

## STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

### #502 – Social Media Guidelines

The Department of Aquarium and Museums maintains social media accounts and will be the sole voice to communicate with guests on these platforms. Do not scoop these accounts by posting ahead of them, do not interact with commenters using personal profiles, and be smart about what you post. Remember: everything posted while using a City network, computer, or device, is considered public. If you have a question about whether to post, ask the Marketing Section.

If you have additional questions about the use of social media, please refer to COMIT's *Web 2.0: New Communication and Collaboration Methods For the City of Virginia Beach*.

#### Details

This policy establishes a set of rules and guidelines for any activity and participation in social media by all Department of Aquarium and Museums employees and volunteers. These rules are intended to be adaptable to the changes in technology and norms of online communication and behavior, and may be amended at any time, for any reason. Nothing contained within this policy is intended to interfere with employee rights under the National Labor Relations Act.

For purposes of this policy, the term "social media" applies to any web-based and mobile technologies, in use now or developed in the future, that enable individuals or entities to disseminate or receive information, communicate, or otherwise interact, and includes, without limitation, email, texting, messaging, social networking, blogging, micro-blogging, bulletin boards, and so on, through providers such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube or any other existing or future technologies.

Staff and volunteers are not to post on behalf of the Department. This is to continue the "one voice," as well as protect employee/volunteer privacy. If, at any time, an official response or correction from the Department is needed, the conversation should be brought to the attention of the Marketing Department.

#### Photo & Video Sharing

The Department of Museums encourages staff and volunteers to take and share digital images and video of our exhibits and animals. Whichever social medium is used, there are a few important rules to follow:

- Our tickets include a release form so that we may photograph and post photos of visitors. It is recommended that if particular visitors are photographed (especially children), their (or their parents') permission be obtained in writing with a signed photo release form. The forms are available from the marketing department.
- Never compromise your safety or the safety of our guests or animals.
- Photographing or filming medical procedures on an animal is an important part of our research and conservation efforts, and is encouraged. These images should only be shared with colleagues or researchers unless prior written approval is given from the Marketing staff AND Curatorial staff.
- And finally, remember that if you were able to capture an image during your work hours or by virtue of your employment, even if you use your personal camera, phone or video camera, the image remains the property of the Department and is subject to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act.
- Please share your great photos and videos by placing them in Sharepoint or the Drop file or emailing them to be posted through the Department's official channels.

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## Social Media Posting/Comments

***Exercise responsibility online.*** You are personally responsible for any of your social media activity. Please don't "scoop" the Department by posting on your personal social media any images taken during work without also informing the Marketing Section and sharing them on the Drop or Sharepoint sites.

No one should claim to offer the Aquarium's official statement on anything unless the Department has shared it first OR with prior approval from the Public Relations Manager and the Marketing Director.

If you need to correct information posted by the Department, or wish to help appease a disgruntled visitor, please pass that information to the Marketing Department for posting. This ensures that the Department speaks to the public with "one voice."

## Department's Official Facebook, Twitter or other Social Media Accounts

The Department maintains a corporate Facebook site where we communicate to our "fans." We encourage posts, questions, discussion, comments and varying viewpoints. We follow the City of Virginia Beach' social media policies and reserve the right to delete questions and/or comments that include the following:

- Solicitations or advertisements of any kind that are not officially sponsored or endorsed by the City of Virginia Beach or the Department of Museums
- Abusive or threatening language, threats against any person or group; libelous, harassing or abusive statements
- Contain personal attacks or aggressive behavior
- Promote hate of any kind
- Use profanity or vulgar language
- Are blatantly spam
- Relate to personnel actions regarding City employees, volunteers or appointees of constitutional offices
- Contain personal information about someone else, such as home address, name, phone number (be aware that when your friends "tag" you on the Aquarium's site, it becomes public knowledge that you are an Aquarium employee)
- Contain information affiliated with or promoting political campaigns
- Hostility or violence toward an individual or group, including personal insults, libel, defamation of character
- Sexual overtones or innuendo
- Illegal discrimination against any individual or group
- Illegal or inappropriate use of firearms or drugs, or any illegal activity
- Questions or comments by persons who are impersonating City officials or using false identities
- Information harmful to children or of a nature to frighten children
- Promotion of cruelty to animals
- Information regarding online casino gaming, gambling or betting
- Information about new programs or exhibits, upcoming discounts or membership promotions
- Information about animal births/deaths/illness/etc. until or unless this information is approved for release by the Aquarium Media Relations team

## Personal Social Media accounts.

Employees and volunteers may have personal social media accounts. Employees and volunteers are prohibited from posting the following:

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- Personal information about another employee or volunteer or citizen in any form of social media. For purposes of this Policy, personal information means an individual's Social Security number, financial account number, driver's license number, address, telephone number, medical information (including family medical history), other highly sensitive information, images of guest receipts, and information related to personnel actions regarding City employees, other than yourself.
- Information about new programs or exhibits, upcoming discounts or membership promotions is also not to be posted until approval obtained from the Marketing Section.

The Aquarium complies with the Virginia Freedom of Information Act. However, it is requested that information about animal births, deaths, illnesses not be released until or unless this information is approved for release by the Department's Marketing Section. When there is a message to be shared by the Department, the information is released to the public through the Public Relations Manager.

Most websites, including Facebook and others, have rules concerning the use and activity conducted on their sites. These are sometimes referred to a "Terms of Use." You must follow the established terms and conditions of use that have been established by the venue and not do anything that would violate those rules.

Do not post any information or conduct any online activity that may violate applicable local, state or federal laws or regulations.

The Department shall not require employees, applicants, or volunteers to disclose their usernames and passwords for any social media account. The Department also shall not require employees, applicants or volunteers to accept another employee or supervisor as a friend, follower, or as an acceptable contact on any personal social media account. The only exception is if the employee or volunteer's social media account activity is reasonably believed to be relevant to a formal investigation or related proceeding regarding allegations of the City or Department violating federal, state or local laws, or City/Department written policies. If a username and password is obtained during a formal investigation or related proceeding into these type of allegations, the username and password shall only be used for the purpose of the investigation or related proceeding.