

NORTH BERGEN SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Purpose

This policy sets forth guidelines for the establishment and use by the Township of North Bergen (“the Township”) of all social media sites (including but not limited to Facebook and Twitter) as a means of conveying information to residents, employees and visitors, and making sure North Bergen residents are engaged with their local government.

The primary uses of Township social media tools fall into two categories:

1. As channels for disseminating time-sensitive information as quickly as possible (example: emergency information)
2. As marketing/promotional channels to inform Township residents of Township missions and initiatives

Scope

This policy shall apply to all Township agencies and departments as well as any affiliated government or non-government Township official and/or commission or council permitted by the Township to post on Township social media sites.

For purposes of this policy, “social media” is understood to be content created by individuals, using accessible, expandable, and upgradable publishing technologies, through and on the Internet. Examples of social media include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, blogs, RSS, and Flickr.

For purposes of this policy, “posts” or “comments” include information, data, articles, pictures and/or videos.

This Social Media Policy shall be placed on the Township’s website and all its social media sites. This Social Media Policy may be revised at any time by approval of the Township Administrator.

Policy

The Township Administrator shall determine which social media technologies may be suitable for use by Township departments.

The use by any Township department of the Township’s social media sites is subject to approval by the Township Administrator or his/her designees. All Township social media sites shall be administered by the Township Administrator and/or his/her designees.

All official Township presence on social media sites or services is considered an extension of the Township’s information networks and is governed by all policies applicable to the use of Township computers and electronic media as well as the Township Communication Media Policy.

Employees representing the Township via its social media must conduct themselves at all times as a representative of the Township and in accordance with all its policies. Township employees should be mindful that inappropriate usage of official Township social media can be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Employees that use social media are responsible for complying with applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and policies. This includes adherence to established laws and policies regarding copyright, records retention, Open Public Records Act (OPRA), First Amendment, privacy laws, sunshine laws and information security policies established by the Township.

Employees must not use official Township social media sites for political purposes, to conduct private commercial transactions, or to engage in private business activities.

The North Bergen website at www.northbergen.org will remain the Township's primary and predominant internet presence. Wherever possible on the Township's social media sites, links to more information should direct users back to the Township's official website for more information, forms, documents or online services necessary to conduct business with the Township.

Information must be presented following professional standards for good grammar, spelling, brevity, clarity and accuracy, and avoid jargon, obscure terminology, or acronyms.

The Township Administrator or his/her designees shall monitor content on all social media sites to ensure adherence to the Social Media Policy for appropriate use, message, and branding consistent with the goals of the Township.

The Township may, at its discretion, enable members of the public to post comments on Township social media sites. Any comment posted by a member of the public on any Township social media site is the opinion of the commentator or poster only, and publication of a comment does not imply endorsement of, or agreement by, the Township, nor do such comments necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of the Township.

The Township Administrator or his/her designees have the authority to remove any information that violates this Social Media Policy or any applicable law at any time from any Township social media site in accordance with archiving and retention requirements. (See "Prohibited Content" below.)

The Township reserves the right to deny access to its social media sites for any individual who violates the North Bergen Social Media Policy, at any time and without prior notice.

Prohibited Content

The following are prohibited and subject to removal:

- Comments not topically related to the particular post being commented upon

- Comments that promote, foster, or perpetuate 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, sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression.
- Obscene or sexual contents or links to obscene or sexual content
- Comments that include vulgar, offensive, threatening or harassing language, personal attacks or unsupported accusations
- Content that incites or promotes violence
- Illegal activity or encouragement of illegal activity
- Confidential information or anything that may compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems
- Private contact information such as names, addresses and phone numbers no matter how easily obtained elsewhere
- Personal information of a person other than the poster
- Comments from children under 13 cannot be posted in order to comply with the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act. By posting on a Township social media site, users acknowledge that they are at least 13 years old
- Comments promoting, endorsing, or in opposition to political campaigns, candidates, or ballot measures
- Solicitation of commerce, including but not limited to advertising of any business or product for sale
- Spamming or repetitive content
- Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party

Personal Use

All Township employees may have personal social networking and social media sites. These sites should remain personal in nature and be used to share personal opinions or non-work related information. Following this principle helps ensure a distinction between sharing personal and Township views.

Township employees must never use their Township e-mail account or password in conjunction with a personal social networking or social media site.

Records Retention

Township social media sites are subject to applicable public records laws. Any content maintained in a social media format related to Township business, including communication posted by the Township and communication received from citizens, is a public record, and subject to records retention requirements.

DISCLAIMERS

Information Disclaimer

By visiting this site, users understand and agree that the Township site is provided “AS IS.” The Township makes every effort to provide accurate and complete information on this site. The information contained herein, however, is not official or in any way shall it be deemed to constitute legal notice where separate legal notice is required by law. The information contained in this site is provided as a service and convenience to people needing information about the Township. Portions of the information on this site may be incorrect or not current. The Township, its officials, officers, employees, and agents shall not be liable for damages or losses of any kind arising out of or in connection with the use or performance of information appearing on the Township’s website or other social media, including but not limited to, damages or losses caused by reliance upon the accuracy or timeliness of any such information, or damages incurred from the viewing, distributing, or copying of those materials.

Linking Policy Links to External Sites

The Township site contains links to outside websites. These websites are not owned, operated, controlled or reviewed by the Township. These links are provided solely as a courtesy and convenience to the visitor. The Township, its officials, officers, employees, and agents exercise no control over the organizations, views, accuracy, copyright or trademark, compliance or the legality of the material contained in these outside websites. The Township, its officials, officers, employees, and agents do not sponsor, endorse, or approve the information, content, proceeds, materials, opinions or services contained on such outside websites. The visitor proceeds to these outside websites at his/her own risk. The Township specifically disclaims any and all liability from damages that may result from the accessing of a third-party site which is linked to the Township website or from reliance upon only such information.

Endorsement Disclaimer

Reference in this website to any specific commercial products, processes, or services, or the use of any trade firm or corporation name is for the information and convenience of the public, and does not constitute endorsement, recommendation, or favoring by the Township government or its officials, officers, employees, or agents.