

Adopted April 28, 2015
Revised May 13, 2025

TOWN OF FARMINGTON SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

POLICY

The Town of Farmington (the Town) recognizes that social media can be a valuable way to communicate with members of the community and relay important information to the public. Social media includes websites such as Facebook, X, Bluesky, Instagram, LinkedIn, SnapChat; blogs, and any other website where one posts or communicates information in a public or quasi-public online forum (including web based and app based). Additionally, this policy provides guidelines and prohibitions on the use of social media by Town departments and personnel. If an employee is found to violate the Social Media Policy, through either official Town social media channels or through the employee's personal social media channels, that employee may be subject to discipline.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance, standards, and restrictions relating to the Town's presence on social media sites. The Town of Farmington endorses the secure use of social media to enhance communication, collaboration, and information exchange; streamline processes; and foster productivity. This policy establishes the Town's position on the utility and management of social media and provides guidance on its management, administration, and oversight. This policy is not meant to address one particular form of social media; rather social media in general, as advances in technology will occur and new tools will emerge.

DEFINITIONS

Blog: A self-published diary or commentary on a particular topic that may allow visitors to post responses, reactions, or comments. The term is short for "Web log:"

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

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

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

Social Media: A category of Internet-based resources that integrate user generated content and user participation. This includes, but is not limited to, social networking sites (Facebook, MySpace), Micro-blogging sites (X, Bluesky, Instagram, LinkedIn, SnapChat), photo- and video sharing sites (Flickr, YouTube), wikis (Wikipedia), blogs, and news sites (Digg, Reddit).

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

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

Wiki: Web page(s) that can be edited collaboratively.

STATEMENT

The Town has an overriding interest and expectation in deciding what is “spoken” on behalf of the Town regarding public and social media. The chosen means of active communication between the Town and its citizens are local newspapers, electronic newsletters, electronic e-mails, postcards, postal correspondence, postal newsletter, local community posters, public meetings, Facebook, and the Town website.

Content for announcements may be created by Town officials, the Town Manager, Department Heads, and their designees. All content, including content created by third parties, is subject to review and approval of the Select Board, Town Manager or their designee prior to public posting. Announcements shall reflect matters and issues of common public interest and information that relates to the Town’s functions, objectives, and mission. All content published on public and social media must be nonpartisan and noncommercial.

CONTENT

As a public entity, the Town must abide by certain standards to serve all its constituents in a civil and unbiased manner. Comments containing any of the following inappropriate forms of content shall not be permitted in or on any Town public and social media form of communications. Town sites are subject to removal and/or restriction by the Select Board, Town Manager, or their designee:

- Comments that are unintelligible or unrelated to the Town’s affairs.
- Profane, obscene, violent, or pornographic content and or language.
- Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, or national origin.
- Defamatory or personal attacks.
- Threats to any person or organization.
- Comments in support of or in opposition to any political campaigns, citizens initiatives or ballot measures.
- Solicitation of commerce, including but not limited to advertising of any business product for sale.
- Conduct or encouragement of conduct violative of any federal, state, or local law.
- Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems.
- Content that violates a legal ownership, such as copyright, or any party.

A comment posted by a member of the public on any Town public or media site is the opinion of the commentator or poster only and publication of a comment does not necessarily reflect the Town’s opinion or constitute the Town’s endorsement of, or agreement with, the opinion expressed.

The Town reserves the right to deny or restrict access to commenting capabilities on the Town’s public or social media sites to any individual who violates the Social Media Policy, at any time and without prior notice.

All comments posted to any Town Facebook site are bound by Facebook’s Statement of Rights and Responsibilities, located at <http://www.facebook.com/terms.php>, and the Town reserves the right to report any violation of Facebook’s Statement of Rights and Responsibilities to Facebook to permit

Facebook to take any appropriate responsive action.

TOWN-SANCTIONED PRESENCE

Each Town of Farmington social media page shall include an introductory statement that clearly specifies the purpose and scope of the Town of Farmington's presence on the website.

The page(s) shall link to the Town of Farmington's official website www.farmington-maine.org which remains the primary internet presence for the Town. Social media page(s) shall be designed for the general public as the target audience.

All Town of Farmington social media sites or pages shall be approved by the Town Manager or their designee and shall be administered by the Executive Assistant or as otherwise determined by the Town Manager.

Social media pages shall clearly indicate they are maintained by the Town of Farmington and shall have official Town of Farmington contact information prominently displayed.

Social media content shall adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including all information technology and records management policies.

Content is subject to public records laws, including the Maine Freedom of Access Act. Relevant records retention schedules apply to social media content. Content must be managed, stored, and retrieved to comply with open records laws and e-discovery laws and policies.

Social media pages shall state that the opinions expressed by visitors to the page(s) do not reflect the opinions of the Town of Farmington or an endorsement of the opinions expressed.

Pages shall clearly indicate that posted comments will be monitored and that the Town of Farmington reserves the right to remove obscenities, commercial advertisements, unintelligible comments, comments unrelated to Town affairs and personal attacks.

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

TOWN-SANCTIONED USE

The Town has its own social media presence and only certain designated employees will be asked to create and/or maintain the Town's social media profiles. An employee may act on behalf of the Town in the social media context only with express authorization from the Town Manager. Any and all content created for or on the Town's social media accounts and systems, and the accounts themselves, are property of the Town. The Town has ultimate discretion over the content posted on its social media accounts and may remove or alter content at any time. This policy also applies to the Town's website and electronic systems.

The Town reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of this policy or any applicable law. Any content removed based on these guidelines must be retained by the Town Manager for a reasonable period of time, including the time, date, and identity of the person or organization posting, when available. Comments on topics or issues not within the jurisdictional purview of the Town may be removed. This policy may be amended at any time by the Select Board. These guidelines shall be made available to users by hyperlink.

Town personnel representing the Town of Farmington via social media outlets shall do the following:

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

Identify themselves as an employee of the Town of Farmington, where applicable.

Observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and service mark restrictions in posting materials to electronic media.

PROHIBITIONS

Town of Farmington personnel representing the Town of Farmington via social media outlets shall not do the following:

Make statements about the personal or private affairs of themselves or others, nor post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate confidential information, including photographs or videos, related to Town of Farmington work-related assignments without express authorization from the Town Manager or their respective Department Head.

Conduct political activities or private business on Town of Farmington computers or social media sites.

Use Town of Farmington computers to access social media for personal use without authorization from the Town Manager.

Use personally owned devices to manage the Town of Farmington's social media activities or in the course of official duties without express authorization from the Town Manager.

USE DURING WORKING HOURS

The Town understands that employees are free to create and maintain personal social media profiles during non-work hours and on non-work equipment. Employees generally may not access social media websites for personal use during work time regardless of whether it is on a Town-owned device or a personal device (including but not limited to iPhones, cell phones, iPad, tablets, laptops, or equivalent devices), unless authorized to do so by a supervisor.

Further, employees do not have an expectation of privacy in their use of social media when such use is used through any Town system or on a Town-provided device.

SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE OUTSIDE OF WORK

Employees should understand that even when they are engaging in off-duty conduct, including use of social media sites, their actions, words and behavior may reflect upon themselves and the Town.

This policy governs social media activity to the extent that such activity either undermines or interferes with the ability of the Town to carry out its responsibilities, which is activity that may be subject to the Town's review and corrective action.

When and if an employee makes any Town -related comment on their personal social media, the employee should make it clear that the comment is made in his or her personal capacity and not as a representative of the Town, or on behalf of the Town.

ALL OTHER POLICIES APPLY

The Town expects employees to comply with all applicable employment policies, including the Town's harassment, discrimination, and confidentiality policies, when using social media. Employees should therefore refrain from making discriminatory, harassing, threatening, violent, abusive or obscene comments related in any way to their employment, or publicizing any confidential information which they may have access to due to employment with the Town.

EMPLOYEES' RIGHTS

This policy in no way restricts, or should be construed to restrict or inhibit, employees' rights to engage in protected concerted activity, such as discussing hours or other working conditions, through social media, or other forms of protected free speech, including political speech, as permitted by law.