

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

A. Purpose

The intended purpose behind establishing the **(name of local unit)** social media sites is for the sole purpose of disseminating information from **(name of local unit)**, about **(name of local unit)**, to its residents, employees and visitors. This Social Media Policy (the “Policy”) sets forth guidelines for the establishment and use by the **(name of local unit)** of all social media sites as a means of conveying **(name of local unit)** -related information to its residents, employees and visitors.

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. Examples of social media include, but are not limited to, Facebook, blogs, MySpace, RSS, YouTube, Second Life, Twitter, LinkedIn, Delicious, Flickr, Instagram and all others that may be in existence or created hereafter. For purposes of this policy, “comments” include text, information, articles, links and pictures.

B. Scope

This policy shall apply to any and all employees, individuals, volunteers, agencies, departments, officials, and/or governing body members who are now or hereinafter permitted as authorized users by **(name of local unit)** to post content on the **(name of local unit)** social media sites, including, but not limited to, members of the public that are permitted to comment on **(name of local unit)** social media posts or tag photos in **(name of local unit)** social media posts. The Township’s social media sites encompassed by this Policy include all sites and accounts authorized and/or created by the **(name of local unit)** and any of its agencies or departments. References to “comments” or “commenting” in this Policy shall also encompass tweets directed at a **(name of local unit)** Twitter account, social media posts that “tag” a **(name of local unit)** social media account, and any post or comment that may appear on the home page of any **(name of local unit)** social media site.

C. General Policy

Because the **(name of local unit)** has an overriding interest and expectation in deciding who may “speak” and what is “spoken” on behalf of the **(name of local unit)** on social media sites, this policy is established for the use of all social media.

1. The **(name of local unit)** shall have a single presence on social media sites deemed appropriate for use by the governing body. With permission of the governing body, individual departments or agencies of **(name of local unit)** may maintain a separate social media presence when deemed appropriate. Any request by a **(name of local unit)** department or agency to maintain a social media presence shall be made in writing to the governing body for consideration. Such request shall not be required to be very extensive but shall contain enough information for the governing body to assess the need for such social media presence, its purpose, and its compliance with this policy. The request shall also set forth the person or persons responsible for and authorized to post content on such sites and accounts.

2. No **(name of local unit)** social media site, including those maintained by departments or agencies of the Township, shall be established without prior approval of the governing body as set forth in subsection (1) above. All **(name of local unit)** social media sites shall be administered by permissible users which shall be the **(Mayor, Manager, Administrator)** and/or the **(Mayor's, Manager's, Administrator's)** designee(s). Where a department or agency of the **(name of local unit)** maintains its own social media presence, such department or agency, with approval from the governing body, shall designate a person or persons responsible for and authorized to post content on such sites and accounts.
3. The **(Mayor, Manager, Administrator)** shall designate a Website / IT / Social Media Liaison to oversee and post content on each **(name of local unit)** social media site to ensure adherence to this policy, including appropriate use, messaging, and branding that is consistent with the interests, goals, and objectives of the **(name of local unit)**. The designated Liaison will be responsible for the content of any **(name of local unit)** social media sites they may create. **This paragraph does not apply to social media sites maintained by individual (name of local unit) departments and agencies.** Such sites will be monitored by the Liaison **only** for consistency with this Policy, but the individual department or agency shall appoint a person or persons responsible for posting content pursuant to Subparagraph 2 above.
4. Any and all permissible users of any social media site shall be provided with a copy of this policy and sign an Acknowledgment of Use (Addendum A) prior to utilizing any **(name of local unit)** social media sites.
5. The **(name of local unit)** social media sites shall clearly set forth that they are maintained by the **(name of local unit)** and that the sites follow this Social Media Policy.
6. Wherever possible, the **(name of local unit)** social media sites should link back to the official **(name of local unit)** website for forms, documents, online services and other information necessary to conduct business with the **(name of local unit)**.
7. The **(name of local unit)** Website (currently located at **(Insert link to website)** or any other web address as designated in the future) will remain the **(name of local unit)** primary and predominant internet presence.
8. The **(name of local unit)** social media sites are intended to be informational only and are *not* intended to be used as an open public forum for making comments, including any official communications to the **(name of local unit)**; for example, reporting crimes or misconduct, reporting dangerous conditions, giving notice required by any statute, ordinance or regulations such as but not limited to notices of claim. Prominent notice of this paragraph shall be displayed on every **(name of local unit)** social media site, along with the appropriate contact information for submitting official communications.
9. This Policy and the **(name of local unit)** Terms of Use Disclosure (Addendum B) shall be placed on the **(name of local unit)** Website and displayed to social media users or made available by hyperlink on each of the **(name of local unit)** social media sites, including those maintained by an agency or department of the **(name of local unit)**.

10. The **(name of local unit)** social media sites and this Policy are subject to all applicable federal and New Jersey State laws and regulations, as well as applicable record retention requirements. This includes adherence to established laws and policies regarding copyright, records retention, Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), Open Public Records Act (OPRA), First Amendment, privacy laws, sunshine laws and information security policies established by the **(name of local unit)**, its departments, affiliated boards, commissions and authorities.
11. This Social Media Policy may be revised at any time by approval of the **(name of local unit)** Governing Body.
12. All **(name of local unit)** social media sites covered under this Policy remain the property of the **(name of local unit)**, including the list of all the followers and friends generated by each of the **(name of local unit)**'s social media sites. If a person appointed to maintain a social media site no longer serves in such capacity, for any reason, they must relinquish everything related to the site including user names, passwords and/or access codes or information.

D. Comment Policy

1. As a public entity the **(name of local unit)** must abide by certain standards to serve all its constituents in a civil and unbiased manner.
2. When a post, comment, link, photograph, or other notification is made by an authorized designee on behalf of the **(name of local unit)**, the authorized designee shall not share personal information about himself or herself, or other **(name of local unit)** employees and or officials.
3. For purposes of this policy, **(name of local unit)** social media falls into distinct categories:
 - a. **The (name of local unit) Government Website** does not allow for any public comments whatsoever. It is reserved for the **(name of local unit)** government to engage in its own expressive conduct to promote its own message and disseminate information. From time to time, the **(name of local unit)** may post surveys on its website which may allow for comments. Commenting shall be limited to those surveys and the topics thereof and shall not change the designation of the **(name of local unit)** website as a government communication and shall not make it a public forum.
 - b. **Government Communication Social Media Sites** are **(name of local unit)** social media sites where public comment is prohibited. The **(name of local unit)** or an agency or department thereof wholly controls such social media sites and, therefore, these sites are informational only and are not a public forum.
 - c. **Limited Public Social Media Forums** are **(name of local unit)** social media sites where public comment *may be* enabled. The **(name of local unit)** restricts comments to topics related to **(name of local unit)** activities and the **(name of**

local unit) reserves the right to delete any comments that do not adhere to this Policy. The **(name of local unit)** also reserves the right to disable comments on such sites at any time and turn such site into a government communication. The persons designated pursuant to Section C(1) and (2) herein shall have the authority to delete or disable comments pursuant to this policy on the sites and/or accounts each person is designated to maintain. The Website / IT / Social Media Liaison shall have such responsibility for other **(name of local unit)**-owned sites or accounts that do not have such person designated.

4. A comment posted by a member of the public on any **(name of local unit)** social media site described in 3(c) above is the opinion of the commentator or poster only, and publication of a comment does not imply endorsement of, or agreement by, the **(name of local unit)**, nor do such comments necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of the **(name of local unit)**.
5. Comments by the general public on limited public social media forums as set forth in 3(c) must be consistent with provisions of this policy. Comments containing any of the following inappropriate forms of content shall not be permitted on any type of **(name of local unit)** social media site and are subject to editing, removal or restriction, in whole or in part, by the relevant department/division representative or their designee:
 - Comments not topically related to the particular social medium thread or topic or article being commented upon;
 - Profane, obscene, or sexual language or content or links to such language or content;
 - 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 or other characteristics protected by state or federal law;
 - Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity;
 - Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems;
 - Threats to any person or organization;
 - Conduct that violates any federal, state, or local law; or
 - Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party.
6. If comments are related to the topic at hand, then the content must be allowed to remain, regardless of whether it is favorable or unfavorable to the **(name of local unit)**.

7. Any attempt to hack or otherwise compromise the **(name of local unit)**'s internet or social media sites will be reported to law enforcement and the perpetrator will be denied access to the sites.
8. The **(name of local unit)** reserves the right to deny access to its social media sites for any individual, who violates the **(name of local unit)** Social Media Policy, at any time and without prior notice.
9. All members of the public who choose to comment on **(name of local unit)** social media sites are advised that such posts, comments, Tweets, etc. may be subject to OPRA, FOIA, and other records retention laws.

E. Links / Posts by or about Non-municipal Groups

From time to time, the **(name of local unit)** (or a department or agency thereof) may find it necessary or beneficial to the public to post on its social media sites about groups unaffiliated with the **(name of local unit)**. Such groups shall be those that promote the health, safety, and well-being of **(name of local unit)** residents. Such posts will be made at the discretion of the person or persons designated to maintain such social media site.

F. Legal

(name of local unit) reserves the right to report any violation of a social media site's Rules, Terms and Conditions, Rights and Responsibilities, etc., to that site with the intent of that site taking appropriate and reasonable responsive action. All **(name of local unit)** policies are applicable to interactions on social media sites when acting in an official capacity and representing the **(name of local unit)**.

ADDENDUM A

(name of local unit)

Acknowledgement of Official Use by Authorized Permitted User

I, _____, acknowledge that:

A. I received a copy of the ***(name of local unit)***'s Social Media Policy on _____(date);

B. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions about said Policy and I have been provided with satisfactory information in response to my questions;

C. I understand the language used in this Policy;

D. I acknowledge that the ***(name of local unit)*** reserves the right to add, amend or discontinue any of the provisions of this policy for any reason or none at all, in whole or in part, at any time, with or without notice;

E. I acknowledge that I understand this Policy and I agree that I will comply with all of its provisions.

Signature _____

Date _____

ADDENDUM B

Terms of Use Disclosure (to be posted on all (name of local unit) Social Media Sites)

A. Information Disclaimer

By visiting this site, you understand and agree that the **(name of local unit)** government site is provided "AS IS". **(name of local unit)** government 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 the **(name of local unit)** government. Portions of the information on this site may be incorrect or not current. **(name of local unit)** government, 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 performance 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 **(name of local unit)** government site contains links to outside websites. These websites are not owned, operated, controlled or reviewed by the **(name of local unit)** government. These links are provided solely as a courtesy and convenience to you, the visitor.

The **(name of local unit)** government, 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. The **(name of local unit)** government, 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. The **(name of local unit)** government specifically disclaims any and all liability from damages, which may result from the accessing of a third-party site, which is linked to the **(name of local unit)** government website or from reliance upon only such information.

C. Endorsement Disclaimer

Reference in this website to any specific commercial products, processes, or services, or the use of any trade firm or corporation name is for the information and convenience of the public, and does not constitute endorsement, recommendation, or favoring by the **(name of local unit)** government or its officers, employees or agents.

D. Copyright and Trademark Limitations

(name of local unit) government 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.

E. Use of Material from this site

The **(name of local unit)** government has made the content of these pages available to the public and anyone may view, copy or distribute **(name of local unit)** government information found here without obligation to the **(name of local unit)** government 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 **the (name of local unit)** and may not be re-engineered, distributed, modified, transmitted, re-used, reposted, or duplicated without the express written permission of the **(name of local unit)** 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 **(name of local unit)** Administrator.

F. Unauthorized Modifications

Unauthorized attempts to modify or otherwise alter any information or image stored on any **(name of local unit)** government website may result in criminal prosecution.