

# City of Augusta, Maine

## Communication and Social Media Policy & Guidelines

### DRAFT

The City of Augusta strives to provide, taxpayers, residents, businesses and the public with accurate and timely information, communicated in a professional manner and in accordance with the laws regarding public access. The City of Augusta has several objectives when doing so:

- To effectively inform businesses and citizens about the City of Augusta.
- To demonstrate, underscore and clarify the role of the City of Augusta, the administration and elected and appointed officials and their profound importance in managing a community.
- To demonstrate the vital services that Augusta provides.

This policy provides guidelines for all communications from the City of Augusta using various media including:

- Printed materials such as the Annual Report, Financial Statement, Audit Report, articles, brochures and documents produced as part of Augusta's information dissemination effort.
- Electronic information tools such as the City website, email, or social media sites.
- CTV-7 the City's Local Cable Access Channel
- Media relations such as requests for interviews, news releases and media inquiries.
- Direct contact with City staff, elected and appointed officials.

### **GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR ALL COMMUNICATION (OFFICIAL AND PERSONAL)**

City of Augusta employees and contracted service providers have a responsibility to help communicate accurate and timely information to taxpayers, businesses, residents and the general public in a professional manner. Any employee who identifies a mistake in reporting should bring the error to the attention of the City Manager's Office or other appropriate staff. Whether the communication is in the employee's or service provider's official role or in a personal capacity, employees must comply with all laws related to trademark, copyright, software use, etc.

### **ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNICATION**

#### **Handling General Requests:**

Staff and service providers are responsible for communicating basic and routine information to customers in relation to their specific job duties. Requests for private data or information outside of the scope of an individual's job duties should be directed to the appropriate department or to the employee's supervisor.

#### **Handling Media Requests:**

With the exception of routine events and basic information that is readily available to the public,

requests for interviews or information from the media are to be directed to the City Manager's Office or a Department Head. Media requests include contact from people who say they represent print publications, such as weekly and daily newspapers and magazines; electronic media such as television and radio stations; and informational websites.

### **Electronic and Social Media Communication on Behalf of the City of Augusta:**

The City of Augusta communicates to taxpayers, businesses, residents and the general public via its website ([www.augustamaine.org](http://www.augustamaine.org)). The Augusta city website is our primary internet presence and is the electronic "face" of the City of Augusta.

Social media includes sites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and others. The City of Augusta recognizes that taxpayers, residents, businesses and the general public increasingly gather information through these and other electronic sites, sometimes to the exclusion of traditional media. It is necessary to use these tools to communicate effectively and fully.

The best and most appropriate uses of social media generally fall into three categories:

- To disseminate time-sensitive material quickly.
- To enhance the City of Augusta's ability to put its messages before the widest audience possible.
- To initiate transparent conversations between the City of Augusta, our taxpayers, residents, businesses, the media and general citizenry.

The City of Augusta recognizes that the instantaneous, yet permanent, nature of these electronic tools can pose risk without effective controls. A starting point for discussion is that information and statements posted on websites and through social media reflect directly on the City of Augusta and require great care. In recognition of these needs, the City will post to its Facebook page in the Facebook member category listed as non-interactive, business/non-profit page on which the City will limit outside posts.

Communication via electronic and social media on behalf of the City of Augusta can be done only by the following employees: City Manager, Assistant City Manager, Executive Assistant, Information Technology Director, Department Heads and designated staff.

### **'Personal' Communication That Can Become 'Public':**

It is important for employees and contracted service providers to remember that some personal communication of employees and service providers may reflect on the City of Augusta, especially if personnel are commenting on: anything political in nature; federal, state or local government activities; or, City business. The following guidelines apply to personal communication including various forms of social media (Facebook, Twitter, blogs, YouTube, etc), letters to the editor of newspapers and personal endorsements.

- Remember that what you write is public and may be so for a long time. It may be spread to large audiences. Use common sense when using email or social media sites. It is a good idea

to refrain from sending or posting information that you would not want your supervisor or other employees to read, or that you would be embarrassed to see in a newspaper or on a prominent website.

- The City of Augusta expects its employees and service providers to be truthful, courteous and respectful toward supervisors, co-workers, citizens, customers and other persons associated with the City. Do not engage in name-calling or personal attacks.
- In the workplace, Augusta employees should always identify themselves as such during official communication.
- The City of Augusta resources and working time should not be used for personal profit or business interests, or to participate in personal political activity.
- Personal social media account names or email names should not be tied to the City of Augusta (e.g., [Directorguy@augustamaine.gov](mailto:Directorguy@augustamaine.gov))

**Other City of Augusta Policies and Guidelines:**

This guideline does not usurp or replace Augusta’s guidelines on computer usage and other HR policies already in place.

**QUESTIONS**

Questions related to this policy should be directed to your supervisor or the Director of Human Resources.