

Town of Lovettsville
Social Media Policy
Effective Date: September 5, 2019

POLICY FOR TOWN OF LOVETTSVILLE SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

Purpose

This document is intended to clearly explain the Town of Lovettsville's expectations for creating, maintaining, and using the **Town's official social media sites**.

The procedures below establish the required steps for utilizing social media intended for the Town, or official representatives of the Town including the Town Council and all approved Committee or commission members, to communicate with citizens, businesses, visitors, and the general public through its official social media sites. The decision by the Lovettsville Town Council to establish a social media presence will follow the policies below, regarding the creation and maintenance of all official and sanctioned Town of Lovettsville presences on various types of social media, including but not limited to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Flickr, YouTube, and blogs.

Official Social Media Sites

Official use of social media is intended to further enhance communications between the Town of Lovettsville and various stakeholders, citizens, businesses, visitors, and members of the public in relation to the Town's goals and objectives. Town of Lovettsville authorized social media administrators should utilize social media tools to:

- Promote Town events and tourism.
- Provide timely information to the public about Town-related meetings, operations, and services.
- Communicate directly to the public during emergencies.

Note: Social Media will not be a sanctioned platform for Town Policy Discussions by Town of Lovettsville Employees unless approved by the Town Manager.

Existing and Creating a Town-related Social Media Site

Existing Social Media Sites:

Below is a list of the Town's official social media sites that were created before this policy was adopted by the Town Council. These sites are not required to go through the approval process for new sites further discussed in this section; however, the creator/administrator of each existing site should provide the Town Manager with the names of those authorized to administer and publish to the site(s) and the associated user identifications/passwords. Upon adoption of this policy, Town pages shall be listed as Verified through the platform host. Sites shall be open to the public and group chat functions shall not be utilized by any authorized members of the group, page or committee for discussion.

Official Town Sites:

- Facebook: The Town of Lovettsville
- Instagram: Town of Lovettsville
- Twitter: Town of Lovettsville (@funlovetsville)

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Town Committees

- Facebook: Lovettsville Oktoberfest
- Facebook: Lovettsville MayFest
- Facebook: Berserkle on the Squirkle
- Lovettsville Movies on the Green
- Facebook: Lovettsville's Summer on the Green
- Facebook: Love Summer Committee 2018
- Facebook: MayFest 2018 Planning
- Facebook: LOVE Summer Committee (Facebook Messenger Chat Group)
- Facebook: Unnamed (Facebook Messenger Chat Group) for the Love America Committee
- Facebook: Lovettsville Oktoberfest Committee Facebook Group
- Facebook: Oktoberfest Messenger Group
- Twitter: @Lovetoberfest
- Instagram: @Lovettsvilleoktoberfest
- Facebook: Lovettsville's One-Handed Work Crew
- Instagram: @Lovettsvillesummer

Creating New Social Media Sites:

The establishment of **new** social media sites that are verified as Town of Lovettsville social media sites, requires the approval of the Town Manager, or his designee, in consultation with the Commerce and Business Development Committee and other committees as appropriate

The username for the Town of Lovettsville social media site should follow a standard format as defined by this policy.

Administration, Acceptable Use, and Conduct by Employees and Elected or appointed Officials

Only Town staff, elected or appointed officials and authorized Committee or Commission members are permitted to establish official Town-related social media sites on behalf of the Town of Lovettsville, including posting information, monitoring the site(s), responding to comments, developing engagement, and ensuring the sites are regularly updated.

Designated administrators and publishers must abide by the following guidelines for using Town of Lovettsville social media sites:

- Publishers should use social media with honesty and transparency.
- Publishers should remain professional at all times and avoid confrontation.
- Publishers should only post information that they know to be accurate.
- Publishers should correct errors and, if modifying a previous post, identify the change.
- Publishers should be responsive to citizens' concerns.
- Publishers should post only within their area of expertise.
- Publishers should only post information that is useful and relevant to Town operations and activities. Posts should be timely (deadlines, upcoming events, news, etc.) or actionable (such as to register, to attend, to go, or to do).

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Publishers shall not:

- Post about potential claims and litigation involving Town of Lovettsville.
- Post the intellectual property of others, without written permission.
- Post nonpublic information of any kind – and should check with the Town Manager, or his designee, if unsure.
- Post personal, sensitive or confidential information about anyone.
- Post defamatory material.
- Post obscene, pornographic, or other offensive/illegal materials or links.
- Post racist, sexist, and other disparaging language about a group of people or members of such a group.
- Post sexual comments about, or directed to, anyone.
- Post political comments.
- Post threatening or harassing comments.
- Censor any material, comments or posts without the written consent of the Mayor or Town Manager, who may consult the appropriate committee of jurisdiction.

Breach of this policy by Town staff may result in disciplinary action as outlined by the Town of Lovettsville Employee Policy Manual. In the case of elected or appointed officials, Committee or Commission members, the Town Council may direct the Town Manager to remove the Member as an administrator, editor, or moderator.

If an employee, elected or appointed official, or Committee or Commission member who is listed as an administrator, editor, or moderator on an official Town social media site is no longer employed by the Town or serving in office, that person must be immediately removed as an administrator, editor, or moderator on the social media site(s) in question.

Updating Social Media Pages

It is the responsibility of each designated site administrator to ensure that their social media page(s) are updated on a regular basis as defined by the committee. This includes bringing to the attention of the Mayor or Town Manager of the question of censoring posted materials that violate the Town of Lovettsville Social Media Comment Policy (Attachment 2) in timely fashion. Pages that are determined to be inactive should be archived and deleted.

Social Media Customer Service

Designated administrators should use good customer service practices when responding to public and private messages through social medial.

For comments or questions that appear rude in nature, provide one polite response, or offer to discuss the matter by phone, email, or in person. Do not engage in back and forth with the user on social media sites.

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Comments/Posts from Users

Citizens have the right to voice their opinions on the Town's social media sites; user-generated comments may be rejected, removed, or hidden only when the content violates the Town's Social Media Public Comment Policy (Attachment 2), in accordance with applicable law. There shall be no censorship of any material, comments or posts without the written consent of the Mayor or Town Manager, who may consult with and shall inform the appropriate committees of jurisdiction. If the user inquires about why their social media comment or post was deleted, refer them to the Town of Lovettsville's Social Media Public Comment Policy.

Social Media Advertising

The Town supports the use of social media advertising to boost posts and to increase awareness of events; however, all advertisements must be approved in advance by the Town Manager. Each department or event is responsible for paying for its own social media advertising, unless otherwise authorized by the Town Manager.

Account Maintenance

All Town of Lovettsville social media sites shall adhere to applicable state, federal, and local laws, regulations, and policies. This includes adherence to established laws and policies regarding copyright, records retention, [Freedom of Information Act \(FOIA\)](#), First Amendment, privacy laws and information security policies established by Town of Lovettsville. Each official site shall include a link to this Social Media Policy and Attachment number two (2), in a manner that makes it clear that it applies to posts on the site.

Elected Official's Use

Elected officials who use the Town of Lovettsville's official social media sites are subject to the restrictions imposed by the policies and procedures outlined in this document. Personal social media accounts, including electronic communication, and other online pages established for official purposes are understood to be subject to disclosure and access as required by law.

Elected officials should note that the use of social media to discuss public business may violate the open meeting law if the use is conducted in a way that meets the threshold of a public meeting, and that the relevant electronic records are considered public records in such event. All officials should be aware of the limitations and disclosure requirements with regard to electronic communication and open meeting requirements. Any official may choose to include the Town FOIA officer in any discussion and seek guidance.

Elected officials should be aware that their activities using a personal social media account may be reflective of the Town of Lovettsville. Elected officials are encouraged to adopt the policies and procedures outlined in this document for all accounts, including personal social media accounts; if such sites are used for receipt of comments and/or exchanges with regard to public business of the Town, the officials are strongly encouraged to participate in the Town's undertaking to archive electronic information for management under the Virginia FOIA, noting that such communications may be subject

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to review and possible disclosure under the Act in any event. Elected officials shall not act as an administrator, editor, or moderator on any public social media site representing Town activities unless authorized.

Officials are strictly prohibited from using official Town pages for political campaign purposes and are strongly encouraged to establish distinct campaign and electoral advocacy pages clearly differentiated from any of the official Town of Lovettsville social media pages described in this policy, to avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest. All campaign and electoral advocacy pages should be maintained and archived in accordance with applicable election law standards and requirements of the Library of Virginia for same. Official resources should never be used for political campaign purposes.

All official Town of Lovettsville social media pages shall be retained and archived in accordance with law, incurring the expenditure of public funds for qualifying social media and related pages.

Retention

Town of Lovettsville social media sites are subject to the Library of Virginia's (LVA) public records laws. According to the Virginia Public Records Act (VPRA) of the *Code of Virginia §42.1-77*, a public record is defined as: *recorded information that documents a transaction or activity by or with any public officer, agency, or employee of an agency. Regardless of physical form or characteristic, the recorded information is a public record if it is produced, collected, received, or retained in pursuance of a law or in connection with the transaction of public business. The medium on which such information is recorded has no bearing on the determination of whether the recording is public record.*

Therefore, relevant Town of Lovettsville social media communications are public records that should be considered "correspondence" for the purposes of Virginia retention laws. Generally, such social media responses need to be retained as long as administratively necessary before being destroyed. Records required to be maintained pursuant to a relevant records retention schedule shall be maintained for the required retention period in a format that preserves the integrity of the original record and is easily accessible. Please contact the Town's VFOIA Officer with questions.

For more information see the [Library of Virginia Electronic Records Guidelines](#).

Freedom of Information Act

All Town of Lovettsville social media correspondence are subject to Freedom of Information Act and e-discovery laws, therefore content must be able to be managed, stored, and retrieved to comply with these laws. ***All Town of Lovettsville social media sites should indicate that content posted or submitted is subject to public disclosure.***

Archiving

All Town social-media accounts, including elected officials' accounts, will be archived using Archive Social upon the effective date of this policy.

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Attachment 1 – Social Media Application

All requests for new Town of Lovettsville Social Media Accounts must be submitted to the Town of Lovettsville for review and approval. Email the completed form to clerk@lovettsvilleva.gov.

Name/Phone/Email: _____

Department/Event: _____

Type of Social Media Account: _____

Proposed Name of Social Media Account: _____

Why do you want to create this social media page? _____

Who is your intended audience? _____

What do you plan to post about on this social media page?

Acknowledgement: _____

I have read, understand and will comply with the Town of Lovettsville’s Social Media Policy and Best Practices Document.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPROVED:

By: _____ Date: _____

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Attachment 2

**Town of Lovettsville
Social Media Public Comment Policy
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The purpose of the Town of Lovettsville social media sites is to facilitate communication about matters of public interest to Town residents, businesses, visitors, and the general public. We encourage you to submit your questions, comments and concerns, but please note that these sites are moderated online discussion sites intended to promote the purposes of the Town government and not a public forum.

We recognize the web is a 24/7 medium and your comments are welcome at any time; however, given the need to manage our staff resources, please be advised that the Town's social media sites are generally only checked periodically during normal business hours (Monday-Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) and not all comments can be responded to due to limited staff resources at this time. If you have a Town-related issue, please CALL 540-822-5788 during normal business hours or call the emergency number 540-822-0155 after hours. For all other emergencies, please call 9-1-1.

Once posted, the Town reserves the right to delete submissions that contain vulgar language or offensive comments that target or disparage any ethnic, racial or religious group. Furthermore, the Town also reserves the right to delete postings or comments that:

- contain nudity or obscenity;
- contain personally identifying information, sensitive personal information, or information that may be deemed libelous;
- contain offensive language that targets or discriminates on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, or other protected status;
- are threatening or harassing;
- incite or promote violence or illegal activities
- contain spam, advertising, or include links to other sites and email addresses;
- advocate illegal activity;
- promote or oppose particular services, products, or political candidates or organizations;
- infringe on copyrights or trademarks; or
- contain information that may compromise the safety, security, or proceedings of the public, public systems, or any criminal or civil investigations.

Repeated violations of the Town's Social Media Comment Policy can result in the offending user being blocked from the Town's social media sites, as outlined in the Policy for Town of Lovettsville Social Media Sites.

Please note that the comments expressed on the Town of Lovettsville social media sites do not reflect the opinions and position of the Town of Lovettsville or its officers and employees.

If you have any questions concerning the Town's Social Media Public Comment Policy, please contact the Town Manager at 540-822-5788 or townmanager@lovettsvilleva.gov.