

## Local Government Use of Social Media

### 202.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy provides guidelines to ensure that any use of social media on behalf of the Township is consistent with the Township mission.

This policy does not address all aspects of social media use. Specifically, it does not address:

- Personal use of social media by township employees (see the Speech, Expression, and Social Networking Policy).
- Use of social media in personnel processes (see the Recruitment and Selection Policy).
- Use of social media as part of an investigation, other than disseminating information to the public on behalf of this township.

#### 202.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

**Social media** - Any of a wide array of internet-based tools and platforms that allow for the sharing of information, such as the township website or social networking services.

### 202.2 POLICY

The Township will use social media as a method of effectively informing the public about township services, issues, investigations, recruitment, and other relevant events.

The use or access of social media should be done in a manner that protects the constitutional rights of all people.

### 202.3 AUTHORIZED USERS

Only employees authorized by the Township Administrator or the authorized designee may utilize social media on behalf of the Township. Authorized employees shall use only township-approved equipment during the normal course of duties to post and monitor township-related social media, unless they are specifically authorized to do otherwise by their supervisors.

The Township Administrator or authorized designee may develop specific guidelines identifying the type of content that may be posted. Any content that does not strictly conform to the guidelines should be approved by a supervisor prior to posting.

Requests to post information over township social media by employees who are not authorized to post should be made through the appropriate supervisory channels.

Employees maintaining or contributing to social media or engaging in posts must not use the Township's name in their identity (e.g., username, "handle," or screen name). They also must not speak as a representative of the Township, unless expressly authorized by the Township Administrator.

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Mutual respect and teamwork are essential to effective and efficient Township administration and operations. Employees must be courteous, respectful, and thoughtful about how the Township and other employees may be affected by posts. Incomplete, inaccurate, inappropriate, threatening, harassing or poorly worded posts may be harmful to other employees, damage member's relationships, undermine the Township's effort to encourage teamwork, violate township policy, or harm the Township, which may result in corrective action or disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Employees bear the full responsibility for information contained in their posts and their social media. Employees must make certain that their posts are accurate and must correct any inaccurate statement they make. Employees must not reference other Township employees or Township customers without obtaining their expressed permission to do so. Most social media sites require that users, when they sign up, agree to abide by a Terms of Service document. Employees are responsible for reading, knowing, and complying with the Terms of Service of the social media site they use.

The employee's decision to use different medium does not excuse recklessness in public communication or limit the Township's ability to regulate social media usage and posts as it could any other communication. The Township supports the employee's right to engage in discourse about matters of public concern, to discuss the terms and condition of their employment and supports their First Amendment rights. However, the Township prohibits actions that violate this policy.

**202.4 AUTHORIZED CONTENT**

Only content that is appropriate for public release, that supports the Township mission, and that conforms to all township policies regarding the release of information may be posted. Examples of appropriate content include:

- (a) Announcements.
- (b) Tips and information related to crime prevention.
- (c) Requests for information.
- (d) Community engagement information.
- (e) Real-time safety information that is related to in-progress crimes, geographical warnings, or disaster information.
- (f) Traffic information.
- (g) Media releases.
- (h) Recruitment of personnel.

**202.4.1 INCIDENT-SPECIFIC USE**

In instances of active incidents where speed, accuracy, and frequent updates are paramount (e.g., crime alerts, public safety information, traffic issues), the Township Administrator or the authorized designee will be responsible for the compilation of information to be released.

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**202.5 PROHIBITED CONTENT**

Content that is prohibited from posting includes but is not limited to:

- (a) Content that is abusive, discriminatory, inflammatory, or sexually explicit.
- (b) Any information that violates individual rights, including confidentiality and/or privacy rights and those provided under state, federal, or local laws.
- (c) Any information that could compromise an ongoing investigation.
- (d) Any information that could tend to compromise or damage the mission, function, reputation, or professionalism of the Township or its employees.
- (e) Any information that could compromise the safety and security of township operations, employees of the Township, or the public.
- (f) Any content posted for personal use.
- (g) Any content that has not been properly authorized by this policy or a supervisor.

Any employee who becomes aware of content on this township's social media sites that the employee believes is unauthorized or inappropriate should promptly report such content to a supervisor. The supervisor will investigate its possible removal from public view and the cause of the entry.

**202.5.1 PUBLIC POSTING PROHIBITED**

Township social media sites shall be designed and maintained to prevent posting of content by the public.

The Township may provide a method for members of the public to contact township employees directly.

**202.6 MONITORING CONTENT**

The Township Administrator or authorized designee will appoint a supervisor to review, at least annually, the use of township social media and report back on, at a minimum, the resources being used, the effectiveness of the content, any unauthorized or inappropriate content, and the resolution of any issues.

**202.7 RETENTION OF RECORDS**

The Township Administrator or authorized designee should work with the Custodian of Records to establish a method of ensuring that public records generated in the process of social media use are retained in accordance with established records retention schedules.

**202.8 TRAINING**

Authorized employees should receive training that, at a minimum, addresses legal issues concerning the appropriate use of social media sites, as well as privacy, civil rights, and dissemination and retention of information posted on township sites.