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August 3, 2023

Concerned

Via email: [opra+request-49058-b26189ba@requests.opramachine.com](mailto:opra+request-49058-b26189ba@requests.opramachine.com)

Dear Concerned:

The Township of Medford received your Open Public Records Act (OPRA) request on July 26, 2023. The official Records Custodian received your OPRA request on July 26, 2023. As such, the seven (7) business day deadline to respond to your request is August 7, 2023. This response to your request is being provided to you on the 7th business day after the custodian's receipt of your request.

The following records are being requested:

1. All policies regarding blocking and/or restricting members of the public from viewing the police department Facebook page, specifically the one maintained at: <https://www.facebook.com/MedfordTwpPD.NJ>. (See attached report.)
2. A list of all Facebook profiles blocked by the Medford Township Police Department and the reasons for which they were blocked. (**There are NO DOCUMENTS for this request.**)

These records are being transmitted to you via email, as per your request. There is no cost for this request.

If your request for access to a government record has been denied or unfilled within the seven (7) business days required by law, you have a right to challenge the decision by the Township of Medford to deny access. At your option, you may either institute a proceeding in the Superior Court of New Jersey or file a complaint with the Government Records Council (GRC) by completing the Denial of Access Complaint Form. You may contact the GRC by toll-free telephone at 866-850-0511, by mail at P.O. Box 819, Trenton, NJ, 08625, by e-mail at [grc@dca.state.nj.us](mailto:grc@dca.state.nj.us), or at their web site at [www.state.nj.us/grc](http://www.state.nj.us/grc). The GRC can also answer other questions about the law. All questions regarding complaints filed in Superior Court should be directed to the Court Clerk in your County.

Sincerely,

*Patricia A. Lee*

Patricia A. Lee  
Administrative Assistant

|                                                                                   |                                                              |          |                                  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|----------|----------------------------------|
|  | <b>Medford Township Police<br/>Standard Operating Policy</b> |          | Effective Date:<br>March 3, 2010 |
|                                                                                   |                                                              |          | <b>Number:</b><br><b>1.11</b>    |
| <b>Title: Personal Web Pages or<br/>Web Sites &amp; Social Networking</b>         |                                                              |          |                                  |
| Issuing Authority: Chief Arthur Waterman                                          |                                                              |          | Eval. Date:<br>03/24/2025        |
| Accreditation                                                                     |                                                              |          |                                  |
| State Accreditation Standards:                                                    |                                                              |          |                                  |
| Revision Date<br>03/24/2022                                                       | Page Numbers                                                 | Sections | Approved                         |

SUBJECT: Personal Web Pages or Web Sites  
 1.11 (7 pages)

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this order is to provide guidance to the members of the Medford Township Police Department concerning personal web pages or internet sites and social networking which reference the Medford Township Police Department. Additionally, to ensure employees use appropriate discretion in the use of references to the Medford Township Police Department so as not to discredit or disrespect the department, and to ensure that the release, either directly or indirectly, of information concerning crimes, accidents, or violations of ordinances or statutes to persons outside the department does not occur, and that all employees treat as confidential the official business of the department.

II. POLICY

While employees have a right to maintain personal web pages and websites, their status as a member of the Medford Township Police Department requires that the content of those web pages and websites not be in violation of existing policy or directives. When reference is made to or about the Medford Township Police Department, a review of that reference is needed to ensure that such reference does not compromise agency integrity and thus, undercut the public confidence in this agency or this profession. Therefore, it shall be the policy of the Medford Township Police Department that all employees are prohibited from posting, transmitting and/or disseminating any photographs, video or audio recordings, likeness or images of department logos, emblems, uniforms, badges, patches, marked vehicles, equipment, or other material that specifically identifies the

Medford Township Police Department, on any personal or social networking website or web page, without the express written permission of the Chief of Police.

No employee shall represent themselves, directly or indirectly, in any public forum as a member of the Medford Township Police Department, either by text, photograph, or image depicting uniform, badge, or patch, in any manner that reflects a lack of good moral character. No employee will represent themselves in any public forum as an employee of the Medford Township Police Department with other information, opinion, or posture that would bring unfavorable criticism or embarrassment upon the department.

Social media provides a new and potentially valuable means of assisting the department and its personnel in meeting community outreach, problem-solving, investigative, crime prevention, and related objectives. This policy identifies potential uses that may be explored or expanded upon as deemed reasonable by administrative and supervisory personnel.

### III. PROCEDURE

#### A. Private use of Social Media by Employees

1. The Department recognizes the growing use of social media by its employees, and its implications on the business conducted by the department. As a result of the unique nature of the law enforcement profession, the department has an obligation to enact rules regarding the private use of social media by employees.
2. Department personnel are free to express themselves as private citizens on social media sites to the degree that their speech does not impair working relationships of this department for which loyalty and confidentiality are important, impede the performance of duties, impair discipline and harmony among co workers, or negatively affect the public perception of the department.
3. As public employees, department employees are cautioned that speech on or off duty made pursuant to their official duties that owes its existence to the employee's professional duties and responsibilities is not protected speech under the First Amendment and may form the basis for discipline if deemed detrimental to the department. Department personnel should assume that their speech and related activity on social media sites will reflect upon their office and this department.
4. Employees are prohibited from using department computers or cell phones/devices for any unauthorized purpose, including participation in social media or social networking.

5. Employees are prohibited from using any social media or social networking platform while on duty, unless permission is granted for investigative or public information purposes.
6. Unless granted explicit permission, employees of this department are prohibited from posting any of the following on any social networking platform, either on their own sites, the sites of others known to them, the sites of others unknown to them, news media pages, or other information exchange forums:
  - a. Any text, photograph, audio, video, or any other multimedia file related to any investigation, both current and past, of this department.
  - b. Any text, photograph, audio, video, or any other multimedia file related to any past or current action of this department, either in homage or critique.
  - c. Logos, badges, seals, uniforms, vehicles, equipment, or any item or symbol that is affiliated with this department.
  - d. Any item, symbol, wording, number, likeness or material that is identifiable to this department.
  - e. Any text, photograph, audio, video, or any other multimedia file that is related to any occurrence within the department.
7. Employees who choose to maintain or participate in social media or social networking platforms while off duty shall conduct themselves with professionalism and in such a manner that will not reflect negatively upon the department or its mission. In the course of operating or participating in such venues, the following rules shall apply:
  - a. Unless explicitly granted permission by the department, officers shall not identify themselves, in any way, as an employee of this department.
  - b. Employees shall not use any reference to infer they are employees of this department during social media or networking participation or maintenance.
  - c. Employees will be held responsible for the content that appears on their maintained social media or social networking sites and will be obligated to remove any posting or material contributed by others that identifies the employee as an employee of the department.

- d. Employees will be held responsible for the content that appears on their maintained social media or social networking sites and will be obligated to remove any posting or material contributed by others that reflects negatively upon the department.
  - e. Sexually graphic or explicit material of any kind shall not be posted by the employee on any form of social media or social networking site.
  - f. Sexually graphic or explicit material of any kind posted by others to the employee's social media or social networking site shall be immediately removed by the employee.
  - g. Weaponry, owned by this department and/or owned personally or privately, shall not be displayed or referenced to, in any multimedia format, social media or social networking sites if such displays or depictions promote or glorify violence.
  - h. Any text, photograph, audio, video or any other multimedia file included on a social media or social networking site that infers, implies, states, opines, or otherwise expresses the officer's views on the public shall not be detrimental to the department's mission, nor shall it in any way undermine the public's trust or confidence in this department.
  - i. Any text, photograph, audio, video, or any other multimedia file included on a social media or social networking site that infers, implies, states, opines, or otherwise expresses the employee's views on the legal, judicial, or criminal systems shall not, in any way, undermine the public's trust and confidence in this department.
  - j. Any posting that detracts from the department's mission will be considered a direct violation of this directive.
8. Unless serving as an explicit permitted tool of public information or community outreach, no employee shall use their rank and/or title in any social media or social networking activity, including inclusion of said rank and/or title onto the officer's online identify or avatar.
9. Employees who are brought under administrative or internal investigations related to their performance, functionality or duties as a police officer may be ordered to provide the department, or its designated investigator, with access to the social media and social networking platforms.
10. Employees should expect that any information created, transmitted downloaded, exchanged or discussed in a public forum may be accessed by the department at any time without prior notice.

11. Any candidate seeking employment with this department shall complete an affidavit attesting to all of the social media and social networking platforms in which they participate or maintain an account. The candidate shall also be required to provide the designated background investigator with access to the social networking platforms in which they participate or maintain account.

#### B. Approval Process

1. An employee seeking approval to use references to the Medford Township Police Department on a personal website, web page, or other public forum, shall submit a request for approval to the Chief of Police via the chain of command.
2. The request shall describe the proposed reference and purpose.
3. A list of the reference(s) and any media to be used shall be provided.
4. A printed layout of the entire web page, posting, or site shall be provided.
5. The employee will receive an approval or denial of the request.
6. Any changes made to a previously approved posting must be submitted for re-consideration.

#### C. Departmental Social Media

1. The Department recognizes social media as a valuable tool and has incorporated its usage as a means of meeting numerous departmental objectives.
2. The use or creation of all departmental social media sites or pages shall be approved by the Chief of Police or his designee, and shall be administered by the Criminal Investigative Bureau Commander and/or the Operations Division Commander in their roles as Public Information Officers. All social media pages or sites shall indicate that they are maintained by the department and shall have contact information for the department prominently displayed.
3. Social media content shall adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including all information technology and records management policies. Information contained on these sites is subject to the open public records laws and relevant records retention schedules that apply to their content. All content must be managed, stored and retrieved to comply with open public records laws and e-discovery laws and policies.

Departmental sites and or pages shall indicate that any content posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure.

4. Social media sites should state that the opinions expressed by the visitors to the pages do not reflect the opinions or views of the department. Pages should clearly identify that posted comments will be monitored and that the department reserves the right to remove obscenities, off-topic comments and personal attacks. The department reserves the right to deny access to departmental social media sites and pages for any individual who violates this policy, at any time and without prior notice.
5. Personnel designated to administer and maintain the departmental social media outlets shall conduct themselves at all times as representatives of the department. Accordingly, all department standards of conduct apply to these sites. All postings will be factual, accurate, complete and within their area of expertise.
6. Personnel representing the department shall 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 departmental training, activities, or work-related assignments without expressed written consent.
7. Employees shall not conduct political activities or private business on departmental sites or pages.
8. Employees will not share personal information about himself or herself, or any other department employee on any departmental social media website or page.
9. The use of departmental computers by department personnel to access social media is prohibited without authorization. The use of personally owned devices or computers to manage the department's social media activities or in the course of official duties is prohibited without authorization.
10. Departmental social media shall be maintained by only those personnel approved by the Chief of Police. For the purpose of this directive, the Criminal Investigative Bureau Commander and Operations Division Commander will serve this role through their function as Public Information Officers.
11. Departmental social media may be used by supervisors for time-sensitive notifications and public information releases when immediate notification

to the public is necessary. These situations include but are not limited to the following:

- a. Road closures and detours
  - b. Active searches for missing/endangered persons
  - c. Active searches for wanted persons
  - d. Weather emergencies
  - e. Any other information deemed necessary for immediate release to the public.
12. Departmental social media sites may be used as an investigative tool when seeking evidence or information about an active investigation. The Criminal Investigative Bureau Commander and Operations Division Commander are responsible for the dissemination of information pertaining to investigations on the social media sites with approval from the Chief of Police.
13. Social media sites are also valuable in the investigation of criminal activity, the identification of possible suspects and the gathering of intelligence.
- a. Members of the Patrol and Investigative Bureaus are authorized to access social media sites if pertinent to an investigation. Access to these sites for the purpose of an investigation must be documented in the officer's report.
14. Social media can also be a powerful recruiting tool, as persons seeking employment or volunteer positions use the Internet to search for opportunities. Department members are encouraged to use social media sites to assist with recruiting potential candidates for employment or volunteer positions within the department.

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