

Town of Needham
Access and Use of the Town's Social Media Policy
Personnel Administration #430

I. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance regarding appropriate professional use of social media platforms. This document governs social media use by employees acting in their official capacities on behalf of the Town of Needham ("Town").

The Town actively engages with residents, businesses, visitors and others through various official social media platforms. As the Town increases its use of these and other social networking sites, it is imperative that employees understand the responsibilities and expectations governing the use of these tools.

II. APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to all Town of Needham employees acting on behalf of the Town and any other person ("user") using social media to communicate on behalf of the Town.

III. DEFINITIONS

Refer to Policy # 100 Definitions for the definition of commonly used words and phrases.

Social Media: For the purposes of this policy, "social media" covers tools and technologies that allow a user to share communications, postings or information, or participate in social networking, including but not limited to blogs and microblogs social networks, video and photo sharing websites, online forums and discussion boards, and automated data feeds.

Professional Use: Social Media engagement on behalf of the Town and as authorized by the Town's Director of Communications and Community Engagement (DCCE) on sites where the Town has an official web presence.

Official: For the purposes of this policy, "official" refers to any site or process authorized for use by the Town Manager and set up by the DCCE, Town employees, agents, or contractors, which serves to communicate sanctioned Town of Needham information or engage citizens with information about topics, services, events, or processes administered by the Town of Needham.

Authorized User: An employee appointed by the department manager to post and/or manage content on a social media account. An authorized user may have access to the account's username and password.

IV. POLICY

It is the policy of the Town of Needham to support the official use of social media to assist users in accomplishing the Town's mission of informing and engaging residents, businesses, employees, visitors and others in Town activity. The Town believes that appropriate use of social media improves transparency, collaboration, and engagement in the Town. Examples of use of social media for the purposes of community engagement include targeted communications and media relations, promoting and encouraging communication with the public, and providing information about Town resources, operations, services and events, as well as building closures or schedule changes.

Users are expected to exercise reasonable judgment in interpreting this policy and in making decisions about the use of the Town's social media sites and identities. Any questions regarding the application or meaning of this policy should seek clarification from their department manager, supervisor or DCCE.

V. PROCEDURES

1. All of the Town's social media sites that are managed by departments and offices will be subject to approval by the DCCE.
2. The Town will approach the use of social media tools as consistently as possible, on an enterprise-wide basis.
3. All new social media tools proposed for Town use must be approved by the Town Manager or DCCE.
4. The appropriate department manager or their designee will be responsible for the content and upkeep (including maintenance and monitoring) of any social media site that the department creates.
5. Users shall not post on a matter of public concern as a spokesperson for the Department without express authorization from the Department manager or their designee. This includes the use of department titles, logos, department-owned images, or identification as a member of the department.
6. The Town's social media sites shall comply with all appropriate Town policies and procedures, and all applicable conflict of interest and ethics rules.
7. The Town's social media sites are subject to the Commonwealth's Public Records Law, which states that any electronic communication created or received by a public employee/official in their capacity as such, is subject to retention and possibly disclosure, in whole or in redacted part. The department maintaining the site is responsible for responding completely and accurately to any public records request for social media provided, however, such requests shall be submitted to the Records Access Officer (RAO). Additionally, the Town is committed to protecting any

sensitive data from the public by Massachusetts General Laws or any Federal law or regulation.

8. All official Town appearances on social media sites or services are considered an extension of the Town's information networks and are governed by all Town Personnel Policies and applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations. Employees representing the Town through social media outlets must always conduct themselves as representatives of the Town. Efforts should be made to avoid grammatical errors and the use of jargon and uncommon abbreviations whenever possible.

VI. ADMINISTRATION

1. The DCCE will maintain a list of authorized users approved to access and post content on behalf of the Town.
2. The DCCE will maintain a list of the Town's social media sites, including login and password information. The appropriate department manager or designee will inform the DCCE of any new social media sites or administrative changes to existing sites.
3. The DCCE must be able to immediately edit or remove content from all social media sites associated with the Town.

VII. EXPECTATIONS OF STAFF – PROFESSIONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

1. On-duty use of Town social media
 - a) Official use of the Town's social media by employees representing the Town shall maintain the same high level of ethical conduct and professional decorum expected in all Town business and public communications. Failure to do so will result in the revocation of the privilege to participate in Town social media and may be grounds for additional discipline.
 - b) Only authorized users identified by department managers and communicated to the DCCE may access and post content to official Town social media platforms, unless otherwise approved by the Town Manager.
 - c) Authorized users should refrain from posting sensitive or proprietary information. Such content, if needed to be shared, should be authorized by the DCCE prior to posting. Content, posts, comments, and responses made in an official Town capacity must not contain partisan political views, explicit commercial endorsements or discriminatory, racist, offensive, obscene, inflammatory, unlawful or otherwise objectionable statements, language, or content.
 - d) Authorized users of official Town social media platforms should ensure that they maintain any personal social media accounts separately from their official accounts. Doing so helps to ensure that personal and professional postings are not mistakenly posted to the wrong pages.

- e) Authorized users must safeguard their account credentials and shall not share them with others.
- f) Employees who post photos, comments, etc. of other department employees should inform and seek approval from the employee(s) before posting.
- g) Authorized users may not use official Town social media channels for political purposes or to support, oppose or promote any 3rd party interest unless otherwise approved by the Town Manager or DCCE.
- h) If an employee determines that a 3rd party posting should be responded to by a Town Department or the Town Manager's Office, the employee should communicate that to the DCCE. The DCCE will work with the appropriate Town official to determine whether a response is warranted and who should deliver said response.
- i) Authorized users may not delete or hide public comments or block members of the public from accessing the social media platform unless the public member violates the Town's Terms of Use. If a question arises on whether an individual's comment should be deleted or hidden or if a member of the public can be blocked, the authorized user should seek guidance from the DCCE.

2. Off-duty access to Town social media

- a) Official use of Town social media platforms should be limited to standard working hours unless necessary or as determined by the department manager or DCCE.
- b) Town employees must be authorized by their department manager to post content outside of standard working hours.

3. Off-duty use of Town social media

- a) Town content that is posted outside of normal business hours must comply with all applicable conflict of interest rules and regulations, including those outlined in Section V above.
- b) Department managers remain responsible for content that is posted on the Town's social media pages outside of normal business hours. Whenever possible, authorized users must obtain pre-approval for content posting and/or post commenting outside of standard working hours.

VIII. EXCEPTIONS

The Town Manager and DCCE have the discretion to interpret and make exceptions to this policy in the best interest of the Town.

IX. COMPLAINTS OR PROBLEMS OF MISUSE

Should any Town employee receive or become aware of a violation of this policy, including but not limited to a harassing, offensive, threatening or intimidating

communication via social media from another user, the employee should report the violation as soon as possible to their department manager.

The Town prohibits retaliation against any member for reporting a possible violation of this policy or for cooperating in the investigation of a possible violation.

X. VIOLATION OF POLICY

Failure to comply with any and all provisions of this policy may result in the revoked access by to the Town's social media platforms.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RECEIPT OF POLICY

I acknowledge receipt of this ACCESS AND USE OF THE TOWN'S SOCIAL MEDIA policy (#430) from the Town of Needham, and I have read, understand and agree to comply with its contents.

Name (Print)

Signature

Date