

Social Media Policy

Adopted by the Board of Selectmen – June 13, 2013

The Town offers this policy to remind employees that they should use proper discretion when discussing employment related matters on social media sites.

Simply stated, any information that would not appropriately be the subject of oral discussion or written transmission would not be appropriate for discussion on social media. Indeed, the discussion of inappropriate matters on social media will often cause more serious problems (than oral discussion or pre-internet written communication) precisely because matters posted on a social media site are capable of such widespread dissemination. While friends may repeat to others a derogatory comment about a fellow worker or supervisor that you make to them in conversation, if that same derogatory comment is made on a social media site it may be directly accessed by hundreds or thousands of people. In such case the damage done to the work environment and working relationships may be correspondingly increased. Employees should be mindful that the things that they say or do on social media may be publicly available and searchable and may be forever accessible.

It is not possible to anticipate all of the employment-related discussions that might be inappropriate on social media. However, the following are offered by way of example:

- Derogatory comments or gossip regarding co-workers, supervisors or other persons with whom the employee has official ("employment-related") contact –

As an Employer, the Town has legitimate concerns regarding the ability of employees and supervisors to work together, harmoniously.

The Town must also be concerned with comments that employees make regarding taxpayers, customers and others with whom employees have official contact.

In either of these cases, derogatory comments on social media regarding persons with whom an employee has workplace contact may impact the employee's ability to do her/his job and/or cause discredit to the Town.

- Public dissemination of confidential information which the employee learns in her/his official capacity –

Employees who have workplace access to confidential information have always been prohibited from sharing that information with unauthorized persons. Employees must be mindful that the dissemination of confidential information on social media has the potential for greater harm to the Town (than, for example, conversation with acquaintances) since the universe of persons having access to social media may be so much larger.

- Public dissemination of workplace information that, while not confidential, is not yet public information –

Employees may in their work responsibilities gain access to information regarding actions that are contemplated by the Town or by Town officials but have not yet been made public. While release of such information in conversation with acquaintances would be objectionable, release of such information on social media could be far more damaging to the Town's or the Department's interests.

The Town recognizes the many positive opportunities that social media offer. However, when discussing issues that impact the workplace, employees need to be mindful of the harm that ill-conceived comments may have.