



## **Town of Easton**

# **POLICY: SOCIAL MEDIA**

### **INTERNAL POLICY**

#### **Purpose**

This document defines the social networking and social media policy for The Town of Easton, the “Town”. To address the fast-changing landscape of the Internet and the way residents communicate and obtain information online, Town departments may consider using social media tools to reach a broader audience. The Town encourages the use of social media to further the goals of the Town and the missions of its departments, where appropriate. The Town has an overriding interest and expectation in deciding what is “spoken” on its behalf on social media sites. This policy establishes guidelines for the use of social media.

#### **Acceptable Use**

##### **1. Personal Use**

All Town employees and officials may have personal social networking, Web 2.0 and social media sites. These sites should remain personal in nature and be used to share personal opinions or non-work related information. Following this principle helps ensure a distinction between sharing personal and agency views.

Town employees and officials must never use their agency e-mail account or password in conjunction with a personal social networking, Web 2.0 or social media site.

The following guidance is for Town employees and officials who decide to have a personal social media, Web 2.0 or social networking site or who decide to comment on posts about official Town business:

- State your name and, if relevant, role, when discussing Town business;

## **2. Professional Use**

All official town-related communication through social media, Web 2.0 and social networking outlets should remain professional in nature and should always be conducted in accordance with the Town's communications policy, practices and expectations. Employees must not use official town social media, Web 2.0 or social networking sites for political purposes, to conduct private commercial transactions, or to engage in private business activities.

Town employees and officials should be mindful that inappropriate usage of official town social media, Web 2.0 and social networking sites can be grounds for disciplinary action. If social media, Web 2.0 and social networking sites are used for official town business, the entire town site, regardless of any personal views, is subject to best practices guidelines and standards.

Only individuals authorized by the Town may publish content to a town Web site or state agency social media platforms.

### **Approval and Registration**

All Town social media sites shall be (1) approved by the First Selectman; (2) published using approved social media networking platform and tools; and (3) administered by the town designated contact or their designee.

### **Oversight and Enforcement**

Employees and officials representing the Town through social media outlets or participating in social media features on town websites must maintain a high level of ethical conduct and professional decorum. Failure to do so is grounds for revoking the privilege to participate in town social media sites, blogs, or other social media features.

Information must be presented following professional standards for good grammar, spelling, brevity, clarity and accuracy, and avoid jargon or obscure terminology.

Town employees and officials recognize that the content and messages they post on social media websites are public and may be cited as official Town statements. Social media should not be used to circumvent other town communication policies, including news media policy requirements.

Town employees and officials may not publish information on town social media sites that includes:

- Confidential information
- Copyright violations

- Profanity, racist, sexist, or derogatory content or comments
- Partisan political views
- Commercial endorsements or SPAM

## **Records Retention**

Social media sites contain communications sent to or received by the Town and its employees and officials, and such communications are therefore public records subject to applicable public records statutes. These retention requirements apply regardless of the form of the record (for example, digital text, photos, audio, and video).

The Department maintaining a site shall preserve records pursuant to a relevant records retention schedules for the required retention period in a format that preserves the integrity of the original record and is easily accessible. Furthermore, retention of social media records shall fulfill the following requirements:

- Social media records are captured in a continuous, automated fashion throughout the day to minimize a potential loss of data due to deletion and/or changes on the social networking site.
- Social media records are maintained in an authentic format (i.e. ideally the native technical format provided by the social network, such as XML or JSON) along with complete metadata.
- Social media records are archived in a system that preserves the context of communications, including conversation threads and rich media, to ensure completeness and availability of relevant information when records are accessed.
- Social media records are indexed based on specific criteria such as date, content type, and keywords to ensure that records can be quickly located and produced in an appropriate format for distribution (e.g. PDF).
- Each employee or official who administers one or more social networking sites on behalf of the Town has self-service, read-only access to search and produce relevant social media records to fulfill public information and legal discovery requests as needed.

Town utilizes an automated archiving system provided by ArchiveSocial to comply with applicable public records law and fulfill the above record retention requirements. The Town archive is available at [www.archivesocial.com](http://www.archivesocial.com) .

## **EXTERNAL POLICY**

The following guidelines must be displayed to users on all social media sites or made available by hyperlink.

## **Moderation of Third Party Content**

This town social media site serves as a limited public forum and all content published is subject to monitoring. User-generated posts will be rejected or removed (if possible) when the content

- is off-subject or out of context
- contains obscenity or material that appeals to the prurient interest
- contains personal identifying information or sensitive personal information
- contains offensive terms that target protected classes
- is threatening, harassing or discriminatory
- incites or promotes violence or illegal activities
- contains information that reasonably could compromise individual or public safety
- advertises or promotes a commercial product or service, or any entity or individual
- promotes or endorses political campaigns and/or candidates

## **Public Records Law**

Town social media sites are subject to applicable public records laws. Any content maintained in a social media format related to town business, including communication posted by the Town and communication received from citizens, is a public record. The Department maintaining the site is responsible for responding completely and accurately to any public records request for social media content.