

TOWN OF FARMINGTON POLICY FOR USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

A. Purpose

The Town of Farmington endorses the secure use of social media to enhance communications, collaboration, and information exchange; streamline processes; and foster productivity. This policy establishes the Town's position on the utility and management of social media and provides guidance on its management, administration, and oversight. This policy is not meant to address one particular form of social media, rather social media in general terms as technology will outpace our ability to discover emerging technology and create policies governing its use.

B. Philosophy

Social media provides a new and potentially valuable means of assisting the Town and its personnel in meeting community outreach, problem-solving, and related objectives. This policy identifies potential uses that may be explored or expanded upon as deemed reasonable by administrative and supervisory personnel. The Town also recognizes the role that these tools play in the personal lives of some Town personnel. The personal use of social media can have a bearing on Town personnel in their official capacity. As such, this policy provides information of a precautionary nature as well as prohibitions on the use of social media by Town personnel.

C. Policy

1. Determine Strategy

- a. Where possible, each social media page shall include an introductory statement that clearly specifies the purpose and scope of the agency's presence on the website.
- b. Where possible, the page(s) should link to the Department's or Town's official website.
- c. Social media page(s) shall be designed for the target audience(s) such as youth or potential recruits.

2. Procedures

- a. All Town social media sites or pages shall be approved by the appropriate Department head or his or her designee.
- b. Where possible, social media pages shall clearly indicate they are maintained by the Town or Department and shall have Town or Department contact information prominently displayed.
- c. Social media content shall adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including all information technology and records management policies.

- (1) Content is subject to public record laws. Relevant records retention schedules apply to social media content.

Board of Selectmen approved with 5-0 vote June 23, 2014

(2) Content must be managed, stored, and retrieved to comply with open records laws and e-discovery laws and policies.

d. Where possible, social media pages should state that the opinions expressed by visitors to the page(s) do not reflect the opinions of the Town or Department.

(1) Pages shall clearly indicate that posted comments will be monitored and that the Town reserves the right to remove objectionable obscenities, off-topic comments, and personal attacks.

(2) Pages shall clearly indicate that any content posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure.

3. Town-Sanctioned Use

a. Town personnel representing the Town or Department via social media outlets shall do the following:

(1) Conduct themselves at all times as representatives of the Town or Department and, accordingly, shall adhere to all Town and Department standards of conduct and observe conventionally accepted protocols and proper decorum.

(2) Identify themselves as a member of the Town or Department.

(3) Not make statements about the guilt or innocence of any suspect or arrestee, or comments concerning pending prosecutions, nor post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate confidential information, including but not limited to documents, photographs, audio recordings or video recordings related to training, activities, personnel matters, medical matters, other material protected by confidentiality laws, or work-related assignments without express written permission.

(4) Adhere to the rule that during duty, or while representing the Department or the Town of Farmington, any and all media taken with personal or Town supplied media devices shall be the sole property of the Town of Farmington and will not be distributed in any fashion without permission from a proper authority.

(5) Not conduct political activities or private business.

b. The use of Town computers by employees to access social media is prohibited without authorization.

c. Employee use of personally owned devices to manage the Town or Department social media activities or in the course of official duties is prohibited without express written permission by the Department heads or their designee.

d. Employees shall observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and service mark restrictions in posting materials to electronic media.

4. Personal Use

a. Precautions and Prohibitions. Personnel shall abide by the following when using social media.

(1) On personal time, Employees are free to express themselves as private citizens on social media to the degree that their speech does not impair or impede performance of duties or negatively affect the public perception of the Department or Town.

Board of Selectmen approved with 5-0 vote June 23, 2014

- (2) As public employees, personnel are cautioned that their speech either on or off duty, and in the course of their official duties that has a nexus to the employee's professional duties and responsibilities may not necessarily be protected speech under the First Amendment. Personnel should assume that their speech and related activity on social media sites will reflect upon their position with the Town.
- (3) Employees shall not post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate any information to which they have access as a result of their position without permission from the appropriate authority.
- (4) Employees are cautioned not to display Town logos or information on personal web pages without prior permission. When using social media be mindful that speech becomes part of the World Wide Web.
- (5) Adherence to Town's code of conduct is required in the personal use of social media. Employees are prohibited from using speech containing obscene or sexually explicit language, images, or acts and statements or other forms of speech that ridicule, malign, disparage, or otherwise express bias against any race, any religion, or any protected class of individuals.
- (6) Personnel may not divulge information gained by reason of their authority; make any statements, speeches, appearances, and endorsements; or publish materials that could reasonably be considered to represent the views or positions of the Town without authorization for the proper authority.
- (7) Personnel should be aware that they may be subject to civil litigation for publishing or posting false information that harms the reputation of another person, group, or organization otherwise known as defamation. This includes publishing or posting private facts and personal information about someone without their permission that has not been previously revealed to the public, is not of legitimate public concern, and would be offensive to a reasonable person; or using someone else's name, likeness, or other personal attributes without that person's permission for an exploitative purpose; or publishing the creative work of another, trademarks, or certain confidential business information without the permission of the owner.
- (8) Town personnel should be aware that privacy settings and social media sites are constantly in flux, and they should never assume that personal information posted on such sites is protected.
- (9) Personnel should expect that any information created, transmitted, downloaded, exchanged, or discussed in a public online forum may be accessed by the Town at any time without prior notice.

(Note: I believe any breach of any rule in this policy is a "violation")

D. Discipline

Discipline for violations of this policy shall be governed by the Town of Farmington Personnel Policy and/or Department SOG's or SOP's.

Board of Selectmen approved with 5-0 vote June 23, 2014