

# **City of Seymour, Indiana Social Media Policy**

## ***1.0 BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE.***

A. The City of Seymour is committed to enhancing the traditional communication methods with its various constituents using social media. This commitment primarily stems from public expectations, the capabilities of current technology, and the rapid growth of social media by other local, state, and federal government entities, all of which serve as an indication that social media can be used effectively to enhance communications between local government and the public.

B. Seymour's social media platforms fulfill two primary purposes: (i) to communicate and deliver information about government matters directly to residents; and (ii) when appropriate, in a designated or limited public forum, to facilitate resident involvement, interaction, and feedback on specific issues involving the government's business.

C. This policy is adopted to provide guidance and information both to the public and for the City of Seymour's use of social media, including but not limited to, web and mobile cell phone applications, blogs, photo and video sharing sites, micro-blogging, social networking sites and wikis. This policy is not intended to address any one particular form of social media (i.e. Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Tumblr, X, Flickr, Next-door, YouTube, TikTok and similar platforms); rather social media in general, as advances in technology will occur and new tools for sharing information will emerge. While the City of Seymour website ([www.seymourin.org](http://www.seymourin.org)) is the City's primary internet presence, the City of Seymour recognizes that, when used appropriately, social media may be useful in furthering the goals of the City and the missions of its departments in informing and interacting with the public.

D. Other laws, ordinances and policies may also apply to the use of social media and this policy should not be interpreted to conflict with any of those laws, ordinances and policies, including requirements under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

## ***2.0 SCOPE***

This policy applies to all City of Seymour departments, employees and agents when working with social media tools on behalf of the City, and applies to an officer's, employee's and agent's use of personal social media sites as addressed in this policy.

### ***3.0 ADMINISTRATIVE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES***

**A. Public Information Specialist:** The Public Information Specialist in the Office of the Mayor is responsible for implementing this policy and leading the City of Seymour's social media efforts for official City business. The Public Information Specialist shall serve as the City's social media Administrator.

The Public Information Specialist shall:

- Ensure the City of Seymour's official social media accounts are implemented and regularly maintained and kept current.
- Review information posted to the City departments' social media sites by City employees or agents to ensure the content is appropriate, professional, and consistent with the City of Seymour's policies and the purpose for which the site exists. Frequent review of sites that provide opportunity for comment or other interaction is essential.
- The Public Information Specialist shall keep the Mayor informed of the City's social networking tools and activities.
- Communicate regularly with the city's Department of Law to ensure that the City of Seymour social media sites comply with any applicable public records laws.
- Establish a process to ensure that this policy is broadly disseminated and that all officers, departments, employees and agents are aware of and confirm their understanding of this policy.

**B. The City of Seymour's Official Social Media Accounts.** The official City of Seymour Social Media sites are the primary tier of the City's social media presence. This tier includes any official City presence on a social media site.

a. The Public Information Specialist is responsible for developing and administering the City of Seymour's presence on all social media accounts that are the official accounts of the City. The Public Information Specialist, assisted by City Department Heads, shall review, monitor and enforce all approved social media accounts and sites.

b. City officers, departments, employees and agents are encouraged to contribute content and ideas to this site/account by contacting the Public Information Specialist.

**C. Departmental-Specific Social Media Accounts.** A City department may seek to develop its own site or account or platform specific to its needs. Department-specific social media sites should be focused and limited in scope and topic and should complement rather than supplant the official City of Seymour social media sites or existing web resources.

a. On a case-by-case basis the Public Information Specialist shall review and approve or deny all requests for developing additional department social media sites.

b. The Public Information Specialist will be the coordinating authority for review and monitoring and enforcement of any approved City of Seymour social media sites. The Mayor shall be the final decision-making authority for the approval or denial of any social media sites and the use of such sites by the City.

**D. Existing Social Media Account/Platform.** The Public Information Specialist must review existing departmental social media sites or tools that have already been established as of the effective date of this policy to ensure that existing sites follow this policy.

a. Within 60 days of the effective date of this policy, the Public Information Specialist shall approve or deny the existing department social media site or tools.

b. In the event the request is denied, the site or tool must be immediately taken down and its use discontinued.

#### ***4.0 STANDARDS AND BEST PRACTICES OF CITY OF SEYMOUR SOCIAL MEDIA SITES***

The Public Information Specialist shall develop and provide detailed best practice guidance for the City of Seymour social media sites, accounts and platforms. The following general standards apply to all City social media sites, accounts and platforms including departmental, committee, board, agency or committee sites:

A. Unless otherwise specifically noted, when the City of Seymour establishes a City website or social media account it does so to communicate to the public, to inform and relay official City content. The City therefore regulates the City of Seymour social media sites that it maintains for the following reasons:

- Posts on City of Seymour social media sites appear to carry the approval of the City, and unauthorized posts on those sites can confuse people as to whether the City endorses the post or if a specific post forms a position of the City and whether it is the City's official position,
- City of Seymour social media sites, unless expressly noted, are not intended to operate as a traditional open public forum as there are ample open forums for purposes of expressing opinions and views. Social media and internet sites are many and varied and offer an ever-expanding opportunity for expression over a multitude of platforms.

**B. Right to Remove Posts that Do Not Comply with the Rules of the Limited Public Forum.** When the City of Seymour social media site has not been opened as a traditional public forum or where the City of Seymour social media site has been opened as "non-public" and "limited public" forums, the Public Information Specialist, with guidance from the Department

of Law, is authorized to remove unauthorized content links posted on City social media sites that do not conform with the requirements of this Policy in a viewpoint neutral manner.

**C. Required Disclosures.** A clear statement of the intent, purpose, and subject matter of a City social media site, as well as a statement clearly articulating whether the site accepts comments and if so, any restrictions that might affect the nature of the forum as either limited or traditional. The City social media site should prominently disclose that all content posted to the City social media site are subject to public disclosure laws. Any other disclaimer or notice should be clearly posted on City social media sites. The following statements must be included on each City social media site following the City's description of the purpose of that social media site or tool and a user assents by use to the rules of the forum and the conditions established for its use as established in this required Notice as described:

### **REQUIRED NOTICE AND USE POLICY**

To better serve its residents, the City of Seymour utilizes user engagement tools and websites, including social media channels, to provide residents with information in more places and more ways than were traditionally available.

All content of this site (insert the following if comments are accepted: and all comments submitted to this page) are public and are subject to disclosure pursuant to the Indiana Access to Public Records Act (APRA) I.C. 5-14-1.5 et seq. Please be aware that anything you post may survive deletion whether by you or others.

- Requests for emergency services should be directed to 9-1-1 not through this site. Individual complaints, concerns, or service requests will not be addressed via social media unless the City of Seymour specifically identifies the site for that purpose.
- To protect your privacy and the privacy of others, please do not include sensitive personally identifiable information, such as social security numbers. The City hosted tools and websites should not be considered secure.
- If you have specific questions regarding a City activity or program that involves details you do not wish to share publicly, please contact the appropriate city department, listed at [www.seymourin.org](http://www.seymourin.org).
- Posts to this site may be removed in a viewpoint neutral manner if allowed by law and under this policy but may be preserved as a public record.
- The City of Seymour also reserves the right to discontinue any or all City social media sites at any time.
- Practical and legal considerations may sometimes constrain, prevent, or prohibit discussion by the City of certain topics, including, but not limited to litigation, pending investigations, and other topics through various media including social media.
- Following or "friending" persons or organizations is not an endorsement by the City and is only intended as a means of communication.

- Any references or links to a specific entity, product, service or organization posted by individuals on the City of Seymour social media sites should not be considered an endorsement by the City or its officers, departments, employees and agents.
- The City of Seymour does not review, sponsor, or endorse any other website(s) linked to its website or to City social media sites. The views and opinions of authors expressed on those websites do not necessarily state or reflect the opinion of the City and may not be quoted or reproduced for the purpose of stating or implying any endorsement or approval of any product, person, or service by the City, its officers, departments, employees and agents. The City of Seymour is not responsible for content that appears on external links.
- The City is not responsible for and does not guarantee the authenticity, accuracy, appropriateness or security of any link, external website or its content.
- Investors determining whether to invest or continue to invest in the City's debt offerings should not rely on information posted on the site in making their decisions to invest or not to invest; information regarding the City's financial position is posted at [www.seymourin.org](http://www.seymourin.org).

Any questions should be directed to the Public Information Specialist at [jrutherford@seymourin.org](mailto:jrutherford@seymourin.org). By accessing this site, posting or commenting I acknowledge having been advised of and understand the foregoing.

**D. Solicitation of Public Comment – limited public forum.** Where comments are solicited or invited on the site the following statement must be included:

“The purpose of this site is to discuss matters of public interest in and to the City of Seymour as identified and raised by the City for discussion. We encourage you to submit comments that are on topic, but please address your comments to the specific topic(s) discussed. This is a forum limited to the specific topics identified and raised by the City. Users who submit content to this City of Seymour social media site agree they have read, understand and agree to the following terms and conditions by virtue of posting or commenting on this site. The terms of use are as follows:

**TERMS OF USE**

1. I am submitting content voluntarily and on my own behalf.
2. The content I post reflects my own original thoughts or work.
3. I understand that the City has the right to re-post or share any content, photos or videos that I submit on this or other City of Seymour social media sites.

4. I have read and understand the policy, including the right of the City to remove, or archive content as described in the City's policy and as may be allowed by law. I understand that any content I provide may be considered a "public record" under the laws of the State of Indiana.

5. I understand and agree that unless specifically identified as a resource for receiving requests for information under the state public information laws, City of Seymour social media sites are not proper vehicles for making requests for public information or public records under Indiana state law and any such requests must be made to the appropriate custodian of the records.

6. I understand and agree that my comments and comments of others are subject to archiving and that my comments and others' comments are subject to removal in whole or in part from this site if my or their comments contain:

- comments not directly on the topic raised for discussion,
- obscene, indecent, or profane language, or pornographic images,
- direct threats,
- content that promotes discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, ethnicity, age, disability, or gender identity,
- the solicitation, promotion or endorsement of specific commercial services, products or entities,
- links to any site or content posted by automatic software programs (i.e."bots"),
- the promotion or encouragement of illegal activity,
- personally identifiable information or sensitive personal information that if released violates federal or state law,
- the promotion or endorsement of a political campaign or candidate,
- information that compromises the public safety or security of the public or security systems,
- information that directly interferes or compromises ongoing investigations, public safety tactics, or the safety of public safety officers,
- confidential or exempt information in violation of state or federal law, or
- content that appears to violate the intellectual property right of the City of Seymour or a third party under federal or state law.

7. I also understand that the views and comments expressed on this site only reflect those of the comment's author, and do not necessarily reflect the official views of the City of Seymour, its elected and appointed officers and employees or its departments and agencies.

8. Waiver of Liability.

Because various laws exist that create liability for various actions, including but without limitation, defamation, invasion of privacy, false light, breach of contract, procurement violations, violations of due process among many potential areas of exposure for which the City accepts no responsibility based on the actions of others or for creating this social media site, I, for myself, successors and assigns, release, hold harmless and agree to indemnify and defend the City of Seymour, including its officers and employees, from any and all actions, claims, liabilities and damages of whatever kind and nature arising out of or in connection with my use of the City social media site.

By posting or commenting I acknowledge that I understand and accept these terms of use.

**5.0 PERSONAL USE**

Employees and elected officials of the City may maintain and use personal social media accounts during non-work time. The personal accounts and activities of employees and elected officials of the City should remain personal in nature. Employees and elected officials may not use City-issued email addresses to sign up for or access personal social media accounts. Employees and elected officials of the City shall not use personal social media accounts to conduct City-related business.

A. Employees must be clear that their personal social media activities and content represent their own views and opinions and shall not state or otherwise give the impression that their personal activities or content are authorized or approved by the City. If City employees publish content on or through personal social media accounts and the content relates to their work or the City, the City recommends using the following disclaimer: "My postings express my own opinions and do not represent the views of the City." Following this recommendation helps ensure that City employees officials distinguish between sharing personal and City-approved views, opinions, or positions.

B. Neither the City nor its departments are responsible for opinions or information shared by others on any website or social media account outside of websites or accounts facilitated by the City.

C. Employees are reminded that their social media activities and content can oftentimes be viewed by others, duplicated, copied, or otherwise shared with others (even unintended recipients), and be permanently accessed and/or stored by third parties. Employees are encouraged to consider how their online activities or content may be viewed or perceived by others. In certain circumstances, employees may be disciplined for their online activities and content, even when those activities and content occur during non-work time. Examples may include, but are not limited to, activities or content that constitutes discrimination or harassment on the basis of gender, race, religion, or other protected classification, defamation, the disclosure of confidential information, otherwise unlawful conduct, or violations of this Policy.

D. To the extent employees have work-related issues that they would like to discuss, the City believes the best way to resolve such issues is by talking through them in person. The City's Human Resources Department is available for employees who have concerns or complaints.