

Town of Weare, NH

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

It is the policy of the Town of Weare to ensure that certain standards are set with respect to social media to serve all its constituents in a positive, productive manner. The Town supports the use of social media as a method to communicate information to its citizens regarding its Town government. The primary mission of the Town's social media efforts will be focused on providing information on Town services and programs to the general public. Citizens are encouraged to use social media avenues to communicate with Town Departments on service related issues.

This policy provides guidance for employees/volunteers use of social media, which should be broadly understood for purposes of this policy to include blogs, wikis, microblogs, message boards, chat rooms, electronic newsletters, online forums, social networking sites, and other sites and services that permit users to share information with others in a contemporaneous manner.

The following principles apply to professional use of social media on behalf of the Town of Weare, as well as personal use of social media.

- Employees/volunteers should be aware of the effect their actions may have on their images, as well as the Town's image. The information that employees/volunteers post or publish may be public information for a long time.
- Employees/volunteers should be aware that the Town may observe content and information made available by employees/volunteers through social media. Employees/volunteers should use their best judgment in posting material that is neither inappropriate nor harmful to the Town, its employees, volunteers or residents.
- Although not an exclusive list, some specific examples of prohibited social media conduct include posting commentary, content, or images that are defamatory, pornographic, proprietary, harassing, and libelous, that can create a hostile work environment, or otherwise reflect poorly on the town.
- Employees/volunteers are not to publish post or release any information that is considered confidential or not public. If there are questions about what is considered confidential, employees/volunteers should check with the Town Administrator.
- Social media networks, blogs and other types of online content sometimes generate press and media attention or legal questions. Employees/volunteers should refer these inquiries to their respective department head, and/or the Town Administrator.
- If employees/volunteers encounter a situation while using social media that threatens to become antagonistic, employees should disengage from the dialogue in a polite manner and seek the advice of a supervisor.

- Employees/volunteers should get appropriate permission before referring or posting images of current or former employees/volunteers, or customers. Additionally, employees/volunteers should get appropriate permission to use a third party's copyrights, copyrighted material, trademarks, service marks or other intellectual property.
- Social media use shouldn't interfere with employees/volunteers responsibilities. The Town's computer systems are to be used for business purposes only. When using the Town's computer systems, use of social media for business purposes is allowed (ex: Facebook, Twitter) but personal use of social media networks or personal blogging is prohibited and could result in disciplinary action or termination.
- Subject to applicable law, after-hours online activity that violates the Town's Personnel Policy or any other Town policy may subject an employee to disciplinary action or termination.
- If employees/volunteers publish content after-hours that involves work or subjects associated with the Town, a disclaimer should be used, such as this: "The postings on this site are my own and may not represent the Town of Weare's positions, strategies or opinions."
- It is highly recommended that employees/volunteers keep Town related social media accounts separate from personal accounts.

Town department heads, employees/volunteers and certain officials may post content in their official capacity, if authorized to do so. When doing so, they shall log in as a Town social media administrator and sign the comment with their initials. If there is a question as to whether an item may be acceptable, the Town Administrator shall be contacted.

Employees/volunteers are prohibited from using any social media websites to publicly display Town-owned badges, uniforms, logos, insignia, tools, equipment, vehicles or other images of Town-owned property in a manner that is not consistent with existing departmental rules, regulations, guidelines, or standard operating procedures. (These guidelines do not apply in the event that a department has no such rules, regulations or procedures that apply.)

Employees/volunteers shall not post, transmit or distribute any images obtained from a work place while on-duty, to include scenes of accidents, crimes, fires, training sites or any other municipal activity except upon written authorization from the employees/volunteers immediate supervisor. (This guideline does not apply to images made during a public meeting as otherwise allowed under RSA 91-A:2.) The unauthorized release or distribution of any photograph or video recording of an incident victim will be cause for immediate termination as a Town employee/volunteer.

Employees who participate in social networking while off-duty shall maintain an appropriate level of professionalism and decorum when making reference to municipal operations or other Town employees/volunteers, agents or officials.

The Town recognizes all employees/volunteers have constitutionally protected rights pertaining to freedom of speech, freedom of expression, freedom of association, and protections afforded under the Whistle Blower's Protection Act. In addition, employees have a right to discuss their wages, hours, and working conditions with co-workers and others. However, any social media displays of willful or deliberate malicious acts that result in the disruption of workplace relationships will be treated as though the behavior took place while in the employment of the Town. The following social media situations by employees/volunteers are likely to result in the imposition of disciplinary action, up to and including termination:

- Behavior that is directed towards a Town official using language that is insubordinate, defamatory, slanderous or unlawful;
- Conduct that interferes with the maintenance of essential workplace discipline;
- Actions of an obscene or derogatory nature that damage or impair the reputation and/or efficiency of municipal operations;
- Cyber-bullying directed towards any one employee/volunteer

ADOPTED BY BOARD OF SELECTMEN: August 29, 2016