



TOWN OF MACEDON POLICE DEPARTMENT

General Order: 208	Effective Date: April 4, 2019
Subject: Social Media	
Reference Standards: 28.4	
Rescinds:	
Page 1 of 9	Attachments: None

I. DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

The Macedon Police Department endorses the secure use of “Social Media” (as defined herein) to enhance communication, collaboration, community engagement and information exchange; streamline processes; and foster productivity. This policy establishes this department’s position on the utility and management of Social Media and provides guidance on its management, administration and oversight. This policy is not meant to address one particular form of Social Media; rather it is directed at Social Media in general, as advances in technology will occur and new tools will emerge.

II. POLICY

Social Media provides a new and potentially valuable means of assisting the department and its personnel in meeting objectives related to community engagement, problem-solving, crime investigation, crime prevention, and related matters. This policy identifies potential uses of Social Media that may be explored or expanded upon as deemed reasonable by administrative and supervisory personnel. The department also recognizes the role that these tools play in the personal lives of some department personnel. The personal use of Social Media can have bearing on departmental personnel in their official capacity. As such, this policy provides information of a precautionary nature as well as prohibitions on the use of Social Media by department personnel. The Macedon Police Department recognizes and embraces the opportunity that Social Media provides to us in building public trust, the opportunity for transparency and the ability to utilize Social Media to enhance our core mission of public safety.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. **Blog:** A self-published diary or commentary on a particular topic that may allow visitors to post responses, reactions, or comments. The term is short for “Web log.”
- B. **Page:** The specific portion of a Social Media website where content is displayed, and managed by an individual or individuals with administrative rights.
- C. **Post:** Content an individual shares on a Social Media site or the act of publishing content on a site.
- D. **Profile:** Information that a user provides about himself or herself on a social networking site.
- E. **Social Media:** A category of Internet-based resources that integrate user-generated content and user participation. This includes, but is not limited to, social networking sites (Facebook, MySpace), microblogging sites (Twitter, Nixle), photo- and video-sharing sites (Flickr, YouTube), wikis (Wikipedia), blogs, and news sites (Digg, Reddit).
- F. **Social Networks:** Online platforms where users can create profiles, share information, and socialize with others using a range of technologies.
- G. **Speech:** Expression or communication of thoughts or opinions in spoken words, in writing, by expressive conduct, symbolism, photographs, videotape, or related forms of communication.
- H. **Web 2.0:** The second generation of the World Wide Web focused on shareable, user-generated content, rather than static web pages. Some use this term interchangeably with Social Media.
- I. **Wiki:** Web page(s) that can be edited collaboratively.

IV. ON-THE-JOB USE

- A. Department-Sanctioned Presence

1. Determine Strategy

- a) Where possible, each Social Media page shall include an introductory statement that clearly specifies the purpose and scope of the agency's presence on the website.
- b) Where possible, the page(s) should link to the department's official website.
- c) Social Media page(s) shall be designed for the target audience(s) such as youth or potential police recruits.

2. Procedures

- a) All department Social Media sites or pages shall be approved by the Chief of Police or his or her designee and shall be administered by the departmental information services section or as otherwise determined.
- b) Where possible, Social Media pages shall clearly indicate they are maintained by the department and shall have department contact information prominently displayed.
- c) Social Media content shall adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including all information technology and records management policies.
 - (1) Content is subject to public records laws. Relevant records retention schedules apply to Social Media content.
 - (2) Content must be managed, stored and retrieved to comply with applicable Freedom of Information Law standards, as well as e-discovery laws and policies.
- d) Where possible, Social Media pages should state that the opinions expressed by visitors to the page(s) do not reflect the opinions of the department.
 - (1) Pages shall clearly indicate that posted comments will be monitored and that the department reserves the right to

remove obscenities, off-topic comments, and personal attacks.

- (2) Pages shall clearly indicate that any content posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure.

3. *Department-Sanctioned Use*

- a) Department personnel representing the department via Social Media outlets shall do the following:
 - (1) Conduct themselves at all times as representatives of the department and, accordingly, shall adhere to all department standards of conduct and observe conventionally accepted protocols and proper decorum.
 - (2) Identify themselves as a member of the department. This restriction will not apply to fictitious social media accounts that officers create to conduct covert criminal investigations with the authorization of the Chief of Police.
 - (3) Not make statements about the guilt or innocence of any suspect or arrestee, or comments concerning pending prosecutions, nor post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate confidential information, including photographs or videos, related to department training, activities, or work-related assignments without express written permission of the Chief of Police or his or her designee.
 - (4) Not conduct political activities or private business while representing the department.
- b) The use of department computers by department personnel to access Social Media is prohibited without authorization by a Sergeant or the Chief of Police.
- c) Department personnel use of personally owned devices to manage the department's Social Media activities or in the course of official duties is prohibited without express written permission.
- d) Employees shall observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and

service mark restrictions in posting materials to electronic media.

B. Potential Uses

1. Social Media is a valuable investigative tool when seeking evidence or information about:

- a) Missing Persons;
- b) Wanted Persons;
- c) Gang Participation;
- d) Crimes perpetrated online (i.e., cyberbullying, cyberstalking);
- e) Photos or videos of a crime posted by a participant or observer.

2. Social Media can be used for community outreach and engagement by:

- a) Providing crime prevention tips;
- b) Offering online-reporting opportunities;
- c) Sharing crime maps and data;
- d) Soliciting tips about unsolved crimes (i.e., Crimestoppers, text-a-tip).
- e) Building connections with members of the Irondequoit Police Department.

3. Social Media can be used to make time-sensitive notifications related to:

- a) Road closures,
- b) Special events,

- c) Weather emergencies,
 - d) Missing and endangered persons,
 - e) For critical incidents and time sensitive police matters.
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- 4. Persons seeking employment and volunteer positions use the Internet to search for opportunities, and Social Media can be a valuable recruitment mechanism.
 - 5. This department has an obligation to include Internet based content when conducting background investigations of job candidates.
 - 6. Searches should be conducted by a non-decision maker. Information pertaining to protected classes shall be filtered out prior to sharing any information found online with decision makers. Under no circumstances shall information related to an individual's protected classification or status be used in any decision-making process.
 - 7. Persons authorized to search Internet-based content should be deemed as holding a sensitive position.
 - 8. Search methods shall not involve techniques that are a violation of existing law.
 - 9. Vetting techniques shall be applied uniformly to all candidates.
 - 10. Every effort must be made to validate Internet-based information considered during the hiring process.

V. PERSONAL USE

A. Precautions and Prohibitions

To maintain the integrity of the department, and achieve and maintain the public's highest level of respect, department personnel shall abide by the following procedures when using Social Media:

- 1. When using Social Media, department personnel should be mindful that their

speech (which includes images) becomes part of the worldwide electronic domain. Therefore, department personnel must adhere to the department's Code of Conduct when engaging in the personal use of Social Media.

2. Department personnel are free to express themselves through Social Media sites as long as their speech does not violate the Code of Conduct or the General Orders of the Macedon Police Department, negatively impact the collegial working environment within the department for which loyalty and confidentiality are important, impede another employee's performance of his or her duties, impair the department's disciplinary process, or negatively affect the public's perception of the department and/or its employees.
3. Department personnel are cautioned that speech on- or off-duty, made on behalf of the department pursuant to their official department duties is not protected speech and may form the basis for department discipline if deemed detrimental to the department.
4. Department personnel shall not post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate any information to which they have access as a result of their employment by the department without written permission from the Chief of Police or his or her designee.
5. For safety and security reasons, department personnel shall not disclose their employment with the department on Social Media sites. To prevent such disclosures, department personnel shall not do the following on Social Media:
 - a) Display department logos, uniforms, or similar identifying items that may cause them to be identified as an employee of the department;
 - b) Post personal photographs or videos while wearing department uniform, and/or displaying department logos, badges, emblems, patches or similar items in personal photographs or videos that may cause them to be identified as a member of the department;
 - c) Post any information, including photographs or videos, pertaining to any other member of the department without that member's express permission; and
 - d) Police officers who are, or who may reasonably be expected to work in undercover operations, shall not post any form of photograph, video or audio recordings, likenesses or images of department logos,

emblems, uniforms, badges, patches, marked vehicles, equipment, or other material that identifies him or her as a member of the department.

These restrictions will not apply to photographs taken at official department ceremonies (including police academy graduations, awards/medals, promotions, etc.). Personnel will ensure that any photographs posted on Social Media under this exception must comply with the regulations set forth in subsection "c."

6. Consistent with the department's Code of Conduct and to maintain the public's confidence and trust in the integrity of the department and its personnel, employees are prohibited from engaging in the following while on Social Media:
 - a) speech (which includes images) containing obscene or sexually explicit language or images; and
 - b) speech that ridicules, maligns, disparages, oppresses or expresses discriminatory bias against any group based on race, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation or identification, ethnicity, national origin, religion, or any other protected category.
7. Department personnel are cautioned that engaging in certain speech on Social Media (including, but not limited to, speech that ridicules, maligns, disparages or expresses bias against any group), may become evidence and used to undermine or impeach an officer's testimony in criminal, administrative or other legal proceedings.
8. Department personnel shall not, on Social Media, (a) divulge any information gained by reason of their employment; (b) make any statements, speeches, appearances, and/or endorsements on behalf of the department; or (c) publish materials that could reasonably be considered to represent the views or positions of this department, without the prior authorization of the Chief of Police or his or her designee.
9. Department personnel are cautioned that they may be subject to civil or criminal penalties for engaging in the following conduct on Social Media:
 - a) Publishing or posting false information that harms the reputation of another person, group, or organization (defamation);

- b) Publishing or posting private facts and personal information about someone without their permission that has not been previously revealed to the public;
 - c) Using someone else's name, likeness, or other personal attributes without that person's permission and for an exploitative purpose; or
 - d) Publishing the creative work of another, trademarks, or certain confidential business information without the permission of the owner.
10. Department personnel are cautioned that privacy settings on Social Media sites change constantly, and department personnel should never assume that personal information posted on such sites is always private.
11. Department personnel are cautioned that any information created, transmitted, downloaded, exchanged, or discussed in a public forum on Social Media may be accessed by the department at any time without prior notice.
12. Department personnel who violate this policy may be subject to discipline, up to and including termination.
13. Reporting violations: Any employee becoming aware of or having knowledge of a Social Media posting or website that violates any of the provisions of this policy shall notify his or her supervisor immediately.

By Order of the Chief of Police


John P. Colella (Apr 4, 2019)

John P. Colella
Chief of Police

Apr 4, 2019

Date