



Social Media Use Policy, Standards and Procedures

Purpose

To address the fast-changing landscape of the Internet, the way residents and businesses communicate and obtain information about the Town of Bedford online. The Town of Bedford departments 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.

The Town has an overriding interest and expectation in deciding what is posted or communicated on behalf of the Town on social media sites. The policy intent establishes internal procedures for the use of social media.

What is Social Media? Social Media is a term used to refer to activities that integrate technology, social interaction and content creation. This media allows people to generate, organize, share, edit and comment on web content by means of RSS and other web feeds, blogs, mashups, widgets, wikis, podcasts and photo/video sharing.

General

All of the Town's social media sites that are posted by departments and offices will be subject to approval by the department head or designee. The Town's website (<http://www.bedfordnh.org>) will remain the Town's primary and predominant internet presence. The most appropriate uses of social media tools are as informational channels to increase the Town's ability to broadcast its messages to the widest possible audience. As is the case for the Town's website, the department's director or designee will be responsible for the content and upkeep (including maintenance and monitoring) of any social media site that a department may create. The Town's social media sites are subject to the New Hampshire 91-A Right to Know Law. Any content maintained in a social media format that is related to Town business, including a list of subscribers and posted communication (with certain exceptions), is a public record. The department maintaining the site is responsible for responding completely and accurately to any requests for public records on social media. Content related to Town business shall be maintained in an accessible format so that it can be produced in response to a request.

Wherever possible, such sites shall clearly indicate that any articles and any other content posted or submitted for posting may be or are subject to public disclosure upon request. Users shall be notified that public disclosure requests must be directed to the relevant department's director or designee.

Users and visitors to the Town's social media sites shall be notified that the intended purpose of the site is to serve as a means of communication between Town departments and members of the public. The Town's social media site articles, posts and comments containing any of the following forms of content shall not be allowed and shall be removed as soon as possible:

- a. Profane language or content
- b. Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation
- c. Sexual content or links to sexual content
- d. Solicitations of commerce
- e. Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity
- f. Information that may compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems.
- g. Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party.

Users shall be informed by posting to the Town's social media sites that the Town disclaims any and all responsibility and liability for any materials that the Town deems inappropriate for posting, which cannot be removed in an expeditious and otherwise timely manner. Any content removed based on these guidelines must be retained, including the time, date and identity of the poster when available (see the Town's Twitter, Facebook and Video Posting standards), in accordance with New Hampshire 91-A Right to Know Law on the retention of such information. The Town reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of this policy or any applicable law. The Town will approach the use of social media tools as consistently as possible, enterprise wide.

Procedures

Administration of the Town's Social Media Sites

The following social media tools have been approved by the Town and standards have been developed for their use:

Twitter - Twitter Standard
Facebook - Facebook Standard
Video & Other Online Content -

Twitter, Facebook, & Other Online Content Standard

Twitter

Twitter is a micro-blogging tool that allows account holders to tweet up to 140 characters of information to followers. By procuring and maintaining Twitter accounts, Town departments will communicate information directly to their Twitter followers, alerting them to news and directing them to the Town's website for more information. These standards should be used in conjunction with the Town's Social Media Use Policy, Standards and Procedures.

Facebook

Businesses and government agencies have joined individuals in using Facebook to promote activities, programs, projects and events. This standard is designed for Town

departments looking to drive traffic to department websites and to inform more people about Town activities. These standards should be used in conjunction with the Town's Social Media Use Policy, Standards and Procedures and Video Posting policy. As Facebook changes, these standards may be updated as needed.

Other Online Content

The Town will enable access to online content, as this is the way many residents communicate and obtain information online. Key objectives for video, attachments, and all other online content shall meet one or more of the follow goals: further the department's mission, provide information about Town services, showcase the Town and community events, and explore Town issues.

Content

- I. A department's director or designee shall hold and maintain that department's Twitter and Facebook accounts. Each department may have multiple Twitter and Facebook accounts, and may have accounts which reference the department administrative personnel. There may be a need to authorize an outside source the ability to post pictures and videos such as a department photographer. Each person may be allowed by the individual department head. A department's Twitter and Facebook Account biography and/or background information will include a link to Town's website where the following disclaimer information will be posted:

"We hope you'll find any/all of Bedford's official fan pages to be a useful source of news, updates, and information about our departments. Our pages are a limited public forum for that purpose. We know it also will become a key place for you to connect and be a part of the online community. But we also want you to be cognizant that these are the OFFICIAL pages for the Town of Bedford. This is not the place for personal attacks, spam, or rant. Per our comments policy, we may delete comments if they include any of the following:

- *Personally Identifiable Information [PII] (e.g., Social Security numbers, postal and email addresses, phone numbers);*
- *Threatening, defamatory, or obscene language or material;*
- *Personal attacks (e.g., abusive remarks);*
- *Discriminatory language (including hate speech) about race, color, national origin, age, sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity), religion, disability, or other legally or agency-protected group;*
- *Embedded media, such as videos or photos (but hyperlinks to such media are acceptable);*
- *Linking to unrelated content;*
- *Spam or undecipherable language (gratuitous links will be viewed as spam); and,*

People who create any of the above listed are subject to being blocked from any, or all Bedford Pages, or twitter following.

Please participate at your own risk, taking personal responsibility for your comments. The Town of Bedford does not endorse any external posts or links that appear on any of our pages.

Any direct tweets to this page and its list of followers may be considered a public record which is subject to disclosure pursuant to the New Hampshire Right to Know Law. Public information requests must be directed to the Town Manager.”

For more information about the Town of Bedford please visit www.bedfordnh.org.

While social media is a 24/7 medium, our monitoring capabilities are not. We do our best to respond timely to comments and questions, but we only respond during business hours. Keep commenting, and thanks for joining the conversation.

- II. Twitter, Facebook, and other online content accounts shall serve three primary purposes:
 - a) Disseminate immediate interesting or important information to residents of which a news item on the Town’s website is not necessary or possible
 - b) Promote Town-sponsored meetings, events, programs and facilities
 - c) Refer followers to a news item or content hosted at the Town’s website and the department’s Facebook page.

- III. Information posted on Twitter or Facebook shall conform to the existing protocols of the Town and the department that is posting the information. The department’s director or designee should be responsive to those constituents who communicate via Twitter’s @reply or direct message functions. If comments are turned on for Facebook, the FBML page shall also include a Comment Policy Box with the following disclaimer:

“Comments posted to this page will be monitored and inappropriate content will be removed as soon as possible. Under the Town of Bedford Social Media Use Policy, Standards and Procedures, the Town reserves the right to remove inappropriate content, including, but not limited to, those items that have obscene language or sexual content, threaten or defame any person or organization, violate the legal ownership interest of another party, promote illegal activity and promote commercial services or products. The Town disclaims any and all responsibility and liability for any materials that the Town deems inappropriate for posting, which cannot be removed in an expeditious and otherwise timely manner.”

- IV. Comments and post may be subject to the Town’s official media policy. In the event there are requests for information sensitive in nature, or has a need for review, the department head shall be responsible.

Archive

- I. The department's director or designee will maintain an electronic record or printout of any information necessary to retain for the purposes of public records retention in accordance with applicable Town policy regarding retention of such information that is not available from the application.

Page Administrators

- I. A successful page requires consistent attention. The department's director will designate one or more staff members as page administrators who will be responsible for monitoring the department's Facebook page. Only designated department staff members will make posts. The department's director or designee will be responsible for ensuring content is not stale. The department will designate one or more back-up administrators.

Termination

- II. Department heads must notify the IT manager in the event of a user being terminated. The individual user will be subject to the same termination policy as it pertains to all technology within the town.

Comments and Discussion Boards

- I. Comments to the Wall generally will be allowed if the department is able to and does regularly monitor content. If the department is unable to do so, comments to the Wall may be turned off.

Photos and Video

- I. Page managers and administrators may add photos and videos to the department's Facebook page. If there are postings of photos and/or videos of the public, staff may secure permission from individuals depicted in the photo and/or video. Photos and/or videos of the Town's employees taken during regular office hours may be posted without obtaining waivers. Videos must follow the Video Posting Standard. Photos and video that is informational or has a specific purpose may be posted as needed. Some examples are wanted persons, for identification purposes, and missing persons etc.

Applications

- I. There are thousands of Facebook applications. Common applications can allow users to stream video and music, post photos, and view and subscribe to RSS feeds. While some may be useful to the page's mission, they can cause clutter and security risks. An application must not be used unless it serves an appropriate and a valid business purpose, adds to the user experience, and comes from a trusted source. An application may be removed at any time if the Town determines that it is causing a security breach or spreading viruses.

A Note about Indemnity

- I. Most online sites require users to agree to terms of service that include such provisions as:

Indemnification and Defense. When a public agency creates an account on a social media site, it typically must agree not to sue the site, nor allow the site to be included in suits against the agency. Many sites also require the account owner to pay the site's legal costs arising from such suits.

Applicable Law and Venue. Most terms of service also assert that a certain state's laws (usually New Hampshire, but not always) apply to the terms of use and that the state's courts will adjudicate disputes.

- II. The terms of service represent a binding contract; public agencies should assure that they have taken the steps necessary to bind the agency to such an agreement.
- III. Some companies are willing to negotiate on the substantive provisions in the terms of use, but they may be hesitant to negotiate separate agreements with dozens of different agencies. For example, the FAQ on the "Facebook and Government" page indicates that "at this time Facebook does not have any special legal agreements for state and local governments."

Summary

It is the goal of the Town to utilize social media in a safe and effective manor to keep the public informed better of the events and on goings within the organization.

Town Council Adopted: October 13, 2016
Town Council Reaffirmed: April 28, 2021