

**PURPOSES:**

To encourage the use of official social media accounts as avenues for accurate and appropriate communication to the public. To limit the liability to the Town of Lincoln from inappropriate use of official social media accounts.

**GUIDELINES FOR USE:**

- 1) The official social media account for the Town of Lincoln shall be created and maintained by the Town Manager's Office.
- 2) Social media accounts for individual departments may be created with approval of both the relevant department director and the Town Manager. Maintenance of individual social media accounts shall be the responsibility of the relevant department director or their designee. Websites and social media accounts for individual departments that are not appropriately monitored or maintained may be discontinued by order of the Town Manager. The Town Manager or their designee shall hold an active password and/or administrator access to all social media accounts.
- 3) Where applicable, social media accounts should be of the appropriate type (i.e. government agency or corporate account as opposed to private individual account) and should be visible to the public without requiring the public to “subscribe”, “follow”, “like”, or “friend” the Town account, if possible.
- 4) In all cases, the official Town or department website should be the place where information and content is stored/hosted. Social media accounts should link back to the official website for access to information wherever possible.
- 5) Employees who are authorized to maintain official social media accounts should take extra care to insure that information that is classified as non-public or confidential by law is not be distributed by website or social media accounts. Photos of minors will not be posted without a photo waiver signed by a parent or guardian.
- 6) Employees who are authorized to maintain official websites or social media accounts should use their professional judgment to insure that all information released is accurate and appropriate. Communication via social media accounts should be treated in the same manner as any other written, verbal, or electronic communication. ***If you would not distribute the information at a public meeting, to a newspaper reporter, or face to face with a resident, it should not be distributed via social media accounts.***
- 7) Information should not be distributed in a manner intended primarily to cast a negative light on any individual or group of individuals. Any information distributed should be fair and balanced according to a reasonable person standard.

- 8) Extra care should be taken to moderate and/or maintain social media accounts that allow comments from other users or the general public to be posted on the official page or site of any Town department. The determination of whether or not to allow other users or the general public to comment on an official page or site will be based on the specific social media account (i.e. blog, Facebook, Twitter, etc.) and will be made solely by the Town Manager.
- 9) It is understood that the Town of Lincoln represents citizens with opinions and viewpoints that may differ considerably from the opinions and viewpoints of the Town government's leadership. Where posting by other users is allowed, these users will be allowed to post messages questioning or disagreeing with town policies or actions in a constructive way. ***Employees should not engage in debate over the merits or politics of any Town action or policy with other users over social media.*** In all instances involving negative comments, the other user should be thanked for their comments and invited to express their concerns in person or by phone directly to the appropriate Town employee or official. Any complaints or concerns shall be directed to the appropriate employee or official according to the chain of command.
- 10) Inappropriate comments left by other users will be removed immediately from social media accounts. Whenever possible, a message should be sent to the other user explaining why the comment was removed. If inappropriate comments continue, the user shall be blocked from commenting on the social media account in the future. Inappropriate comments shall include, but not be limited to, the following:
  - comments of a profane, offensive, or sexual nature.
  - comments not relevant to the official business of the Town of Lincoln.
  - comments intended solely to solicit commerce or promote a for-profit business.
  - comments that promote or foster discrimination toward any class protected by state or federal law.
  - negative comments naming or implying a person or organization that is not an employee, official, or subagency of the Town of Lincoln.
  - comments intended to threaten, harass, any or defame any person or organization.
- 11) Any employees who link their private social media accounts to the Town of Lincoln's official account or publicly identify themselves as employees of the Town of Lincoln on their private social media accounts should be mindful of the image that information they post on their private social media account casts on the Town. When in doubt, the bold-faced text in guideline #6 above serves as a good test to determine whether certain information should be shared via private social media accounts.