

CITY/TOWN OF \_\_\_\_\_

## SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Adopted by the Board of Selectmen on \_\_\_\_\_ pursuant to RSA 41:8.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Vice Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Selectman

---

**Purpose:** The City/Town of \_\_\_\_\_ has established social media sites primarily in order to inform residents about City/Town programs and events, to encourage dialogue between residents about these programs and events, and to exchange information and knowledge between residents and City/Town employees about these programs and events. The City/Town's social media sites are not intended to be traditional public forums for the general exchange of ideas and viewpoints, but rather a limited public forum for discussion of specific programs and events. Courts have recognized that governmental entities, such as the City/Town, may create limited public forums for specific purposes and limit discussion on the forum to those specific purposes. The City/Town shall remove content and postings not consistent with the specific purpose of the social media sites and these Guidelines.

**Summary:** New and emerging online platforms are fundamentally changing the way the world works, offering us new ways to collaborate and to engage with the public. The City/Town of \_\_\_\_\_ encourages the use of social media to further the outcomes of the City/Town and to assist us in our mission to better engage with our Community. The City/Town Manager has an overriding interest and expectation in deciding who may "speak," and what is "spoken," on behalf of the City/Town of \_\_\_\_\_ to our respective residents. To ensure that communication through City/Town social media networks is consistent and in the best interest of the City/Town, this policy provides guidelines for the use of social media.

**Scope:** Applies to all City/Town employees, volunteers, City/Town officers and members of municipal boards, committees or commissions, when acting in their capacity as a member of such entities or as a representative of the City/Town, that

create or contribute to blogs, wikis, social networks, virtual worlds, or any other kind of social media on behalf of or as a representative of the City/Town.

**Policy Detail:**

1. The official social media account for the City/Town of \_\_\_\_\_ shall be created and maintained by the City/Town Manager's Office.
2. Social media accounts for individual departments or boards, commissions or committees may be created with approval of both the relevant department head/director (where applicable) and the City/Town Manager. Maintenance of individual social media accounts shall be the responsibility of the relevant department head/director or their designee. Websites and social media accounts for individual departments or boards, commissions or committees that are not appropriately monitored or maintained shall be discontinued by order of the City/Town Manager. The City/Town Manager or their designee shall hold an active password and/or administrator access to all social media accounts.
3. All departmental social media sites shall have a clear statement of the purpose of the social media site and include a clear statement that “This social media site is not intended to be a traditional public forum for the general exchange of ideas and viewpoints, but rather a limited forum for discussing...***[insert the purpose of the social media site]***. Courts have recognized that governmental entities, such as the City/Town, may create limited public forums for specific purposes and limit discussion on the forum to those specific purposes. The City/Town shall remove content and postings not consistent with the specific purposes of the social media sites and these Guidelines.”
4. The City/Town of \_\_\_\_\_’s website (INSERT TOWN WEBSITE) will remain the City/Town’s primary and predominant Internet presence.
5. The City/Town of \_\_\_\_\_ currently approves use of the following social media networks:
  - Facebook
  - Instagram
  - Twitter

***Any social network not on this list is considered unapproved and may not be used for City/Town purposes without first obtaining written approval by the City/Town Manager.***

6. Wherever possible, content posted to City/Town of \_\_\_\_\_ social media platforms shall have originated from departmental websites.

7. All approved social media networks shall be identified as “an official City/Town of \_\_\_\_\_ site,” and shall include the City/Town Seal or approved logo. Any unapproved social media network is prohibited from identifying as an “official City/Town of \_\_\_\_\_ site” and is prohibited from using the City/Town seal or logo.
8. Wherever possible, content posted to City/Town of \_\_\_\_\_ social media networks should contain links directing users back to the City/Town’s official website for more in-depth information, forms, documents or online services necessary to conduct business with the City/Town of \_\_\_\_\_.
9. The use of social media networks shall serve the following purposes:
  - a. To disseminate time-sensitive information as quickly as possible;
  - b. To increase the City/Town’s ability to broadcast its messages to the widest possible audience; and
  - c. To push information to the public, not to directly communicate with them (i.e. no response to posts, no answers to questions, comments, or concerns)
10. Administration of the City/Town’s social media networks shall be as follows:
  - a. The [City/Town Manager/Information Technology Division] will maintain a list of social media platforms that are approved for use.
  - b. The [City/Town Manager/Information Technology Division] will maintain a list of all City/Town social media networks, including login and password information. Departmental communication liaisons will inform Information Technology of any new planned social media networks or desired changes to existing networks.
  - c. [City/Town Manager/Information Technology Division staff] must be able to immediately edit or remove content from social media networks.
  - d. [City/Town Manager/Information Technology Division] retains the authority to remove pages or close sites if necessary.
11. Users and visitors to the City/Town’s social media networks shall be notified that the intended purpose of the network is to serve as a mechanism for receiving information from the City/Town and that it is a limited public forum. Users must also be notified that City/Town of \_\_\_\_\_ social media postings may be subject to removal if they are not related to the specific purpose of the social media site. The City/Town’s social media networks shall also contain the disclaimer that “any comments or information linked or posted shall not be deemed information created, accepted, or obtained by, or on behalf of, the municipality under RSA 91-A:1-a.”

**The General Test:** If a post’s subject matter is not related to the purpose of the social media site, it is subject to removal.

Examples of posts that may be subject to removal:

- a. Comments, materials, or links not related to the specific purpose of the social media site.
- b. Comments in support of or opposition to political campaigns or ballot measures.
- c. Profane language. The City/Town intends for all members of the public, including minors and others sensitive to such language, to access and use its social media sites. To that end, any containing such language will require increased scrutiny as to its ability to remain on the site. A post containing profane language shall be subject to removal if the subject matter of the post is not related to the purpose of the social media site.
- c. Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination 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 shall be subject to removal if the subject matter of the post is not related to the purpose of the social media site.
- e. Sexual content or links to sexual content. The City/Town intends for all members of the public, including minors and others sensitive to such content, to access and use its social media sites. Examples of sexual content are:
  - 1. Graphic descriptions or depictions of sexual activity;
  - 2. Graphic descriptions or depictions of sexual intercourse; and
  - 3. Graphic descriptions or depictions of nudity.
- f. Solicitations of commerce. No advertisements for commercial services, products, or businesses shall be permitted on the social media sites.
- g. Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity.
- h. Information that compromises the safety or security of the public or public systems. Examples of information that compromises the safety or security of the public or public systems is:
  - i. Threats of violence against City/Town officials, employees or the public;
  - ii. Personal identifying information of City/Town officials and employees; and
  - iii. Login information for City/Town systems, such as usernames, passwords, and PIN numbers.
- i. Content that violates an intellectual property right of any third party. The City/Town shall remove content infringing on the intellectual property rights of a third party upon receiving notice from said third party describing the alleged infringement and establishing the legal right of the third party to the alleged infringed material.

- j. Any other content that violates local, State, or Federal laws, ordinance, or regulations.
12. Wherever possible, all City/Town of \_\_\_\_\_ social media networks shall comply with all appropriate City/Town of \_\_\_\_\_ policies and standards, including but not limited to:
- Computer Use Policy
  - Media Relations Policy
13. The City/Town shall maintain records of its social media sites for a minimum of one year pursuant to NH RSA 33-A:3-a (XXV). The Department maintaining the platform is responsible for responding completely and accurately to any public records request for public records on social media. Wherever possible, social media networks shall clearly indicate that any articles and any other content posted or submitted, by the municipality, for posting are subject to public disclosure.
14. Posts shall only be removed from the City/Town's social media site by the [director/head of the relevant department/the Information Technology Division/the City/Town Manager].
15. If a particular posts is directed at a particular individual, that individual shall not have the authority to remove that post.
16. The City/Town's social media sites shall be reviewed for compliance with the Guidelines no less frequently than once a month, with more frequent review encouraged.
16. The City/Town shall remove any content or posts that violate this social media policy or any applicable law.
17. Any content or posts removed based on these guidelines **must be retained**, including the time, date and identity of the author when available.
- a. Any removed content shall be printed out in hard copy as it appears on the social media site before it is removed.
  - b. Prior to the removal of any content or posts, the removing party shall create a removal record. The removal record shall include:
    - i. A statement explaining why the content or post was removed, including which provision of the Guidelines was violated;
    - ii. Who removed the content or post;
    - iii. When the content or post was removed; and
    - iv. Any other information relevant to the removal.

18. If there is any doubt whether content or a post is removable, [director/head of the relevant department/the Information Technology Division/the City/Town Manager] should contact the City/Town's legal counsel prior to taking any action.
19. Quasi-judicial bodies/departments of the City/Town, including but not limited to the Zoning Board of Adjustment and the Planning Board, shall not have social media sites.

DRAFT