

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

I. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to set forth the rules, regulations, procedure and appropriate use of Village social media accounts. This Policy also includes a guideline for use of personal social media by Village officials, employees, and volunteers.

This Policy is not meant to address any particular form of social media, but rather to address the use of social media in general, including, but not limited to social media tools and applications that may result from future advances in technology.

II. Scope

This Policy applies to all Village employees and officials (“employees”). This Policy also applies to individuals who are not employees of the Village, but who are employees of Village contractors, subcontractors, vendors or consultants, and other persons who provide services to the Village, such as volunteers, interns and temporary employees (referred to herein as “affiliated non-employees”).

“Social media” refers to social networking websites and applications including, but not limited to, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google + and Twitter, as well as blogs and video, music and photo sharing sites including, but not limited to, YouTube, Snapchat, Instagram, TikTok and Flickr. Social media also includes all means of communicating or posting information or content of any sort on the internet, including to your own or someone else’s web log or blog, journal or diary, personal website, social networking or affinity website, web bulletin board or a chat room, whether or not associated or affiliated with the Village. This Policy applies to social media accessed via all types of devices, including, but not limited to, personal and/or work-issued mobile devices, computers, tablets, cell phones, etc.

Employees are free to express themselves on matters of public concern as private citizens on social media outlets with limited exceptions outlined herein. Nothing in this Policy is intended to interfere with an individual’s constitutional rights; however, employees and affiliated non-employees should adhere to the guidelines set forth below when representing themselves as affiliated with the Village or in communicating with others affiliated with the Village.

III. Village Social Media Accounts

- A. Creation of Accounts: Prior to creating a new Village-affiliated social media account, a request memorandum must be submitted to the Village Manager for approval. In such request, the proposed creator should provide justification for establishing a new social media account and an overview of how the account will be utilized, including the main topics to be discussed or communicated on the page.
- B. Management of Accounts: The Village's social media accounts shall be managed by a designated Social Media Coordinator ("SMC"). Unless otherwise designated by the Village Manager, the Village Manager shall serve as the SMC of all Village-affiliated social media accounts. Department Heads who would like to post on a Village social media account must create the content they would like posted and send it to the SMC for authorization prior to posting. If the content is regarding a Village event, the SMC must have the post at least one (1) week in advance of the date of the event to ensure adequate time for review and approval.
- C. Proper Use: The Village shall utilize social media outlets to disseminate information to the public. Social media is a means for the Village to advertise events, public meetings, emergency notifications, project updates, improve government transparency and support operational efficiency.
 - 1. The use of social media shall be in addition to, and not in place of, the Village's other means of communication already in place such as, but not limited to, e-mail blasts and posts on the Village's website.
 - 2. When possible, messaging, comment and reply capabilities shall be turned off or disabled on all Village social media accounts. Village social media accounts are intended to act as limited public forums and shall not be used as a means for individuals to contact the Village or to otherwise discuss Village issues. If comments and/or replies are disabled, a statement will be made indicating such in the "about us" or "bio" with instructions on where to send comments, questions, concerns, complaints, etc.
 - 3. Village social media accounts may link, like, or otherwise associate only with social media sites of other governmental agencies. The SMC is permitted to like content of such governmental agencies, but is not permitted to post comments on other pages/accounts. The SMC is also prohibited from replying to comments made on the Village's social media accounts or to any messages sent via social media.
- D. Department Social Media Accounts: If individual departments of the Village have their own social media accounts, the Department Head must act as the SMC, or designate an employee to act as the SMC. The same procedure for approval shall be used and policies followed as described above. Village departments are encouraged to share event or emergency notifications posted by other departments of the Village. Village

Committees must use the main Village social media account and go through the Village Manager, or the SMC, for postings.

IV. Personal Social Media Usage by Village Employees

- A. Guidelines: The Village respects its employees' rights to personal expression as private citizens on personal social media sites to the extent that such expression does not impair or impede the performance of their job duties or adversely affect the interests of the Village. Ultimately, individuals are solely responsible for all activities and posts on their own social media accounts and should be aware that their posts may remain archived on the internet even if deleted.

When using personal social media accounts, the following rules and guidelines should be adhered to:

1. Employees and affiliated non-employees are prohibited from using Village e-mail addresses to register for personal social media accounts or blogs.
2. Unless otherwise authorized, employees shall not represent themselves as a spokesperson for the Village of Ardsley. Employees and affiliated non-employees shall not communicate with the media on the Village's behalf without prior written consent from the Village Manager.
3. If a personal email, posting on social media or other electronic message could reasonably be construed to be an official Village communication, a disclaimer is required. An example of such disclaimer is: "The views and opinions expressed are my own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Village of Ardsley."
4. Employees and affiliated non-employees shall not knowingly publish false or misleading information about the Village, or their co-workers, supervisors, vendors, residents or others affiliated with the Village.
5. Employees and affiliated non-employees shall not publish confidential information. "Confidential information" includes internal Village reports, policies, procedures or other internal business-related private communications and private information about co-workers, supervisors, vendors, residents and others affiliated with the Village, such as addresses, social security numbers, telephone numbers, dates of birth, employment/personnel records, etc. This prohibition is not intended to restrict an employee's right to discuss collectively negotiated wages and other terms and conditions of employment.
6. As with other Village policies, conduct that adversely affects an employee's job performance, the performance of fellow employees or otherwise adversely

affects an employee's ability to represent the Village in their official capacity may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

- B. Village personnel should assume that their speech and related activity on personal social media sites will be viewed by others and may reflect upon their position within the Village.
- C. Employees should strive to always be fair and courteous to fellow employees, affiliated non-employees, others who work for the Village, and residents. Employees should keep in mind that they are more likely to resolve work-related complaints by speaking directly with their co-workers or contacting the Village Manager, rather than by posting complaints to a social media outlet. Nevertheless, if an employee decides to post complaints or criticism on social media, they should avoid using statements, photographs, video or audio that: (1) reasonably could be viewed as malicious, obscene, threatening or intimidating; or (2) might constitute discrimination, harassment or bullying. Examples of such conduct include offensive posts meant to intentionally harm someone's reputation or posts that could contribute to a hostile work environment on the basis of race, sex, age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, predisposing genetic characteristics, genetic information, national origin, military status, color, marital status, familial status, domestic violence victim status, or any other characteristics protected by law. Social media posts that could contribute to a hostile work environment also will not be tolerated.
- D. Employees' use of social media is also subject to the Village's Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy, Unlawful Harassment Policy and Workplace Violence Policy, as well as the Village's other policies and standards of conduct, rules, regulations, and ordinances. Employees shall not harass anyone in contravention of the Village's Harassment/Workplace Violence policies, regardless of the time, place, form, or manner in which the information is posted or transmitted. Online postings that harass or threaten any other Village employees, affiliated non-employees or others are expressly prohibited.
- E. Village employees are reminded that they serve the public. Employees shall be mindful that any communication that disparages and/or damages the public's trust may negatively impact the Village's ability to serve the public and the individual employee's ability to serve in an official capacity for the Village.

V. Disclaimer

Nothing contained in this Policy is intended or should be construed to impair or otherwise limit the right of any employee to engage in lawfully protected and concerted activity, including, but not limited to discussing wages or other terms and conditions of employment, or making legally protected statements or reports to internal or external authorities.

Nothing in this Policy is intended to or should be interpreted as interfering with, limiting or restricting the rights provided to individuals under the First Amendment, the Taylor Law or any other law. To the extent a section of this Policy is found to be in violation of an individual's rights, or becomes invalid or is otherwise unenforceable by reason of legislation or court decision, all other provisions of this Policy shall remain in full force and effect.