

Town of Bridgton
Digital Policy and Strategy

Section 1 Mission

To ensure open and transparent communication and community engagement, while upholding a unified, positive, and consistent image.

Section 2 Strategy

The strategy is to use new media, and social collaborative tools and technologies to improve governmental communications and encourage citizen involvement by initiating conversations to strengthen our community and our government services. These technologies should be embraced to interact with citizens, businesses, the general public, and prospective businesses with increased efficiency, collaboration, transparency, and openness.

Section 3 Policy Objective

- A. Minimize risk to the reputation of our town and its elected and appointed officials, as well as our employees
- B. Prevent damage due to confidentiality

Section 4 Purpose of Town website

- A. To disseminate information on meetings, events, emergency procedures and any other announcements related to municipal government operations.
- B. To serve as a digital warehouse of documents, agendas, minutes related to the work of elected officials, appointed officials, boards, committees, and task forces, as well as staff

Section 5 Purpose of the use of social media

The use of social media is the town's initiative designed to promote participation in government, increase collaboration, expand the town's ability to share information with social media users, and to demonstrate transparency of governance.

Legislative History:
Staff draft presentation 2.12.13/2.26.13
Ratified by Select Board 2.26.13

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Section 6 Background

Staff created a social media committee in April 2012. It is comprised of the Town Manager, the Recreation Director, the Executive Secretary (Public Information Officer), the Town Clerk and the Director of Planning, Economic & Community Development (herein referred to as “the committee”.)

Residents of Bridgton have asked for communication with their local government that would ensure unified, consistent, open and transparent messaging in a manner that would be timely and understandable.

Staff was commencing the use of social media and the town’s website went under construction. The committee formed to pull all strategy and policy components of digital media into one document. Upon staff acceptance, this document will be forwarded by the committee to the Select Board for review, editions and ultimate approval.

Section 7 Definitions

Social media: a term to describe current and future internet sites such as and not limited to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, blogs, internet forums, list-serves, Wikipedia, Google+, Yahoo groups, etc.

Section 8 Responsibility and Severability

- A. Staff is responsible to ensure the mission and purpose of the strategy and policy is met for the use of social media and the management of the town’s website.
- B. If an employee is unsure about a posting, a response to a post, or what documents should be placed on the town’s website, the town manager will be consulted.
- C. Elected and appointed officials are also protected and bound by this policy for their use of town-sponsored websites and town-sponsored social media.
- D. This strategy and policy is not meant to conflict with any existing town policies, ordinances or job descriptions or infringe upon First Amendment rights, rights to privacy, rights under the National Labor Relations Act, or the Freedom of Access requirements. These all take precedence over the policy and strategy contained herein.

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Section 9 Public Interaction, Message Content, and Response Times

- A. Postings by Others to Town Sponsored social media sites
The town reserves the right to remove postings that may be considered defamatory or include personal attacks. The town reserves the right to block access to sites if a visitor to a site has repeated postings in a defamatory manner or submits repeated posts containing personal attacks. Warnings regarding this possible action shall go on all town-sponsored sites.
- B. Postings by Town Staff and Officials to Town-Sponsored social media sites
 1. Staff and officials shall not post anything deemed to possibly be libelous, slanderous, inflammatory, defamatory or uses profane language or obscene content. No posts shall contain content that promotes, fosters or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, public assistance status, national origin, as well as physical or mental disabilities.
 2. Postings shall not inhibit a right to privacy by an employee or a resident. Postings may not discuss pending litigation, police investigations (except when the posting is used as an investigative tool such as identifying photo of a suspect or assisting in locating a missing person) or personnel investigation.
 3. Postings may not infringe on copyright laws, fair use, financial disclosure or anything that puts the town at risk for civil rights action.
 4. No staff or official shall use a town-sponsored site for political campaigns or ballot questions except to inform about polling and the content of a ballot question.
 5. Postings should adhere to the mission, objective and purpose of this policy and strategy.
- C. Digital inquiries or responses to postings shall be responded to within 72 hours (excluding federal holidays.)

Section 10 General Guidelines

- A. All users of digital media shall use a consistent template for the reader to have a clear understanding that the site or document is an official town site or document.
- B. The use of third party sites or links thereto shall be kept to a minimum but may include organizations that are financially supported by the town of Bridgton, or are otherwise supported by inter-local agreements, county, state or federal agencies or an organization that is aligned with the mission of the town's use of digital media. The following disclaimer shall be appended to any non-Town-sponsored links:

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By clicking this link you are now exiting the town of Bridgton's website. The town is not responsible for and has not confirmed the accuracy of content on the linked website. By continuing on to the linked website you are acknowledging that the town is not liable for any damage resulting from your visit to the linked website.

A similar disclaimer should go onto any social media site that utilizes outside or third party links.

Section 11 Town website

- A. The front page of the website shall contain the most recent events or documents to be disseminated. Emergency management and public information officer postings take precedence over any other post on the front page.
- B. Department pages shall be managed by the respective department head or designee.
- C. Town sponsored social media sites shall have a direct link to and from the town's website to assure the public the site is a town sponsored site.
- D. This policy is not intended to conflict with the Electronic Equipment, Communications and Use Policy (EECUP); however the Digital Media policy contained herein augments and supersedes the EECUP.

Section 12 Social media

- A. General Requirements
 - 1. The use of social media sites shall be in keeping with the mission, objectives and purpose of the digital strategy and policy.
 - 2. Personal postings and site administrator postings should be kept separate on social media sites.
 - 3. Postings should happen no more than 10 times a day per site but at least once per week per site created, except in the case of an emergency.
 - 4. The name of an administrator of any site should be declared openly and a link to this policy and strategy document shall accompany the creation of any site.
 - 5. Posting on professional networking sites is encouraged but shall carry the tone of the mission of this policy and strategy and is in keeping with professional, local and state ethics requirements.
 - 6. The use of social media is to augment our role in serving the public but shall not be so encompassing that other duties of the position cannot be met.
 - 7. Posting amongst different social media sites should be consistent with information to avoid confusion and damage to the town's credibility.

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8. The use of town-sponsored social media for personal gain by an employee is prohibited.
 9. The use of bulk-posting or “spam” from a town site is prohibited.
 10. Extreme care should be employed when creating content to be consumed by minors. It is also noted that minors consume all social media, and postings should carry a tone appropriate for all ages.
 11. All social media accounts shall carry a notification that opinions posted from others are part of the public record.
- B. Twitter usage
1. The use of Twitter is an effective means to provide last-minute updates on meetings, to provide up to date information in emergency events and a means to communicate pertinent professional information and town events.
 2. It is recommended that town-sponsored Twitter accounts follow anyone that follows the town, unless specifically asked otherwise.
- C. Video and/or photograph sharing sites
1. The use of video/photo sharing sites are an effective means to showcase town-sponsored events, projects, and meetings.
- D. Facebook
1. The use of Facebook is an effective means to convey information in an emergency, for public notifications, requests for public assistance, meeting notices, press releases, statutorily related or local deadlines, projects, meetings, general information, as well as reference changes to the Town’s website. It can also be used to solicit comments on town projects, services and events.

Section 13 Penalties and Appeals

Any violation or grievance shall adhere to the Personnel Rules Policy as most recently amended.