

# Communications Policy

## Town of Dryden, New York

### Introduction

This policy is adopted by the Town Board of the Town of Dryden to govern all use of communications media by employees, officials, and other persons acting for or in the name of the Town, and whether compensated or volunteer. It has no application to any person or organization acting solely in their own name, or as a candidate for political office.

### Policy Purposes

The purposes of this policy are to facilitate effective communication between the Town, its citizens, and other interested persons, and to assure that information communicated by or on behalf of the Town is complete and accurate, in conformity with the law, and does not infringe on the rights of others.

### Media Covered

This policy governs the use of any medium of expression, whether written, oral, or pictorial, now known or hereafter invented. It includes communications that are one-to-one or one-to-many, and communications that are one-way or two-way. By way of example only, it would include:

- a conventional letter or notice sent by mail or courier service, a facsimile (fax), an e-mail, or an emergency notice sent simultaneously to many persons by portable phone or radio or television broadcast;
- a phone conversation between two persons regardless of whether accomplished by landline, by cellular service, satellite phone or voice-over-internet protocol, with or without pictorial content;
- a conference call among more than two persons, regardless of whether only some or all attached may contribute or otherwise participate in an exchange;
- an electronic bulletin board on which content may be posted, and one to which additional content or comment may be added which solicits information.

Many of these communications mechanisms function over the internet in some fashion and are commonly termed “website” and “social media”, such as Twitter, Facebook, Myspace, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, TikTok, Snapchat, individual blogs, Flickr, and wikis, but this policy is not intended to be limited to such services or technologies, which will surely change with time.

### Who Does It Apply To?

This policy applies to all employees of the Town. It also applies to elected officials of the Town, and to persons who serve on boards or committees such as the

- Town Board
- Planning Board
- Board of Zoning Appeals
- Conservation Board
- Dryden Recreation and Youth Commission
- Dryden Agriculture Advisory Committee
- Rail Trail Task Force
- Climate Smart Community Task Force
- Safety & Disaster Preparedness Committee

It also applies to persons serving the Town on a volunteer basis, such as coaches in the Town's recreation programs. For convenience, all such persons are referred to in this policy as "Employees". In any case, it is intended to apply only to speech or actions that would or could be understood to reflect on the Town, and not to any communication made in their private capacity.

### **Town Media**

The Town Board from time-to-time by resolution shall designate, and control through designated officers or employees, particular media or platforms as "Town Media". A person designated to create or control any type of Town Media is a "Monitor".

All Town Media shall bear the Town logo or other indication that they are official publications of the Town. The registration of all electronic Town Media, including web pages, Facebook, or Twitter accounts or their equivalent shall be made and maintained in the name of the Town.

Monitors shall review and control the content of all materials posted to Town Media. The Monitor(s) will exercise their reasonable discretion to remove or otherwise cause postings to Town Media to conform to the guidelines included in this policy. Any content removed due to violation of this policy will be retained by the Town for at most 18 months, including the time, date, and identity of the poster. Monitors shall also see that appropriate records and archives are maintained for the Town Media with which they are charged.

For all links on Town Media to outside sites, the Town is not responsible for and does not endorse the information or materials presented on any external website. All links to external sites should follow the guidelines of this Communications Policy.

### **Guidelines for Town Media**

- Town Media shall not advertise or promote any private business, not-for-profit organizations, or any other non-municipal organizations.
- Posts to Town Media sites shall not include any of the following:
  - Comments not related to the original topic
  - Defamatory or personal attacks
  - Solicitations of any nature
  - Profane, obscene, violent, or pornographic content and/or language
  - Threats
  - Violations of any federal, state, or local law
  - Content that promotes discrimination on the basis of religion, age, national origin, race, creed, color, gender, or sexual orientation
  - Comments relative to political campaigns
  - Illegal activity
- If there are any posts or comments that are not relevant to official Town business, they may be removed.
- Town Media shall not be used to report any issues, concerns, or file a complaint, all of which are to be directed to the "Contact Us" or its equivalent function on the platform.
- Access for posting to any Town Media page is limited to the designated Monitor.
- Town Media are considered public record and subject to Freedom of Information ("FOIL") requests and record retention rules for the Town. Any comments or posts can be used in legal actions and FOIL (Freedom of Information Law) requests.
- All posts will abide by copyright laws.

## **Personal Media**

Personal Media are communications means owned or controlled by persons who may be Employees, but who are not acting in an official capacity for the Town. For example, a private e-mail account maintained by an Employee for his or her family affairs, such as a Gmail account or a Facebook page would be Personal Media.

### **Guidelines for Personal Media**

- Use of Personal Media during hours when an Employee is engaged in Town business is not allowed.
- Use of Personal Media should not negatively affect an employee's job performance, other Town employees' ability to do their job, or affect the Town functions.
- Employees are expected to follow all Town policies when using social media whether at work or on personal time, in particular
  - Code of Ethics
  - Discrimination and Harassment Policy
  - Violence in the Workplace
- If an Employee identifies himself or herself as an employee of the Town, any personal posts or blogs should include a disclaimer that the opinions expressed are of the individual, not representative of the Town.
- Employees should use good judgment, as what they publish can reflect on the Town, both negatively and positively.
- Employees are not allowed to use the Town's logo or town email in their personal posts.
- Employees must keep confidential all Town information that is not available to the public.
- Employees shall comply with the copyright laws of the United States.
- Social media should not be used to retaliate, harass, or discriminate against another employee of the Town.

### **Consequences for Policy Violations**

Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. Where there are no clear guidelines, employees should use their professional judgment. Consult with Department Head if any clarification is needed.

### **Retaliation Prohibited**

The Town prohibits retaliation against an employee for reporting another employee's failure to follow this policy or for cooperating in an investigation. If an employee retaliates against a fellow employee, the guilty employee will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

### **Review of Policy**

The Town's Communication Policy should be reviewed annually by the Monitor(s) and updated when necessary with approval from the Town Board.

### **Posting of Communication Policy**

The Communication Policy will be posted on the Town of Dryden's website for reference.