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ADMINISTRATIVE RESOLUTION ADOPTING A SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY FOR TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND

WHEREAS, the role of Internet technology within the workplace, community, and amongst individuals continues to expand, and a general shift to social media communications as a leading platform to facilitate information sharing, interoperability, transparency, and collaboration continues; and

WHEREAS, the loyal user bases of social media platforms provide an important outreach and communication source for government to improve customer service and keep citizens, businesses, and visitors informed; and

WHEREAS, Talbot County, Maryland (the "County") currently uses several social media platforms across a number of departments to build community, enhance community relations and customer service, and officially and rapidly communicate directly with citizens, stakeholders, partners, and the media as part of an online communication presence to provide information and access to residents, businesses, and visitors; and

WHEREAS, although the official County website will remain the predominant source of timely information, documents, forms, and other instruments necessary to conduct business with the County, the County Council of Talbot County, Maryland (the "County Council") supports the use of social media technology to enhance and complement the official County website; and

WHEREAS, the County Council has determined it is in the best interest of the County to adopt the social media policy attached hereto to establish the general standards and responsibilities to govern the use, administration, management, monitoring, and retention of the County's social media and social media content.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the County Council of Talbot County, Maryland, that the Talbot County, Maryland Social Media Policy attached hereto as Exhibit A be and it is hereby adopted as the official Social Media Policy for Talbot County, Maryland.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Administrative Resolution shall take effect immediately upon adoption.

INTRODUCED by the County Council of Talbot County, Maryland at a Regular Meeting on June 13, 2023, at which meeting copies were available to the public for inspection.

ADOPTED by the County Council of Talbot County, Maryland at a Regular Meeting on June 13, 2023, at which meeting copies were available to the public for inspection.

GIVEN UNDER OUR HANDS AND THE GREAT SEAL OF TALBOT COUNTY, THIS 13th DAY OF June IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD TWO THOUSAND AND TWENTY-THREE.

ADOPTED:

By the Council June 13, 2023

Certified Susan Moran
Susan Moran, Secretary

Chuck F. Callahan, President

Pete Lesher, Vice President

Dave Stepp

Lynn L. Mielke

Keasha N. Haythe

EXHIBIT "A"

TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

I. DEFINITIONS

As used in this Policy, the following terms shall have the meanings indicated:

A. County – Talbot County, Maryland.

B. Policy – This Talbot County, Maryland Social Media Policy, as may be updated or amended from time to time.

C. Social Media Platform – Websites and applications that enable uses to create and share content, participate in social networking, and/or provide community-based input.

D. Social Media Account – A personalized presence inside social networking channels initiated by the County, its agents, servants, and employees, including any approved volunteers, consultants, or representatives.

II. APPLICABILITY

This Policy applies to all County Social Media Accounts in existence as of the effective date of the Administrative Resolution adopting this Policy, as well as any other such accounts across Social Media Platforms the County may establish for public information or citizen discussion.

III. PURPOSES

A. County Social Media Accounts are established by County departments under the authority of the County to promote and disseminate information regarding public announcements, County policies, County initiatives, public events, and other matters of public interest that relate directly or indirectly to the County. These pages provide limited public forums for discussion with and among users about the posted public announcements, County policies, County initiatives, public events, and other matters of public interest.

B. Conversations and questions directly related to matters posted are encouraged within comments, messages, retweets, and other communications. The County, its staff, or other individuals appointed to moderate and manage the County's Social Media Accounts, and those that may be established at a future date, may review the comments, messages, retweets, and other communications on all County Social Media Platforms. The County does not discriminate based on viewpoint but does reserve the right to remove comments, messages, and retweets for violating the terms of this Policy.

IV. COMMENTS

A. In order to facilitate the above-stated purposes of County Social Media Platforms, comments, messages, retweets, and other communications may be removed for containing, linking to, or constituting:

1. Conduct in violation of any federal, State, or local law;

2. Conduct or encouragement of criminal or other illegal activity;

3. Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on any legally-protected classes including, but not limited to, race, religion, national origin, age, familial status, pregnancy, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical or mental disability, genetic information, or military or veteran status;

4. Confidential or sensitive publicly identifiable information;

5. Nudity, indecent, sexual, or sexual harassment content;

6. Profane or obscene language or content;

7. Fraudulent information;

8. Information that compromises the safety or security of the public or public systems;

9. Content that threatens or defames any person, group, or organization;

10. Making or publishing of false or malicious statements concerning any employee, the County, or its operations;

11. Comments not topically related to, or out of context to, the particular article or post;

12. Matters unrelated to governmental concerns;

13. Content that violates a legal ownership interest, ongoing investigation, or legal or administrative proceeding of any other party;

14. Disruptive or repetitive content;

15. Copyrighted or trademarked material used in violation of any applicable laws and regulations;

16. Confidential or private information that may serve to personally identify an individual, subject to any applicable statutory prohibition;

17. Advertisements or promotions for commercial products and services; and/or

18. Malicious computer hardware or software.

B. Questions or concerns about specific employees should generally be referred to the County Manager's Office. Any violation of law or threat of violence may be forwarded to the appropriate law enforcement agency for investigation.

V. RULES

A. The following rules apply across the County Social Media Platforms:

1. Content shall be treated as public comment under the Maryland Open Meetings Act; provided, however, that it shall not be accepted as written public comment or testimony for any public hearing which the County Council of Talbot County is legally required to hold. Public comment may not be removed except as permitted or required by law. Removed content may be saved in the form of screenshot, transcription, or other digitized fashion.

2. Users in repeated violation of this Policy may be temporarily or permanently restricted from accessing or commenting on County social-media platforms.

3. To contest the restriction of access to County Social Media Platforms, the restricted user must submit to the County Manager a written request for reinstatement, including details regarding any restriction, and grounds for reinstatement. Requests shall be addressed in a timely fashion. Access shall be restored if a determination is made that grounds for reinstatement are sufficient.

4. Users may report comments, messages, retweets, or other communications believed to be in violation of this Policy. Any response to any comment, message, retweet, or other communication shall be made in compliance with this Policy or may be determined to be in violation of this Policy.

5. The County shall prominently display this Policy on the official County website and make notice of changes to this Policy as soon as practicable subsequent to their adoption.

VI. USER-GENERATED CONTENT

The County is not responsible for user-generated comments, messages, retweets, shares, or other communications on County Social Media Platforms. No user-generated comments, messages, retweets, or other communications should be construed as endorsed by the County. No materials intended to remain private should be published on or to a County Social Media Account by a user with an expectation that such material will remain private.

VII. INTERNAL OPERATIONS

The County Manager, in consultation with the County Office of Law and County Department of Information Technology, shall develop internal policies regarding the establishment, supervision, and use of County Social Media Accounts. Such internal policies shall be implemented prior to the establishment of any new County Social Media Accounts.