

Administrative Policy No. 12

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY REGARDING TOWN-SPONSORED SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

Purpose:

The Town may utilize social media and social network sites to further enhance communications with the public and various organizations in support of Town goals and objectives.

Definitions:

For the purpose of this Town Social Media Policy, the following terms are defined below:

1. **Social Media or Social Network:** Social Media or a Social Network is content created by individuals using accessible web-based and mobile technologies to communicate through interactive dialogue and/or to share information, ideas, messages, and other content (i.e. videos). Examples of social media include Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.
2. **Social Media Administrator:** An authorized Town employee that is responsible for creating, reviewing, authorizing, and allowing content to be posted to a Town social media site.
3. **Commenter:** A Town official, employee and/or member of the public who submits a comment on a Town-sponsored social media site.

Policy:

1. All Town-sponsored social media sites shall be (1) approved by the Town Manager and/or his designee (2) published using approved Town social networking platform and tools; and (3) administered by the Town Manager and/or designee who will serve as the Social Media Administrator. Designees can be any employee designated by the Town Manager that has a complete understanding of this policy and has appropriate technical experience and training.
2. All Town social networking site shall adhere to applicable Town, County, State, and Federal laws, regulations and policies including all Information Technology and Records Management policies.
3. Public records laws, the Freedom of Information Act and e-discovery laws, and policies apply to social media content and therefore shall be managed, stored and retrieved to comply with these laws.
4. All social network sites shall clearly indicate that any content posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure law.
5. Where possible, these social networking sites should attempt to link back to the official Town website (www.swansboro-nc.org) for forms, documents and other information.
6. Town-sponsored social networking content and comments containing any of the following shall not be allowed for posting and may be removed:
 - a. Comments not topically related to the particular site being commented upon;
 - b. Profane, malicious, offensive, threatening or insulting language;

- c. Content, profiles, pictures, avatars and/or usernames that promote, foster or perpetuate discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, economic status, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation.
 - d. Sexual content or links to sexual content
 - e. Solicitations or advertising
 - f. Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity; copyright, patent or trademark violations;
 - g. Information that may compromise the safety and security of the public or public systems;
 - h. Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party;
 - i. Personally identifiable information, such as addresses, telephone numbers, social security numbers, driver's license numbers, HIPPA protected or other private and/or sensitive information.
 - j. Character attacks;
 - k. False or misleading representations; and/or
 - l. Unauthorized hyperlinks.
7. The Town reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of this policy or any applicable law in accordance with Policy – Item 6, above.
 8. Content that is deemed not suitable for posting by a Town Social Media Administrator because it is not topically related to the particular social networking site objective being commented upon, or is deemed prohibited content based on the criteria in Policy – Item 6 of this policy, shall be printed and kept in a file with a description of the reason the specific content is deemed not suitable for posting.
 9. All Town Social Media Administrators shall be provided a copy of this Town policy, and explained their responsibilities to review content submitted for posting to ensure compliance with the policy.
 10. All social networking sites shall clearly indicate they are maintained by the Town and shall have Town contact information prominently displayed, where available. They shall also state the “this site is not monitored at all times, do not use this forum to report emergency situations and/or time-sensitive issues.”
 11. Employees representing the Town via social media outlets shall conduct themselves at all times as representative of the Town and in accordance with all Town policies.
 12. Employees found in violation of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Employee Guidance for Participating in Social Networking:

The Town understands that social networking and Internet services have become a common form of communication in the workplace and among citizens, businesses, visitors and the general public. Social networks are online communities of people or organizations that share interests

and/or activities and use a wide variety of internet technology to make the interaction a rich and robust experience.

Employees that choose to participate in social networks as a Town employee shall adhere to the following guidelines.

1. Town policies, rules, regulations and standards of conduct apply to employees that engage in social networking activities while conducting Town business. Use of your Town computer (or Town portable electronic devices), Town email address and communicating in your official capacity will constitute conducting Town business.
2. Departments have the option of allowing employees to participate in social networking sites as part of their job duties, with Town Manager approval.
3. Town-sponsored social media sites shall be established in accordance with Policy – Item 1 above.
4. Follow all public laws, fair use and financial disclosure laws and any other laws that might apply to the Town.
5. Employees should not use copyrighted material, trademarks or content of the Town (i.e. Town seal, pictures, etc.) as well as third parties without the necessary permission from the rights holder.
6. Employees who are not authorized by the Town to serve as Social Media Administrators shall make it clear that they are speaking for themselves and not on behalf of the Town. If you publish content on any site outside of the Town and it has something to do with the work you do or a subject(s) associated with the Town, use a disclaimer such as this: “The postings on this site are my own and don’t necessarily represent the Town’s positions or opinions.”
7. Do not use ethnic slurs, profanity, personal insults and/or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in the Town’s workplace. Do not share information about another employee’s opinions, beliefs, thoughts and emotions. Avoid posting pictures, audio and videos without the permission of those featured in them. Do not disclose facts or information gained through unreasonable intrusion.
8. If you identify yourself as a Town employee, ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself to your colleagues, and citizens. Use common sense.
9. Correct your mistakes (before publishing a comment). Do not alter previous posts.
10. Frame any comments and/or opposing views in a positive manner.
11. Use caution when interacting with outside entities. Do not conduct Town business communications, internal or external, using private, or Town sponsored social media sites. Instead, use Town email for standard Town business communications.
12. Social Media Administrators of Town-sponsored sites shall employ strong passwords, which shall be changed periodically. The passwords that are used for all Town related social media accounts will be provided to the Town Manager and/or designee.

13. Participation in a Town-sponsored social media site will be at your own risk. The right of privacy should not be expected within any communication. By participating, you take personal responsibility for your comments, your username, and any information that you provide. You may be personally and legally responsible for any posting you make on a Town sponsored social media site.

Violations of Policy:

Violations of this policy will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and may result in loss of internet access for the user and, depending on the severity of the infraction, may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Violations may also result in fines as well as criminal misdemeanor or felony claims in accordance with applicable laws.

Signed: _____
David M. Harvell, Town Manager

November 19, 2012