

## RESOLUTION

### A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF BLUFFTON, SOUTH CAROLINA, ADOPTING THE TOWN OF BLUFFTON SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY AND TERMS OF USE

WHEREAS, the role of technology in providing governmental services is constantly expanding and now includes social media communication tools that facilitate interactive information sharing, collaboration, and increasingly important outreach and communication tools for municipalities; and,

WHEREAS, the Town Council for the Town of Bluffton encourages the appropriate use of social media to further the goals and missions of the Town and its departments, where appropriate; and,

WHEREAS, the use of social media tools by the Town of Bluffton provides a method to build community and to quickly and effectively communicate with the public on matters of governmental concern; and,

WHEREAS, to address the ever-changing landscape of social media and the methods by which the Town of Bluffton and its residents communicate and exchange information, the Town Council for the Town of Bluffton acknowledges the necessity for adopting the attached Town of Bluffton Social Media Policy and Terms of Use to regulate the acceptable use and posting of content to the Town's social media platforms; and,

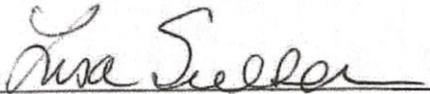
WHEREAS, the Town of Bluffton has an overriding interest in ensuring that its social media platforms remain an effective means of communicating and distributing information to appropriate audiences

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF BLUFFTON, SOUTH CAROLINA, AS FOLLOWS:**

1. The foregoing "WHEREAS" clauses are hereby adopted and incorporated herein as forming the legislative and administrative findings, purposes, and intent of this Resolution.

2. The Town hereby adopts the Town of Bluffton Social Media Policy and Terms of Use in the form attached hereto as EXHIBIT A and which is incorporated herein by reference.

**THIS RESOLUTION SHALL BE EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY UPON ADOPTION.  
SIGNED, SEALED AND DELIVERED AS OF THIS 14th DAY OF SEPTEMBER 2021.**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Lisa Sulka, Mayor, Town of Bluffton, South Carolina

ATTEST:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Kimberly Chapman, Town Clerk, Town of Bluffton, South Carolina

# Town of Bluffton Social Media Policy and Terms of Use

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Town of Bluffton's Social Media Policy and Terms of Use is to provide the standards and procedure for the appropriate use of the Town's various social media platforms. This policy creates guidelines for any public user who accesses or posts any content on the Town's social media. The Town of Bluffton supports and encourages the use of social media to communicate directly with the public, stakeholders, partners, the media, etc., and to contribute to the overall vibrancy of our community. The Town's use of social media is intended to broaden the reach of communication and engagement with the community, while utilizing new platforms that offer methods of communicating beyond the traditional source of information located at [townofbluffton.sc.gov](http://townofbluffton.sc.gov). While this policy generally applies to the most popular social media platforms (Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, TikTok, Nextdoor), the Town recognizes that social media continues to evolve and that new platforms may become available over time and may require new policies.

The Town has an overriding interest and expectation in deciding what is published on behalf of the Town and in establishing guidelines for the use of the Town's social media by the public. All social media should be treated as a public communications tool and should be used to:

- Discuss matters of public interest in and to the Town as identified and raised by the Town.
- Educate residents and visitors on Town services, programs, projects, meetings, events, etc.
- Increase government transparency and efficiency.
- Engage citizens in community dialogue on specific topics identified and raised by the Town.
- Share posts from other government social media sites to help promote their programs, events, services, messaging etc.
- Communicate with residents during inclement weather, emergencies, or other critical incidents.
- Expand resident and visitor interactivity and participation through online sources and resources.

## COMMENT POLICY

The Town of Bluffton encourages public interaction on social media with the following caveats:

- **Stay focused.** All viewpoints are welcome, but comments should remain relevant to the topic of discussion, the Town of Bluffton community outreach efforts, public information, and the associated website.
- **Tell the truth.** Spreading misleading or false information is prohibited.
- **No spam.** Repeated posting of identical or very similar content in a counter-productive manner is prohibited – this includes posts aggressively promoting services or products.
- **Public record.** Any content posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure and will be archived by the Town of Bluffton even if the content is deleted from public view.

The Town recognizes that the web is a 24/7 medium, and your comments are welcome at any time. However, given the need to manage town resources, moderating and posting comments should only be expected to occur during regular business hours.

The comment policy is valid for all discussions on any Town-managed forum. Thank you for taking the time to review the comment policy. The Town encourages your participation in our discussions and looks forward to an active exchange of ideas. For more information, see the Terms of Use.

## **TERMS OF USE**

Except for those platforms that do not allow any public user content and are reserved for the Town government to engage in its own expressive conduct or distribute information, the Town's social media shall constitute limited public forums and all public user content shall be restricted as set forth in this Policy. By posting or commenting on any social media platform used by the Town, you participate by your own choice, taking personal responsibility for your comments, your username, and any information you provide therein. This policy shall apply to all users who access or post, create, share, distribute, or transmit any content on the Town's social media. Agreement to these terms of use are a prerequisite to participating in the Town's social media. You further agree to the following terms of use:

### **DEFINITIONS**

The Town welcomes a person's right to express his/her opinion and encourages posters to keep comments relevant to the topic in question. Posting of any content on any of the Town's social media platforms by any visitor, follower, subscriber, or fan, constitutes acceptance of the terms of use.

For purposes of this policy, a social media platform is the website or app offered to the public to provide audio, video, still-photo, or written communications between other members of the public and/or representatives of certain groups, businesses, organizations, or departments. Examples of social media platforms include but are not limited to Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Nextdoor, website blogs with commenting capabilities, and forums and emergency notification services.

The definition of content used in this policy refers to any written copy, photos, graphics, videos, live-video streams, comments, or any form of communicative content exchanged between parties regardless of form.

All posts are subject to public records laws therefore, the Town of Bluffton maintains an archive of content posted even after content may be deleted from public view.

### **EMERGENCY OR NON-EMERGENCY REQUESTS FOR POLICE ASSISTANCE**

The posting of requests for police assistance, regardless of an emergency or non-emergency nature, is discouraged and will not guarantee a response by the Town of Bluffton or any emergency service provider. In case of an emergency, or police assistance is needed, please dial 9-1-1. If you wish to report a crime or information relevant to a crime, please call the Bluffton Police Department at 843-706-4550 or the non-emergency number at 843-524-2777.

### **ENDORSEMENTS AND DIRECT LINKS**

"Friending", "Following" or "Liking" of the Town of Bluffton, or an officer or an employee of the Town of Bluffton, does not indicate an endorsement of that person's actions or comments.

A comment or post by a member of the public on any Town of Bluffton social media site is the opinion of the author only, and publication of a post or comment does not imply endorsement of, or agreement by the Town, nor do such comments necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of the Town.

The provision of direct links should not be construed as an endorsement or sponsorship of these external sites, their content, or their hosts. The Town specifically disavows legal responsibility for what a user may find on another site, whether operated by the Town. The views and opinions of the authors of documents published on or linked to the Town's social media accounts do not necessarily state or reflect the opinion, policy, or position of the Town.

The Town of Bluffton is not responsible for the content, quality, accuracy, or completeness of any offsite materials referenced by or linked through the Town's social media accounts. By using the Town's social networking sites, the user acknowledges and accepts the risk of injury or damage from viewing, hearing, downloading, or storing such materials rests entirely with the user and the Town is not responsible for any material stored on other social networking sites or websites, nor is it liable for any inaccurate, defamatory, offensive, or illegal materials found on other social networking sites or websites.

The Town does not endorse any content, viewpoint, products, or services linked from its social networking sites and shall not be held liable for any losses caused by reliance on the accuracy, reliability, or timeliness of such information. The Town does not warrant the accuracy or reliability of or endorse any products or service provides listed or linked to its site.

#### **MODERATION OF CONTENT:**

When applicable, the Town uses platform-provided content moderation/filtering options to limit foul or obscene content. Social media platforms used by the Town are only monitored during regular business hours and content posted will not be received until the following business day. Content that violates the Town's social media policy may be subject to removal. This removable material may include, but is not limited to:

- Comments not related to the original topic, including random or unintelligible comments
- Profane, obscene, or sexually explicit content and/or language
- Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination based on race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, or national origin
- Defamatory or information asserted as fact for which the poster does not have a reasonable basis to believe is accurate
- Threats to any person or organization
- Political campaigning
- Conduct in violation of any federal, state, or local law
- Solicitation of commerce, including but not limited to advertising of any business or product for sale or other personal uses
- Encouragement of illegal activity or violence
- Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems
- Content that violates a legal ownership interest, such as a copyright, of any party
- Posts or comments which contain any external links
- Apparent spam or content posted by automatic software programs (i.e., "bots")

#### **DISCLOSURE**

Please be aware that you participate at your own risk and assume personal responsibility for your comments, your username and any information provided. Nothing in this policy shall be applied to

prohibit or infringe upon any communication, speech or expression that is protected or privileged under law. This includes speech and expression protected under state or federal constitutions, as well as other applicable laws. Any content removed based on these guidelines shall be retained by the Town for a reasonable period, including the time, date, and identity of the poster, when available, in accordance with South Carolina law.

The Town reserves the right to amend any of the provisions of this policy for any reason and at any time.