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TOWN OF PROSPER ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS

CHAPTER 18: COMMUNICATIONS

SECTION 18.01: SOCIAL MEDIA

A. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Town's social media policy is to provide guidelines for sharing information with community members about Town issues, programs, and services, using various social media platforms, leading to a more responsive and transparent government and a high level of public confidence. To address the rapidly changing ways in which residents communicate and obtain information, Town staff will make appropriate use of the various forms of social media available to communicate with residents in ways they find timely and convenient. This policy seeks to delineate rules and regulations for the use of social media platforms in such a way as to maintain the platforms' maximum effectiveness while staying within the bounds of good taste, propriety, and impartiality and utilizing sound communication principles.

This communication effort will be under the direct supervision of the Communications Director in collaboration with the Executive Director and the Town Manager. The Communications Director will make use of the appropriate personnel and technological resources required for successful completion of this effort.

B. ESTABLISHMENT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

1. The Town of Prosper will maintain only one official page on any social media platform, including, but not limited to, Facebook, X, Instagram, Nextdoor, YouTube, LinkedIn and the RAVE alert system. Any new social media platforms not currently in use may be allowed one official Town of Prosper page or account.
2. The Town also maintains departmental pages and accounts for the Police Department, Fire Department, Parks and Recreation Department and Library. Pages and accounts already in existence must comply with this policy.
3. Any new departmental pages or accounts for the Town of Prosper shall only be created after receiving approval from the Communications Director in conjunction with the Executive Director and the Town Manager. Requests for new accounts will be evaluated based on the terms of use, and staff time required to implement, monitor and maintain the site and other applicable considerations.

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C. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. All Town of Prosper existences, activities, responses, posts and appearances on social media sites or services are considered an extension of the Town's information and communications networks. All uses of social media must be in complete compliance with this policy.
2. It is the responsibility of the Communications Director to act as the Town's primary administrator on Town social media sites. The Communications Director in conjunction with department heads may designate individuals to post, respond to and conduct other related activities on the Town's official and departmental pages and accounts.
3. Staff members who are designated as administrators, editors, or who otherwise have access to post on any Town social media platform shall be responsible for the following:
 - a. Review social media pages and accounts to which they have been designated to ensure they are in compliance with this policy. Posts from the public that are determined to be in violation of the Town's Social Media User Guidelines may be hidden from view but not deleted.
 - b. Ensure pages and accounts are regularly maintained and kept current by posting content that is relevant, informative and engaging.
 - c. Ensure that information on social media sites is accurate, professionally presented, respectful, and free from spelling and grammatical errors.
4. Any department that has not been granted editing ability may request to post content on an appropriate social media page or account by submitting a helpdesk ticket to the Communications Department.
5. The Communications Director will maintain all passwords for social media accounts. Employees who are tasked with social media assignments shall never change or otherwise alter the passwords assigned by the Communications Director. Passwords will be changed by the Communications Director, as needed, and when a staff member with access to any social media page or account leaves employment with the Town.

D. CONTENT GUIDELINES

1. Potential uses for social media include but are not limited to:
 - a. Sharing published media releases regarding Town news, programs, services, and events;
 - b. Publicizing Town programs and activities, including Special Events which the Town sponsors, either financially or through substantial in-kind support;
 - c. Publicizing new or amended Town services, holiday closings or other critical information normally found on the Town's website;
 - d. Issuing emergency alerts, road closures, or weather alerts affecting residents;

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- e. Publicizing Town Council meetings, Board and Commission meetings and other public meetings held by the Town.

2. General overview of site content by departments includes but is not limited to the following:
 - Town of Prosper
 - a. Town Council, Board and Commission and public meeting reminders
 - b. Town office closures
 - c. Town-sponsored events,
 - d. Town programs and services
 - e. Capital project updates
 - f. Awards and recognition
 - g. Road closures/traffic notices
 - h. News releases
 - Fire Department
 - a. Emergency responses (fire, gas main break, etc.)
 - b. Safety issues
 - c. Emergency notifications
 - d. Community outreach & education (programs, tours, events, etc.)
 - e. Awards and recognition
 - Police Department
 - a. Traffic incidents
 - b. Crimewatch notifications
 - c. Safety issues
 - d. Community outreach & education (programs, events, etc.)
 - e. Awards and recognition
 - Parks and Recreation Department
 - a. Recreation programs
 - b. Park closures
 - c. Town events
 - d. Awards and recognition
 - Library
 - a. Library programs and services
 - b. Library hours
 - c. Awards and recognition

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Posted information may be shared among the Town pages and accounts and departmental pages and accounts when appropriate, based on the content of the post and the intended audience.

3. Guidelines for creating high-quality content:
 - a. Ensure content is factually accurate, clear and concise, without unnecessary verbiage. Posts should provide value to the reader and the Town by conveying a positive and informative message.
 - b. A high-quality photo or graphic should accompany a post whenever possible. Content should be free from spelling, grammar and punctuation errors.
 - c. Content should be timely, interactive, and engaging, including a diverse range of media (photos, graphics, videos, links) and a variety of original and/or shared content.
 - d. Content should be posted on appropriate social media platforms based on the intended audience. Efforts should be made to post content at the most popular times for each platform to ensure the highest possible follower response and interaction.
 - e. Omissions or errors in information posted on social media sites must be corrected as soon as possible.
4. Social media posts should provide links to appropriate pages located on the Town's website whenever possible. This will create a deeper relationship between residents and the Town via the Town website, and allow residents to obtain information, forms, documents, or other online services that make it easier to conduct business with the Town.
5. Use of social media must comply with applicable federal, state and local ordinances, regulations and policies, as well as proper business etiquette. This includes adherence to established laws and policies regarding copyright, records retention, release of public information, the First Amendment, privacy laws and information security policies established by the Town of Prosper.
6. The Communications Director and designated departmental administrators will determine the appropriateness and suitability of any social media posts. The Town Manager will be the final determinant of whether a posting is acceptable for any of the pages and accounts used by the Town.
7. The Town of Prosper reserves the right to remove from public view any message, post, response, or other submissions that do not conform to the standards set by this policy and the Town of Prosper Social Media User Guidelines (see Exhibit A of this policy). When possible, all Town pages and accounts shall include a link to the Town's Social Media User Guidelines.

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E. RESPONDING TO MESSAGES AND COMMENTS

1. The primary administrator for each Town page or account shall monitor and review activity daily for comments and/or messages from the public, and provide an appropriate response consistent with this policy, preferably within one business day. Comments should be returned during normal business hours unless there is an emergency situation.
2. Due to the time-sensitive nature of public safety communication, Police and Fire Department pages and accounts will be continually monitored for comments and messages from the public related to crime, safety, and other emergencies. Responses must be cleared through each department's appropriate chain of command.
3. Only the primary administrator or other authorized staff member for each Town page or account shall monitor and respond to messages from the public.
4. Responses to public comments, messages, or questions are intended to provide additional information, answer questions, or correct misinformation. While two-way communication is encouraged, social media platforms are not intended to be used for ongoing conversations between staff members and the public.
5. Responses to comments, questions, and messages should be polite, factual, and concise. When appropriate, members of the public should be directed to the appropriate page on the Town website where they can find additional information.
6. After responding to a public comment or message, if an additional response is warranted, Town staff should attempt to redirect the conversation to a private platform by providing the name and contact information of a staff member who can provide more information or assistance.
7. Employees shall use discretion and respect the privacy of members of the public and Town staff when handling complaints or sensitive information.

F. RECORDS MANAGEMENT AND ARCHIVING

1. Content posted on any Town page or account, including a list of subscribers, fans, or followers, is considered a public record and is subject to disclosure under the Texas Public Information Act (Chapter 552 of the Texas Government Code). Requests for information related to content on any social media page or account maintained by the Town of Prosper shall be directed to the Town Secretary's Office.
2. All social media content, comments, and messages will be archived and retained in compliance with the Town's approved record retention schedules. Content shall be maintained in an accessible format so that it can be produced in response to a request.
3. Public comments that are determined to be in violation of this policy may be hidden from public view but shall not be deleted.

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G. EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION

Content related to public safety emergencies such as traffic issues, crime alerts or other public safety notifications will be under the direction of the Police Department or Fire Department, depending on the nature of the incident. All posted content shall be approved through the Department's appropriate chain of command. Information may be shared from the Town page or account or relevant departmental pages and accounts as needed, depending on the nature of the emergency.

In the event of a Town-wide emergency or disaster, all communication regarding the emergency is to be centralized and coordinated with the Emergency Management Coordinator (EMC) in accordance with the Town's Emergency Management Plan, the Town of Prosper Crisis Communications Plan and the Police Department's General Orders related to Public Information and Media Relations. The EMC or designee will have access to post emergency communication to the Town's social media accounts, including the RAVE emergency alert system. Emergency information may be shared with departmental pages and accounts to provide greater dissemination of the information but should not deviate from the approved message.

H. EMPLOYEE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

Access to the Internet using the Town's electronic communications systems is a privilege and carries responsibilities, including responsible and ethical use. This is true whether access is for personal use or related to an employee's job duties. The Town reserves the right to access, intercept, monitor, and review all information viewed, posted, sent, stored, printed, or received through its communications systems or equipment at any time.

An employee's use of social media, whether on or off duty, must not interfere with or conflict with the employee's responsibilities or job performance, reflect negatively on the Town, or violate any Town policy. Protecting the Town's reputation and ensuring that an employee's communication with people within and outside of the Town not only reflects positively on the employee as an individual but also on the Town. Personal use of social media sites is strongly discouraged during working hours.

The Town expects all employees to use good judgment and follow the guidelines set out in this policy when posting information on social media, regardless of whether activity occurs during or outside work hours.

1. User Guidelines

Employees who wish to engage on personal social media accounts:

- a. Shall not use a Town email address for social media accounts. Furthermore, Town of Prosper email addresses cannot be used in conjunction with a personal social networking site.
- b. May not comment on work-related matters on any public platform or outlet unless they are an official spokesperson and have the approval to do so.

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- c. Shall not post images, files or texts depicting Town property, equipment, apparel or personnel in any manner that would adversely affect the reputation of the Town or a Town employee or department.
- d. Shall not, on any platform or outlet, make insulting or offensive comments, engage in harassment or libel, or use derogatory speech regarding a person's race, age, religion, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, or gender.
- e. Are prohibited against disclosure of confidential information or information that could breach the security of the Town of Prosper in any way.
- f. May not attribute personal statements or opinions to the Town when engaging in private postings on social media sites.
- g. Are prohibited from posting anything that promotes or contains illegal activity of any kind.
- h. Are discouraged from posting pictures of themselves or others wearing Town uniforms or insignia, Town logos, Town equipment or Town work sites, unless they are posted on the Town's official social media platforms as part of their job duties or shared from an official Town of Prosper social media platform.
- i. The Town prohibits the unauthorized release or disclosure of any employee information on social media or through other means that may be considered private and/or confidential by law.

2. Applicability

This policy applies to all Town of Prosper employees. When an employee uses social media sites, all applicable Town policies shall be followed.

3. Policy Authority

The Town Manager, with the assistance of the Human Resources Director and the Information Technology Director, is responsible for interpreting and enforcing this policy.

4. Implementation Procedures

Employees are made aware of Town policies, including this policy, during their orientation as a new Town of Prosper employee, and they are expected to adhere to those policies. In the event that an employee violates one of the policies, the Human Resources Department will work with the affected employee and Town Management to resolve the situation. Violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

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5. Senate Bill 1893 Regarding TikTok

Pursuant to Senate Bill 1893 passed during the 88th Legislative Session in 2023, the Town of Prosper prohibits TikTok on Town of Prosper devices and networks. Accordingly, if an employee has installed TikTok on a Town-provided device (phone, computer or tablet), the employee is required to uninstall the app from that device. This does not include personal devices for which an employee receives a monthly stipend. The Town of Prosper has also removed access to TikTok via Town of Prosper Wi-Fi and the Town of Prosper network. This restriction is effective immediately.

The Town of Prosper will continue to cooperate with applicable local, state and federal laws and implement such policies designed to safeguard the Town's organizational information.

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Exhibit A

Social Media User Guidelines

The following is a set of guidelines for those who wish to interact with the Town of Prosper through one of our social media platforms. We welcome input and comments regarding the Town of Prosper, Texas.

Our social media sites are intended to share information and matters of public interest in the Town of Prosper. We encourage users to comment on posts, but please note that an opinion or comment posted on a Town of Prosper social media page or account is considered for discussion only and is not a substitute for a formal statement in a Public Hearing process.

Comments posted on all pages and accounts will be monitored. The Town of Prosper reserves the right to remove from public view any comments that contain false information, obscene language, or sexual content; threaten or defame any person or organization (including the Town of Prosper); support or oppose political candidates, political organizations, or ballot propositions; promote illegal activity, commercial services, or products; infringe on copyrights or trademarks; promote discrimination on the basis of race, age, religion, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, or gender; or, are not topically related to the particular posting. Any comments deemed to be criminal in nature will be reported to authorities.

All content, including public comments and private messages, is considered a public record. All posts, even those that may be hidden by the Town or removed by the user, may be subject to disclosure under the Texas Public Information Act (Chapter 552 of the Texas Government Code).

The Town of Prosper asks all our followers to understand that content posted to our social media platforms by external parties, including comments, photos, links, or other outside materials, does not necessarily represent the ideals of the Town of Prosper or our employees. The Town of Prosper is not responsible for any such external content and does not endorse any opinions expressed by external users on our social media platforms.

The Town of Prosper may occasionally post links to third-party websites. Please note that this does not in any way constitute an endorsement of the website and/or company. The Town of Prosper does not control the content, advertising, or views of any such third-party website. The thoughts and opinions of third-party websites do not represent the opinions of the Town of Prosper.

The Town of Prosper respects the privacy of those who engage with our social media platforms. If you have a complaint about any of the information you see on one of our social media platforms, please contact Todd Rice, Communications Director, at trice@prosptx.gov or 972-569-1025.

The Town of Prosper reserves the right to remove from public view any content that is deemed in violation of these guidelines or any applicable federal, state, or local laws or ordinances. By visiting, liking, or interacting with any of our social media platforms, you are agreeing to the above guidelines for use, as well as to any of the terms of use/service outlined by third-party social media application providers. The Town of Prosper reserves the right to block users who violate these guidelines from posting to all Town of Prosper social media platforms.