

Town of Needham
Personal Use of Social Media Policy
Personnel Administration #431

I. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance regarding appropriate personal use of social media platforms. This document informs employees of appropriate and acceptable use of their own personal social media accounts as it relates to any Town business or representations made as a Town employee.

II. APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to Town employees during work hours and after work hours, while engaging or causing others to engage in social media. Uniformed employees in the Police Department and the Fire department are subject only to those provisions in this policy which are not specifically regulated by their department's existing policies.

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.

Personal Use: Day-to-day use of personal social media sites by employees, not related to official duties.

IV. POLICY

The Town recognizes employees' right to maintain a personal social media presence. This policy is designed to aid employees and other users in understanding and adhering to acceptable personal use of social media.

This policy is designed to promote appropriate personal use of social media in a responsible manner and to avoid uses that can : 1) breach confidentiality by revealing protected information about the Town, its residents or its employees 2) expose the Town to legal liability for employer or employee behavior that may be harassing, offensive or maliciously false or 3) interfere with productivity and/or the ability to perform the duties and responsibilities as employees of the Town.

Any person with questions regarding the application or meaning of this policy should seek clarification from their department manager, supervisor or Director of Communication and Community Engagement (DCCE).

V. PROCEDURES

1. Town employees are expected to use the Internet responsibly and productively, and excessive personal Internet browsing, including personal social media use, is not permitted while on duty. Further, the Town reserves the right to monitor how employees use Town-owned property, including computers and networking equipment, and employees should be mindful that all web browsing done on Town devices, property, and/or premises may be monitored.
2. Employees may not misrepresent any non-Official Town Social Media site as a Town of Needham Official Town Social Media site. The use of the Town's name and/or of the Town Seal, logo or brand is prohibited unless approved by the Town Manager or designee.
3. Employees may not post information on a non-Official Town Social Media site which may indicate that the information is being posted in their capacity as a Town employee, that it constitutes official information of the Town, or that it represents an official viewpoint of the Town. If in connection with a posting on a non-Official Town Social Media site an employee identifies themselves as a Town employee, or it is reasonable to conclude that readers will know that they are a Town employee, a statement must be included that the posting is not made on behalf of and does not represent an official viewpoint of the Town.
4. Town employees should be mindful that they are personally responsible for what they post online and that what they post online will likely remain searchable in perpetuity.

VI. EXPECTATIONS OF STAFF

1. The Town recognizes the rights of an employee to speak publicly as a private citizen on matters of public concern to the extent guaranteed by constitutional provisions on free speech, or in communication with other employees or employee representatives for the purpose of engaging in concerted (joint) activities relative to workplace issues (for example, wages or working conditions) as may be guaranteed by labor laws. This policy is not intended to infringe upon these rights.
2. Needham employees are held to the highest standards of ethical conduct on and off the job. Therefore, in accordance with the Town's anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies, an employee may not use their personal social media to harass, bully or discriminate against an individual or group. Employees are expected to

comply with work rules regarding appropriateness of communication when posting on their personal social media accounts.

3. Employees may not use Town email addresses or passwords in conjunction with a personal social media site.
4. Use of a personal account to post on a matter related to the Town government, must include a disclaimer clarifying that the social media communications reflect only the employee's personal views and do not represent the views of the employee's department or the Town. If the Town determines that an employee's activity on their personal social media channels may be confused as representative of the employee's official duties or Town's official views, the Town may act as appropriate.
5. Employees should be mindful that even when including a disclaimer in a personal post related to the Town, the public will be more likely to view this content as representative of an official position of the Town government.

VII. EXCEPTIONS

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

VIII. 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. Any employee who retaliates against another employee for reporting a possible violation of the policy or for cooperating in an investigation will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination from employment.

IX. VIOLATION OF POLICY

Failure to comply with any and all provisions of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination from Town service.