

TOWN OF ULYSSES

Social Media Policy

Approved by Town Board on July 25, 2023.

1. **Scope.** This policy pertains to Social Media accounts established by, and for, the Town of Ulysses as well as posts made by Town staff, volunteers, and elected officials regarding Town operations when made in an official capacity (all such staff, volunteers and elected officials referred to in this policy as "Town Official(s)").
2. **Social Media Defined.** Social media is defined as the use of third-party hosted online technologies that facilitate social interaction and dialog. Such third-party hosted services and tools may include, but are not limited to: social networking sites (e.g., Instagram, FaceBook, Linked-In), micro-blogging tools (e.g., Twitter, RSS feeds), audio-visual networking sites (e.g., YouTube), web logs (blogs), and so forth.
3. The goal of the Town's social media channels is to serve as an online information source focused on Town issues, projects, news, and events, and is not intended as a public forum (a place to exercise of the right to speech, public debate, and assembly). Rather, it is a one-way means of communication meant to:
 - Update people on important news, meetings, events and emergency information;
 - Increase resident participation in meetings and events;
 - Direct people to the Town website and/or staff for further information.
4. The Town does not endorse any link or advertisements on social media sites placed by the site owners, their vendors, or partners.
5. **Policy.**
 - A. The Town's official website at townofulyssesny.gov (or any other domain(s) owned by the Town) will remain the Town's primary means of internet communication.
 - B. No social media account may be opened in the name of the Town without first having obtained permission by resolution of the Town Board, which will identify which site(s) will be used and who has permission to post.
 - C. Approved social media accounts opened in the name of the Town must prominently identify themselves as the Town of Ulysses Official Page for such social media service.
 - D. While social media, with its use of popular abbreviations and shorthand, does not adhere to standards and conventions of correspondence, the content and tenor of any conversations, correspondence, or posting on any social media/networking site by any Town Official must adhere to basic rules of grammar and diction and must be presented in a professional manner.
 - E. Town social media accounts are only to be used by authorized Town Officials for the purpose of re-sharing information previously shared/posted on a Town platform (i.e. Town website or Town newsletter) to avoid creation of a new Town record that will then be subject to FOIL and records retention requirements.

- F. Any Town Official authorized to post items on the Town website or any Town social media account shall not express his or her own personal views or concerns through such postings.
- G. As social media use by the Town is not intended to be a public forum (see definition above), and to avoid creation of new Town records subject to FOIL and records retention requirements as stated in 5E above, no commenting will be allowed on the designated sites.
- H. Town social media accounts shall not be used for any of the following purposes:
 - a. To take official Town action.
 - b. To promote any policy making decision.
 - c. As an official public notice (to fulfill legal notice requirements).
 - d. To discuss items of political, legal, or fiscal significance to the Town (as opposed to simply providing factual information).
 - e. To advertise or promote commercial services, entities or products.
 - f. To endorse or oppose any political candidate or ballot proposition.
 - g. To share any content that violates Town policies or is not in line with the Town's goals of health, welfare and safety of its citizens.
- I. All content on the Town website and all Town social media accounts shall be reviewed, approved, and administered by the Town's Communications Officer, or designee.
- J. The Town reserves the right to terminate access to the Town website or any Town Social Media account at any time and without any notice.
- K. The Town shall retain full permission or rights to any content posted by the Town, including documents, pictures, videos, or any other electronic content of any type.
- L. Town officials should assume that any Town-related communication conducted on a social media account (even a personal or non-Official 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. Town officials are also reminded that conversations with other Town elected officials' social media accounts may trigger Open Meeting Law concerns. In order to avoid the potential appearance or existence of a quorum, no Town-related communications shall be discussed on a social media account between more than two Town officials who serve on a board (Town Board, Planning Board, or Board of Zoning Appeals). Finally, elected officials may not "block," remove, or otherwise censor public comment on social media accounts (even non-Official Accounts) except as permitted by applicable law.
- M. The Town Board shall designate a Communications Officer. All social media communications will be approved by the Communications Officer. The Communications Officer will manage the posting or designate another staff member to review, approve, or post on their behalf.

