

Town of Haddam
Social Media Policy

A. Purpose.

(1) The Town of Haddam (Town) may utilize social media tools and websites to further enhance communications with the public in support of Town goals, policies and programs. Social media, for purposes of this policy, means the use of online technology to communicate with others. Examples of social media tools and websites include, without limitation, blogs and social-networking sites such as Facebook, Myspace, YouTube, Twitter, and LinkedIn.

(2) As part of their responsibilities, Town elected officials and employees will be expected to appropriately use available technological resources in order to assist them in their ability to publish articles, facilitate discussions and communicate information through various social media tools and sites when conducting Town business.

B. Use of Town-sponsored/created social media sites.

(1) All Town-sponsored/created social media sites shall be:

(a) Approved by the First Selectman and the requesting Department Director;

(b) Administered solely by a designated Town representative as determined by the First Selectman and the Department Director.

(2) Only those Town elected officials and employees (including members of volunteer boards/commissions) specifically authorized to post content on Town-sponsored/created social media sites on behalf of the Town will be permitted to do so. Unless authorized to do so, Town elected officials and employees do not have permission to speak on behalf of the Town via any social media sites. All Town-sponsored/created social media sites shall not be used by any Town employee for the creation, publication, posting or distribution of any personal and/or non-work-related written, visual and/or audio correspondence or materials.

(3) All Town-sponsored/created social media sites shall adhere to all applicable state, federal and local laws, regulations and Town policies.

(4) Freedom of Information Act requirements and electronic-discovery obligations may apply to the content on all Town-sponsored/created social media sites, and therefore, the Town will manage, store and retrieve such content as may be necessary to comply with these requirements and obligations.

(5) The Town reserves the right to restrict or remove any content on any Town-sponsored/created social media sites that is deemed in violation of this policy or any applicable law.

(6) Examples of content that shall not be allowed to be posted by anyone (including Town elected officials and employees and members of the public) on any Town-sponsored/created social media sites are (without limitation) as follows:

(a) Comments not topically related to the particular site or information posted;

(b) Profanity;

(c) Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination or harassment on the basis of any legally protected status, including race, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, national origin, disability or sexual orientation;

(d) Sexual content or links to sexual content;

(e) Solicitations of commerce;

(f) Content demonstrating participation in or encouraging any illegal activity;

(g) Content that may compromise the safety or security of the Town or the public; or

(h) Content that violates a legal ownership or personal privacy interest of any other party.

(7) Elected officials and employees representing the Town via social media outlets must conduct themselves at all times in a professional manner as a representative of the Town and in accordance with all applicable state, federal and local laws, regulations and Town policies.

(8) Elected officials and employees found in violation of this policy will be subject to public censure (in the case of elected officials), or disciplinary action (in the case of employees), up to and including termination of employment.

C. Personal use of social media sites.

(1) Any conduct which under the law or Town policy is impermissible if expressed in any other format (such as through a conversation, a memo or an e-mail) is impermissible if expressed by an elected official or employee through any personal use of social media as well. Further, any elected official or employee who chooses to personally use social media needs to be aware of the following:

(a) The personal use of social media is not allowed while Town elected officials or employees are on working on Town business (e.g., excluding break time, etc.), regardless of the equipment used (e.g., either using personal or Town phones or computers). Elected officials and employees may not use Town equipment or computers for personal reasons in accordance with this policy and other applicable policies.

(b) Elected officials or employees who use social media shall not post any proprietary Town data, documents or photographs, or any information which would violate any property interest or privacy laws applicable to the Town, regardless of whether the posting is done during working or non-working time; nor shall elected officials or employees who use social media post any content (i) that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination or harassment on the basis of any legally protected status, including race, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, national origin, disability or sexual orientation, (ii) that demonstrates participation in or encouraging any illegal activity, (iii) that may compromise the safety or security of the Town or the public, or (iv) that violates a legal ownership or personal privacy interest of any other party; regardless of whether the posting is done during working or non-working time.

(c) Unless authorized in writing by First Selectman (such as when an elected official or employee's job is to send public messages on behalf of the Town), elected officials and employees do not have permission to speak on behalf of the Town via social media.

(d) While communicating through social media, if Town elected officials or employees post any content related to the work they perform for the Town or subject matter associated with the business of the Town, such elected official or employee must make clear that they are not speaking on behalf of the Town by adding to their post a disclaimer in substantially the following form: "The postings on this site are my own and do not represent the Town of Haddam's positions or opinions."

(e) Elected officials or employees should avoid sending or accepting "friend" requests from supervisors which could result in violations of any applicable Town policies, including, without limitation, policies pertaining to conflicts of interest and discrimination/harassment.

(2) When an elected official's or employee's use of any social media violates the law or Town policies (including policies pertaining to employee misconduct or job performance), public censure, in the case of an elected official, and, in the case of an employee appropriate discipline up to and including termination of employment will be imposed, regardless of when the information was posted or sent and regardless of the tools or site used to post or send such information.

(3) Nothing in this policy (or any other Town policy) will be implemented or should be interpreted in any manner so as to prohibit or inhibit any elected official or employee from engaging in any personal lawful activities through social media, including exercising any rights they may have to engage in protected speech, concerted activity or political activities.

Approved and Adopted by the Haddam Board of Selectmen on November 29, 2021