



## **Town of Corning Social Media Policy**

### **1. PURPOSE**

The Town of Corning (the “Town”) maintains social media accounts for the purpose of communicating with the members of the public. Social media refers to the creation and exchange of information among individuals through Internet based applications. This includes, but is not limited to information in the form of text, pictures, videos, links to other sites, or any other type of communication posted to the approved social media site.

Examples of social media sites include, but are not limited to: Facebook, X, Instagram, and YouTube. It is understood that social media is an evolving communications tool and that new resources may be become available over time. This policy gives direction to Town employees, elected officials, volunteers, and other authorized affiliated persons and organizations that utilize the Town’s electronic/computer resources to access social media websites and engage in social networking for Town purposes. The Town has an overriding interest and expectation in deciding what is published on behalf of the Town through social media and in establishing guidelines for the use of Town social media by Town officials.

All content posted on the pages, including comments submitted, those removed, and a list of subscribers or “followers”, is considered a public record and subject to the New York State Freedom of Information Law. Any content removed and/or hidden by the Town, based on the guidelines below will be retained and maintained by the Town Clerk pursuant to the record retention policy.

The Town has established the following guidelines for the creation and use of the Town’s social media sites. The Town shall establish an “official” town-wide social media site(s) and the Site Administrator shall be the communications manager, as designated by the Town Board who shall to oversee and manage social media accounts and overall online presence.

### **2. INTENT**

This policy is intended to enable and encourage civil communication and positive

engagement with members of the public. The Town intends to disseminate information to the public in the most effective ways possible and looks to obtain feedback from the public in the same way.

The Town recognizes the potential exposure in online communication, as well as the legal requirements related to all forms of official communication. As such, this policy intends to protect the Town, its employees and its elected officials from the potential of harmful conduct related to online communications and establish a set of requirements and guidelines to support an effective method of communication while complying with applicable legal standards.

### **3. CONTENT**

It is the goal of the Town to have a cohesive online presence and as such, centralized social media accounts through which official information is disseminated. Maintaining and updating social media sites will be used strictly for conveying information about the Town to the public and engaging with residents where appropriate. The Town's official website will be the primary and predominant Internet presence. Wherever possible, content posted to the Town's social media sites will also be available on the Town's official website. All content should be complementary of the Town's website and content posted on the social media sites should contain links to the Town's official website.

#### **a. INTEGRITY OF INFORMATION**

Any person or department who is not a Site Administrator wishing to post content to any official social media site, shall submit a request to the communications manager with all necessary information and media, including text, photos/videos and links. The communications manager has the right to approve or deny the request based on the guidelines contained herein. Only content approved by the communications manager shall be posted.

It is the responsibility of the Department Head to ensure that all content submitted for posting has been fully vetted and is free from error.

#### **b. OWNERSHIP**

All Town-designated accounts are considered the property of the Town and as such, do not transfer if a site administrator terminates employment with the Town, or no longer

serves in a capacity consistent with social media account management with the Town.

### **c. BRANDING**

Social media “profile pictures” should clearly represent the Town either with the official Town seal or other identifying marker of Town Department.

## **4. CONDUCT**

Employees representing the Town via its social media sites shall conduct themselves at all times as representatives of the Town and in accordance with the Employee Handbook and other applicable policies. When a Town employee uses his/her personal social media account to post or respond to a comment in his/her capacity as a Town employee, the employee should do so in the name of the Town department and disclose his/her name and title. The employee is not to post to social media during scheduled work hours.

On official Town social media pages, Town employees shall not share personal information about him or herself, or other Town employees except as required for Town business. Town employees are strongly discouraged from using personal accounts to comment on or post information to Town social media sites and from posting information regarding official town business on other social media sites. This includes any usage of or participation in Town social media sites from outside the workplace. This policy is intended to compliment and expand on the Social Media policy contained in the Town of Corning Employee Handbook. Employees found in violation of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment in compliance with the Town’s personnel policy, employment contract, or collective bargaining agreement as necessary and appropriate.

## **5. ELECTED OFFICIALS**

Any elected officials choosing to establish and maintain social media profiles should do so using this policy as guidelines for management but understand that the Town does not take ownership of those accounts in any capacity, nor does the Town manage or monitor pages owned by Elected Officials.

The Town recognizes that elected and appointed officials may choose to express themselves by posting personal information on social media platforms or by making comments on sites hosted by other persons, groups or organizations, this right of expression should not

interfere with the operation of the Town.

If an elected official conducts any Town business or communication as an official from a personal account, professional account, or account created for a Board, committee, or commission representation, officials should assume that Town-related communications will be considered a public record and will be subject to the New York State Freedom of Information Laws (FOIL), as well as applicable sections of the records retention schedule.

## **6. ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT**

All social media sites maintained by the Town shall clearly set forth that they are maintained by the Town as the Town's "official" social media accounts. The following disclaimer shall appear on all Town social media sites where possible. Alternatively, the language following will be contained in a page on the Town's website and be linked directly:

The Town shall be the sole owner of all social media accounts and reserves the right to not publish or remove any postings which contain inappropriate content, including, but not limited to:

- Potentially libelous comments;
- Obscene or racist comments;
- Derogatory or inflammatory comments about an individual's gender, race, age, disability, religion, or national origin;
- Personal attacks, insults, or threatening language;
- Private, personal information offered without express consent;
- Comments unrelated to the topic of discussion;
- Hyperlinks to materials not directly related to the discussion;
- Material known to be plagiarized;
- Commercial promotions, including for-profit advertisements or products for sale;
- Content appearing to be "spam";
- Comments pertaining to organized political activities, including political endorsements;
- Any content that is not deemed to be in the best interest of the Town.

Town social media sites are intended to be informational. Users should not use these forums

for making any official communications to the Town; for example, reporting crimes or misconduct, reporting dangerous conditions, requesting an inspection, giving notice required by any statute, regulation or ordinance, such as, but not limited to, notices of claims. It is understood that the Town of Corning's social media sites are not maintained 24 hours a day, 7 days per week and immediate responses to any requests via post, email, direct message, etc. may not occur. The Town reserves the right to not reply or decline to reply to any/all comments posted to its social media accounts. It is also understood that the Town will not automatically "friend", "like", "follow" or "connect" to users who follow, comment or "like" Town posts.

If comments are related to the topic at hand, and do not otherwise violate the above-listed proscriptions, then the content must be allowed to remain, regardless of whether it is favorable or unfavorable to the Town.

Content posted by a member of the public to any Town social media site shall not reflect the opinions or policies of the Town.

## **7. TERMS OF SERVICE**

All social media sites maintained by the Town shall clearly set forth that they are maintained by the Town as the Town's "official" social media accounts. Employees administering social media accounts should be aware of the Terms of Service (TOS) of each social media site. Each has its own unique TOS that regulates how users interact using that particular form of media. Anyone with access to any official Town site should regularly consult the TOS as they are updated regularly.

## **8. OPERATION, AUDIT, AND REPORTING**

The Town of Corning shall review this social media policy annually, and it shall have the power to amend this policy at any time.

Adopted by the Town Council Town of Corning May 8, 2024