



## The City of Middletown Social Media Policy

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish the City of Middletown's position on the utility and management of social media and provide guidance on its management, administration, and oversight by City personnel in the course of their official duties.

Social media can assist the City of Middletown and its personnel in engaging constituents and communicating with the community. As such, the City of Middletown encourages the secure use of social media to enhance communication, collaboration, and information exchange, to streamline processes, and to foster productivity. This policy is not meant to address one particular form of social media; rather social media in general, as advances in technology will occur and new tools emerge.

### POLICY

It is the City of Middletown's policy that all personnel use computers, computer applications, computer programs, Internet resources, and network/Internet communications in a responsible, professional, ethical, and lawful manner.

All existing laws, rules, regulations, and directives that govern personnel conduct are applicable to conduct associated with social media and networking.

When engaging in social networking, employees will strictly adhere to any and all existing federal, state, and local laws, the City of Middletown Information Technology and Equipment Use Policy, and the City of Middletown Personnel Rules.

Personnel within the Middletown Police Department who are governed by the Section 514 Patrol Functions: Social Media policy are exempt from this policy.

### DEFINITIONS

**Blog:** A self-published diary or commentary on a particular topic that may allow visitors to post responses, reactions, or comments.

**Blogsphere:** Denotes the world of blogs and refers to all the blogs and blog interactions on the internet.

**Chat:** An interaction on a website, with a number of people adding text items one after another into the same space at nearly the same time – differs from a forum because conversations happen in "real time."

**Comments:** Responses to a blog post, news article, social media entry, or other social networking post.

**Feed:** A list of user's recent tweets which can be posted on other sites such as Facebook or an agency's website.

**Forums:** Discussion areas on websites where people can post messages or comment on existing messages at any time.

**Page:** The specific portion of a social media website where content is displayed and managed by an individual or individuals with administrator rights.

**Post (noun):** Content an individual shares on a social media or similar site or the act of publishing content on such a site.

**Post (verb):** The act of creating, uploading, editing, or adding to any social media outlet. This includes text, photographs, audio, video, or any other multimedia file.

**Profile:** Information that a user provides about the City on a social networking or similar site.

**Social Media:** A category of Internet-based resources that integrate user-generated content and user participation. This includes, but is not limited to, social networking sites, blogs and microblogging sites, photo and video sharing sites, wikis, and news sites that permit user contributed content.

**Social Networks:** Online platforms where users can create profiles, share information, and socialize with others using a range of technologies, such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Usenet Group message or on-line bulletins boards, blogs, wikis, news sites, or other similarly developed formats.

**Speech:** Expression or communication of thoughts or opinions in spoken words, in writing, by expressive conduct, symbolism, photographs, videotape, or related forms of communication.

**Tweet:** A post or status update on Twitter.

**Wall:** The user's own profile page and the updates it contains. People can write updates on the City's wall that are viewable by all contacts.

**Web 2.0:** The second generation of the World Wide Web focused on shareable, user-generated content, rather than static web pages. Some use this term interchangeably with social media.

**Wiki:** Web page(s) that can be edited collaboratively by users.

**YouTube:** An online video community that allows users to upload video content, share that content, and view the videos uploaded by others. Viewers are able to rate videos and leave comments.

## PROCEDURE

Where the City of Middletown uses social media to advance the purposes and goals of the organization, its social media sites are intended to serve as a mechanism for communication between the public and the Department. The following procedures shall apply to these officially sanctioned uses:

### General Operating Procedures for City Sanctioned Use of Social Media

For accounts representing the City of Middletown as a singular entity ("City account"), no social media account is to be established unless authorized by the Mayor or his/her designee. Such social media accounts will be administered by personnel who have been authorized by the Mayor.

For accounts representing a specific department or division (“Department account”), no social media account is to be established unless authorized by the department head or his/her designee. Such social media accounts will be administered by personnel authorized by the department head. Upon establishment of such a social media account, the department head is to inform the Mayor of the account and which personnel have been authorized to administer it.

Department heads must inform the Mayor of any social media accounts that predate this policy and provide a list of which personnel has been authorized to administer it. The central repository for this information shall be the Office of the Mayor or his/her designee.

For all accounts, only authorized personnel members shall have the authority to post content to a given social media site. Only the Mayor or his/her designee can authorize posts dealing with local, state, or national emergencies. Where possible, each social media page shall include the following:

- An introductory statement that clearly specifies the purpose and scope of the City’s or department’s presence on the website;
- The page(s) should link to the City’s official website.
- City accounts shall clearly indicate they are maintained by the City and shall have the Mayor’s Office contact information prominently displayed.
- Department accounts shall clearly indicate they are maintained by the respective department and shall have the department’s contact information prominently displayed.

Social media content shall adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including all information technology and records management policies. Content may be subject to public records laws. Relevant records retention schedules can apply to social media content. As such, content must be managed, stored, and retrieved to comply with public records laws.

Where possible, social media pages should state that the opinions expressed by visitors to the page(s) do not reflect the opinions of the City of Middletown. Pages also shall clearly indicate that posted comments will be monitored and that the City of Middletown reserves the right to remove obscenities, off-topic comments, and personal attacks. Pages shall clearly indicate that any content posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure.

Department accounts should only post content relevant to the department and should not cross-post or repost material from other department accounts.

### Conduct During Sanctioned Use of Social Media

When representing the City and its departments via social media outlets:

- Employees shall conduct themselves at all times as representatives of the City or department and, accordingly, shall adhere to all Department standards of conduct and observe conventionally accepted protocols and proper decorum.
- Employees shall identify themselves as an employee of the City.
- Employees shall not conduct political activities or private business on a City-wide or Department account.

- If permitted by a social media platform, employees shall manage City-wide or Department social media activities using social media accounts associated with their @middletownct.gov email addresses and not social media accounts associated with a personal email address.
- Employees shall observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and service mark restrictions in posting materials to electronic media.

### Recognized Uses for a Sanctioned Social Media Presence

Social media is a valuable tool for community engagement and constituent communications.

Social media can be used to make time-sensitive notifications related to:

- Emergency communications
- Road closures
- Special events
- Weather emergencies
- Missing or endangered persons
- Other topics as authorized by the Mayor or his/her designee for City-wide accounts or the Department head for Department accounts.

### Guidelines for Social Media Accounts

Where possible, a minimum of two employees should be authorized to administer any given account.

Social media accounts should be updated frequently. If a social media account is updated less frequently than twice a month, there may not be a justification for its existence.

### Mayor's Approval

This policy was approved on 3/15/2021

by



Benjamin Florsheim (Mayor)