

Employee Conduct with Social Media

I. PURPOSE

The First Amendment to the United States Constitution guarantees the freedom of speech. The Town of Sabattus recognizes that employees are entitled to express themselves (including, without limitation, by means of spoken or written narratives, opinions, symbolism, photographs, videos, audio recordings, memes, caricatures, and sharing of postings made by social media users) via online platforms, software applications, and related technologies that allow users to share original and promoted content in various electronic formats, collectively known as "social media," so long as those forms of speech conform to applicable legal limitations on speech, do not create the appearance of official communications by the agency, and are consistent with Town standards of conduct.

This policy is intended to simultaneously preserve employees' right to freedom of speech and to serve as a guide for employees regarding their use of current and future forms of social media in conformance with legal and policy expectations for employee conduct.

The policy also considers that materials or information posted on social media may impact the safety and security of employees and the agency.

This policy recognizes that there are many legitimate personal purposes for social media use but establishes that employee misuse of social media may lead to disciplinary action.

II. POLICY

The following restrictions apply to employee personal use of social media. This includes use of social media by an employee in his or her personal capacity outside of work using non-Town resources (computers, internet access, email, etc.):

1. Employees shall not use Town equipment or resources to access personal social media platforms.
2. Employees shall not engage in personal social media activities during working time. To the extent that an employee uses social media during the workday outside of working time, such use shall not interfere with the performance of the employee's official duties.
3. When an employee's personal use of social media is related to subject matter pertinent to Town employment, it must be conducted in a manner that no impression is created that an employee is speaking on behalf of the Town.
4. If an employee identifies himself or herself as a Town employee or the employee's personal expression suggests that the employee is an employee of the Town, the employee should include a clear disclaimer indicating that the employee is not communicating on behalf of the Town, such as "The information on this site is not posted on behalf of the Town of Sabattus."
5. An employee's personal usage identity must be distinct from the Town usage identity, for example, established under a personal email account and not a Town email account.
6. Employees must refrain from disclosing Town confidential information.
7. Employees shall not engage in communications that would reasonably impair public trust in the Town or impair the Town's ability to perform its functions.
8. Town harassment and discrimination policies, confidentiality policies, and ethics rules are applicable to all social media usage.
9. Employees have the right to express themselves as private community members speaking on matters of public concern. However, that right may be outweighed by such considerations as the Town's interest in avoiding interference with its operations, maintaining discipline, promoting working relationships based on loyalty and confidentiality, avoiding obstructions to the performance of official duties, and avoiding abuses of authority.

This policy does not extend to, and is not intended to, impair or diminish employees' rights as provided by the Maine Municipal Public Employees Labor Relations Law or similar laws relating to collective bargaining.

III. POLICY UPDATE / ADDENDUM

This update is added as an addendum to the already legally signed Employee Conduct with Social Media policy. Except as expressly supplemented below, all existing provisions of the signed policy remain in full force and effect.

Personal Social Media Posts About the Town of Sabattus: Employees' personal social media posts that reference, mention, tag, or otherwise relate to the Town of Sabattus—whether directly or indirectly—are subject to the same guidelines and standards outlined in this policy. Employees are responsible for ensuring that such content complies with all confidentiality, professionalism, accuracy, and conduct requirements contained herein.

Disciplinary Action

Violations of this social media policy will be investigated and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. The severity of the disciplinary action will depend on the nature and impact of the violation, and may include:

- Verbal or written warning
- Suspension
- Loss of access to Town of Sabattus systems or accounts
- Termination of employment

The Town of Sabattus reserves the right to take legal action in cases where the violation causes significant harm or breaches applicable laws.

Reporting Violations

Employees who become aware of a violation of this policy are encouraged to report it to their supervisor or the Human Resources agent immediately. All reports will be handled confidentially and investigated promptly.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually and updated as necessary to reflect changes in technology, law, or Town of Sabattus operations.

Town of Sabattus

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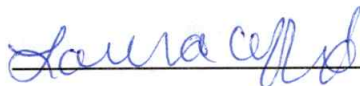
Selectwoman Noel Hinkley

Date

 8/4/26

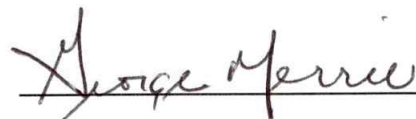
Selectman Richard Lacombe

Date

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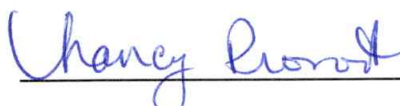
Selectwoman Laura Clifford

Date

 8.4.26

Selectman George Merrill

Date

 8/4/26

Selectwoman Nancy Provost

Date