

## The Town of Ashland Guidelines and Best Practices for the Use of Social Media

*The Town of Ashland created social media accounts for various departments to effectively engage residents with accurate, transparent, and insightful dialogue bridging communication between administration and residents.*

### Current Active Town Social Media Sites:

**Town Hall** (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube)

**The Corner Spot** (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)

**Ashland DPW** (Facebook)

**Ashland Public Library** (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube)

**Ashland Recreation** (Facebook, Instagram)

**Ashland Senior Center** (Facebook)

**Ashland Human Services** (Facebook)

**Ashland is Dementia Friendly** (Facebook)

**Other Accounts privately managed** (Fire –F, I, T / Ashland Police )

Town of Ashland Staff follow procedures mentioned both below and in the employee handbook in POLICY: 10.7 SOCIAL MEDIA/NETWORKING.

### General Information:

- The Town has created social media accounts for various departments as a customer service tool for the dissemination of unbiased, factual information to the public and community stakeholders.
- The Town's social media sites will be used by the Town and its departments for communicating information with the sole purpose of informing the public of the work, news, and updates of various Town departments.
- Town's social media sites are monitored during operating hours and should not be used for emergency purposes. *If you have an emergency please dial 9-1-1.*
- No comments will be accepted through the Town's social media accounts for any public hearing; either adjudicatory public hearings or any other notified public hearing. Residents must attend public hearings and directly communicate with the deliberative body.
- Content posted to social media is subject to Massachusetts Public Records Law.
- Any unsatisfactory content should be reported to Ashland's Communications Coordinator, Ashley Place; 508-532-7935, [aplace@ashlandmass.com](mailto:aplace@ashlandmass.com)

### Monitoring:

By choosing to comment or post on the Town of Ashland's social media accounts, you agree that the Town reserves the right to remove content and/or block you from the page if your posts are deemed inappropriate for any reason, including but not limited due to the following:

- Profane or vulgar language or content
- Content that degrades others 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

- Threatening or harassing postings
- Personal attacks
- False information that causes harm to an individual or organization
- Sexual content or links to sexual content
- Content that reveals private or, personal information without permission
- Inappropriate photographs, including but not limited to: photos involving alcohol, nudity, and scenes of graphic violence
- Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity
- Information that may compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems
- Copyright, trademark, and intellectual property violations

If you violate any of these guidelines, you may have your content removed or be blocked from further participating on the page. If this happens, you have the right to appeal the decision with the Town Manager's Office by emailing Beth Reynolds at [breynolds@ashlandmass.com](mailto:breynolds@ashlandmass.com).

#### TOWN OF ASHLAND STAFF- PERSONAL VS. PROFESSIONAL GUIDELINES

The Town and its departments, as well as Town employees, are not obligated to follow or friend any organization or individual. The Town and its departments may follow another public town, state, quasi-state agencies, and federal agencies for the coordination and dissemination of information of interest to the public.

- **Personal Use-** Town of Ashland employees may have personal social media accounts. These accounts should remain personal in nature and be used to share personal opinions or non-work-related information. Following this principle helps ensure a distinction between sharing personal and official Town of Ashland views. The Town of Ashland employees must never use their Town of Ashland e-mail account or password in conjunction with a social media site.
  - The following guidance is for Town of Ashland employees who choose to have a personal social media or who decide to comment on posts about official Town of Ashland business:
    - State your name and, if relevant, role, when discussing Town of Ashland business;
    - Use a disclaimer such as: "The postings on this site are my own and don't reflect or represent the opinions of the Town of Ashland for which I work."
    - If social media is used for official Town of Ashland business, the entire Town of Ashland site, regardless of any personal views, is subject to best practice guidelines and standards.
- **Professional Use-** All official Town of Ashland-related communication through social media, should remain professional in nature and should always be conducted in accordance with the Town of Ashland's communications policy, practices and expectations. Employees must not use the official Town of Ashland social media accounts for political purposes, to conduct private commercial transactions, or to engage in private business activities. Town of Ashland employees should be mindful that inappropriate use of the official Town of Ashland social media accounts

can be grounds for disciplinary action. Only individuals authorized by the Town of Ashland may publish content to a website or social media account.

- POSTING- Official social media sites need to be clear, precise, and follow industry best practices for posting updates. All content posted to Town of Ashland social media accounts should be:
  - Relevant – Information that engages residents and pertains to their daily lives
  - Timely – Pertains to deadlines, upcoming events, or current news
  - Actionable – Prompts residents to take action Please refer to the Town of Ashland style guide for specific guidelines on the content format.
- ENGAGEMENT: Town staff should positively engage in commentary on social media comments or private messages with helpful references to information located on the website, or provide the department email address to move the conversation offline.
  - WHAT NOT TO POST- Town of Ashland employees may not publish content on Town of Ashland social media sites that includes:
    - Confidential information
    - Copyrighted material without permission
    - Profane, racist, sexist, threatening or derogatory content or comments
    - Partisan political views
    - Commercial endorsements or SPAM
- MANAGEMENT:
  - REGISTERING A NEW PAGE- All Town of Ashland social media sites shall be (1) approved by Beth Reynolds, (2) published using approved social networking platform and tools, and (3) administered by the contact or their designee.
  - DEREGISTERING AN EXISTING PAGE- If a social media page is no longer of use, (1) notify Beth Reynolds, (2) ensure records have been archived according to Town of Ashland guidelines, (3) unpublish and delete the page.