

City of Bellingham Policy

Title: MANAGING CITY WEBSITES

Code: PRA 03.09.03

Chapter: Administration

Level of Policy: Administrative

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Date Revised:

Revised by:

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Approved By: Mark Asmundson, Mayor

Cancel: ADM 07.00.09, COB WEB

See Also: ADM 07.11.09, USING CITY COMPUTERS AND OTHER INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES
PRA 03.08.00, COMMUNICATING WITH THE PUBLIC

Purpose

To make clear responsibilities and help provide timely, accurate, understandable information to the citizens of Bellingham and others when using City owned or operated websites.

Scope

This policy applies to all City employees when developing, issuing, approving, or publishing City information or services to be accessed by the public over the Internet via all city-owned and/or operated websites.

Policy/Conditions

1. We define official public websites

We define the City of Bellingham official public website (official website) as the collection of public web content available at <http://www.cob.org>.

The scope of content for the official website is limited to information and services by, about and for the City of Bellingham.

2. Chief Administrative Officer oversees website policy

The Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) is responsible for oversight of the City's public communications. With regard to public websites, the CAO:

- Assigns responsibility for development, approval, and publication of public web content for critical City issues.
- Resolves issues involving the interpretation or application of this policy.

The city Communication Coordinator and Director of Information Technology Services Department (ITSD) manage the day-to-day implementation of this policy.

3. Communication Coordinator approves website content

The Communications Coordinator oversees website content, consistent with ADM (XXX) “*Communicating with the Public*”. The Communications Coordinator or designee:

- Approves standards for web content including visual presentation, site organization, currency and accuracy;
- Approves posting of web content to a location other than the official website;
- Approves creation and maintenance of new City websites as provided for below;
- Approves adding links on City websites as provided for below

Due to the high visibility of the home page of the City's official website, the Communications Coordinator or designee has sole discretion in approving its content. Priority for homepage placement will be given to:

- Information about high priority and timely City news, issues and events
- Widely used City information and services
- Emergency information

4. Information Technology Services Department (ITSD) develops web standards

The ITSD director or designee develops standards for all public websites including:

- Standards for web content, using input from City departments and incorporating industry best practices. This includes user interfaces and the use of effective design principles.
- Technology used in developing, operating, securing and publishing to public websites, as provided for by ADM 07.00.11 *USING CITY COMPUTERS AND OTHER INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES*

5. Information Technology Services Department (ITSD) approves high stakes web projects

The ITSD Director approves high stakes web projects based on the following criteria:

- Expense: costs exceed \$100,000 (software, hardware and staff hours)
- Multi-year: will take more than one year to acquire and implement;
- Multiple system interfaces and/or integration expected;
- Impact on multiple business processes
- Enterprise impact: many stakeholders, likely to impact the organization for 7+ years
- High security risk: credit card use, storage of sensitive data;
- Hosted solutions: city data is stored remotely.

6. The Information Technology Services Department (ITSD) manages official City website

The ITSD Director or designee manages the official City website by:

- Establishing procedures for publishing content on the official website
- Auditing official website content for conformance to standards
- Coordinating work on the official website by City staff, consultants and interns
- Approving technology extensions or new interfaces.

7. Departments maintain their web content

Department heads or designees:

- Use City websites as key communications tools
- Appoint staff who are responsible for developing, approving, publishing, and maintaining content sponsored by their departments
- Designate key staff to coordinate content sponsored by their department and serve as primary contacts for ITSD
- Ensure their content is current, accurate and understandable

8. We publish all public web content to the official website

All City public web content should be published on the official website. The Communication Coordinator may authorize exceptions, including the creation of new websites as provided for below.

9. We limit creation and maintenance of City public websites

The Communication Coordinator reviews and approves proposals to create new City-owned or operated websites, using the following criteria:

- The extent to which the needs of proposed new website's co-sponsors can/cannot be met by an existing City website
- Resources necessary to create, maintain, market and archive the new site
- Impacts on ability to market specific services and the revenue those services generate
- The information or service to be published is not easily identified as being provided by the City of Bellingham.

Existing public websites may be reviewed periodically using the above criteria. Sites found to no longer meet the criteria may be discontinued with the approval of the Communications Coordinator.

Because of the unique missions, services, funding and organizational placement of the Bellingham Public Library and the Whatcom Museum of History and Art, and the Bellingham/Whatcom Public Facilities District, these City services are authorized to maintain their existing separate websites www.bellinghampubliclibrary.org, www.whatcommuseum.org and www.bwpfd.org. These organizations must follow all other policy direction contained herein, and must also be represented in appropriate departmental and services sections of the City's official website.

10. All City websites must display City logo and link to official City website

All City-owned or operated websites must display the official City logo on every page and must include a link to the official City website.

11. We allow links that support the City's mission

We allow external links to Internet sites or services to be accessed from City public websites only when they support the mission of the City. In the event of a dispute over whether an external link should be added or removed, the Communication Coordinator or designee has sole discretion in rendering a decision, as provided for above.

Because of the unique missions, services, funding and organizational placement of the Bellingham Public Library and the Whatcom Museum of History and Art, these City services are authorized to maintain distinct policies regarding links to their separate web sites at the direction of their directors.

12. We allow recognition of sponsors

We allow recognition of sponsors on City websites. The acknowledgment must:

- Only appear on the web page(s) related to the City activity being sponsored
- Comply with web content standards established by ITSD and approved by the Communication Coordinator as provided for above

13. **We make reasonable efforts to meet accessibility standards**

We make reasonable efforts to meet accessibility standards for people with disabilities, as recommended by federal law and leading industry experts.

14. **We comply with applicable laws**

All web content must meet applicable local, state and federal laws, most notably:

- Copyright laws: All copyrighted content published to the City website must comply with copyright law. Written permission must be kept on file for any copyrighted material used in public web postings.
- Campaign laws: City websites cannot be used in any way for the purpose of assisting a campaign for election of any person to any office or for the promotion of or opposition to any ballot proposition. See [RCW 42.17.130](#). This provision does not preclude the city from publishing on the City website factual information about City elected officials or election issues.