



# Town of East Greenwich

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## Employee Social Media Policy

*Adopted January 23, 2018*

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Employee Social Media Policy

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*Purpose*

The purpose of this policy is to establish a position on the utility and management of social media tools as well as provide guidelines for the personal usage of social media for employees of the Town of East Greenwich.

To ensure that employees use appropriate discretion in relation to the use of references to the Town (web pages and/or sites) and not discredit the Town or its employees.

To ensure inappropriate conduct and/or information is not disseminated via personal web sites.

*Scope*

This policy shall apply to all Town of East Greenwich personnel.

*Policy*

The Town recognizes the role that social media tools play in the personal lives of some Town personnel in their official capacity. This policy provides information of a precautionary nature as well as prohibitions on the use of social media by Town personnel.

*Be respectful*

Always be fair and courteous to fellow co-workers and the public and avoid inappropriate postings that may include discriminatory remarks, harassment, threats of violence or similar inappropriate and unlawful conduct. Postings that violate the Town's policies, such as anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies, will not be tolerated and may subject you to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

*Personal Use Precautions and Prohibitions*

Barring state law or binding employment contracts to the contrary, Town employees shall abide by the following precautions and prohibitions, as well as the Town's other applicable policies, when using social media:

a. Employees are prohibited from accessing social media sites, such as but not limited to Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, Myspace, LinkedIn, and YouTube, during work hours; provided, however, that employees may access social media sites if such access is related to the performance of their job duties (for example, employees in the Police Department are allowed such access for purposes of investigations and other intelligence-related activities). Whenever an employee uses social media sites, including during non-work hours, the

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employee must abide by this policy and any other relevant Town policies (i.e., anti-harassment, etc.).

b. Employees may not post anything on the Internet in the name of the Town or in a manner that could reasonably be attributed to the Town without prior written authorization from the Town Manager. Any comments directly or indirectly relating to the Town must include the following disclaimer: “The postings on this site are my own and do not represent the Town of East Greenwich’s positions, strategies or opinions.”

c. As public employees, members of the Town are cautioned that speech, on - or off- duty, made pursuant to their official duties - that is, that owes its existence to the employee’s professional duties and responsibilities - is not protected speech under the First Amendment. Town employees should assume that their speech and related activity on social media sites will be a reflection on the Town as a whole.

d. Maintain the confidentiality of the Town’s trade secrets and confidential information, such as internal reports, policies, processes, know-how, technology and internal business-related confidential communications.

e. When using social media, Town employees should be mindful that their speech becomes part of the worldwide electronic domain. Therefore, adherence to the Town’s policies and procedures is required in the personal use of social media. In particular, Town employees are cautioned not to post the following:

1. Speech containing obscene or sexually explicit language, images, or acts and statements or other forms of speech that ridicule, malign, disparage, or otherwise bias against any race, any religion, or any protected class of individuals.
2. Speech involving themselves or other Town personnel reflecting behavior that would reasonably be considered reckless or malicious.

f. Engaging in speech noted herein may provide grounds for undermining or impeaching an employee’s testimony in civil or criminal proceedings. Defense counsel in civil or criminal cases search for material posted by employee’s on websites with the hope of finding incriminating statements that can be used in a legal proceeding. When an employee’s postings indicate bias or other incriminating information, they become of great value to lawyers seeking to impeach an employee’s testimony and may be detrimental to the outcome of a case.

g. Town employees should be aware that they may be subject to civil litigation for purposefully:

1. Publishing or posting willfully false information that harms the reputation of another person, group, or organization (defamation);

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2. Using someone else's name, likeness, or other personal attributes without that person's permission for an exploitative purpose; or
3. Publishing the creative work of another, trademarks, or certain confidential business information without the permission of the owner.

h. Town 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.

i. Town personnel should expect that any information created, transmitted, downloaded, exchanged, or discussed in a public online forum may be accessed by the Town at any time without prior notice.

j. Any violation of this policy may result in discipline, up to and including termination of employment.