

COMMUNICATION & SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY TOWN OF GRAY MAINE

Adopted October 21, 2014

PURPOSE

To address the fast-changing landscape of the Internet and the way residents communicate and obtain information online, the Town of Gray and its departments may consider using social media tools to reach a broader audience more effectively. The Town encourages the use of social media to further the communication and transparency goals of the Town and the missions of its departments, where appropriate.

The Town of Gray 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.

DEFINITIONS

- A. **Broadcast** – One-way electronic communication.
- B. **Comment** – A user submitted response to an administrator post.
- C. **Limited Public Forum** - A limited public forum is public property which the Town makes available for use by the public for the purpose of “expressive activities.”
- D. **Official Town Email Account** – Email account provided by the Town of Gray email system or external mailbox (e.g., gray.maine.1778@gmail.com) that is approved for official Town business.
- E. **Post** – An administrator submitted message/blog in the form of text, videos, photographs, graphics, links (hyperlinks), documents, computer applications, etc.
- F. **Social Media** – Social media include sites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and others. The U.S. Government defines social media as the various activities that integrate technology, social interaction, and content creation. Through social media, individuals or groups can create, organize, edit or comment on, combine, and share content. Social media uses many technologies and forms, including social-networking, blogs, wikis, photo-sharing, video-sharing, podcast, social bookmarking, mash-ups, widgets, virtual worlds, microblogs, Really Simple Syndication (RSS) and more. Not all forms of social media may be appropriate for use by Town of Gray departments.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

The Town of Gray website at www.graymaine.org is – and will remain – our primary internet presence and the electronic “face” of the Town of Gray.

Gray employees have a responsibility to help communicate accurate and timely information to citizens and to the public in a professional manner.

The Town of Gray recognizes that citizens and the public increasingly gather information through social media sites including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and other electronic sites, sometimes to the exclusion of traditional media.

It is essential to participate in social media to communicate effectively and fully. The best, most appropriate uses of social media generally fall into two categories:

1. To disseminate time-sensitive material as quickly as possible.
2. As broadcast channels which increase the Town’s ability to transmit its messages to the widest audience possible.

Information and statements posted on websites and through social media reflect directly on the Town of Gray and municipal government. Great care must be used when doing so.

AUTHORIZED USE

- A. All Town of Gray and Town of Gray department level social media accounts shall be administered by the Director of Communications & Information and the Town of Gray Website Administrator. Other authorized users may be assigned to a Town of Gray or Town of Gray department level social media account with the written approval of the Town Manager.
- B. Departments who choose to utilize social media shall establish a written social media plan that complements other town policies and considers the department's mission and goals, audience, legal risks, technical capabilities, security issues, emergency response procedures, etc. The Town Manager shall review and approve, if appropriate, the department-specific social media plan prior to the use of any social media by that department.
- C. Each participating department shall designate either the Director/Department Head or another employee as designated by the Town Manager to be responsible for overseeing the department's social media activity and policy compliance.
- D. Use of the Town of Gray and Town of Gray department level social media accounts shall be limited to those employees who are directly responsible for or associated with the information that is to be posted. All such information shall have a clear business purpose related to the forum and/or the department in which it is published.
- E. The department plan shall establish appropriate uses by employees of the department to include identifying what sites each individual is approved to use, as well as defining permissions such as publish, edit, comment or view only.
- F. Only Directors/Department Heads and/or their designee(s) as approved by the Town Manager shall be considered authorized users and have permission to post and/or broadcast on behalf of the Town.
- G. Authorized users are required to sign an acknowledgement for all Town Social Media Policies (including applicable departmental social media plans) upon their adoption, and review their department's social media plan and procedures annually.

USER BEHAVIOR

The same standards, principles and guidelines that apply to Town of Gray employees in the performance of their assigned duties apply to employee social media technology use. Similarly, the Town's Electronic Communication Policy governs the use of such equipment.

- A. Authorized users shall do so only within the scope defined by their respective department's social media plan and in compliance with all other applicable Town policies, practices, user agreements and guidelines.
- B. Authorized users participating in social networking discussions related to Town business matters when off duty shall clearly indicate that viewpoints are personal and do not reflect an official position or statement of the Town of Gray.
- C. Violations of this policy shall be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and may result in appropriate disciplinary actions, up to and including discharge.

ENGAGEMENT EXPECTATIONS

Town of Gray social media accounts are primarily broadcasting tools and not meant to substitute for direct communications via phone, e-mail, or a visit to Gray Town offices, especially for service-related questions, complaints, concerns. Gray citizens are encouraged to contact appropriate department personnel to ensure that their concerns can be addressed in an appropriate manner.

Contact information for Town of Gray departments is available online at <http://www.graymaine.org/departments>.

Please note that any service-related posts published on Town of Gray social media accounts will not receive a response and may be removed when discovered.

'PERSONAL' COMMUNICATION THAT CAN BECOME 'PUBLIC'

It is important for authorized users to remember that all of their communications may reflect on the Town of Gray, especially if employees are commenting on anything political in nature, federal, state or local government activities, or Town of Gray business. The following guidelines apply to personal communication including various forms of social media (Facebook, Twitter, blogs, YouTube, etc.):

- A. Remember that what you write is public and may be so for a long time. It may be spread to large audiences. Use common sense when using email or social media accounts. It is a good idea to refrain from broadcasting or posting information that you would not want your supervisor or other employees to read, or that you would be embarrassed to see in a newspaper or on a prominent website.
- B. The Town of Gray expects its authorized users to be truthful, courteous and respectful toward supervisors, coworkers, citizens, customers and other persons associated with the Town of Gray. They must not engage in name-calling or personal attacks.
- C. Town of Gray employees must always identify themselves as such during official communication.
- D. Personal social media account names or email names may not be tied to the Town of Gray (e.g., "GrayDirectorGuy")

APPROVED SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKS

- A. Departments shall only use social media networks approved by the Town Manager for hosting official Town social media accounts.
- B. New social media networks under consideration must be reviewed and, if appropriate, approved by the Town Manager and the Director of Communications & Information with consultation from legal counsel and/or and the Gray Town Council when appropriate.
- C. Departments may request review and approval of additional social media networks as needed.

AUTHENTICITY ESTABLISHMENT

Town department social media accounts shall be created and maintained with identifiable characteristics of an official Town site that distinguishes them from non-business or personal uses.

- A. Town social media network accounts shall be created using an official Town of Gray email account.
- B. Contact information must display the name of the account administrator and other authorized users, an official Town email address, a statement that it is an "official Town of Gray" department/account, and provide a link to the Town of Gray and/or department website.
- C. The name "Town of Gray" or the official Town Seal must be prominently displayed.
- D. A link to the adopted Town of Gray Communication & Social Media Policy must be displayed.

CONTENT MANAGEMENT

The Director of Communications & Information and the Town of Gray Website Administrator shall be responsible for establishing and maintaining content on official Town of Gray social media accounts. Departments shall be responsible for establishing and maintaining content posted to department level social media accounts.

- A. Employees responsible for social media content shall review account activity daily for misuse. Misuse may include any violation of this policy, other Town of Gray policies, or state or federal laws.
- B. The ability to post new topics shall be limited to Town of Gray authorized users where permitted by the social media account.
- C. Social media content shall fully comply with all applicable Town of Gray policies.
- D. Contents posted on Town of Gray social media accounts are considered public records subject to disclosure under the [Freedom of Access Act \(the “Maine Right to Know Law”\). \[Title 1, Chapter 13, Subchapter 1: Freedom of Access \(FOA\); 2011, c. 662, §1 \(NEW\)\].](#) FOAA requests for the production of posts on a Town of Gray social media account shall be referred to the Town Manager for review and response.
- E. Accounts shall provide a link to the Town of Gray Communications & Social Media Policy and, if needed, consult with the Town Attorney to develop department specific disclaimers to meet the Town’s legal needs.

LIMITED PUBLIC FORUM

- A. Users and visitors to Town of Gray social media accounts shall be notified that the intended purpose of the account is to serve as a mechanism for broadcasting information from the Town and/or its departments to members of the public. The Town of Gray recognizes its online presence as an extension of its physical facilities and considers such online presence to be a limited public forum.

As a limited public forum, the Town of Gray’s website and social media accounts and its departments have the discretion to limit access to and the use of social media by members of the public. The Town of Gray may restrict users from posting comments, images, or links to other sites and may remove any posts or comments that are in violation of this policy. Examples of violations of this policy include (but are not limited to):

1. Comments not topically related to the original comment, post or Town department;
2. Making or publishing of false, vicious or malicious statements concerning any citizen, employee, the Town or its operations;
3. Service-related questions or concerns;
4. Content intended to defame any person, group or organization;
5. Comments in support of or opposition to political campaigns or ballot measures;
6. Disclosure of confidential, sensitive or proprietary information including, but not limited to, pictures or postings including personally identifying information of persons involved in or on the scene of incidents in which the Town’s police, fire or rescue departments are called to respond, such as building fires or motor vehicle accidents;
7. Promotion or endorsement of political issues, groups or individuals;
8. Profane or obscene language or content;

9. 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;
 10. Violent or threatening content;
 11. Sexual content or links to sexual content;
 12. Sexual harassment content;
 13. Solicitations of commerce or advertisements including promotion or endorsement;
 14. Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity;
 15. Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems;
 16. Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party, such as trademark or copyright infringement;
- B. Content that contains any of the above shall be removed and repeat individual violators of this policy may be prohibited from posting or commenting on Town of Gray social media accounts.
- C. These guidelines must be displayed to users or made available by hyperlink. Any content removed based on these guidelines must be retained, including the time, date and identity of the poster when available.

OTHER GRAY POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

This Policy shall not be construed to replace any other Town of Gray policies and guidelines on computer usage, such as the “Electronic Communication Policy,” or other Personnel Policies already in place.

QUESTIONS

Questions related to this policy shall be directed to the Town Manager.