

**Purpose:** The purpose of these guidelines is to clarify personnel existing conduct obligations under other District policies, procedures, rules and regulations and directives in the context of using social media. It is high level principles based, and addresses both official and private use.

**Scope:** These guidelines:

- Provides clarification for District personnel under existing policies, procedures, rules and regulations and directives pertaining to conduct;
- Reflects the District's standard to hold personnel accountable for the consequences of their public and private actions;
- Clarifies that participating in social media is subject to the same standards of behavior that applies when participating in any other media or public forum; and
- Is a reminder that ramifications of breaching the standards of conduct when using social media may result in disciplinary action.

These guidelines **DO NOT**:

- Modify the standards of conduct set forth in existing District policies, procedures, rules and regulations and directives; and
- Seek to regulate how social media is used as a work tool/communications medium.

**Guidelines:**

**1. Strategic Policy:**

- Each social media (networking) site shall include an introductory statement which clearly specifies the purpose and topical scope of the site;
- Whenever appropriate, all social media (networking) sites should link back to the District's official site for forms, documents or other information;
- All social media (networking) sites shall clearly indicate they are maintained by the Board of Fire Commissioners, Fire District No. 1, Borough of Manasquan, and shall have the District seal, logo and contact information prominently displayed;

- Social media (networking) sites shall be designed for a target audience, such as the community, civic leadership, personnel, potential recruits, time sensitive (emergency) information, and other audiences as may be deemed appropriate;

## **2. Procedures:**

- All social media sites or pages shall be approved and/or authorized by the Board of Fire Commissioners, Fire District No. 1, Borough of Manasquan;

- Social media sites and pages shall be administered and monitored by the District Public Information Officer (PIO) to be appointed by the Board. The PIO may designate or otherwise delegate administration and/or monitoring of the authorized sites and pages;

- All social media sites, pages and content shall adhere to applicable state, federal and local laws, regulations and policies as well as all Board policies, rules, regulations, guidelines, procedures and standards;

- District social media sites are subject to the State of New Jersey Public Records and Retention Laws, N.J.S.A 47:1A-1, *et seq.*, "Open Public Records Act" (OPRA) and N.J.S.A. 47:3-8.1, "Destruction of Public Records Act". Any content maintained in a social media format that pertains or is related to District business, including a list of subscribers and posted communications, is a public record and shall be retained as the Board's official records to be accessible and maintained as an official Board record pursuant to and in accordance with the "Open Public Records Act"; N.J.S.A. 47:1A-1, *et seq.* and the "Destruction of Public Records Law (1953)"; N.J.S.A. 47:3-8.1, *et seq.* as set forth by the State of New Jersey Municipal Agency Record Retention Schedule promulgated by the Division of Archives and Record Management. The District Custodian of Records is responsible for responding completely and accurately to any public request for public records on social media sites and pages. Content pertaining or related to District business shall be maintained in an accessible format so that it can be readily produced in response to a request. Whenever practicable, sites shall clearly indicate that any article and any other content posted or submitted for posting are subject to public disclosure. Whenever practicable, sites shall post notification that the District Custodian of Records is the appropriate official to whom all requests for public records shall be directed along with the custodian's contact information;

- All social media formats and social media content are subject to the Record Retention Law. The PIO shall preserve records required to be maintained pursuant to the record retention schedules for the required retention period. The PIO shall develop retention formats for specific social media tools so as to preserve the integrity of the original record and which is easily accessible;

- Users and visitors to social media sites shall be notified that the intended purpose of the site is to serve as a mechanism for communication between the District and members of the public. District social media site articles and comments containing any of the following forms of content shall not be allowed;

1. Comments not typically related to the particular social medium article being commented upon;
2. Comments in support of or opposition to political campaigns or ballot measure;
3. Profane language or content;
4. Content that promotes, fosters or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation;
5. Sexual content or links to sexual content;
6. Solicitations of commerce;
7. Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity;
8. Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems; or
9. Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party.

These guidelines must be displayed to users or made available by hyperlink. Any content removed based on these guidelines must be retained, including the time, date and identity of the poster when available; and

- Social media sites and pages should clearly indicate that the opinions expressed by the visitors (users) do not reflect the opinions of the District and that posted comments are being monitored and those comments off topic and in violation of the within guidelines will be removed.

### **3. District Sanctioned Use:**

- The District shall appoint a Public Information Officer (PIO) with a complete understanding of the within guidelines, content and technical experience and public disclosure and record retention requirements. The PIO shall administer the social media tools authorized by the Board which shall include monitoring of all sites and pages as deemed necessary. The PIO may designate facilitators and moderators to assist in furtherance of the District Social Media Policy;

- Social media network access shall be limited only to those with a clear business purpose to use the forum;

- Appropriate access levels shall include identifying what sites, or type of sites, the individual is approved to use, as well as defining capability: publish, edit, comment or view only;

- Only Official Spokespersons, Public Information Officers and select individuals shall have permission to create, publish or comment on behalf of the District;

- Authorized users shall be provided a copy of the District's social media policy and guidelines and are required to acknowledge their understanding and acceptance;

- Usage standards will be developed for each approved social media network to optimize District use of the site in correlation with the District's overall business mission and the District's Social Media Policy;

- The PIO is responsible for maintaining the list of approved social media networks and site related usage standards;

- The use of District computers and other electronic devices by District personnel to access social media is prohibited unless authorized by the PIO; and

- District personnel are prohibited from using personnel electronic devices to monitor or administer the District's social media activities unless authorized to do so by the PIO.

#### **4. Potential Uses:**

- All uses of social media shall be approved by the Board;

- The PIO shall recommend to the Board those social media formats to be activated and/or established to initiate the District social media policy;

- The PIO shall recommend to the Board additional social media tools, formats and other means that will advance the intent and purpose of the District's social media undertaking; and

- The PIO shall endeavor to maximize the District's social media commitment and shall seek the input of District personnel to assist in this regard.

#### **5. Personnel Guidance for Participating in Social Networking:**

- Where personnel are authorized to use social media relating to the administration of policies and programs of the District, they should avoid making statements or engaging in activities of a party political nature;

- Use of social media for making public comment in relation to duties must follow the appropriate internal communications process and authorization;

- When using social media for official purposes it should not be used to express personal opinions;

- When using social media for private purposes, staff must ensure that they make it clear that any comments relating to District activities are not official, and that they are speaking only on behalf of themselves;

- Staff must ensure that any personal comments do not compromise their capacity to perform their public role in an unbiased manner;

• Whether using social media for official use, or in a private capacity, staff must not do anything that may adversely affect their standing as a public official or which could bring themselves or the public sector into disrepute. The nature of social media increases the risk of reputational damage through private activities such as:

1. Posting images, information or links to images or information;
2. Disclosing one's own and others' personal information; and
3. Engaging in a heated debate or argument.

• Staff must comply with employer policies regarding private use of work resources, including their use in engaging in social media. Those policies will have regard to not only the efficient and effective use of public resources, but also the risks associated with their use for private purposes (e.g. 'electronic footprints' which could identify the user as working for the public sector);

• Staff must maintain accurate and reliable records of their official use of social media as required by relevant legislation, policies and procedures;

• All communication of an official nature should be objective and courteous in dealing with the government, community and other public sector employees;

• Staff must ensure the privacy and confidentiality of information acquired at work is protected at all times and treated in accordance with relevant laws and policies. The potential scope and ramifications of a breach of privacy or confidentiality when using social media are severe; and

• Obligations on public sector employees to support an environment free of discrimination, harassment and bullying also apply to their use of social media.

Legal References: State of New Jersey Public Records and Retention Laws;  
N.J.S.A. 47:1A-1 et seq.  
Open Public Records Act (OPRA); N.J.S.A. 47:3-8.1

Effective Date:

Revised Date: