


TOWN OF ACWORTH

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

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Jim Jennison


Kathi Bradt


Ryanne Schoonover

Purpose: The Town of Acworth has established social media sites primarily in order to inform residents about Town programs and events and to exchange information and knowledge between residents and Town employees about these programs and events. The Town's social media sites are not intended to be traditional public forums for the general exchange of ideas and viewpoints. Courts have recognized that governmental entities, such as the Town, may create limited public forums for specific purposes and limit discussion on the forum to those specific purposes. The Town shall remove content and postings not consistent with the specific purpose of the social media sites and these Guidelines.

Summary: New and emerging online platforms are fundamentally changing the way the world works, offering us new ways to collaborate and to engage with the public. The Town of Acworth encourages the use of social media to further the outcomes of the Town and to assist us in our mission to better engage with our Community. The Town Administrator has an overriding interest and expectation in deciding who may "speak," and what is "spoken," on behalf of the Town of Acworth to our respective residents. To ensure that communication through Town social media networks is consistent and in the best interest of the Town, this policy provides guidelines for the use of social media.

Scope: Applies to all Town employees, volunteers, Town officers and members of municipal boards, committees or commissions, when acting in their capacity as a member of such entities or as a representative of the Town, that create or contribute to blogs, wikis, social networks, virtual worlds, or any other kind of social media on behalf of or as a representative of the Town.

Policy Detail:

1. The official social media account for the Town of Acworth shall be created and maintained by the Town Administrator and/or Emergency Management Director.
2. The Town of Acworth's website (acworthnh.net) will remain the Town's primary and predominant Internet presence.
3. The Town of Acworth currently approves use of the following social media network:
 - a. Facebook

Any other social media is considered unapproved and may not be used for Town purposes without first obtaining written approval by the Town Administrator.

4. All approved social media networks shall be identified as “an official Town of Acworth site,” Any unapproved social media network is prohibited from identifying as an “official Town of Acworth site”.
5. Wherever possible, content posted to Town of Acworth social media networks should contain links directing users back to the Town’s official website for more in-depth information, forms, documents or online services necessary to conduct business with the Town of Acworth.
6. The use of social media networks shall serve the following purposes:
 - a. To disseminate time-sensitive information as quickly as possible;
 - b. To increase the Town’s ability to broadcast its messages to the widest possible audience; and
 - c. To push information to the public, not to directly communicate with them (i.e. no response to posts, no answers to questions, comments, or concerns)
7. Administration of the Town’s social media networks shall be as follows:
 - a. The Town Administrator and/or Emergency Management Director will maintain a list of the Town social media networks, including login and password information.
 - b. Town Administrator and/or Emergency Management Director must be able to immediately edit or remove content from social media networks.
 - c. Town Administrator and/or Emergency Management Director retains the authority to remove pages or close sites if necessary.
8. Users and visitors to the Town’s social media networks shall be notified that the intended purpose of the network is to serve as a mechanism for receiving information from the Town and that it is a limited public forum. Users must also be notified that the Town of Acworth social media postings may be subject to removal if they are not related to the specific purpose of the social media site. The Town’s social media networks shall also contain the disclaimer that “any comments or information linked or posted shall not be deemed information created, accepted, or obtained by, or on behalf of, the municipality under RSA 91-A:1-a.”

The General Test: If a post’s subject matter is not related to the purpose of the social media site, it is subject to removal.

Examples of posts that may be subject to removal:

- a. Comments, materials, or links not related to the specific purpose of the social media site.
- b. Comments in support of or opposition to political campaigns or ballot measures.
- c. Profane language. The Town intends for all members of the public, including minors and others sensitive to such language, to access and use its social media sites. To that end, any containing such language will require increased scrutiny as to its ability to remain on the site. A post containing profane language shall be subject to removal if the subject matter of the post is not related to the purpose of the social media site.
- d. Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability, or sexual orientation shall be subject to removal if the subject matter of the post is not related to the purpose of the social media site.
- e. Sexual content or links to sexual content. The Town intends for all members of the public, including minors and others sensitive to such content, to access and use its social media sites.

- f. Solicitations of commerce. No advertisements for commercial services, products, or business shall be permitted on the social media sites.
 - g. Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity.
 - h. Information that compromises the safety or security of the public or public systems.
 - i. Content that violates an intellectual property right of any third party. The Town shall remove content infringing on the intellectual property rights of a third party upon receiving notice from said third party describing the alleged infringement and establishing the legal right of the third party to the alleged infringed material.
 - j. Any other content that violates local, State, or Federal laws, ordinance, or regulations.
9. The Town shall maintain records of its social media sites for a minimum of one year pursuant to NH RSA 33-A:3-a (XXV). The Department maintaining the platform is responsible for responding completely and accurately to any public records request for public records on social media. Wherever possible, social media networks shall clearly indicate that any articles and any other content posted or submitted, by the municipality, for posting are subject to public disclosure.
 10. Posts shall only be removed from the Town's social media site by the Emergency Management Director and/or the Town Administrator.
 11. If a particular posts is directed at a particular individual, that individual shall not have the authority to remove that post.
 12. The Town's social media sites shall be reviewed for compliance with the Guidelines no less frequently than once a month, with more frequent review encouraged.
 16. The Town shall remove any content or posts that violate this social media policy or any applicable law.
 17. Any content or posts removed based on these guidelines **must be retained**, including the time, date and identity of the author when available.
 - a. Any removed content shall be printed out in hard copy as it appears on the social media site before it is removed.
 - b. Prior to the removal of any content or posts, the removing party shall create a removal record. The removal record shall include:
 - i. A statement explaining why the content or post was removed, including which provision of the Guidelines was violated;
 - ii. Who removed the content or post;
 - iii. When the content or post was removed; and
 - iv. Any other information relevant to the removal.
 18. If there is any doubt whether content or a post is removable, the Town Administrator should contact the Town's legal counsel prior to taking any action.
 19. Quasi-judicial bodies/departments of the Town, including but not limited to the Zoning Board of Adjustment and the Planning Board, shall not have social media sites.