

2023-07
Social Media Terms of Use and Comment Policy

PURPOSE

Because many of our residents and other stakeholders utilize social media for news and communications, the Town of Granite Quarry has developed its own social media accounts, which help us inform the public about our work and mission. We rely on our own free speech rights to communicate our selected messages. Comments left on our social media sites reflect the views of the commenters not the opinions and positions of the Town, its officials, or its employees.

The Town of Granite Quarry is committed to fully complying with the freedom of speech clause of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and other similar legal obligations surrounding free speech. Since we follow the law, there may be times when what some people perceive to be offensive comments left by members of the public will remain visible on our social media posts, if such comments are legally protected speech.

The Town of Granite Quarry has an important interest in assuring the accuracy and consistency of information associated with our social media sites. These terms and conditions establish guidelines for the public's use of our social media sites in a way that balances these values.

DEFINITIONS

1. "Social media" means digital content created by us and communicated on platforms that allow sharing, commenting, and engagement by the public. Examples of social media accounts we may use are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and LinkedIn.
2. "Comments" include any digital content, information, links, images, videos, or any other form of communicative content posted in reply or response to a social media account post posted by us on one of our social media sites.
3. "User" means a member of the public who views or interacts with one or more of our social media accounts.

EXPECTATIONS

We ask commenters to consider that our social media feeds are a reflection of our Town and may be viewed by children and other impressionable people. Please avoid profanity, slurs, personal attacks, bullying, repeated or not relevant posts, or the sharing of false information.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The Town of Granite Quarry commits to regularly train its employees on this policy and relevant freedom of speech case law and also commits to hold employees accountable if they violate policy or law.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. These terms and conditions apply to all our social media sites. Where possible, a link to these terms and conditions will be made available as a hyperlink or posted as text somewhere on our social media accounts.
2. Users should know that social media posts we make, comments, replies to those posts, and any direct or private messages sent to us may be public records subject to applicable public records release.
3. Our social media accounts are not monitored 24/7 and no one should utilize our social media accounts to seek emergency services or for any official requests. Anyone in need of emergency help should call 9-1-1.
4. Official requests, individual complaints, concerns, or service requests will not be addressed via social media. Please utilize the Town website's [Report a Concern](#) feature or call 704-279-5596.
5. We do not guarantee we will respond to comments or messages sent on our social media accounts.

CONTENT MODERATION

1. **Limited Public Forum.** Our social media accounts are created and maintained as limited public forums under the caselaw pertaining to the freedom of speech clause of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. We invite members of the public to view and, where possible and permitted, provide comments or other engagement on our social media posts. However, the law permits us to hide and/or delete comments that are not protected speech under the First Amendment and relevant case law, or which do not relate to the jurisdiction or authority of the Town. As a general rule, we will not hide and/or delete comments solely because such comments are critical of the Town of Granite Quarry or its officials; however, we may prohibit comments altogether on some or all social media sites, either now or in the future.
2. **Prohibited Content.** As indicated above, we may hide or delete:
 - a. Any content or comments that do not relate to the jurisdiction or authority of the Town.
 - b. Content or comments advocating or inciting violence, illegal activity, or direct criminal threats.
 - c. Profane or obscene language or content as determined by the profanity filters offered through each social media platform (such posts result in the comment/content being blocked through the social media's profanity filter).
 - d. Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetrates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability, or sexual orientation, or any other protected class of people.

- e. Duplicate comments posted by the same author (the original post will be left intact assuming it follows the guidelines of acceptable comments or content).
 - f. Comments that contain a hyperlink to any website other than those controlled by the Town of Granite Quarry. This will be done without regard to the viewpoint of the comment containing such a link or the content of the site to which the link redirects. Excessive or repeated commercial advertising or postings, or which do not relate to the authority or jurisdiction of the Town.
 - g. Promotions or content related to political organizations of any type.
 - h. Advocation of illegal activity; or those that compromise safety or security of the public.
 - i. Comments that contain images or other content that violate the intellectual property or copyright rights of someone else, if the owner of that property notifies us that the property was posted in a comment on our social media account.
 - j. Confidential or non-public information, including but not limited to any personally identifiable medical information and any content that violates the legal rights of the owner of said content.
 - k. Comments containing or linking to obscenity, which is defined as sexually explicit and/or pornographic content that is patently offensive, appeals to prurient interest, and lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.
 - l. Comments containing actual defamation against a specifically named person or organization, either as determined by a court or comments that are patently defamatory by easily discovered facts.
- 3. Retention.** When a comment containing any of the above content is posted to our social media account, a copy or electronic record of that content may be retained or archived pursuant to our records retention policy, along with a brief description of the reason the specific content was deleted. Once documented, the content will be removed, where possible, from our social media account.