

TOWN OF HOWLAND

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY & GUIDELINES

The Town of Howland strives to provide the public with accurate and timely information, communicated in a professional manner and in accordance with the laws regarding public access.

- To effectively inform municipal officials and citizens about the Town of Howland.
- Electronic information tools such as the Town of Howland website, email, and postings to municipally related web sites and / or social media sites like Facebook.
- Media relations such as requests for interviews, news releases and media inquiries.
- Direct contact with the Town of Howland Administration, Municipal Officials and Employees.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR ALL COMMUNICATION (*OFFICIAL AND PERSONAL*)

The Town of Howland employees have a responsibility to help communicate accurate and timely information to residents and to the public in a professional manner. Any employee who identifies a mistake in reporting should bring the error first to their Supervisor /or Town Manager. Regardless of whether the communication is in the employee's official role or in a personal capacity, employees must comply with all laws related to trademark, copyright, software use, etc.

ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES FOR THE TOWN OF HOWLAND COMMUNICATION

Handling General Requests:

Staff is responsible for communicating basic and routine information to the public and customers in relation to their specific job duties. Requests for private data or information outside of the scope of an individual's job duties should be routed to the appropriate department /or to the employee's supervisor. All Freedom of Access requests received regardless of department shall be forwarded to attention the FOAA Officer (Town Manager).

Handling Media Requests:

With the exception of routine events and basic information that is readily available to the public, requests for interviews /or information requests from the media are to be routed first through the Town Manager/or Designee. Media requests *may include* direct contact from people who say they represent: print publications, such as weekly and daily newspapers and magazines; electronic media such as television and radio stations; and, informational websites. Department Managers are allowed to facilitate their own department media releases and once reviewed by the Town Manager forward to the person's making the request.

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Electronic and Social Media Communication on Behalf of the TOWN OF HOWLAND:

The Town of Howland communicates to residents and the public via its website (www.howlandmaine.com). The Town of Howland website is the primary internet presence and is the electronic “face” of the Town.

Social media include sites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and others.

The Town of Howland recognizes that residents and the public increasingly gather information through these and other electronic sites, sometimes to the exclusion of traditional media. Therefore it may be necessary to use these tools to communicate effectively and fully.

The best, most appropriate uses of social media generally fall into two categories:

- To disseminate time-sensitive material quickly.
- To enhance the Town of Howland’s ability to put its messages before the widest audience possible.

The Town of Howland recognizes that the instantaneous, yet permanent, nature of these electronic tools can pose risk without effective controls. A starting point for media reflect directly on the Town and municipal government. Great care should be used when doing so. The discussion is that information and statements posted on websites and through social media.

The Town of Howland will post its Facebook page as a non-interactive, business friendly/non-profit page on which we can limit, decline /or largely control outside posts.

Communication via electronic and social media on behalf of the Town of Howland can be done only by the following employees: Town Manager; and it’s Department Managers /or designated staff.

‘Personal’ Communication That Can Become ‘Public’:

It’s important for employees to remember that some personal communication of employees may reflect on the Town of Howland especially if employees are commenting on: anything political in nature; federal, state or local government activities or Town of Howland business. The following guidelines apply to personal communication including various forms of social media (Facebook, Twitter, blogs, YouTube, etc.), letters to the editor of newspapers and personal endorsements. Remember that what you write is public and may be so for a long time. It may be spread to large audiences. Use common sense when using email or social media sites. It is a good idea to refrain from sending or posting information that you would not want your

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supervisor or other employees to read, or that you would be embarrassed to see in a newspaper or on a prominent website. The Town of Howland expects its employees to be truthful, courteous and respectful toward supervisors, coworkers, residents, citizens, customers and other persons associated with the Town. Do not engage in name-calling or personal attacks. Patient information or identifying information will not be used. No photos of off duty activities will be posted.

- In the workplace, The Town of Howland employees should always identify themselves as such during official communication.
- The Town of Howland resources and working time shall not be used for personal profit or business interests, or to participate in personal political activity.
- Personal social media account names or email names should not be tied to the Towns. Employee questions related to this policy should be directed to your immediate supervisor.

Policy enacted by the Board of Selectmen on this _____ day of October, 2018.











Board of Selectmen