

Town of Tyre

Social Media Policy

Adopted December 29, 2022 by the Tyre Town Board

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that communications across the Town of Tyre (Town) are well coordinated, effectively managed and responsive to the diverse information needs of the public. This policy establishes guidelines for the establishment and use of social media sites by the Town of Tyre as a means of conveying Town information to its citizens. These guidelines include, but are not limited to, the Town web site and any social media websites.

The intended purpose for establishing Town of Tyre social media sites is to disseminate information from the Town, about the Town, to its citizens and visitors, and as an alternate and additional means of communication during emergency situations. This policy gives direction to Town employees, elected officials, and other authorized persons regarding the creation, maintenance, and posting of content through Official Accounts.

Utilization of Town approved social media sites must adhere to this policy. The guidelines may be supplemented by administrative rules and regulations by the Tyre Town Board. This policy may be amended at the direction of the Town Board.

The Town of Tyre has an overriding interest and expectation in deciding what is “spoken” on behalf of the Town on Town 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, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. For purposes of this policy, “comment/postings” include information/text, articles, pictures, videos, links to other sites or other form of communicative content posted on a Town of Tyre social media site. It is understood that social media is an evolving communications tool and that new resources may become available over time.

Policy Statement

It will be the policy of the Town of Tyre to foster and encourage an atmosphere of openness and transparency and to:

1. Provide the public with timely, accurate, clear, objective and complete information about its policies, programs, services, events and initiatives.
2. Employ a variety of ways and means to communicate and provide information in multiple formats to accommodate diverse needs.

3. Identify and address communication needs and issues routinely in the development, implementation and evaluation of policies, programs, services and initiatives.
4. Consult the public, listen to and take account of people's interests and concerns when establishing priorities, developing policies, and planning programs and services.
5. Deliver prompt, courteous and responsive service that is sensitive to the needs and concerns of the public and respectful of individual rights.

Duties and Responsibilities

The establishment and use by any Town department of a Town social media site is subject to approval by the Town Board. The Town Supervisor (Supervisor) is responsible for administering the Town's public communication programs. The Supervisor shall be the official staff spokesperson for the Town and shall act as the Town's Public Information Officer (PIO).

1. Town of Tyre social media sites should make clear that they are maintained by the Town of Tyre and that they follow the Town's Social Media Policy. Postings on the Town's Facebook site(s) may only be written by Town personnel and approved by the PIO.
2. All Town of Tyre social media sites are considered property of the Town and as such, do not transfer if the PIO terminates employment with the Town or no longer serves in a capacity consistent with social media site management with the Town.
3. The PIO must administer and maintain security credentials (i.e., user names and passwords) for each social media account upon creation and any time log in credentials may change.
EXCEPTION: Facebook and other sites requiring personal account information are an exception to the foregoing rule. Usernames and passwords will not be required for such accounts because Site Administrators must use personal accounts to manage pages. Rather than providing personal information, Town of Tyre accounts on Facebook are required to add the Town Supervisor and the Town Clerk as an administrator. It is advised that the PIO also add a secondary back-up administrator to the page, if applicable.
4. Comments by the general public on Town approved social media sites shall not be considered, for regulatory purposes, as official correspondence with the Town. All official correspondence with the Town shall be made by written communication to the Town's mailing address or through electronic e-mail to the Town electronic address.
5. Wherever possible, Town social media sites should link back to the official Town of Tyre website for forms, documents, online services and other information necessary to conduct business with the Town of Tyre.
6. The PIO will monitor content on Town's social media sites to ensure adherence to both the Town's Social Media Policy and the interest and goals of the Town of Tyre.
7. The Town reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of this Social Media Policy or any applicable law. Any content removed based on these guidelines must be retained by the Town Clerk for a reasonable period of time, and include the time, date and identity of the poster, when available.
8. These guidelines shall be on display to users or made available by hyperlink whenever possible.
9. All Town social media sites shall adhere to applicable federal, state and local laws, regulations and policies.

10. Employees representing the Town government via Town social media sites must express themselves using language and content that reflects the highest standards of decorum and in accordance with all Town policies.
11. This Social Media Policy may be revised at any time by the Town board.
12. Social media sites are subject to the records retention rules and regulations of the State of New York.
13. The Town's Social Media Policy shall be reauthorized yearly at the Town's organizational meeting held in January.

Content/Postings Policy

All official Town social media sites are considered an extension of the Town's information network and are governed by this Social Media Policy.

1. The Town and its representatives are expected to serve all constituents in a civil, respectful, and unbiased manner. The PIO should remember that when creating, maintaining, and posting through Town social media accounts, they are representing the Town government. Accordingly, they must always conduct themselves as a representative of the Town using the highest standards of decorum concerning language and content and abide by all Town policies and procedures in relation to all posts.
2. Any creation or use of social media sites used to represent the Town must be authorized by the PIO.
3. Social media sites will be used strictly for conveying information about the Town to the public. The Town official website will be the Town's primary and predominant Internet presence. Wherever possible, content posted to social media sites will be available on the Town's official website. All content should be complementary of the Town's website and content posted on the social media sites should contain links to the Town's official website.
4. Social media "profile pictures" should clearly represent the Town with the official Town seal.
5. Any person or department who is not the PIO wishing to post content to any Town social media site shall submit a request to the PIO or Town Board with all necessary information and media, including text, photos/videos, and links. Subject to any oversight the Town Board determines necessary and appropriate from time to time, the PIO has the right to approve or deny the request based on the guidelines contained herein. Only content approved by the PIO or Town Board shall be posted. It is the responsibility of the relevant Department Head to ensure that all content submitted for posting has been fully vetted and is free from error.
6. The PIO will routinely monitor content on all the Town's Official Social Media Accounts to ensure compliance with this Policy and applicable federal, state and local laws, regulations and policies.
7. The PIO should be aware of the Terms of Service (TOS) of each social media site for each Official Account used by the Town of Tyre.
8. The following forms of content shall not be permitted on Town of Tyre social media sites and are subject to removal and/or restriction by the PIO or his/her designees:
 - a. Comments/postings not related to the original topic, including random or unintelligible comments/postings;
 - b. Profane, obscene, violent, or pornographic content and/or language;

- c. Content that promotes, fosters or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, disability or national origin;
 - d. Libelous comments;
 - e. Defamatory or personal attacks;
 - f. Threats to any person or organization;
 - g. Comment/postings in support of, or in opposition to, any political campaigns or ballot measures;
 - h. Solicitations of, or for commerce, including but not limited to advertising of any business or product for sale;
 - i. Conduct or communications in violation of any federal, state or local law;
 - j. Encouragement of illegal activity;
 - k. Information that may compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems;
 - l. Content that violates a legal ownership interest, such as a copyright, of any party;
 - m. Content appearing to be “spam”;
 - n. Campaign materials promoting or opposing an individual in an election for political office.
9. Comments posted by members of the public on any Town of Tyre social media site reflects the opinions of the individuals posting the comments. Publication of a comment does not imply endorsement of, or agreement by, the Town of Tyre, nor do such comments/postings reflect the opinions or policies of the Town of Tyre.
 10. The Town of Tyre reserves the right to deny access to Town of Tyre social media sites, at any time and without prior notice, to individuals who violate the Town’s Social Media Policy.
 11. Electronic information posted to a social media site by the Town, or a member of the public, may be considered a public record subject to New York State’s Freedom of Information Law.
 12. Site content shall be maintained in accordance with its respective Records Retention Schedule and in accordance with Town policies and procedures.
 13. The values shared by the Town of Tyre and its network of professionals must be always upheld when interacting with the general public:
 - a. Customer Service
 - b. Transparency
 - c. Quality
 - d. Responsibility
 - e. Participatory
 - f. Timeliness
 - g. Respect
 14. Use of social media sites must comply with applicable federal, state and Town laws, regulations and policies. This includes adherence to established laws and policies regarding copyright, records retention, Freedom of Information Law (FOIL), First Amendment, privacy laws, and information security policies established by the Town.
 15. Employees must include their name and title when responding to a comment or question on Town social media sites. Employees shall not share personal information about himself or herself, or other Town employees.

Account Management

Because the purpose of Town social media accounts is for the Town to communicate with the members of the public, where there is an option to do so, accounts should generally be established in such a manner as to limit communications to content created by and approved by the Town in accordance with the policy. However, where it is necessary because of the type of social media account to allow public comment, the following disclaimer shall appear on all official Town social media accounts where possible or, alternatively, will be contained in a page on the Town's website and be linked directly to the official Town social media account:

As a public entity, the Town must abide by certain standards to serve all its constituents in a civil and unbiased manner. The Town shall be the sole owner of all social media accounts and reserves the right to not publish or remove any postings which contain inappropriate content, including, but not limited to:

- *Potentially libelous comments;*
- *Obscene or racist comments;*
- *Derogatory or inflammatory comments about an individual's gender, race, age, disability, religion, or national origin;*
- *Personal attacks, insults, or threatening language;*
- *Private, personal information offered without express consent;*
- *Comments unrelated to the topic of discussion;*
- *Hyperlinks to materials not directly related to the discussion;*
- *Material known to be plagiarized;*
- *Commercial promotions, including for-profit advertisements or products for sale;*
- *Content appearing to be "spam";*
- *Comments pertaining to organized political activities, including political endorsements;*
- *Any content that is not deemed to be in the best interest of the Town.*

Town social media sites are intended to be informational. Users should not use these forums for making any official communications to the Town; for example, reporting crimes or misconduct, reporting dangerous conditions, requesting an inspection, giving notice required by any statute, regulation or ordinance, such as, but not limited to, notices of claims.

It is understood that the Town of Tyre's social media sites are not maintained 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and immediate responses to any requests via post, email, direct message, etc. may not occur. The Town reserves the right to not reply or decline to reply to any/all comments posed to its social media accounts. It is also understood that the Town will not automatically "friend", "like", "follow" or "connect" to users who follow, comment or "like" Town posts.

Content posted by a member of the public to any Town social media site shall not reflect the opinions or policies of the Town.

Elected Officials

Any elected officials who post through Official Accounts must abide by this Policy in all respects.

Elected officials who choose to create, maintain, or use social media accounts (other than Official Accounts) are solely responsible for the content of such accounts and any liability that may arise from same. The Town recognizes that elected and appointed officials may choose to express themselves through such accounts; however, this right of expression should not interfere with the operation of the Town.

Elected officials should assume that, if any Town business or communication is conducted on a social media account (even a non-Official Account), the account will be considered a public record and will be subject to the New York State Freedom of Information Laws (FOIL), as well as applicable sections of the records retention schedule.