



## **TOWN OF CASCO**

### **BOARD AND COMMITTEE MEMBER USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY & GUIDELINES**

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#### **Section 1. Purpose:**

At the Town of Casco (the "Town"), we understand that social media can be a fun and rewarding way to share your life and opinions with family, friends and co-workers around the country. However, use of social media also presents certain risks and carries with it certain responsibilities. To assist you in making responsible decisions about your use of social media, we have established this Policy & Guidelines (the "Policy") for appropriate use of social media by the members of the Selectboard, the Planning Board, the Zoning Board of Appeals, the Conservation Committee, the Open Space Commission, and any other committee or board created by the Selectboard or Town Meeting.

#### **Section 2. Policy & Guidelines:**

In the rapidly expanding world of electronic communication, *social media* can mean many things. *Social media* includes all means of communicating or posting information or content of any sort on the Internet, including to your own or someone else's blog, journal or diary, personal web site, social networking or affinity web site, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Reddit, TikTok, or similar platform, whether or not associated or affiliated with the Town, as well as any other form of electronic communication.

Ultimately, you are solely responsible for what you post online. Before creating online content, consider some of the risks and rewards that are involved. What you write or post is public, and will be so for a long time. It will also be spread to large audiences without your knowledge or permission. Recognize that the instantaneous, yet permanent, nature of social media can pose risk without effective controls.

#### **Know and follow the rules**

Carefully read this Policy and ensure your postings are consistent with this Policy. Inappropriate postings that may include discriminatory remarks, harassment, and threats of violence or similar inappropriate or unlawful conduct will not be tolerated.

#### **Section 3. Policy For All Social Media Communications:**

##### **A. Use of social media on Town equipment**

Be advised that Board and Committee Members have no right to privacy with respect to personal use of social media or personal social media accounts accessed by means of Town equipment or with respect to personal social media content so accessed. Board and Committee

Members should not expect or assume privacy or confidentiality with respect to any such personal social media use or social media content.

**B. Use of Town name/e-mail address**

Personal social media account names or e-mail names should not be tied to the Town. Do not use a Town e-mail address to register on social networks, blogs or other online tools utilized for personal use. For those Board and Committee Members who use a Town e-mail address for registration with social networks, blogs or other online tools utilized for personal use as of the date of adoption of this Policy & Guidelines, you have until September 1, 2023 to change your personal registration with social networks, blogs or other online tools utilized for personal use to a non-Town e-mail address.

**C. Protection of private and confidential information**

Many Board and Committee Members have access to private and confidential information that must be actively guarded from publication. When using social media, all Board and Committee Members are expected to actively protect private and/or confidential information. A good rule of thumb is that if you are not sure if the information is protected as confidential by law, ask before you post.

**D. Guidelines for all communications (official and personal)**

All Board and Committee Members have a responsibility to help communicate accurate and timely information to the public in a professional manner. Any Board or Committee Member who identifies a mistake in reporting should bring the error to the attention of the Selectboard Chair, Town Manager, or other appropriate person. Regardless of whether the communication is in the person's official Town role or in a personal capacity, Board and Committee Members must comply with all laws relating to intellectual property rights, including, without limitation, trademark, copyright and software use. Board and Committee Members must also follow all Town policies that may apply.

**E. Violations**

This Policy is intended to be self-enforcing and is an expression of the standards of conduct for Board and Committee Members of the Town. Nonetheless, any violation of this Policy may result in discipline as deemed appropriate by the balance of the Selectboard or the board or committee of which that person is a member. This Policy is not intended to violate and will not be enforced in violation of federal, state or local law.

**Section 4. Guidelines For Personal Use Of Social Media:**

Some personal communications of Board and Committee Members may reflect on the Town, especially if Board and Committee Members are commenting on Town business, Town policies, fellow Board and Committee Members or Town employees. These guidelines apply to personal communications involving various forms of social media. To assist you in making responsible decisions about your use of social media, we have established these guidelines for appropriate personal use of social media.

**A. Be respectful**

Always be fair and courteous to fellow Board and Committee Members and people who work on behalf of the Town. Also, keep in mind that you are more likely to resolve Town business complaints by speaking directly with your fellow Board and Committee Members, or the appropriate member of the Selectboard or Town staff, than by posting complaints to a social media outlet. Nevertheless, if you decide to post complaints or criticism, avoid using statements, photographs, video or audio that reasonably could be viewed as malicious, obscene, threatening or intimidating, that disparage fellow Board and Committee Members, and people who work on behalf of the Town, or that might constitute harassment or bullying. Examples of such conduct might 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, disability, religion or any other status protected by law.

**B. Be honest and accurate**

Make sure you are always honest and accurate when posting information or news, and if you make a mistake, correct it quickly. Be open about any previous posts you have altered. Remember that the Internet archives almost everything; therefore, even deleted postings can be searched. Do not post any information or rumors that you know to be false about the Town, its employees, your fellow Board or Committee Members, or people working on behalf of the Town.

**C. Post only appropriate and respectful content**

- 1) Maintain the confidentiality of information made confidential by law to which you have access solely as a result of your position with the Town.
- 2) Do not create a link from your blog, website or other social networking site to the Town's website without identifying yourself as a Town official.
- 3) Express only your personal opinions. Never represent yourself as a spokesperson for the Town. If the Town is a subject of the content you are creating, be clear and open about the fact that you are an elected or appointed Board or Committee Member and make it clear that your views do not represent those of the Town, its employees, your fellow Board or Committee Members, or people working on behalf of the Town. If you do publish a blog or post online related to the work you do or subjects associated with the Town, make it clear that you are not speaking on behalf of the Town. It is best to include a disclaimer such as "The postings on this site are my own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Town of Casco."

**D. Be mindful of public record and record retention laws**

Maine's Freedom of Access Act ("Right-to-Know" law), State Archives Advisory Board Rules for Disposition of Local Government Records and e-discovery laws apply to social media content. Therefore, content must be able to be managed, stored and retrieved to comply with these

laws. Beware that even your personal social media content may be treated as a “public record” if it has “been received or prepared for use in connection with the transaction of public or governmental business or contains information relating to the transaction of public or governmental business.” See 1 M.R.S.A. § 402(3).

Adopted this 11th day of July, 2023.

**Approved by Casco Selectboard:**



Scott Avery, Chair



Eugene Connolly, Vice-Chair



Mary-Vienessa Fernandes



Robert MacDonald



Grant Plummer