

# Town of Mead Social Media Policy and Disclaimers

## POLICY STATEMENT

This policy establishes guidelines for the use of social media by Town of Mead staff and elected officials.

### I. PURPOSE

The intended purpose of social media use by the Town of Mead is to disseminate information from the Town, about the Town, to engage residents in a dialogue with the Town about issues related to Town government, and to promote community events, programs and initiatives. In this policy, social media refers to any platform for online publication and commentary, including, but not limited to, social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, content hosting sites such as YouTube, as well as blogs and wikis.

This policy establishes procedures for creating and maintaining the Town's presence on social media platforms and to establish standards for the use of or participation on those platforms.

### II. SCOPE

This policy applies to all Town officers, employees, and elected officials. All Town policies, procedures, directives, and guidelines also apply in the social media context, including but not limited to any existing or future Town of Mead policy regarding the use of technology, computers, smart phones, email and the Internet.

### III. MANAGEMENT OF TOWN PRESENCE IN SOCIAL MEDIA

- A. Approved Social Media Platforms. The Town has implemented the following social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube, with possible expansion into additional platforms. Social media accounts shall not be created, nor shall additional platforms be implemented, without approval by the Public Information Officer (PIO) or Town Manager. The Town of Mead's username should be consistent across social media platforms; when available, @townofmead should be used.
- B. Ownership. All Town-sponsored social media accounts, pages, and their content are the property of the Town, regardless of which department or staff member creates, manages, or contributes to the content or what equipment is used to produce the content. As a result, the Town reserves the right to access, review, edit, remove, and disclose any such information at any time and without notice as required to maintain the integrity of its communications and information technology functions.
- C. Town Website as Primary Internet Presence. The Town of Mead's website, [www.townofmead.org](http://www.townofmead.org), shall remain the Town's primary and predominant internet presence. Whenever possible, content posted to the Town social media pages will also be available on the Town's website. When possible, the Town's social media pages shall contain a link that directs

users back to the Town’s official website for information, policies, forms, documents, or online services necessary to conduct business with the Town.

- D. Compliance with Applicable Law. Use and administration of the Town’s social media accounts and pages shall comply with applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and policies.
- E. Security. Town social media website accounts and pages are considered a Town asset and logins to these accounts must be securely administered in accordance with Town security and computer use policies. The Town shall make every effort to ensure that its social media accounts are secure and protected from attempts to “hack” or “hijack” the accounts that would alter, misstate, or otherwise misuse the account content. The Town shall develop a plan to address such a security breach if it occurs.
- F. Confidentiality. A social media account shall not be used by the Town or any Town employee or representative to disclose sensitive and/or confidential information without the prior express written approval of the Town Manager.
- G. Legal Disclaimer; Disclaimer Required on Town Social Media Accounts.

The Town of Mead assumes no liability for damages incurred directly or indirectly as a result of errors, omissions or discrepancies set forth on its social media accounts. Moreover, the Town is not responsible for the content of, nor endorses, any site linked to its social media accounts. No communication to the Town of Mead through social media platforms shall be deemed to constitute legal or official notice for any purpose.

Each Town social media account and/or page shall prominently post or include a link to the following disclaimer:

“The Town of Mead’s use of external social media websites is provided as a public service. The Town of Mead disclaims all liability for ads, videos, promoted content, or commentary accessible from any external web page. The responsibility for external content or commentary rests with the individuals or organizations providing them. Inclusion of external content or commentary on external social media websites does not imply endorsement by the Town of Mead or reflect the opinions or positions of the Town of Mead, its officers, or employees.”

- H. Access for Persons with Disabilities. The Town will make every effort to ensure that its social media sites are accessible. If a person with a disability that prohibits them from accessing the Town’s social media sites wishes to receive that information from the Town in another format, that person should direct their request to the Town’s Public Information Officer. The Public Information Officer shall attempt make every effort to accommodate this request in a reasonable manner that does not fundamentally alter the nature of the service offered or does not present an undue burden for the Town.
- I. Personal Use of Social Media. Elected officials and Town employees who engage in personal use of social media outside of work may not use the trademark, logo, or name of the Town or that of any Town department or program, nor may they use their affiliation with the Town in association with that personal use. Elected officials and Town employees may not speak as

representatives of the Town in the course of their personal use of social media. In cases where an individual's personal use of social media may be perceived as being on behalf of the Town, such as if an individual identifies themselves as a Town official or employee or is widely known to be a Town official or employee, that individual shall include a visible disclaimer on their account to inform other users that their opinions are their own and do not represent those of the Town of Mead. The Town Manager shall be charged with interpreting this provision for all Town employees. An employee's personal use of social media that is business-related may subject that employee and their personal account to this Policy and all other Town policies, including the Employee Handbook. Employees are advised that their conduct on social media may reflect on their fitness to perform their jobs.

#### **IV. RECORDS**

All comments and replies posted on any Town of Mead social networking tool, blog, or page are subject to the Colorado Open Records Act, C.R.S. §§ 24-72-201, *et seq.* The Town may use third-party services for archiving purposes. All information found on these pages or disseminated through a web application tool like Facebook are capable of being reprinted in newspapers, magazines, online or any other media format.

#### **V. COMMENTS**

The Town of Mead encourages comments, concerns and questions regarding any of the topics on its social media pages. The Town encourages all commenters to engage in civil discourse and to be respectful of members of the community in their comments. All commenters are advised that they are fully responsible for the content of their comments and that all comments are in the public domain and may be subject to public records requests. The Town shall not block followers or commenters based on an expression of viewpoint and, except as otherwise provided below, the Town shall not delete comments based on the content or the viewpoint expressed therein.

Comments and posts may be removed at the Town's discretion, upon consultation with the Town Attorney, including those that contain:

- Obscene material.
- Commercial solicitations, advertisements, prize contests, promotions, or giveaways.
- Proprietary, confidential, or privileged information.
- Plagiarized material or material that potentially violates intellectual property rights.
- Off-topic comments.

The Town of Mead reserves the right to deny access to its social media sites to any individual who violates this policy, at any time and without prior notice, upon consultation with the Town Attorney.

## VI. ESTABLISHING AN OFFICIAL TOWN SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNT

To establish an official Town of Mead social media account, a department director must submit a written request outlining the need, purpose, administrators, voice/tone, etc. The Town PIO will determine if the social media platform is an appropriate channel of communication for the Town and whether the use of such platform is consistent with this policy.

- A. Roles and Responsibilities. Authorized individuals with administrator rights who are assigned to manage social media for their departments shall understand the benefits and risks inherent in social media communication and are charged with representing the Town of Mead when posting information on Town social media accounts. Consistency, professionalism and integrity are required of all contributors.

Except as otherwise noted in this policy, the PIO will provide overall management of the Town's social media accounts, including serving as the content creator, monitoring pages and responding to comments, and following up with Town staff, as needed. Additionally, the PIO will engage with residents, implement social media campaigns, and evaluate the effectiveness of the Town's social media accounts using social analytics. The PIO will work across departments to create informational content relevant to each department. The PIO will be responsible for social media training of new employees designated to use social media.

- B. Use of Social Media by Police Department. The Mead Police Department shall maintain its presence on Facebook and Twitter. Administrators for these accounts shall abide by this policy. Additionally, the Police Department shall comply with the department-specific social media policy from Lexipol to the extent it does not conflict with this policy or other Town policies.

- C. Rules of Engagement. Administrators of the Town's social media accounts will be held accountable for postings that are published on the Town of Mead's social media accounts.

Content posted on behalf the of Town must adhere to the following standards:

- Social media content and messages shall not be used for expressing personal views.
- Reply to requests for information within four hours during Town business hours.
- Consult with the Town Attorney as required by this policy or as needed.
- Staff and elected officials shall not engage in ongoing, back-and-forth exchanges.
- Whenever possible, conversations that become heated should continue outside of the Town's social media accounts. Connecting via email or phone may yield a more productive and efficient outcome.

A good rule of thumb is to treat social media platforms as if they are occurring during a public meeting.

- D. Participation in Private Community Groups. Social media administrators shall not join private community Facebook groups. Town administrators may view content posted on public-facing social media pages and profiles.

- E. Sharing Requests from Community Members. Not-for-profit organizations can request that the Town share specific information across the Town’s social media accounts. The Town’s PIO will review all such requests and must approve them prior to sharing information on Town social media accounts. On occasion, and under the discretion of the PIO, the Town may share information from a for-profit business (e.g., private-public partnerships with the Town).

## **VII. USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY ELECTED OFFICIALS**

Any social media account established, operated, maintained, or used by an elected official in their official capacity must be separate and distinct from personal social media accounts. “In their official capacity” means: (1) if the official is acting or purporting to act in the performance of official duties via the social media account; or (2) if the official’s conduct is such that the official could not have behaved in that way but for the authority of his or her office.

Elected officials, including incumbents seeking reelection, using social media accounts in their official capacity (for example, accounts in the name of “Mayor Smith,” “Town of Mead Mayor,” “Susan Smith for Board of Trustees,” etc.) are subject to this policy.

## **VIII. ENFORCEMENT**

Persons who do not comply with this policy may be subject to appropriate discipline in accordance with Town policies, as applicable.

**Adopted by Resolution No. 15-R-2020 and effective on January 27, 2020.**