



Social Media Policy

PURPOSE

This policy sets forth guidelines for the establishment and use by Piscataway Township (the “Township”) of its social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, et al) as a means of conveying the Township-related information to its residents, employees and visitors. The Township has an overriding interest and expectation in deciding what is published on behalf of the Township on its social media sites.

The purpose of this social media policy is to establish enforceable rules for the use of social media by Township officials and employees when engaged in Township business. Social media at this time refers to the Township’s website and its Facebook, Twitter and any other communication that is open to response or comment. Rules are necessary to assure that communications made on behalf of the Township are properly authorized and in correct form; that communications to the municipality by means of social media which can be viewed by the public are appropriate and pertinent; that all communications to the municipality is related to the posted municipal information; and that the sender is clearly and fully informed that a message received by means of social media is not a substitute for required reporting procedures or statutory notice requirements.

For purposes of this policy, “social media” is understood to be content created by individuals, using accessible, expandable, and upgradable publishing technologies, through and on the Internet. For purposes of this policy, “comments” include information, articles, and pictures. It also includes other communication medium created by the Township including but not limited to Swift 911 and/or Piscataway Community Television.

SCOPE

This policy shall apply to all Municipal departments and/or agencies.

GENERAL POLICY

The objective of the use of social media by the Township and its departments is to expand and facilitate the dissemination of information from the Township to its residents, taxpayers and the general public.

1. No Township social media site shall be established without prior approval of the Township’s Communications Team.

2. The Township social media sites shall clearly set forth that they are maintained by the Township and that they follow this Social Media Policy.
3. Wherever pragmatic, the Township social media sites should link back to the official Township website for forms, documents, online services and other information necessary to conduct business with the Township.
4. Social media accounts established by the Township or a Township agency are to be used for Township and agency business purposes only.
5. Township social media sites are not to be used for making any official communications to the Township, for example, reporting crimes or misconduct, giving notice required by any statute or responding to official Township correspondence.
6. This social media policy shall be available for public viewing on the Township website, www.piscatawaynj.org.
7. The Township Communications Team shall monitor Township social media sites to ensure adherence to both this Social Media Policy and the interest and goals of the Township. The Township has the right and will restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of this Social Media Policy or any applicable law. Any content removed based on the guidelines will be retained by the Township's Communication Team pursuant to the applicable Township retention policy, including the time, date and identity of the poster, when available.
8. The Township website, www.piscatawaynj.org, will remain the Township's primary and predominant internet presence.
9. Employees and volunteers representing the Township's government via its social media sites shall conduct themselves at all times as a representative of the Township and in accordance with all its policies.
10. All Township presence and activity on social media are an integral part of the Township's information networks and must comply with all rules and policies governing the Township's computers and electronic media.
11. All Township use of social media is responsible for complying with applicable federal, state and county laws, regulations and policies. This includes adherence to established laws and policies regarding copyright, records retention, Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), Open Public Record Act (OPRA), First Amendment, privacy laws, sunshine laws and information security policies (if applicable) established by the Municipality.
12. All Municipal policies are applicable to interactions on social media sites when acting in an official capacity and representing the Municipality.
13. Social media sites are operated by a third party agency separate from the Township. The Township reserves the right to disable its social media accounts either temporarily or permanently at any time. In the event of a discontinuation off a social media site, documentation related to the site will be maintained in accordance with records retention guidelines set forth by the Government Records Council.

14. This Social Media Policy may be revised at any time by Township officials.

COMMENT POLICY

1. As a public entity the Township must abide by certain standards to serve all its constituents in a civil and unbiased manner.
2. The intended purpose behind establishing the Township social media sites is to disseminate appropriate information to residents, employees and visitors. The Township shall not be expected to host the publication of comments or feature them on its social media sites.
3. A comment by a member of the public regarding any Township social media site communication is the opinion of the commentator or poster only and publication of a comment does not imply endorsement of, or agreement by, the Township, nor do such comments necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of the Township.
4. Any attempt to hack or otherwise compromise the Township's internet or social media sites will be reported to law enforcement and the perpetrator will be subject to prosecution.
5. The Township reserves the right to deny access to its social media sites for any individual who violates Piscataway Township's Social Media Policy at any time and without prior notice.
6. All comments posted to social media websites are bound by any applicable terms and conditions of the operating programs that govern those sites.

PROHIBITED CONTENT

1. Persons posting prohibited content are subject to being barred from posting comments on Township social media in the future.
2. Comments containing any of the following inappropriate forms of content shall not be permitted on the Township's social media sites and are subject to removal and/or restriction by the Township Communications Team:
 - a. Profane, obscene, violent, or pornographic content and/or language, or sexually suggestive or explicit content links to such materials. Any image or link containing minors or suspected minors in sexual and/or provocative situations will be reported to law enforcement;
 - b. Content that promotes, fosters or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, or national origin, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation;
 - c. Defamatory attacks;
 - d. Threats to any person or organization;

- e. Solicitation of commerce, including but not limited to advertising of any business or product for sale;
 - f. Conduct in violation of any federal, state or local law;
 - g. Illegal activity or encouragement of same;
 - h. Information that may compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems;
 - i. Content that violates a legal ownership interest, such as a copyright. The Township does not permit or allow copyright infringing activities and/or infringement of intellectual property rights on its website or social media sites and will remove or modify any and all content and submissions if properly notified that such content and/or submission infringes on another's intellectual property rights;
 - j. Private contact information such as names, addresses and phone numbers no matter how easily obtained elsewhere; Personal information of a person other than the poster;
 - k. Spamming or repetitive content;
 - l. Comments from children under 13 cannot be posted in order to comply with the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act. By posting on a Township media site, users acknowledge that they are at least 13 years old. Parents are responsible for any minor child's posting or comments;
 - m. Content that incites violence;
 - n. Comments unrelated to the particular post being commented upon.
3. The Township Communications Team may be required to remove postings on Township social media sites deemed to constitute a breach of policy. In the event of removal, those postings will be subject to applicable archiving and retention requirements.

TERMS OF USE DISCLOSURE

A. Information Disclaimer

By visiting this site, you understand and agree that this Piscataway Township website is provided "AS IS." Piscataway Township makes every effort to provide accurate and complete information on this website. The information contained herein is not official nor in any way shall it be deemed to constitute legal notice where such legal notice is required by law. The information contained in this site is provided as a service and convenience to people needing information about Piscataway Township. Piscataway Township, its officers, employees or agents shall not be liable for damages or losses of any kind arising out of or in connection with the use or provision of information, including but not limited to damages or losses caused by reliance upon the accuracy or timeliness of any such information, or damages incurred from the viewing, distributing or copying of those materials.

B. Linking Policy — Links to External Sites

The Piscataway Township website contains links to outside websites. These websites are not owned, operated, controlled or reviewed by Piscataway Township. These links are provided solely as a courtesy and convenience to visitors.

Piscataway Township, its officers or employees exercise no control over the organizations, views, accuracy, copyright or trademark, compliance or the legality of the material contained in these outside websites. Piscataway Township, its officers or employees do not sponsor, endorse or approve the information, content, proceeds, materials, opinions or services contained on such outside websites. The visitor proceeds to these outside websites at his/her own risk. Piscataway Township specifically disclaims any and all liability from damages, which may result from the accessing of a third-party site, which is linked to the Piscataway Township website or from reliance upon any such information.

C. Copyright and Trademark Limitations

Piscataway Township makes no warranty that materials contained herein are free of copyright or trademark claims or other restrictions or limitations on free use or display. Making a copy of such material may be subject to copyright or trademark laws.

D. Use of Material

Piscataway Township has made the content of these pages available to the public and anyone may view, copy or distribute the information found therein without obligation to Piscataway Township for non-commercial, personal use only, unless otherwise stated on particular material or information to which a restriction on free use may apply. The design of this site, original graphics, and original content are all copyrighted by Piscataway Township may not be re-engineered, distributed, modified, transmitted, re-used, reposted, or duplicated without the express written permission of Piscataway Township in each instance. All requests to use any part of the original design, code, graphics or content of this site should be made via e-mail to the Township Communications Team. Responses will be sent via e-mail only.

E. Unauthorized Modifications

Unauthorized attempts to modify or otherwise alter any information or image stored on any Piscataway Township website may result in criminal prosecution.