



## **Granville County Social Media Policy**

Adopted: October 17, 2016

Updated: August 5, 2019

### **Social Media Vision and Brand Consistency**

Granville County Government uses social media as tool not only to broadcast information, but to actively engage our citizens, businesses, partners, and visitors in Granville County's daily activities and strategic objectives. Social media platforms are used to create a more efficient government, as well as to actively recruit talent to our county and partner strategically with other organizations. In using social media platforms, Granville County hopes to have a more fluid and informal method of communicating with stakeholders and to use social media to create trust and build a positive reputation with all stakeholders. In order to achieve all of these things, all staff, elected officials, and volunteers are expected to maintain a consistent agency and organizational identity established by Granville County Government.

### **Policy Purpose**

Granville County officials, agents, employees, and volunteers use social media and networking sites as a means to communicate with stakeholders, media, employees, constituents, and visitors. Social media sites provide an avenue to disseminate timely information to the public and enables Granville County to receive feedback easily. This policy is designed to give direction on the rights and responsibilities for using these platforms, as well as a guideline for representing Granville County in the social media sphere. Social media is constantly evolving; therefore, this policy will evolve as needed.

### **Establishing Accounts**

All proposed official (sanctioned by Granville County department heads and the County Manager) Granville County social media and networking sites are to be submitted for approval to the County Manager's Office. Requests submitted by staff to the County Manager will already have the department head's approval. Any Granville County social media and networking sites existing prior to this policy being adopted need to be reported to the County Manager's Office within 5 working days of this policy's adoption.

While departments are encouraged to develop departmental accounts specific to department needs, goals, and targeted audience, Granville County Administration will work simultaneously with departments and account administrators to ensure government-wide brand consistency is maintained and that the Social Media Policy is followed. The Public Information Officer will frequently check-in on department specific accounts. The Public Information Officer has the right to ask all social media account administrators to make adjustments to accounts and content as needed.

Before starting a social media account, departments should consider their capacity to adequately monitor these accounts. Accounts should be monitored, at a minimum, once a day. Frequent check-ins throughout the work day and even during non-office hours are encouraged. It is strongly encouraged that non-exempt employees are not responsible for administering social media accounts as they may need to make adjustments outside of scheduled work hours.

### *Administrative Roles*

Department heads will update the Public Information Officer (Granville County Administration) on the names of the staff and/or volunteer administrators for official department social media accounts. Department heads will update the Public Information Officer on any changes in administrative roles for official Granville County social media accounts.

The Public Information Officer will act as an administrator on social media accounts for all departments as a back-up plan for emergencies. The Public Information Officer will not take an active role in updating or editing content on a department's page outside of Administration. This measure is simply a back-up measure for emergencies.

When an administrator of a social media account leaves the department/Granville County Government, the department head must notify the Public Information Officer. Department heads will immediately change administrative access to the departmental account as soon as the social media account administrator departs.

All social media administrators will complete the appropriate annual training and sign and submit the Granville County's Social Media Policy Acknowledgement and Agreement Form (Appendix G).

It is strongly encouraged that all social media administrators use a device separate from their personal device to update social media accounts. This tactic will help ensure that administrators don't accidentally post to an official Granville County account from their personal account.

### *Passwords and IT Security*

Security related to social media is largely a behavioral issue. Employees, elected officials, and volunteers are asked to minimize security risks via social media sites by following the Granville County Social Media Policy and all other rules and guidelines outlined in the Granville County Information Technology Policy.

Granville County social media account administrators are strongly encouraged to use the Granville County Password Policy for passwords tied to official social media accounts. This policy can be found in the Granville County Information Technology Policy.

### *Training*

Granville County Administration will host a minimum of one social media staff training a year for all employees (in person, by video, or webinar). All new administrators and all content contributors (staff and volunteers) for official social media accounts will meet with the Granville County Public Information Officer and/or Management Analyst before administering any official accounts. Department heads are responsible for training volunteers on the Granville County Social Media Policy.

## Legal Requirements

### *4.1 Social Media as Public Record*

Granville County social media sites are considered public record under North Carolina General Statutes Section 132 and will be managed as such. Non-employees may not know that social media sites are public record. To assure that the public is aware of this, departments with social media sites should include language on their social media page that identify it as subject to public record laws.

#### *G.S. § 132-1(a)*

*"Public record" or "public records" shall mean all documents, papers, letters, maps, books, photographs, films, sound recordings, magnetic or other tapes, electronic data-processing records, artifacts, or other documentary material, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received pursuant to law or ordinance in connection with the transaction of public business by any agency of North Carolina government or its subdivisions.*

Public records include anything created in the course of public business *regardless of format*. Content created on social media accounts is subject to public record law. Any record made or received in the transaction of public business is subject to public access unless an exception applies. Records created by government staff on personal devices or personal social media and personal email accounts are public records if the content involves public business.

The following statement should be included on all official Granville County social media accounts:

*"Representatives of Granville County Government communicate via this account. Consequently, any communication via this account (whether by county employee or the general public) may be subject to monitoring and disclosure to third parties."*

Granville County official accounts should regularly post this statement on their timeline.

Employees and volunteers receiving messages or comments from the public on personal social media accounts or in personal email that involves public business should refrain from replying other than to redirect messaging to an official government account or phone call. Elected officials are strongly encouraged to act consistently with County policy.

Social media content is subject to public record retention schedules. All official government accounts should be reported to the IT department for archiving and retention.

### *4.2 Content Retention*

Retention schedules for social media may vary by department and/or topic. Content created by Granville County social media admins AND content created by the public on county social media accounts are subject to state retention schedules.

Department heads must notify IT of all account administrators so that the proper retention software may be applied to those account administrators.

### *4.3 Open Meetings*

Elected officials and appointed board members are subject to the state's open meetings laws with the use of social media. A quorum of lawmakers holding a discussion about public business through social media may constitute a

meeting that is subject to the open meetings law.

## **Operational Policies**

### *5.1 Content Generation*

Officials, agents, employees, and volunteers using Granville County social media and networking sites to communicate with citizens do so on behalf of Granville County. Therefore, administrators should use their professional judgement before posting or commenting, as content can be seen by anyone and may not be able to be recanted. A successful representation of Granville County will:

- Be honest and transparent.
- Post only within one's area of expertise
- Post only useful information
- Keep it professional - avoid confrontation
- Be accurate
- Correct errors, and if modifying an earlier post, identify the change
- Be responsive to citizen concerns
- Follow Granville County standardization guidelines listed below.

Employees are prohibited from posting the following on official Granville County sites:

- Information about actual or potential claims and litigation involving the government
- The intellectual property of others, without written permission; a successful representation of Granville County will utilize original content
- Photographs of members of the public without written permission (see the Photo Consent Form in Appendix H)
- Defamatory material
- Any personal, sensitive, or confidential information about anyone
- Obscene, pornographic, or other offensive/illegal materials or links
- Racist, sexist, and other disparaging language about a group of people
- Sexual comments about, or directed to, anyone
- Political campaign materials or comments
- Threatening or harassing comments
- Other information that is not public in nature.

While Granville County Government is supportive of our local businesses and non-profits, the county cannot operate as a message board or advertising outlet for all. Official Granville County Government accounts will refrain from promoting or endorsing any private business or non-profit organization without legitimate reasoning. Legitimate reasoning may include partnering with a specific business or organization in providing services to the county. Promotions and endorsements must be related to a county benefit. Official accounts are strongly discouraged from advertising for partner entities on events/activities/etc. that are not tied to County services.

#### *When in doubt*

When in doubt, social media administrators should check with their department head and/or the Public Information Officer before posting content, "liking" other pages, etc.

Official accounts should post regularly and at a minimum of at least once every two weeks. Departments that cannot maintain frequent contact with their social media accounts should not have accounts.

## 5.2 Photos, Videos, and Other Images

Any photographs or videos using identifiable images and/or small group shots of children under the age of 18 are strongly encouraged to use a photo release form and/or to get written permission to use the image of subjects under the age of 18.

Social media administrators and content generators should use original photos, videos, and images whenever possible. When original content cannot be created, administrators and content generators should obtain permission before using photos, videos, and images that do not belong to Granville County Government.

Permission form in Appendix H of the Granville County Information Technology Policy.

## 5.3 Public Commentary

While some departments may choose a strategic presence that is purely informational and non-transactional, a public forum strategy that allows commentary and engagement may be a more effective and desired strategy for some. The County Manager will leave this strategy to the professional judgement of the department heads with the understanding that engagement with the public will adhere to the guidelines.

Departments and their social media designee(s) will operate platforms in compliance with the Granville County comments policy.

All official Granville County social media accounts are considered a public forum transacting government business and therefore viewpoint discrimination is prohibited. Visitors leaving comments on official Granville County social media sites are protected by the First Amendment with a few exceptions. The comment moderation policy must be posted on each social media site.

### **5.3-A Comment Moderation Policy**

Official Granville County social media and networking sites will post the following social media and networking comments policy:

- This site is moderated and comments are reviewed.
- Any communication on this site is considered public record.
- The appearance of external links or advertisements on this site does not constitute official endorsement.
- Please note that the public comments expressed on these sites do not reflect the opinions and position of Granville County government or its officers and employees. If you have any questions concerning our Social Media Comments Policy, please contact Granville County Government.
- Solicitations/advertisement are not allowed and will be removed from this site.
- Granville County reserves the right to delete unacceptable submissions by members of the public. We will remove comments that are or include:
  - Spam and Solicitations of Commerce: Comments focused on selling a product or service, or comments posted for a purpose of driving traffic to a particular website for personal, political, or monetary gain, will be excluded.
  - Personal Attacks: If you disagree with the content, we'd like to hear from you, but ask that you refrain from comments that attack others.
  - Illegal: Comments that suggest or encourage illegal activity are not allowed.
  - Offensive Language: Comments including, but not limited to, graphic, obscene, explicit, abusive, derogatory, or racial content will be excluded.
  - Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetrates discrimination on the basis of race,

- o creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, physical ability, mental ability, marital status with regard to public assistance, national origin, sexual orientation.
- o Infringement on copyrights or trademarks

Private or Confidential Information: You participate at your own risk, taking personal responsibility for your comments, your username and any information provided. Please do not provide any specific personal information about yourself or other individuals.

#### *5.3-B Responding to Public Commentary and Deletion Rules*

Granville County social media account administrators may not remove or censor comments simply because they are critical of the department, staff, the government, etc. or because the administrator disagrees with the comments. Account administrators are allowed to delete comments that are in violation of the comment moderation policy.

If the social media administrator (s) finds a public comment in violation of the Social Media Comments Policy, the designee is to immediately remove the comment from the site. All comments should be archived with the IT archival program.

#### *When in doubt*

When in doubt, social media administrators should check with their department head and/or the Public Information Officer before posting or deleting comments.

### **5.4 Volunteer-Run Social Media Accounts**

Department heads and/or their staff designee(s) will oversee volunteer programming and all volunteers that transact Granville County business. Social media content that is gained due to a volunteer's access to Granville County departments should be monitored by the department head.

#### *5.4-A Volunteers and Official Social Media Accounts*

Volunteers will not oversee official Granville County accounts. Volunteers may be used to assist in operating an official Granville County account. Any volunteers that are used to assist in operating official Granville County accounts must be approved by the department head and County Manager; the department head is responsible for monitoring official Granville County accounts and volunteers associated with those accounts at all times.

Volunteers assisting in transacting official Granville County business may not use personal social media accounts to conduct official Granville County business. The transaction of Granville County business via social media is subject to public record law and retention schedules.

Use of personal accounts does not ensure that IT staff can archive and retain public records related to official Granville County business. Volunteers receiving messages or comments from the public on personal social media accounts that involves official public business will refrain from replying other than to redirect messaging to an official government account.

#### *5.4-B Volunteers and Unofficial Social Media Accounts*

Official volunteers of Granville County departments that operate social media accounts related to

Granville County departments will follow the policies and procedures outlined for volunteers. Official volunteers are expected to properly represent Granville County departments.

Official volunteers of Granville County departments that operate unofficial social media accounts related to Granville County departments are strongly encouraged to conduct these accounts in accordance with the Granville County Social Media Policy.

Social media content that is gained due to a volunteer's access to Granville County departments should be monitored by the department head.

Department heads may exercise discretion over volunteers that uses their work with Granville County to inform any unofficial social media account. Department heads retain the right to no longer use an individual as a volunteer based on misuse of information and inaccurate portrayals of a Granville County department.

Official volunteers of Granville County that establish non-official social media accounts must clearly state that they do not represent Granville County Government with the following statement "This account is not affiliated with Granville County Government. This account is an unofficial account and does not represent the views and actions of Granville County Government."

Official volunteers of Granville County that operate unofficial social media accounts must regularly post the state of non-representation (at a minimum rate of once per week), redirecting the public to official channels of communication.

### **5.5 Partner Organizations**

Department heads are strongly encouraged to work with partner organizations to make sure their department is accurately represented in social media communications from partners. While department heads cannot dictate what organizations outside of Granville County Government say and do with their social media accounts, department heads can work to ensure that all partnerships with Granville County Government maintain the integrity and reputation of the county. Department heads that partner with outside organizations are encouraged to ask partners to share official county communications from official county social media accounts and/or the Granville County website.

### **5.6 Standardizing Accounts**

An official Granville County social media is approved by the department head and the County Manager. An official account will display the any markings allowed by the platform to represent that account as official (for example, the grey check on Facebook).

Usage standards below apply to all social media and networking accounts:

- Display being the "official account"
- Display official county or department logo or program graphic
- Contain a link to official county website and post the Social Media Comments Policy (if applicable)
- Contain an official county email and/or contact number
- Review site daily for exploitation or misuse

## **5.7 Elected Officials**

Elected officials who use the county's official social media are subject to the same requirements as employees. Elected officials are subject to the state's open meetings laws with the use of social media. A quorum of lawmakers holding a discussion about public business through social media may constitute a meeting that is subject to the open meetings law. Elected officials use of their own social media to communicate in their official capacity with members of the public can produce some risk. Discussion of public business, especially if it involves other elected officials, can be difficult to track and keep in accordance with open meeting laws.

Elected officials who use social media and networking for campaigning are highly encouraged to use a separate account for that purpose and not access social media through government technology and the use of government social media resources.

Elected officials are highly encouraged to include a link back to the county's official website for detailed information. Elected officials who use the same social media for communicating with constituents as they do to campaign risk violating the law against using government resources for political purposes.

## **5.8 Employee Use of Personal Accounts**

All county employees, agents, and officers are asked to access their personal social media and networking accounts in a responsible and professional manner during office hours. Accessing personal accounts should not detract from workplace responsibilities and productivity.

Employees are strongly discouraged from using their personal accounts to conduct official Granville County business. The transaction of County business via social media is subject to public record law and retention schedules.

Use of personal accounts does not ensure that IT or any department can archive and retain public records. Conducting official County business from personal accounts risks confusing County residents and visitors as to the content that is public business and the content that is of a personal nature.

Employees should make every effort to refrain from using their personal accounts to transact County business related to their professional role. If an employee is contacted about government business via a personal account, employees should make every effort to redirect communication through an official Granville County channel.

Employees should refrain from creating original content on their personal accounts that directly relates to their job responsibilities and is meant to be received in a professional capacity.

Sharing content generated by an official Granville County account on one's personal page does not count as conducting official Granville County business.

When accessing personal accounts during and outside of office hours:

- Employees include in any post related to the government or their job on a personal or professional site a disclaimer that the posting reflects their own opinion, and not that of the government
- Policies that relate to conduct and ethics, privacy and confidentiality, harassment, retaliation and other relevant conduct apply
- Employees have no reasonable expectation of privacy when using government technology
- Employee use of personal social media at work must be brief, not interfere with performance of the employee's duties or with the workplace, and not involve commercial, political or other prohibited

activities

### **5.9 Departmental Discretion of Personal Use**

Department heads may implement a departmentally specific social media policy. These department specific policies must meet the Countywide policies at a minimum. Department specific policies must be approved by the County Manager and/or the respective departments' governing boards.

### **5.10 Violations**

Violating the guidelines of this policy could jeopardize the integrity of the Granville County Government brand and work against the goals established in the county's vision for social media use. In some cases, a violation of elements outlined in this policy is a matter of legal concern. Violations of this social media policy will be brought to the attention of the department head and/or the County Manager.

**Granville County Employee  
Social Media Policy  
Acknowledgement and Agreement**

Employee Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Employee ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Dept: \_\_\_\_\_

**I have read, understand, and agree to comply with the Granville County Social Media Policy. I acknowledge that my cell phone account records may in certain circumstances be considered public records in accordance with NC General Statutes and may need to be turned over to the County upon request.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

