

# City of Tega Cay, SC Communication Policy

## ***Terminology***

The term “Users” means any person who communicates with the City.

The term “City” means the City of Tega Cay, SC.

## ***Purpose***

The City of Tega Cay (the “City”) actively utilizes several communication channels to inform and engage its residents, businesses, elected officials, media members and visitors. As the proliferation of these channels increases it is vital that all who engage in communication on behalf of the City work together to promote the interests and goals of the City within relevant, legal obligations. The Tega Cay Communication Policy establishes guidelines for the use by the City, its departments and/or employees of available communication channels including print (City mailings and press releases) and electronic (social media channels, website, newsletter).

As a public entity, the City and its Users should abide by certain standards in the way they communicate to each other that serves all its constituents in a civil and unbiased manner. The intended purpose behind establishing and maintaining the Tega Cay Communications Policy is to disseminate information from the City to its residents to:

- \*Provide accurate, helpful and timely information about the City for the general public;
- \*Promote the interests of the City in concert with Tega Cay’s goals;
- \*Encourage participation in City government; and
- \*Provide ongoing education to increase understanding about how the City operates.

The Communication Policy is built on the foundation of three concepts that guide the City in its communications approach:

- 1) CLEAR: The City will always strive to use the most direct and straightforward language to communicate its policies and programs by explaining technical terms and providing relevant background information to ensure all information is understandable and accessible to the widest possible audience.
- 2) PROACTIVE: When possible, the City will provide information on emerging issues and follow up on these to ensure the most accurate information is available, and this information is made available as soon as possible.
- 3) TRANSPARENT: The City will be open in communicating its business and make information about policies, programs and operations of the City available to anyone interested.

## **General**

A. The City's website, tegacaysc.org, will remain the City's primary public communication presence. When possible, any other media publication, including press releases, social media posts, etc., should refer to an original source found on the City's website.

B. All City communication channels are subject to South Carolina public records and record retention laws, rules, and policies. Any content maintained in an online format (website/social media) that is related to City business may be subject to public disclosure.

C. Each City communication channel shall be administered and monitored by City staff. Each channel falls under the overall supervision of the City's Communications Manager/Public Information Officer.

D. For all City entities (boards, committees, and departments), the City shall maintain administrative rights to all communication channels (website, social media, newsletters, print mailings, press releases, etc.).

## **Methods**

The City uses a variety of tools to disseminate information:

- \*Website
- \*Social Media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter & YouTube)
- \*Weekly "Rewind" Electronic Newsletter
- \*Mailings
- \*CodeRED Emergency Alert System

Evolving technologies like social media networks help government agencies disseminate information more rapidly, broaden transparency, engage the community, improve perceptions, expand outreach to new audiences and increase public safety.

## **\*Media Relations\***

Inquiries from the news media are given a high priority by the City. Every effort will be made to ensure information released to the news media is accurate. The Communications Manager/Public Information Officer is responsible for drawing accurate information from departments in order to compile it.

## **Media Inquiries**

Any media inquiries received by any City councilmember or City employee should be referred immediately to the City Manager and Public Information Officer. Due to the often-short deadlines for media outlets, it is important that all councilmembers and/or employees respond as soon as possible when the City Manager or Public Information Officer requests it.

### ***Sensitive or Controversial Inquiries***

All television, radio, newspaper, or other media inquiries regarding sensitive or controversial issues must always be immediately referred to the City Manager. The City Manager will then work with the Public Information Officer and any other pertinent staff to gather the necessary information and coordinate a response.

### ***Personal Points of View***

It is recognized that all councilmembers and employees have the right to their personal points of view regarding any issue. However, personal points of view may conflict with the City's official policy. Therefore, City Council members and City employees who write letters to the editor of any newspaper may not use official City stationary or City email address. If they choose to identify himself or herself as a City councilmember or employee in any personal letter or email, he or she must include language which states "the views expressed in this letter/email do not represent the views of the City of Tega Cay, but rather are this person's personally held opinions." A similar disclaimer must be given if the councilmember or employee addresses a public meeting, participates in a radio or television interview or posts on a social media site, unless the councilmember or employee is officially representing the City.

### ***General Requests***

Calls or emails from any media outlet should always be immediately referred to the Public Information Officer. They will then gather the relevant information and coordinate a response including a spokesperson if necessary.

### ***Crisis or Emergency Issues***

During a crisis or major emergency (i.e. flooding, hurricane, hostage situation, etc.) the City's Public Information Officer will be the primary point of contact for all media inquiries. The Public Information Officer may designate a secondary point of contact to assist.

### ***Information Not Available to the Media***

Any information protected under the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act shall not be made available to the public or the media.

### ***Crime Scenes***

The following information is relevant regarding active police investigation areas:

- 1) Members of the media cannot be restricted from taking photographs or recordings if they are on public property, outside the cordoned area of a crime scene and open to public view. Media members are not allowed inside a police, fire or emergency personnel cordoned area or in an active investigation area and may be charged.
- 2) Members of the media should follow directions given by emergency personnel on scene.
- 3) During a crisis or emergency situation a designated media area may be established. Once established, media members are to remain in this area. The Public Information Officer or specified Information Officer as designated by the Incident Commander will provide timely updates to media members in this designated media area as they are available.
- 4) If a crime scene is still active or a potential suspect is still at large and considered to be dangerous media members may be asked to wait at a location away from the scene. Media will not be allowed at the scene until it is considered safe as determined by the Incident Commander.

### ***Questions About Past Incidents***

Requests regarding a previous City incident should be made to the Municipal Clerk via a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request form that shall be located on the City's website.

### ***\*Social Media\****

The City engages customers through many electronic forms, including social media. The purpose of the City's social media sites is to present matters of public interest within Tega Cay, to its residents, businesses, and visitors. Communicating with the City through social media further enables customers to contact the City in a direct way. All official City of Tega Cay social media sites are considered extensions of the City's information network and are governed by this Communications Policy.

The use of social media is not intended to serve as the City's primary source of notifications or communication. The City intends to promote effective communication through the use of social media. The rules for posting external comments on the City's social media sites are intended for moderators to ensure that posted comments are constructive and suitable for all readers while respecting a range of opinions and points of view.

The City's social media sites are not monitored twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Questions posted by Users may/may not be answered in a timely manner. For more immediate answers, Users are encouraged to visit the staff directory on the City's website ([tegacaysc.org](http://tegacaysc.org)) to contact the appropriate City staff member.

### ***Liability***

Social media sites are created for the sole purpose of serving public interests within the City's

community. Users of a social media site will, by doing so, accept, agree, and understand that there is no legal liability to the City because of any posting or comment on a social media site. All persons using the social media sites agree to fully hold the City harmless for any content, postings, comments, or interpretations conveyed about any content, postings or comments which occur on social media sites administered by the City.

### ***Posting on Social Media Pages***

The City reserves the right to delete comments or submissions that violate this policy. All posted information and comments on the City's social media sites must comply with the following rules:

- 1) Comments and posted content must be civil and may not contain slanderous, libelous, malicious, offensive, threatening, profane, vulgar or insulting language, pictures or videos.
- 2) Comments or posted content that promotes, fosters or perpetuates discrimination or hate speech 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 are not permitted.
- 3) Comments or posted content that references the personality of individuals, personal attacks or potentially libelous statements are not permitted.
- 4) Comments and posted content must be within the scope of the original topic under discussion, or the comment will be hidden/removed.
- 5) Comments or posted content of a sexual nature or links to sexual content are not permitted.
- 6) Comments and posted content cannot include personally identifiable information, such as an address, phone number, social security number or other sensitive information.
- 7) Comments and posted content cannot represent a person other than the one posting the comment (i.e. no fake accounts or profiles). Once identified any comments or posted content made by these accounts/profiles will be immediately deleted. Any fake accounts, once identified, may be blocked from the social media site.
- 8) Comments or posted content containing links to other websites or pages must be relevant to the original topic. Unrelated links will be hidden/removed.
- 9) Comments and posted content cannot serve electoral campaign purposes. Comments and posted content of a political nature will not be permitted except for announcements of City/County/State/Federal elections or voter registration information.
- 10) Comments or posted content encouraging illegal activity are not permitted.
- 11) Solicitations of commerce are not permitted.
- 12) Participants are responsible for what they post. Comments and posted content must not breach any law, confidentiality, trademark or copyright.
- 13) Comments or posted content that provides or promotes fraudulent, deceptive or misleading information will not be permitted.

14) The social media page administrator/moderator may remove any and all postings and comments at the administrator/moderator's sole discretion.

***Intellectual Property and Monitoring***

The City respects the intellectual property of others and we ask Users of the City's social media sites to do the same. In accordance with the Digital Millennium Copyright Act ("DMCA") and other applicable laws, the City has adopted a policy of terminating, in appropriate instances and circumstances Users who are repeated violators of the rules as described in this policy. This will be at the sole discretion of the City.

Repeated violation by a User of any of the rules as described under the "Monitoring" section will be the basis for a temporary ban from the City's social media pages. If a User violates any of these rules more than ten (10) times in a six (6) month period they will receive a thirty (30) day ban from the City's social media pages. At the conclusion of thirty (30) days the User may request the ban be lifted. After the first ban, if a User violates any of these rules more than five (5) times in a three (3) month period they will receive a sixty (60) day ban from the City's social media pages. At the conclusion of sixty (60) days the User may request the ban be lifted. After the second ban, if a User violates any of these rules they will be permanently banned from the City's social media pages.

Any opinions, views or content that is posted to City's social media sites by a third or external party do not represent or demonstrate the position of, policies of or the opinions of the City; The City does not support, have responsibility for or possess any ownership in any content generated externally but posted to the City's social media sites. Users should have no expectation of privacy when posting to a City social media page.