

# **Town of Lady Lake Social Media Policy**

## **PURPOSE & SCOPE:**

Social networking has encouraged new ways to communicate and share information. Through this policy, the Town of Lady Lake shall establish basic guidelines for its current (and any new) social media outlets to ensure proper use.

Social media channels are used to increase public awareness of the Town's services, accomplishments, events, and news, as well as serve as an effective and immediate form of communication in emergency/crisis situations when timeliness of the information is crucial.

## **The goals of the Town of Lady Lake Social Media Policy are:**

- To increase public awareness of the Town's programs, policies and services
- To promote the value and importance of the Town's programs, policies and services among government officials, civic leaders, residents and the public
- To maintain open, professional and responsive communications with members of the public and the news media

This policy, and its provisions, apply to and serve as a guide to all Town employees, departments, volunteers and contracted entities that share information on behalf of the Town while engaging in any social media activities implied or directed. Nothing in this policy is intended to restrict employees from the right to speak freely on matters of public concern and to engage in other protected concerted activities, as defined and interpreted by applicable law.

All social media communications, messages and comments are subject to public records law. All of the Town's social media sites shall comply with Chapter 119 and any other applicable sections of the Florida State Statutes. The Town of Lady Lake will use a third-party service provider to automatically capture and retain all social media interaction on Town-owned social media accounts.

## **I. DEFINITIONS:**

An **Authorized User** is an employee, who has been authorized by their Department Director and approved by the Town Manager to access and post updates to the Town's social media accounts.

**Comments** are short notes about a post.

**Hashtags (#)** are words or phrases used within a message to identify a keyword or topic of interest and facilitate a search for it. Hashtags are preceded by the pound sign (#) and can be a word or a short phrase i.e., #AmericasHometown.

A **Post** is a message the organization wants to share with those who "like" the organization's Facebook page or who "follow" the organization on Twitter. On Facebook, a post is most commonly called a **Status Update**. And, on Twitter, a post is called a **Tweet**. Posts will appear on the organization's activity feed and can include pictures, links, videos, or any related media.

**Social media** are websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking.

A **Social Media Account** is any registration, login credential, or network that is created or maintained for the purpose of establishing or perpetuating a social media presence.

**Social Networking** is the use of dedicated websites and applications to interact with other users, or to find people with similar interests to oneself or interest in one's organization. Facebook and Twitter are social networking sites.

**Tag or tagging** someone or an organization means a link is created to that person's or organization's profile. The person/organization that is tagged in a post will be notified and the post may be added to the person's/organization's timeline or newsfeed.

## **II. RESPONSIBILITIES:**

The Town Manager or designee is ultimately responsible for the maintenance and monitoring of all Town of Lady Lake social media accounts in accordance with this policy. The Town Manager or designee is the primary point of contact for each department and will provide an overview and training of this social media policy and its implementation. The Town Manager and/or designee shall have administrator rights on all Town-affiliated social media sites.

The Town Clerk's Office will oversee the records management program.

The Communications Department and Information Technology Department will provide the necessary technology services, security, guidance and technical assistance for effective social media usage.

Authorized users are responsible for actively engaging in social media by posting pertinent information on behalf of the Town on a consistent basis and in compliance with this social media policy.

## **III. POLICY:**

It is the policy of the Town of Lady Lake to adopt a procedure to guide all interaction with social media platforms and its accompanying guidelines that provides a standard approach to the collaboration and

sharing of information on and in various public domains to provide consistent communication across all media.

#### **A. Social Media Usage**

- I. While social media provide an effective forum for building relationships and for conveying small “bites” of information, these platforms do not serve as the Town’s sole or even primary means of communication with residents, businesses and others. The Town’s social media accounts are intended to be used for informational purposes only.
- II. Social media can be an ineffective tool for communicating about complex issues. The Town will use appropriate means to communicate detailed information about complex issues and to discuss concerns with citizens and others.
- III. Practical and legal considerations may sometimes constrain, prevent, or prohibit discussion of certain topics, such as court cases, through this medium.
- IV. Comments that offer thoughtful, relevant and not profane criticism of the organization (not individuals or other businesses) and Town initiatives shall not be removed or altered except as provided for in this policy.
- V. The Town reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of this policy or any applicable law. The Town’s social media articles, posts or comments containing any of the following forms of content shall not be allowed and may be removed at any time by the Town in its sole discretion:
  - a) Profane language or content,
  - b) Comments clearly not topically related or relevant to the site or matter being commented upon,
  - c) Personal or character attacks,
  - d) Language or content that is threatening in nature,
  - e) Content that promotes, fosters or perpetuates unlawful discrimination,
  - f) Sexual content or links to sexual content,
  - g) Advertisements or third-party links not authorized by the Town,
  - h) Illegal conduct or encouragement of illegal activity, and
  - i) Information that may compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems of content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party.
- VI. These guidelines must be readily available to users by hyperlink to the Town’s website. Any content removed based on these guidelines must be retained, including the time, date and identity of the poster when available in accordance with the Town’s policy on the retention of such information.

#### **B. Guidelines for Authorized Users**

- I. Social media posts made by the Town must pertain to Town news, matters or Town sponsored/partnered events only.
- II. As part of the interactive approach to using social media, the Town Manager or designee may follow, message, like, share and retweet posts that contain content that is relevant to the Town’s mission.

- III. The Town's authorized users will approach the use of social media tools as consistently as possible.
- IV. At all times, authorized users shall use good judgment when posting. Employees must refrain from posts that may be interpreted as offensive, obscene, demeaning, or inflammatory.
- V. Confidential information shall not be posted.
- VI. At times, authorized users may determine other means/tools are more appropriate ways to respond to citizen/fan comment or may determine that it is best not to respond to a comment at all.
- VII. In general, individual complaints, concerns, or service requests will not be addressed via social media however when deciding whether or not to respond to a social media comment.
- VIII. Authorized users shall not engage in back-and-forth conversation regarding topics that are complex, controversial, or otherwise sensitive.
- IX. Authorized users, in consultation with the Town Manager or designee, will determine when an issue raised by others has reached a "critical mass" that requires a Town response on the account.
- X. A standard reply may be used to direct users with concerns related to sensitive or complex issues. This standard reply may read something like: *"The Town of Lady Lake is very interested in the insights and concerns expressed here. However, complex topics typically are not effectively discussed in forums such as this. If you wish to voice your concerns further or obtain additional information, please report your concern on the Town's website [www.LadyLake.org](http://www.LadyLake.org) or contact the Town at (352) 751-1501."*

### **C. Guidelines and Limitations for all Employees**

- I. All Town employees, including authorized users of the Town's social media accounts, and Town officials shall govern themselves in a professional manner that reflects positively on the Town when using social media. Users should always focus on providing high-quality customer service and worthwhile information in a timely manner.
- II. Do not, under any circumstances, disclose any personal information about the Town of Lady Lake or its employees.
- III. Do not disclose confidential information about the Town of Lady Lake, its practices, or any information meant to be shared only with fellow employees.
- IV. Do not remove, restrict or alter any comments except as allowed in this policy.
- V. The conversation shall always remain civil and respectful, and all authorized users, employees, and Town officials must refrain from using content in violation of this policy.
- VI. Any rumors, slander, or confidential information shared via social media may have a significant negative impact on the Town and its reputation, especially while on Town time or Town computers. Disciplinary action may be brought against the individual responsible for the publication of this information.
- VII. Repeated violations of this policy shall result in removal of access to the service and be grounds for disciplinary action for Town employees.

- VIII. This Social Media Policy shall be revised as needed. Posts/comments to the Town of Lady Lake's social media accounts shall constitute acceptance of this policy.
- IX. While on company time or company computers, no employee shall, at any time, share anything with another employee via social media that may be considered inappropriate or fall under the category Not Suitable for Work—known online as NSFW. This includes items of a sexual, profane, or violent nature. These have no place in the work environment, and disciplinary action may occur.
- X. Employees shall not engage in social media activities that violate the Town's policies prohibiting unlawful discrimination, harassment, or retaliation, or that otherwise violates the Town's standards of conduct. In this respect, employees should be respectful when engaging in social media activities. Employees should always be fair and courteous to fellow employees, elected officials, members of the public, and any others who work or interact with the Town. Employees should keep in mind that work-related complaints are more likely to be resolved by speaking directly with co-workers than by posting complaints to a social media outlet. Nevertheless, if an employee decides to post complaints or criticism, he or she must avoid using statements, photographs, video, or audio that reasonably could be viewed as malicious, obscene, threatening, intimidating, or that might constitute harassment or bullying. Examples of such conduct might include, but is not limited to, offensive posts meant to intentionally harm someone's reputation, or posts that could contribute to a hostile work environment based on race, sex, pregnancy, disability, religion, national origin, ethnicity, marital status, veteran status, or any other status protected by law or company policy.