

VILLAGE OF WAPPINGERS FALLS SOCIAL MEDIAL POLICY

1. Purpose

Social media has become an efficient and effective way to disseminate information to, and obtain feedback from, its residents and the general public. The Village of Wappingers Falls (the “Village”) presently maintains, or intends to maintain, one or more social medial accounts for the purpose of communicating its residents and members of the public. The Village has an overriding interest and expectation in deciding what is published on behalf of the Village through social media and in establishing guidelines for the use of Village social media. This social media policy (the “Policy”) is meant to provide direction to Village employees, elected officials, volunteers, and other authorized affiliated persons and organizations (collectively, the “Village Users”) that utilize the Village’s electronic/computer resources to access social medial websites and engage in social networking for Village purposes by setting forth guidelines, expectations and prohibitions.

2. Intent of Policy

This Policy is intended to enable and encourage civil communication and positive engagement by the Village with members of the public. The Village recognizes the potential exposure in online communication, as well as the legal requirements related to all forms of official communication. As such, this Policy intends to protect the Village, its employees, its elected officials, and the Village Users from the potential of harmful conduct related to online communications and to establish requirements and guidelines to support an effective method of communication while complying with applicable legal standards.

3. Social Media Defined

Social media refers to the creation and exchange of information among individuals through Internet-based applications. This includes, but is not limited to, information in the form of text, pictures, videos, links to other sites, or any other type of communication posted to the approved Village social media site(s). Examples of social media sites include, but are not limited to: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. Social media is an evolving communications tool and it is expected and understood that new resources are likely to become available over time.

4. Public Records

All content posted on Village social media pages and accounts, including comments submitted, those removed, and a list of subscribers or “followers,” is considered a public record and is subject to the New York State Freedom of Information Law. Any content removed and/or hidden by the Village, based on guidelines below, will be retained and maintained by the Village Clerk pursuant to the Village’s record retention policy.

5. Site Administrator

The Village shall establish “official” Village-wide social media site(s) and/or account(s) to be administered by a Site Administrator designated by the Village Board who shall oversee and manage all Village social media accounts.

6. Content

It is the goal of the Village to have a cohesive online presence. To further that goal, the Village intends to maintain centralized social media accounts through which official information is disseminated. Village social media accounts will be used strictly for conveying information about the Village to the public and engaging with residents where appropriate. The Village’s official website will be its primary and predominant Internet presence. Wherever possible, content posted to the Village’s social media sites will also be available on the Village’s official website. All content should be complementary of the Village’s website, and content posted on the social media sites should contain links to the Village’s official website.

7. Integrity of Information

Any person other than the Site Administrator, or any department or committee wishing to post content to any official social media site, shall submit a request to the Site Administrator containing all necessary information and any media they wish to be posted, including text, photos, videos and links to other sites. The Site Administrator shall have the right to approve or deny the request based on the guidelines contained herein. Only content approved by the Site Administrator shall be posted.

It is the responsibility of the person, department or committee requesting to post material to ensure that all content submitted for posting has been fully vetted, is free from error, and complies with the requirements of this Policy.

8. Ownership

All Village-designated accounts are the property of the Village. Ownership of the accounts, and any content posted therein, does not transfer if the Site Administrator changes.

9. Branding

Social media “profile pictures” should clearly represent the Village either with the official Village seal or other identifying marker of the Village.

10. Department- or Committee-Specific Accounts or Pages

In addition to the “official” Village-wide Village social media account(s), other departments or committees within the Village may maintain “official” department-specific or committee-specific social media accounts, as deemed necessary and appropriate. Such department or committee may seek approval from the Site Administrator and the Mayor. No accounts representing an individual, such as a department head or committee chair will be approved. Any and all auxiliary or supplementary accounts/pages shall operate in accordance with this Policy.

It is the responsibility of a department head or committee chair to monitor such pages and to assure that the site is abiding by the guidelines outlined in this Policy. Any department-specific or committee-specific social media pages should complement the Village’s online presence. The Site Administrator will routinely monitor the content on all of the Village’s social media sites.

The Site Administrator must provide social media account credentials (*i.e.*, user names and passwords) to the Village Clerk. If the Village Clerk shall be designated as the Site Administrator, such account credentials shall be provided to the Mayor. An updated list shall be provided any time such credentials change. Passwords must be adequately complicated to prevent cyber-attacks. Passwords should never be communicated via email. If a cyber-attack is suspected, the Site Administrator must immediately contact the Village Clerk and the Mayor, and try to regain access to the account and change the password, if possible.

Exception: Facebook is the exception to the foregoing requirement. Usernames and passwords will not be required for Facebook since administrators must use personal accounts to manage pages. Rather than providing personal information, administrators of pages are required to add the Village Clerk, and/or the Mayor, as appropriate, as an administrator to the department’s page. The Mayor or Village Clerk must have full access to maintain the site in the absence of the Site Manager. It is advised that the Site Manager also add a secondary back-up administrator to the page, if applicable.

11. Conduct

Employees representing the Village via its social media sites shall conduct themselves at all times as representatives of the Village and in accordance with the Employee Handbook, as it may be adopted or amended from time to time, and other applicable policies. When a Village employee uses his/her personal social media account to post or respond to a comment in his/her capacity as a Village employee, the employee should do so in the name of the Village department and disclose his/her name and title.

On official Village social media pages, Village employees shall not share personal information about themselves or other Village employees except as required for Village business. Village employees are strongly discouraged from using personal accounts to comment on or post information to Village social media sites and from posting information regarding official Village

business on other social media sites. This includes any usage of or participation in Village social media sites from outside the workplace. This Policy is intended to compliment and expand on any social media policy that may be contained in the Village's Employee Handbook, as it may be adopted or amended from time to time. Employees found in violation of this Policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment in compliance with the Village's personnel policy, employment contract, or collective bargaining agreement, as necessary and appropriate.

12. Elected Officials

Any elected officials choosing to establish and maintain social media profiles should do so using this Policy as guidelines for management but understand that the Village does not take ownership of those accounts in any capacity, nor does the Village manage or monitor pages owned by its elected officials.

The Village recognizes that elected and appointed officials may choose to express themselves by posting personal information on social media platforms or by making comments on sites hosted by other persons, groups or organizations, this right of expression should not interfere with the operation of the Village.

If an elected official conducts any Village business, or communicates as an official, from a personal account, professional account, or account created for a Board, committee, or department, that official should assume that Village-related communications will be considered a public record and will be subject to the New York State Freedom of Information Law (FOIL), as well as applicable sections of the Village's records retention policy.

13. Account Management

All social media sites maintained by the Village shall clearly set forth that they are maintained by the Village as the Village's "official" social media accounts. The following disclaimer shall appear on all Village social media sites where possible. Alternatively, the following language will be contained in a page on the Village's website and be linked directly:

The Village shall be the sole owner of all social media accounts and reserves the right to not publish or to remove any postings which contain inappropriate content, including, but not limited to:

- *Potentially libelous comments;*
- *Obscene or racist comments;*
- *Derogatory or inflammatory comments about an individual's gender, race, age, disability, religion, or national origin;*
- *Personal attacks, insults, or threatening language;*
- *Private, personal information offered without express consent;*

- *Comments unrelated to the topic of discussion;*
- *Hyperlinks to materials not directly related to the discussion;*
- *Material known to be plagiarized;*
- *Commercial promotions, including for-profit advertisements or products for sale;*
- *Content appearing to be “spam;”*
- *Comments pertaining to organized political activities, including political endorsements;*
- *Any content that is not deemed to be in the best interest of the Village.*

Village social media sites are intended to be informational. Users should not use these forums for making any official communications to the Village; for example, reporting crimes or misconduct, reporting dangerous conditions, requesting an inspection, giving notice required by any statute, regulation or ordinance, including, but not limited to, notices of claims.

Any content posted by a member of the public to any Village social media site represents the opinion of the poster and does not reflect the opinions or policies of the Village.

It is understood that the Village of Wappingers Falls’ social media sites are not maintained or monitored 24 hours a day, 7 days per week and immediate responses to any requests via post, email, direct message, etc., may not occur. The Village reserves the right to not reply or decline to reply to any/all comments posted to its social media accounts. It is also understood that the Village will not automatically “friend,” “like,” “follow” or “connect” to users who follow, comment or “like” Village posts.

14. Terms of Service

All social media sites maintained by the Village shall clearly set forth that they are maintained by the Village as the Village’s “official” social media accounts. Any employees administering Village social media accounts should be aware of the Terms of Service (“TOS”) of each social media site. Each has its own TOS that regulates how users interact using that particular form of media. Anyone with access to any official Village site should regularly consult the TOS as they are updated periodically. It shall be the responsibility of the Site Administrator to ensure that postings on the social media sites maintained by the Village comply with the relevant TOS.