

# **TOWN OF ORFORD**

## **SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

### **PURPOSE**

This document defines the social networking and social media policy for the Town of Orford, NH, the “Town.” To address the fast-changing landscape of the internet and the way residents communicate and obtain information online, Town departments, agency, board, committee, or commission may consider using social media tools to reach a broader audience. The Town encourages the use of social media to further the goals of the Town and the missions of its departments, where appropriate.

This policy establishes the Town’s position on the utility and management of social media and provides guidance on its management, administration, and oversight. This policy is not meant to address one particular form of social media, rather social media in general, as advances in technology will occur and new tools will emerge. For purposes of this policy, the term “social media” means any online source that allows people to communicate, share information, photos, videos, audio and/or text and any other multimedia files with others via some form of online or cellular network platform, whether using a computer, mobile/cellular telephone, or other device.

To build communication and trust with our residents and visitors, Orford aims to effectively use Social Media Accounts to:

- Provide information
- Support community engagement and outreach
- Support marketing and promotional campaigns
- Frame the public conversation around the Town
- Assist with recruitment efforts

### **ORGANIZATIONS AFFECTED**

All Town departments, employees, officials, volunteers, agents, representatives, Boards, Commissions and Committees.

### **SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE**

#### **1. Determine Strategy**

- a. Official Social Media page(s), accounts, profiles, etc. (“pages” or “sites” or “accounts”) will be identified by using the “Town of Orford” for the header of the page(s), with the department, agency, board, committee, or commission listed below the header.
- b. Where possible, each social media page shall include an introductory statement that clearly specifies the purpose and scope of the department, agency, board, committee, or commission.
- c. Official Social Media pages shall include a link to the Town’s Official Webpage, and list the department, agency, board, committee, or commission contact information.
- d. Social media page(s) shall be designed for the target audience(s).

- e. Official Social Media pages are considered the property of the Town, not of the person(s) acting as site administrator or those associated with the department, agency, board, committee, or commission, and as such, those persons do not retain any ownership or other rights regarding such pages after their employment, position or official relationship with the Town has ended.
- f. Posting of information and comments on all official social media shall be restricted to Town authorized persons only, as determined by the Selectboard.

## **2. Procedures**

- a. All Official Social Media sites or pages shall be approved by the Selectboard and the Selectboard shall designate the administrator of the site. Usually this will be the Department, Board, Commission, or Committee chair. The secondary administrator will be the Town Administrative Assistant (TAA).
- b. Official Social Media pages shall clearly indicate they are maintained by the department, agency, board, committee, or commission and shall have that entity's contact information prominently displayed.
- c. Official Social Media sites shall restrict access for postings or comments to designated officials and administrators. No public posting or comments will be permitted on any Official Social Media sites. Each Official Social Media page/profile will include a statement similar to the following: "This page/site is intended for the distribution of information on behalf of the Town of Orford. It is not a public forum of any kind."
- d. Social media content shall adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including all information technology and records management policies.
  - i. Content is subject to public records laws. Relevant records retention schedules apply to social media content.
  - ii. Content must be managed, stored, and retrieved to comply with open records laws and e-discovery laws and policies.
- e. The TAA will securely maintain a list of all Official Social Media accounts with the corresponding Town email addresses and passwords that are associated with them. This ensures that the Town will have access and control of the Official Social Media account when the site administrator leaves Town employment or service or changes roles.

## **3. Town-Sanctioned Use**

- a. Town personnel representing the Town on Official Social Media sites, pages and accounts shall do the following:
  - i. Always conduct themselves professionally as representatives of the Town and, accordingly, shall adhere to all Town standards of conduct and observe conventionally accepted protocols and proper decorum.
  - ii. Identify themselves as a member of the Town.
  - iii. Not make statements, transmit, or otherwise disseminate confidential information, including photographs or videos, related to Town training, activities, or work-related assignments, or any information that would be

exempt from disclosure under RSA 91-A without express written permission of the department head responsible for the site.

iv. Not use such sites to conduct political activities or transact any commercial or private business or for any other private, non-Town related uses.

v. Not use such sites to express their personal views or values.

b. The use of Town computers or devices by Town personnel to access social media (other than Official Social Media pages of the Town) is prohibited without authorization.

c. Town personnel use of personally owned devices to manage the department's social media activities or in the course of official duties is prohibited without express written permission.

d. Employees shall observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and service mark restrictions in posting materials to electronic media.

e. Inappropriate use of any of the Town's official social media by a Town employee can be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

#### **4. Deregistering an Existing Page**

If an Official Social Media page is no longer of use, the administrator shall (1) notify the Selectboard, (2) ensure records have been archived according to Town, State and Federal guidelines, (3) unpublish and delete the page.

#### **5. Social Media and the Constitution**

As a government user of social media, the Town is mindful of its obligations and the safeguards in place under both the Federal and New Hampshire Constitutions. For example, the Town acknowledges and agrees that government agencies must uphold an individual right to freedom of speech as set forth in both the Federal and New Hampshire Constitutions. Consistent with its obligations under both the Federal and New Hampshire Constitutions, to the extent any Official Social Media pages were to permit posts, comments, messages, or any interaction on these platforms by the public, such posts, comments, messages, or interactions will not be deleted, hidden, or blocked by the Town.

#### **6. Public Employee Speech (RSA 98-E)**

Consistent with the provisions of RSA 98-E, this policy shall not be interpreted or applied in any manner that prevents any Town employee acting in their personal capacity from publicly discussing or giving opinions as an individual on any matter concerning a governmental entity or its policies.

#### **7. Public Records Law (RSA 91-A)**

The Town's Official Social Media accounts are subject to the applicable public records laws. Any content maintained on an Official Social Media account related to Town business, including communication posted by the Town and communications and/or comments received from any other user, is a public record and as such may be subject to disclosure under the law. The department, agency, board, committee, or commission maintaining the official Town social media account is responsible for responding

completely and accurately to any public records request pertaining to said social media account.

## **POSTING**

Official Social Media sites need to be clear, precise and follow industry best practices for posting updates. All content posted to Town official social media should be:

- Relevant – Information that engages residents and pertains to their daily lives
- Timely – Pertains to deadlines, upcoming events, or current news
- Actionable – Prompts residents to act.

What Not to Post: None of the Official Social Media administrators, secondary administrators, or other Town employee, official, volunteer or agent may publish content on Town Official Social Media sites that includes:

- Confidential information (information that would be exempt from disclosure under RSA 91-A or any other statute)
- Copyrighted or other material that requires permission or a release without such permission or release (it is the responsibility of the particular administrator to obtain these when required)
- Profane, racist, sexist, threatening or derogatory content or comments
- Partisan political views
- Commercial endorsements or SPAM

## **MODERATION OF THIRD-PARTY CONTENT**

Third party postings or comments are not allowed on Official Social Media sites. We do not allow information intended to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems.

## **PERSONAL VS. PROFESSIONAL GUIDELINES**

### **Personal Use**

All Town employees may have personal social media sites, accounts, profiles, etc. These should remain personal in nature and share personal opinions. While Town employees may have a First Amendment right to comment on some Town issues that are of significant public concern, and an RSA 98-E right to publicly discuss and give opinions as an individual regarding the Town, employees should know that posts about Town issues that are closer to employment complaints or human resources concerns may not be protected. Employees should exercise caution every time when commenting or acting on any social media platform and be clear about whether they are acting in their personal capacity or are acting on behalf of the Town or as a spokesperson for the Town. Employees are advised and reminded that actions, comments and posting on their personal accounts could violate Town policies and may subject the employee to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Town employees may never use their Town e-mail account or address in conjunction with a personal social media site, account, profile, etc. Absent approval from the Selectboard, no Town employee shall use their personal social media account to post or comment on behalf of the Town, or any department, agency, board, committee, or commission of the Town or in their official capacity. Such approval will be granted only when dictated by necessity.

The following guidance is for Town employees who decide to have a personal social media or who decide to comment on posts about official Town business:

- State your name and, if relevant, role, when speaking or acting on behalf of the Town;
- When commenting or acting in a personal capacity on any social media platform, avoid referencing your position, role or employment with the Town, or posting any photo or video of yourself wearing any uniform, badge, official insignia, or clothing that would cause a reasonable person to conclude that you are acting or commenting in your official capacity on behalf of the Town or as its spokesperson;
- Use a disclaimer in a prominent position on your personal sites, pages, accounts, etc. such as: “The postings on this site are my own and don’t reflect or represent the opinions of the Town for which I work.”
- Use a disclaimer on your individual posts or comments such as: “This post or comment is being made in my individual and personal capacity. I am not speaking on behalf of the Town for which I work.”
- Personal Social media sites, accounts, profiles, etc. may not be named or labeled such that they may be confused with an official Town department, agency, board, commission or committee name as listed on the Town website or any official social media of the Town.

## **RETENTION**

Any communications sent to or received by the Town and its employees, officials, volunteers or agents via official social media may be subject to our retention and disclosure requirements. We are required to comply with RSA Chapter 91-A to ensure government is open and that the public has access to public records and information of which our Town is the custodian. These retention requirements apply regardless of the form of the record (e.g., digital text, photos, audio, and video). To that end, we will collect and store all information posted on Official Social Media sites. All such information may be subject to public disclosure under RSA Chapter 91-A, even if it has been deleted. The Town department, agency, board, committee, or commission maintaining a site shall preserve records pursuant to the records retention schedule in RSA Chapter 33-A and any applicable Town policies.

## **EMERGENCY POSTINGS**

Social media sites are not monitored or updated 24/7. If there is an emergency, contact 911.

Adopted 11/08/2023 by the Orford Selectboard - John Adams, Kevin Follensbee, P. Chase Kling