

TOWN OF PAXTON

POLICY REGARDING PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

BY TOWN EMPLOYEES

PURPOSE:

To establish guidelines for employees of the Town of Paxton who participate in social media networking. It is intended to promote good use and prevent discrediting of the character and integrity of the Town and its employees or officials.

SCOPE:

These guidelines apply to all Town employees who participate in any form of personal social networking. Thus, to the extent employees should refrain from accessing social media on Town owned equipment (exception being Police Department work) and during the hours when the employee is being paid for Town related work.

POLICY:

The Town is aware that employees may maintain or contribute to personal blogs, message boards, conversation pages and other forms of social media (such as Facebook and Twitter) outside of their job function. These postings should not be used to discuss work-related information unless the matter about which they are communicating is a matter of public concern protected by the First Amendment. Employees, however, should understand that the right to free speech is not absolute. They should, therefore, exercise caution with respect to comments they post concerning the Town, its employees or officials.

If employees personally access and/or use external social media platforms, they may not reference the Town or any information that would identify the employee's relationship with the Town or Town Department in which they work in their identity (e.g., username, "handle" or screen name), nor should the employee speak as a representative of the Town. If, however, an employee makes or expresses any comment about Town-business or about the employee's job function or job-related activities because the matter is one of public concern, the employee must disclose his or her relationship with the Town. In doing so, the employee must also state that the comments he/she is making or posting concerning such Town-related business reflects his/her own personal views or opinions and that such comments are neither made on behalf of nor reflect the views of the Town, unless the employee is specifically authorized by the Town to make such comments.

Employees are responsible for acting in a manner that is consistent with the Town's policies. Employees are expected to be courteous, respectful, and thoughtful about how other employees may be affected by postings. ***Postings that harass or threaten any other Town employees or officials, or which disclose confidential information related to the business of the Town or personal information concerning other Town employees or officials violate Town policy and may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.*** Moreover,

postings about other individuals could potentially expose the posting employee to, among other things, personal liability for invasion of privacy, sexual harassment, or discrimination. Employees bear full responsibility for the material they post on personal blogs or other social media. Further, employees who may be required to testify in court as a part of their job should be aware that defense attorneys are increasingly looking for information available on social media and other internet sites to obtain information that can be used at trial to discredit the character and integrity of the prosecution's witnesses. Employees should refrain from posting any comments that might compromise their credibility in court.

For purposes of this policy, a "personal blog" or "social media" includes personal websites, and all forms of on-line community activities such as on-line social networks, message boards, conversation pages, and chat rooms, including, but not limited to, Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, Friendster, Twitter, Flickr, and personal blogs.

If you have any questions about the application of these guidelines, please contact the Town Administrator or your Department Head.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Selectmen on January 14, 2014.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I have received a copy of the Town of Paxton's Policy regarding Personal Use of Social Media by Town Employees and I understand that I am responsible for reading the policies and guidelines described within it.

Name (Print)

Signature

Date

Witness