political candidates, political parties, or any ballot measure is strictly prohibited.

For purposes of this policy, social media is content created by individuals using accessible and scalable technologies through the internet. Examples of social media include but are not limited to: Facebook, Instagram, blogs, RSS, YouTube, X, LinkedIn, discussion forums, and online collaborative information and publishing systems that are accessible to internal and external audiences (i.e., wikis, including Wikipedia).

Employees shall abide by the terms of use and rules and guidelines of each individual social media platform utilized. By posting on the City sites, an employee may be granting to the City an irrevocable, perpetual, non-exclusive license to use and distribute content for any purpose, commercial, advertising, or otherwise. Employees who violate the terms of this policy are subject to discipline up to and including termination.

SECTION 2: OWNED OR CREATED SOCIAL MEDIA

The City maintains an online presence. The provisions of this section apply to City employees posting content in an official capacity on a City owned or created social media platform or on any other platform. Unless authorized, an employee may not characterize or imply him or herself as representing the City directly or indirectly.

All City social media sites and platforms representing the City in an official capacity must be created pursuant to this policy and be approved by the Communications Director. Accounts and pages should, where possible, feature the official City name and logo, or corresponding department name and logo. The City's social media platforms are also encouraged to use official City Graphic Identity Standards for color, logo, seal, type font, marks, etc.

The City maintains a primary and predominant internet presence per the official City website. Whenever possible a social media site or platform shall link or otherwise refer visitors to the City's main website. The City of Spring Hill shall coordinate the upkeep of content on social media sites or platforms created pursuant to this policy.

All City social media sites and platforms are subject to the Tennessee's Public Records Act (T.C.A. § 10-7-101, *et seq.*), and no social media site or platform shall be used to circumvent or otherwise violate this law. All lawful records requests for information contained on a City social media site or platform shall be directed to the City Recorder and will be fulfilled by any employee whose assistance is necessitated. All official postings on a City social media site or platform shall be preserved to the extent possible in each platform in accordance with any applicable retention policy.

A social media site or platform shall also contain a clear and conspicuous statement that the purpose of the site or platform is to serve as a mechanism for communication between the City and its citizens/customers and that all postings are subject to review and deletion by the City, to the extent permitted by law.

The following content is not allowed and will be immediately removed and may subject the poster to banishment from all City social media sites and platforms:

- a. Profane language or content;
- b. Obscene images;
- c. Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, gender or gender identity, age, national origin, disability, military status, communication with an elected public official, free speech, refusing to participate in or remain silent about illegal activities exercising a statutory constitutional right or any right under clear public policy, political affiliation, genetic information or any other basis protected by law., creed, or status with regard to public assistance;
- d. Sexual content or links to sexual content;
- e. Solicitations of commerce;
- f. Illegal conduct or encouragement of such;
- g. Content that incites violence or harassment;
- h. Links to third party sites and platforms other than those approved by the Communications Director; or
- i. Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party.

Administration of City's social media sites and platforms.

- a. The Information & Technology staff will review, test, and technically approve social media tools and implementation for use by City staff.
- b. The Communications Division will maintain an authorized site/platform list of all City social media sites and platforms, including login and password information. When a new City social media site or platform is created, the employee that is authorized to create the site or platform will notify the Communications Director for purposes of inclusion of the site or platform on the authorized site/platform list.
- c. The Communications Director and their designees shall be able to immediately edit or remove content posted by staff serving as administrators for City social media sites and platforms.

Rights and permissions must be secured before posting, sharing or distributing copyrighted materials, including but not limited to: music, art, copyrighted photographs or texts, portions of copyrighted video, or information considered proprietary by a City employee, vendor, affiliate or contractor. Authorized employees must secure written permission prior to using/incorporating any copyrighted or proprietary materials except when such material is covered under Fair Use provisions.

An employee must not post content on City sites and platforms that might be embarrassing to an individual or that could be construed as placing a customer, employee or other individual in a negative or false light. An employee must not post content that might cause someone to believe that his/her name, image, likeness or other identifying aspect of his/her identity is being used, without permission, for commercial purposes. Employees shall not post any content to a City's social media site or platform for their financial gain or for the financial gain of any other person or entity. A City employee posting on a City social media site or platform shall take reasonable care not to disclose any confidential information in any posting.

SECTION 3: CITY SOCIAL MEDIA COMMENTS MODERATION

This section applies to comments on City-created social media posts. The City of Spring Hill values open communication and encourages community engagement on our social media platforms. To maintain a respectful and productive environment for all users, the following guidelines apply to comments on our social media posts:

- a. Open Dialogue Encouraged: We welcome comments and feedback from our community, and we encourage respectful discussions. Our goal is to foster a space where residents and visitors can engage with the City, share opinions, and stay informed.
- b. Comments That Will Be Removed:
 - Comments that are deemed threatening, abusive, or discriminatory.
 - Comments that include hate speech, harassment, or personal attacks.
 - Comments containing explicit language or offensive content.
 - Comments that promote illegal activities or violate laws.
 - Links to external sites at the discretion of the Communications Director or their designee.
 - Sales or advertising
- c. The Communications Director or their designee may turn off comments on any social media post as allowable by the platform being used.
- d. Moderation: The City reserves the right to moderate comments to ensure that conversations remain respectful and aligned with the principles outlined above. Comments that do not violate these standards will not be removed or censored.

SECTION 4: NON-CITY SOCIAL MEDIA

This section applies to City employees posting content to non-City created social media sites and platforms in their personal capacity. Employees are prohibited from posting anything on the Internet that could be construed as an act of unlawful harassment, a threat, or other evidence of discrimination. Employees should limit their personal Internet activities to non-working hours, meal periods and/or rest breaks. An employee may not characterize him or herself as representing the City, directly or indirectly, in any online posting unless done pursuant to a written policy of the City.

The simultaneous use of a City email address, job title, official City name, or logo in conjunction with a posting may be evidence of an attempt to represent the City in an official capacity. Other communications leading a reasonable viewer to conclude that a posting was made in an official capacity may also be deemed evidence to represent the City in an official capacity.

Any postings on non-City social media sites and platforms made in an official capacity may be subject to the Tennessee Public Records Act. A City employee posting on a non-City social media site or platform shall take reasonable care not to disclose any confidential information in any posting. When posting in a personal capacity an employee should take reasonable care to distinguish that his content is a personal expression and not that of the City.

SECTION 5: PERCEPTION

With social media, the lines between public and private, personal and professional can be blurred. Employees identifying themselves as working for the City should be mindful that they may be creating perceptions about themselves and about the City by customers,

business partners, and the general public, and perceptions about themselves by co-workers, other employees, supervisors, and management.

- a. Employees must not represent or speak on behalf of the City on their personal social media sites when they are not authorized to do so.
- b. Employees must not give the appearance that they are speaking on behalf of the City and/or department or posting comments as an official City employee on personal social media sites, when they are not authorized to speak on behalf of the City.
- c. This perception may be avoided by choosing to not post work-related information, featuring themselves while wearing a City uniform or displaying City logo, public safety patches, badges, or City vehicles on a personal site – especially in profile images.
- d. These actions could cause people to believe employees are posting as authorized City spokespersons, official department representatives, or on behalf of the City.