


TOWN OF WOODFIN – POLICY STATEMENT		Policy #:	
	Department:	Issuing Date:	7-20-2021
	Policy Title:	Effective Date:	7-20-2021
	Social Media Policy	Revised Date:	n/a
		Prepared By:	Ryan Vinson, Town Clerk
		Approved By & Date:	M. J. Vetter 7/20/21

PURPOSE: To address the fast-changing landscape of the Internet and the way residents communicate and obtain information online, the Town may consider using social media tools to reach a broader audience. The Town encourages the use of social media to further its goals, when and where appropriate.

The Town has an overriding interest and expectation in deciding what is "spoken" on behalf of the Town on social media sites. This policy establishes guidelines for the use of social media.

POLICY:**Access**

Those looking to create a new page should consult with the Town Administrator for approval. Access will be granted to at least two designated individuals, at all times, to post on the Town's webpage(s). The Town Administrator, or their designee, will be responsible for maintaining a list of all social networking application domain names in use, the names of employee administrators of these accounts, as well as the associated user identifications (usernames) and passwords currently active. The Town Administrator reserves the right to modify or terminate a site. Employee moderators are required to notify the Town Administrator of any changes to the user identifications (usernames) or passwords. Failure to notify the Town Administrator with this information may result in loss of social media privileges for the employee.

Compliance

Please note that communication through local government-related social media is considered a public record and will be subject to archiving under the state public records law. This includes adherence to established laws and policies regarding records retention, public record, First Amendment, privacy laws and the Town's Personnel Policy.

Guidelines

- **Transparency and Security.** All government communication tools should be used in ways that maximize transparency and maintain the security of the network.
- **Link content back to the applicable Town webpage** or identify Woodfin specifically whenever possible (use #Woodfin).
- **Stick with what you know.** Unless you are certain something is accurate, don't say it. When in doubt, leave it out.
- **Don't attempt to issue breaking news** or be the first to share information with the public. If you know something that should be used in a press release or another Town site, contact the Town Administrator.
- **Do not argue with readers.** Citizens may post negative comments to your social media accounts. It is important to respond appropriately (i.e. "Thank you for your comment, please contact NAME at EMAIL/PHONE to discuss matter further," etc.) and continue the conversation elsewhere. Direct citizens to your Town email or phone number whenever possible.

- **Notify users of regulations.** There should be the following disclaimer on the site indicating all posts and comments are subject to public records law: "Please note that comments made on this page are subject to the North Carolina Public Records Law and may be disclosed to third parties." The disclaimer must be posted in a prominent location on the webpage.
- **Double-check your work and correct any mistakes.** Posts may be edited if the information is inaccurate, but never deleted. Poor grammar and misspellings reflect on the Town. If you are unsure of the applicable rules or spelling, have someone proofread your writing.
- **Never address personnel issues.** If you need clarification on how to handle a response to a citizen comment regarding personnel, consult your department head and/or Town Administrator.
- **Keep your personal social media sites separate.** Do not address Town matters on your personal social media site(s). These items are still considered public record and must be forwarded to the Town's record custodian if they are posted.
- **Follow the rules.** Moderators who fail to comply with these policies may be removed from their department's social media account.

Maintenance

- At least two employees should be designated as the moderators to take ownership and regularly check and update the site(s). One employee will be the primary contact and the second employee will be the backup contact. Town of Woodfin moderator(s) will be responsible for monitoring all comments posted to a Town of Woodfin social media site for appropriateness. Moderator(s) will be responsible for ensuring all content is suitable for posting, removing all content that is not suitable or prohibited based on the criteria listed in this policy. This person(s) also is responsible for retaining all content that is removed in accordance with this policy.
- When possible, items for posting need to be submitted by e-mail to the moderator(s) at least 2-business days prior to needing it posted. If you want something posted by Thursday, submit it on Tuesday morning. The e-mail must contain: the text of what is to be posted, on what social media webpage(s) it is to be posted, applicable hashtags and/or Town webpage address to direct citizens to for additional information. If all necessary information isn't submitted, the moderator(s) will e-mail the employee for the missing information, which may result in your posting being delayed.
- If a citizen posts a question(s) that the moderator(s) cannot answer, they will seek an answer from the appropriate employee and then respond to the citizen.
- Photos may be posted to account page if:
 1. Citizen or Resident is enrolled or participating in one of the Town's programs (i.e. special events, Parks and Recreation programming).
 2. Photo was taken on Town public property (i.e. parks)
- Comments posted by users will be deleted if they contain:
 1. Profane language or vulgar content
 2. Advocate illegal activity
 3. Offensive comments that target or disparage any ethnic, racial, religious, or other protected group
 4. Spam, off-topic content or links to other sites that are:
 - Clearly off topic
 - Promote particular businesses, public sector services or products
 - Endorse a candidate, political organization or platform
 - Infringe on copyrights or trademarks.
 - Removed content must be documented for record retention.

Personal Social Media Accounts

Employees should always keep in mind that they are seen as representatives of the Town. To avoid blurring the lines between professional and private business, the Town recommends strict separation between the professional and private on personal social media sites. Employees are prohibited from conducting Town business via their personal sites. It is also recommended that employees not identify with the Town of Woodfin on their personal social media accounts, including but, not limited to: posting information regarding Town programs, events or policies in order to keep the distinction between professional and private business.

Please see the Personnel Policy for further detail, specifically the Personnel Policy, Article 5 Section 5: Unlawful Workplace Harassment and Section 1:3 Social Media.

Conclusion

Social media use in local government can be an asset to achieving Town goals and initiatives. Participation in social media on the Town's behalf is a privilege, not a right, and therefore needs to be taken seriously. Be sure your content is responsible, open, valuable and helpful to residents and businesses in the community.

- SCOPE:** This policy applies to all officers, agents and employees of the Town of Woodfin. Employees who choose to participate in social networks in their capacity as Town of Woodfin employees must adhere to this policy.
- COMMENTS:** Policy should be reviewed annually and updated as necessary.
- POLICY AUTHORITY:** Please contact the Town Administrator at 828-253-4887 with any questions pertaining to this policy.
- RELATED POLICIES:** Personnel Policy