

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

GENERAL STATEMENT

The Village endorses the managed use of social media to enhance communication and information exchange, streamline processes, and foster productivity. This policy establishes the Village's position on the use and management of social media and provides guidelines on its management, administration, and oversight. This policy is not meant to address one particular form of social media, rather social media in general terms, as advances in technology will outpace our ability to keep up with emerging technology and create policies governing its use.

PHILOSOPHY

Business Use: Social media can provide a potentially valuable means of assisting the Village and its employees in providing community information as yet another available option to communicate to residents and interested parties. There may also be instances in which Village employees utilize social media within a professional environment among colleagues.

Personal Use: The Village also recognizes the role that social media tools may play in personal lives of its employees. An employee's use of social media can leave an effect on the individual employee and other Village employees through their official capacity. Furthermore, personal use shall not take precedence over any business use. If such a conflict were to arise, the business use shall prevail.

General: This policy identifies possible uses that may be evaluated and utilized as deemed necessary by administrative and supervisory personnel. This policy is a means to provide guidance of a precautionary nature as well as restrictions and prohibitions on the use of social media by Village personnel, but is not an all-inclusive list.

DEFINITIONS

- 1) **Blog:** A self-published diary or commentary on a particular topic that may allow visitors to post responses, reactions, or comments. The term is short for "web log".
- 2) **Post:** Content an individual shares on a social media website, or the act of publishing content on a website.
- 3) **Profile:** Information that a user provides about himself/herself on a social networking site.
- 4) **Social Media:** A category of Internet-based resources that enable a user to generate content and encourage other user participation. This includes, but is not limited to, social networking sites (Facebook, MySpace), microblogging sites (Twitter, Nixle), photo- and video-sharing sites (Flickr, YouTube), Wikis (Wikipedia), blogs, and news sites (Digg, Reddit).
- 5) **Social Networks:** Online platforms where users can create profiles, share information, and socialize with others using a range of technologies.

- 6) Speech: Expression or communication of thoughts or opinions in spoken words, in writing, by expressive conduct, symbolism, photographs, videotape, or related forms of communication.
- 7) Web 2.0: The second generation of the web focused on shareable, user-generated content, rather than static web pages. This term may be used interchangeably with social media.
- 8) Wiki: Web pages that can be edited collaboratively.

PROCEDURES FOR BUSINESS USE

1. Strategic Policy

- 1) Where possible, each social media page shall include an introductory statement that clearly specifies the purpose and scope of the Village's presence on the website.
- 2) Where possible, the social media page(s) should link to the Village's official website.
- 3) Social media page(s) shall be designed for the target audience(s) such as the community, civic leadership, employees or potential recruits.

2. Procedures

- 1) All Village social media sites or pages shall be approved by the Village Manager or designee and shall be administered by the Village's Public Information Officer or designee.
- 2) Where possible, social media pages shall clearly indicate they are maintained by the Village and shall have the Village logo and contact information prominently displayed.
- 3) Social media content shall adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including all information technology and records management policies of the Village.
 - a. Social media content is subject to open public records laws. Relevant records retention schedules apply to social media content.
 - b. Content must be managed, stored, and retrieved to comply with open records laws and e-discovery laws and policies.
- 4) Where possible, social media page(s) should state that the opinions expressed by visitors to the page(s) do not reflect the opinions of the Village.
 - a. Social media pages shall clearly indicate that posted comments will be monitored and that the department reserves the right to remove obscenities, off-topic comments, and personal attacks.
 - b. Social media pages shall clearly indicate that any content posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure.

Disclaimer: Not intended to restrict free speech or legally protected activities.

VILLAGE-SANCTIONED USE

- 1) Village personnel representing the Village via social media outlets shall do the following:
 - a. Conduct themselves at all times as representatives of the Village and, accordingly, shall adhere to all Village standards of conduct and observe conventionally accepted protocols and proper decorum.
 - b. Identify themselves as a member of the Village staff with name, title, and contact information.
 - c. Not conduct political activities or private business activities.
 - d. Not post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate confidential information, including photographs or videos, related to Village activities, or work-related assignments without express written permission.
- 2) The use of Village computers by Village personnel to access social media is prohibited without authorization.
- 3) Employees shall observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and service mark restrictions in posting materials to electronic media.

Potential Uses

- 1) Village communication: Social media is a valuable communication tool when providing information about:
 - a. Road closures
 - b. Special events
 - c. Weather emergencies
 - d. Major events that affect the entire community
- 2) Employee opportunities: Persons seeking employment and volunteer positions use the Internet to search for opportunities, and social media may be a valuable recruitment mechanism.
- 3) Background checks: For authorized employees to conduct a background checks on potential employees or volunteers
 - a. Candidates applying for employment with the Village must sign a release document enabling an assigned employee to conduct a background check using any resource including social media.
 - b. The Village has an obligation to include Internet-based content when conducting background investigations of job candidates.
 - c. Searches should be conducted by Human Resources or with permission from the Village Manager and only for the purposes of providing possible job related background material on an employee candidate.
 - d. Information pertaining to protected class status shall be filtered out prior to sharing any information found online with decision makers.
 - e. Persons authorized to search Internet-based content should be deemed as holding a sensitive position.
 - f. Search methods shall not involve techniques that are in violation of existing law.

- g. Vetting techniques using social media as one of many resources to provide valid and up-to-date information shall be applied uniformly to all candidates.
 - h. Every effort must be made to validate Internet-based information considered during the hiring process.
 - i. Social media shall not be the only mechanism to obtain background information on a possible candidate.
- 4) Professional organizations: Village employees may be members of professional organizations relating to their position or assigned duties at the Village of Mount Prospect. These professional organizations may use social media websites to share information within their group.
 - a. All Village professional social media sites or pages shall be approved by the Village Manager or designee.
 - b. Personnel using professional social media sites should conduct themselves at all times as representatives of the Village and, accordingly, shall adhere to all Village standards of conduct and observe conventionally accepted protocols and proper decorum.
 - c. Any content posted on social media sites shall adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including all information technology and records management policies of the Village.
 - i. Social media content is subject to open public records laws including Freedom of Information requests.
 - ii. Employees shall observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and service mark restrictions in posting materials to social media.

PERSONAL USE

- 1) Precautions and Prohibitions: Village personnel shall abide by the following when using social media:
 - a. Village personnel are free to express themselves as private citizens on social media sites to the degree that their speech does not impair or impede the performance of duties, impair discipline and harmony among coworkers, negatively affect the public perception of the Village, or violate any policy of the Village of Mount Prospect.
 - b. As public employees, Village personnel are cautioned that their speech either on or off duty, and in the course of their official duties that has a nexus to the employee's professional duties and responsibilities may not necessarily be protected speech under the First Amendment.
 - i. This may form the basis for discipline if deemed detrimental to the Village.
 - ii. Village personnel should assume that their speech and related activity on social media sites will reflect upon their position and the Village.

- c. Village personnel shall not post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate any information to which they have access as a result of their employment without written permission from the Village Manager or designee.
- d. Village personnel are cautioned not to do the following:
 - i. Display Village logos, uniforms, or similar identifying items on personal web pages without prior written permission.
 - ii. Post personal photographs or provide similar means of personal recognition that may cause you to be identified as a Village employee without prior written permission.
 - iii. When using social media, department personnel should be mindful that their speech on any site becomes part of the World Wide Web.
- e. Adherence to the Village's code of conduct is required in the personal use of social media. In particular, Village personnel are prohibited from the following (not all inclusive):
 - i. Speech containing obscene or sexually explicit language, images, or acts and statements or other forms of speech that ridicule, malign, disparage, or otherwise express bias against any race, any religion, or any protected class of individuals.
 - ii. Village personnel may not divulge information gained by reason of their authority; make any statements, speeches, appearances, and endorsements; or publish materials that could reasonably be considered to represent the views or positions of the Village without express authorization.
 - iii. Village personnel should be aware that they may be subject to potential civil litigation for:
 - 1. Publishing or posting false information that harms the reputation of another person, group, or organization (defamation).
 - 2. Publishing or posting private facts and personal information about someone without their permission that has not been previously revealed to the public, is not of legitimate public concern, and would be offensive to a reasonable person.
 - 3. Using someone else's name, likeness, or other personal attributes without that person's permission for an exploitative purpose.
 - 4. Publishing the creative work of another, trademarks, or certain confidential business information without the permission of the owner.
- f. Village personnel should be aware that privacy settings and social media sites are constantly in flux, and they should never assume that personal information posted on such sites is protected.
- g. Village personnel should expect that any information created, transmitted, downloaded, exchanged, or discussed in a public online forum may be accessed by the Village at any time without prior notice.

- h. Use of social media for personal use while at work or using Village equipment is prohibited.

VIOLATIONS

- 1) Report violations
 - a. Any employee becoming aware of or having knowledge of a posting or of any website or webpage in violation of the provision of this policy shall notify his or her supervisor immediately for follow-up action.
- 2) Violation of this social media policy may result in suspension or termination.
- 3) Be assured that no employee will be subject to retaliation for having reported a violation of this Policy and/or for participating in a complaint investigation.

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