

Town of Landis Social Media Policy

Social media facilitates public participation in discussing Town issues, operations, and services. Town departments may use social media and social networking sites to enhance communications with the public in support of Town goals and objectives. This policy is designed to define social media, the process of using social media, and the rights and responsibilities of the Town and its employees in their use of social media.

I. Policy Scope

This policy applies to all Town employees and includes any type of social, digital, and mobile media platforms.

II. Definition

For purposes of this policy, “social media” is defined as using any type or kind of technology to share or exchange information, allow comment on user-generated content, or otherwise encourage online discussions about Town programs, services, projects, events, activities and other matters of public interest. Examples of some types of social media include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

III. Use of Social Media

Social media enables the Town to reach different demographics to achieve business and communication goals, including the following:

- Transparency in conducting local government business.
- Civic engagement regarding Town projects, programs, and initiatives.
- Disseminating information, especially time-sensitive material during public safety emergencies.
- Promotion of the Town and its services and programs.

Social media tools supplement the Town’s official websites and direct people to the Town’s primary online resources.

IV. Procedures

Any employee who desires to create a social media site for official Town use must receive approval from his or her department director and the Town Manager or designee.

The Town Manager or designee will process and retain request forms and establish the appropriate procedure for archiving social media content.

All sites shall be published using approved Town social networking platforms and tools. Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are examples of common platforms. Requests to use any other platform must be submitted to the Town’s Manager’s office.

V. Official Use of Social Media

Employees representing the Town on Town social media sites shall conduct themselves, at all times, as a professional representative of the Town and in accordance with all Town policies. Any employee authorized to post items on any of the Town's social media sites shall not express his or her own personal views or concerns through such postings, and postings shall only reflect the views of the Town. Postings to Town social media sites shall not contain any of the following:

- Comments in support of, or opposition to, political campaigns, candidates or ballot measures;
- Profane language or content;
- Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination in any form;
- Sexual content or links to sexual content;
- Solicitations of commerce;
- Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity;
- Content that violates any copyright, patent, or trademark

VI. Prohibited Uses of Social Media

The following are strictly prohibited at all times, regardless of whether an employee is using social media for personal or official Town use.

- Disclosure of confidential information to which an employee has obtained as a result of the employee's role or duties for the Town. Confidential information includes information that an employee knows is confidential, or has reason to believe is confidential. Examples of such information are a vendor's proprietary information of which the employee has knowledge due to his/her assignment on a Town project; personal, confidential or health information about someone; or, information from an employee's or applicant's personnel file; billing information of customers compiled and maintained by the Town; any data collected from a person applying for financial or other types of assistance or service including, but not limited to, their income, bank accounts, savings account, or other financial accounts.
- Disclosure of non-public information or legally protected information to which an employee has access or has obtained from the Town such as a person's address, date of birth, driver's license number, social security number or other personal information.
- Information related to records of criminal investigations.

This is a representative list and does not include all prohibitions that might violate Town policies and procedures or records of criminal intelligence information.

VII. Personal Use of Social Media

A. Personal use is defined as use of social media by an employee speaking solely for him or herself or as representative of a group when not authorized to do so by a supervisor, department head, or the Town Manager. Personal use of social media by a Town employee is permitted for professional networking purposes. In personal use, the employee is speaking as an individual and not on behalf of the Town.

B. An employee's use and comments made on social media sites are subject to limited First Amendment protections. As a public employee, use of social media is considered an extension of the workplace as it relates to employee conduct.

C. Employee use of social media is subject to these guidelines:

- Where the use is related to a matter of public concern, it must be conducted in such a manner that a reader would not think the employee is speaking for or on behalf of the Town.
- Employees must comply with Town policies, including but not limited to the Town's Personnel Policies and Guidelines, the Employee Handbook, the Standards of Conduct and the Use of Technological Resources.
- Employees should exercise sound judgment and discretion so as not to reflect adversely on the Town in contributing to social media sites.
- Personal use of social media may not violate or infringe upon the right of any other person or entity or constitute a criminal offense or subject the Town to civil liability.

Inappropriate personal use of social media may be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

VIII. Public Comment Guidelines

A. Town social media sites that permit public comments or postings shall include the following disclaimers:

- Views and opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not reflect those of Town of Landis officials and employees.
- People who comment shall have no expectation of privacy. Their comments are public records retained and subject to disclosure in accordance with applicable laws and Town policies.
- Town social media policies are subject to amendment or modification at any time without prior notice.
- Violation of comment standards may result in a public user's comments or postings being banned from Town social media sites.
- Public users should not use the site for emergency communications or when another form of notification or request is required.

B. All comments or postings shall be retained in accordance with Town policies and applicable state laws.

C. Public comments posted on Town social media sites may be blocked, hidden, or removed if they do not meet content-neutral comment standards. Content-neutral comment standards include notice that the site is a moderated online discussion site and the Town reserves the right to block, hide, or remove comments or postings that contain the following:

- Vulgar, abusive, or threatening language, defamatory statements, or nudity in profile pictures or attachments.
- Personal attacks, hate speech, or offensive terminology targeting individuals or groups of individuals.
- Suggestions or encouragement of illegal activity.
- Unsolicited business proposals or endorsements/promotions of commercial services, products, or entities.
- Infringements of copyrights, trademarks, or other intellectual property or information that is deemed proprietary information under state law.
- Endorsements of political parties, candidates, or groups.
- Off-topic comments/posts, spam or links to unrelated sites

D. All comments or postings that are blocked, hidden, or removed from Town social media sites shall be retained until such time as the Town's legal representative advises otherwise.