Town of New Lebanon Social Media Use Policy

Effective Date: 02/11/2020

I. PURPOSE

The Town of New Lebanon endorses the secure use of social media to communicate information to the public on emergencies, service updates and general information relating to the goals of the municipality. Social Media sites may not be used as an official channel of communication. Inquiries from the public should be directed to the appropriate official(s). All social media sites utilized by the Town must be a non-public forum with outgoing information only and not allowing any public comments or posts. Town Board approval is required for each particular social media platform before any new page is created on any social media site. Prior to any official town page being created on any given social media platform, the capabilities of the platform (such as the capability to prevent the site from becoming a public forum per this policy) should be understood and approved by the Town Board.

This policy establishes the Town's position on the utility and management of social media and provides guidance on its management, administration, and oversight. In addition, this policy recognizes the personal use of social networking sites by employees, and identifies prohibited activities by employees on such social media sites. This policy is not meant to address one form of social media; rather social media in general, as advances in technology will occur and new tools will emerge.

This policy identifies potential uses that may be explored or expanded upon as deemed reasonable by administrative and supervisory personnel. The Town of New Lebanon also recognizes the role that these tools play in the personal lives of some personnel. The personal use of social media can have bearing on personnel in their official capacity. As such, this policy provides information of a precautionary nature as well as prohibitions on the use of social media by personnel.

II. DEFINITIONS

a. Designated Official – Individual appointed by the legislative body to maintain and provide oversite on all or designated social media sites

b. Page: The specific portion of a social media website where content is displayed and made by an individual or individuals with administrator rights.

c. Post: Content an individual shares on a social media site or the act of publishing content on a sit.

d. Profile: Information that a user provides about himself or herself on a social networking site.

e. Social Media: A category of internet-based resources that integrate user generated content with user participation. This includes, but is not limited to, social networking sites (Facebook, MySpace), microblogging sites (Twitter, Nixle), photo-and-video-sharing sites (Flickr, YouTube, wikis (Wikipedia), blogs, and news sites (Digg, Reddit).

f. Social Networks: Online platforms where users can create profiles, share information, and socialize with others using a range of technologies.

g. Speech: Expression or communication of thoughts or opinions in spoken words, in writing, by expressive conduct, symbolism, photographs, videotape, or related forms of communication.

III. POLICY

It is the policy of the Town of New Lebanon that official use of social media systems will be strictly regulated and used consistent with applicable laws and that any personnel, to include the personal use of social media by both sworn and civilian personnel, be compliant with all sections of the Town's Personnel Policy and the Town's Code of Ethics.

IV. PROCEDURE

A. Social Media Presence and Use Guidelines

1. All Town social media sites or pages shall be approved by The Town Board and shall be administered by The Town Clerk.

a. Where possible, each social media page(s) shall include an introductory statement that clearly specifies the purpose and scope of the Town's presence on the website.

b. Where possible, the page(s) should link to the Town's official website.

c. Social media page(s) shall be designed for target audience(s) such as Town of New Lebanon community and residents.

2. Where possible, social media pages shall clearly indicate they are maintained by the Town and shall have Town contact information prominently displayed.

3. Social media content shall adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including all Town of New Lebanon information technology and records management policies.

a. Pages shall clearly indicate that any content posted or submitted for postings is subject to public disclosure.

5. Personnel representing the Town via social media outlets shall do the following:

a. Conduct themselves at all times as representatives of the Town and, accordingly, shall adhere to all Town rules of conduct and observe conventionally accepted protocols and proper decorum.

b. Identify themselves as personnel of the Town.

c. Not conduct political activities or private business

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

B. ***(If municipality has a law enforcement agency that will use social media considering adding this section)*** Potential Town Uses of Social Media

1. The department may use social media to make time-sensitive notifications that include but are not limited to the following areas:

    a. Road closures
    b. Departmental Notices/Updates
    c. Public Safety Information
    d. Other emergencies

C. ***(If not addressed elsewhere in employee policies/handbook consider adding this section).*** Personal Use of Social Media – Precautions and Prohibitions

1. All Town personnel shall abide by the following when using social media for their own personal use:

    a. Town personnel are free to express themselves as private citizens on social media sites to the degree that their speech does not impair working relationships of this Town for which loyalty and confidentiality are important, impede the performance of duties, impair harmony among co-workers, or negatively affect the public perception of the Town.

    b. Town personnel shall not post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate any information to which they have access as a result of their employment without the expressed authorization of the Town Supervisor or his/her designee. Municipal policies such as work place violence and harassment apply to all postings in addition to any HIPPA regulations, collective barraging and confidentially requirements.

    c. Use speech involving themselves or other Town personnel reflecting behavior that would reasonably be considered reckless or irresponsible.

d. Engaging in prohibited speech noted herein, may provide grounds for undermining or impeaching an officer's testimony in criminal proceedings.

e. Town personnel shall not post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate any information to their personal social media accounts while on duty regardless if from a Town computer or other personally owned device without the expressed authorization of the Town Supervisor or his/her designee.

f. Town personnel thus sanctioned are subject to discipline up to and including termination. Personnel will not divulge information gained by reason of their authority; make any statements, speeches, appearances, and endorsements; or publish materials that could reasonably be considered to represent the views or positions of the Town without expressed authorization of the Town Supervisor or his/her designee.

g. Reporting Violations – Any employee becoming aware of or having knowledge of a social media posting or of any website or web page in violation of the provision of this policy has an obligation to notify his or her supervisor immediately for follow-up action.

D. Use of Social Media in the employment process

Pre-employment screening for job applicants via social media should be conducted by designated individuals. The designated individual should be distinct from the individual(s) involved in the interview process. Designated person shall access only information accessible to the general public. Only lawful consideration will be used in making employment considerations.

E. Records Management

Any items posted on a social media site will be kept in accordance with applicable laws such as Freedom of Information Laws, Records Retention and other laws.

F. Americans with Disabilities Act

Any social media site maintained by the municipality shall comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act