

MEMORANDUM

To: Human Rights Commission Members (Garry Brown, Paula Buls, Kristian Caballero, Isabel Casas, Sareta Davis, Timothy Miller, Tucker Royall, Naiara Leite da Silva, Kuo Yang)

From: Ashley Normand and Joe Miguez

Date: March 28, 2015

Re: Proposed Policy for the Human Rights Commission's Facebook Page

In accordance with the City of Austin Policy on Business Usage of Social Media ("Social Media Policy"), the Working Group Relating to Social Media proposes that the Human Rights Commission ("Commission") adopt the following policies in relation to its Facebook page.

1. Regular Business

Background: Pursuant to §VIII(G) of the Social Media Policy, a Board or Commission's Staff Liaison may, post Regular Business items, defined as "the standard and routine activity of any Board . . . [including] . . . agendas, minutes, presentations, documents, and backup items created during the regular course of meetings. Alternately, §VIII(G) provides that the Staff Liaison may most a link to the Commission's page on the City's website, where those documents are posted regularly. Past practice has been for the Commission's Facebook page to link to the Commission's Page on the City's Website.

Recommendation: Going forward, we recommend that the Staff Liaison post agendas, minutes and supporting documentation to the Facebook Page at the approximate time it is uploaded to the Commission's Page on the City's Website.

2. Posting Materials for the Gathering of Public Input and Fostering of Public Discussion Related to the Commission's Advisory Role

Background: Pursuant to §VIII(F), Board may utilize Social Media for gathering of public input and fostering of public discussion related to the advisory role they have been assigned by City Council, provided that the use conforms to Sections IV-VII of the Social Media Policy and that (a) the request for input or posting of discussion items is approved in a formal action of the Board at a posted meeting and (b) the request for input or posting does not relate to any solicitation that is identified by the City Purchasing Office or Contract and Land Management Department in the "No Contact Period." Pursuant to §VI, of the Social Media Policy, entitled, Public Comments and Interactive Features, City Social Media Site Accounts must be set up in a way that either maximizes public comments or limits the resources to organizational postings only (see §VI(A)). The Social Media Policy provides that social media sites may be set up as "push" (sites which do not permit public comment), "limited forum" (sites that clearly define a specific topic for discussion) and "open forum" (sites that do not limit the topic of discussion)(See §VI(C)). Sites that permit interconnectivity and comments should provide a disclaimer that posted comments do not necessarily reflect the views or position of the City (See §VI(D)). Editing of public comments is permitted on "open comment" sites in accordance with 8 criteria, listed at §VI(D)(1-8). Editing of public comments is permitted on a "limited comment" site if the comments are clearly off-subject, based on scope and comment (See §VI(E)). The Commission's current practice is as follows: the Commission's facebook page is set up as a "push" site, meaning comments are not permitted. Occasionally, the Staff Liaison posts items he believes relate to the advancement of human rights.

Recommendation: Going forward, we recommend that the setup for the Commission's Facebook page be modified in a way that sets up a "limited forum" page in order to maximize public comments and that the Commission hereafter begin posting items proposed by one or more Commissioners regarding human rights issues and policies that may relate to Austin residents, so long as those postings are approved in a formal action of the Board at a properly noticed meeting. This would include both general interest items and items relating to upcoming human rights forums, conferences, speaking engagements, etc. Note that, under no circumstances are individual Commissioners to comment on, or direct staff to comment on any posting (See §VIII(B) and (H)) In accordance with that change, the Commission recommends that the Staff Liaison add a limitation on the Facebook page to the effect that the Commission's facebook page is set up to "discuss human rights issues and policies that may relate to Austin residents", and that "the posted comments do not necessarily reflect the views or position of the City or of any individual member of the City's Commission on Human Rights". If appropriate, we propose that our Staff Liaison supplement the Commission's Facebook page with "a clear statement of the intent, purpose, and subject matter of the site, as well as a statement clearly articulating that all content and comments posted to the site are subject to public disclosure laws," as required per §V(C). We propose that the Commission thereafter authorize our Staff Liaison to remove any comments that do not relate to the forum's express topic and/or fall outside of the forum criteria for "open forum" websites listed at §VI(D)(1-8)(e.g. violate the site's terms of service, encourage illegal activity, would reasonably be considered pornographic, solicit commerce, etc.)