Town of Butternuts, NY

Social Media Policy

Amended October 14, 2026

I. Definition of Social Media

Social media is broadly defined as internet-based communications technology that provides immediacy, interactivity and the sharing of information across multiple platforms, which include, but are not limited to:

- Facebook/Meta
- X
- Podcasts
- Forums
- Message boards
- Photos
- Videos
- You Tube
- Blog sites
- LinkedIn
- Flickr
- Real-time communications (video chat)

Because new social media and networking sites are regularly created, this policy is not limited to the sites named above; however, the Town of Butternuts, hereinafter referred to as the "Town," will have only one official social media account for each form of social media.

I. **PURPOSE**

The Town may allow the use of social media, where appropriate, to further its goals and mission. However, the Town has an overriding interest and expectation in deciding what is posted on its social media. The various media used by the Town shall not be used as a form of public forums. This policy establishes guidelines for the use of **the Town's** social media by all Users.

A. Proactive purposes of the Social Media policy:

Social media is an effective way to reach residents with up-to-date information. This will allow the Town to accomplish the following:

- Increase transparency in Town government;

- Provide timely communications to residents, including updates on Town news, meetings, events, and emergencies;
- Facilitate access to information;
- Deliver and enhance Town services;
- Encourage resident participation in Town meetings and events;
- Direct residents to the Town website for further information.

B. Protection afforded by the Town's Social Media policy:

The Town will pursue all available measures to prohibit the inappropriate use of electronic communication systems, media, imaging systems, networks, devices, and equipment and dissemination of inappropriate information, images, recordings, photographs, other materials or personal information by Town personnel. This includes the use of the Town's social media by Users.

II. APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to all Town employees, elected officials, Town-appointed volunteers, consultants, service providers and contractors, hereinafter referred to as Users, performing business on behalf of the Town.

III. POLICY

It is the policy of the Town that all individuals identified in section II abide by the policy herein set forth when using Town information systems, which are defined as: computers and the services of both internal and external databases and information exchange networks, the internet, email, voice mail, mobile data terminals, facsimile machines, mobile telephones, lap top computers and social media.

Communications sent by email may be subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act or in litigation. No User shall have any expectation of privacy with regard to any information stored on the Town's information systems.

IV. PROCEDURE

A. **The Town Board will approve establishment of all official social media platforms for Town. The Town Board will appoint the administrator of each official platform.**

B. Transmission of electronic messages and information on communications media provided for employees of the Town shall be treated with the same degree of propriety, professionalism and confidentiality as official written correspondence or public records.

C. Information systems are intended for use in conducting official business of the Town, with limited exceptions noted in this policy. The Town encourages authorized and trained personnel with access to Town information systems to utilize these devices whenever necessary.

However, all information systems are the property of the Town, and the use of information systems is a privilege that is subject to revocation.

D. Users are advised that they do not maintain any right to privacy or ownership in information systems equipment or its contents or to include or install personally owned software.

E. The Town's administration reserves the right to access any of the records within the information systems at any time and to retain or dispose of those records as it deems necessary or appropriate, and may require Users to provide passwords to files that have been encrypted or password protected.

F. The Town reserves the right to access, for quality control purposes and/or for violations of this policy, date, electronic and voice transmissions of Users conducting business in the Town.

G. Personal and/or private use of the Town's information systems to access social media sites is prohibited.

H. Accessing or transmitting materials from the Town's information systems that involve the use of obscene language, images, jokes, sexually explicit materials, or messages that disparage or threaten the Town, any person, group, or classification of individuals is prohibited regardless of whether the recipient has consented to or requested such materials.

Exception: Users in criminal investigations, during the performance of their official duties, may be requested to receive, copy, download, or transmit sexually explicit or other materials normally not allowed. Anyone requiring such authorization will request, in writing, permission from the employee's/elected official's supervisor prior to beginning to receive, copy, download or transmit the material.

I. Confidential, proprietary or sensitive information may be disseminated or made available through shared directories or networked systems only to individuals with a need and a right to know and when there is sufficient assurance that appropriate security of such information will be maintained. The dissemination of confidential, proprietary or sensitive information, including photographs, on social media sites or personal web pages is prohibited.

J. No User shall access or allow others to access any Town file or database unless that person has a need and a right to such information. Personal identification and access codes shall not be revealed to any unauthorized source.

K. Users are not to open email messages unless they are certain of the trustworthiness of the source.

L. Users are advised that email messages are not necessarily a secure and confidential means of communication since subsequent direction of the message cannot be controlled.

M. Users may not knowingly accept messages with inappropriate content as described in this policy and will immediately report such messages to their supervisor and, when directed to do so, completely delete any such message inadvertently received.

P. Users shall not utilize information systems to spoof, masquerade or assume any identity or credentials of another individual.

Q. The use of social media shall conform to all Town policies which prohibit discrimination, retaliation and harassment of co-workers/elected officials.

R. Each User of any Town information system must maintain a current written list of all passwords. This list shall be available to another authorized User in the case of an emergency, incapacitation, absence, or death.

S. No advertising of any kind other than advertising related to Town business may be posted through any Town-owned information system or Town-authorized social media platform by any User.

V. **DISCIPLINE**

Any violation of this policy may result in one or more of the following consequences:

- Temporary loss of privileges and/or deactivation of computer, network, or internet access;
- Permanent loss of privileges and/or deactivation of computer, network, or internet access;
- Disciplinary actions (including proceedings for removal from office) by the appropriate Town Board or Town officials and/or state boards or state officials;
- Subpoena of data files and/or the application for and execution of a search warrant;
- Legal prosecution under applicable United States, New York State and/or Town statutes, local laws, ordinances, codes, rules and/or regulations;
- Possible penalties under applicable laws, including fines and/or imprisonment.

Signature of User:

I have read and agree to abide by the Social Media & Internet Policy of the Town of Butternuts.

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