

# MAINE MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION

## COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY & GUIDELINES

Maine Municipal Association strives to provide members and the public with accurate and timely information, communicated in a professional manner and in accordance with the laws regarding public access. MMA has several objectives when doing so:

- To effectively inform municipal officials and citizens about MMA.
- To demonstrate, underscore and clarify the role of municipalities and municipal officials and their profound importance in the inter-governmental system.
- To demonstrate the vital services that municipalities provide.

This policy provides guidelines for all external communications from MMA using various media including:

- Printed materials such as the Maine Town & City, Legislative Bulletin, newsletters, articles, brochures and documents produced as part of MMA's Citizen Education effort.
- Electronic information tools such as the MMA website, 'MMA This Month' e-newsletter, email, postings to municipally related web sites or social media sites.
- Media relations such as requests for interviews, news releases and media inquiries.
- Direct contact with MMA members and municipal officials.

### **GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR ALL COMMUNICATION (OFFICIAL AND PERSONAL)**

MMA employees have a responsibility to help communicate accurate and timely information to members and to the public in a professional manner. Any employee who identifies a mistake in reporting should bring the error to the Director of Communication & Educational Services or other appropriate staff. Regardless of whether the communication is in the employee's official role or in a personal capacity, employees must comply with all laws related to trademark, copyright, software use, etc.

### **ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES FOR MMA COMMUNICATION**

#### **Handling General Requests:**

Staff is responsible for communicating basic and routine information to members and customers in relation to their specific job duties. Requests for private data or information outside of the scope of an individual's job duties should be routed to the appropriate department or to the employee's supervisor.

#### **Handling Media Requests:**

With the exception of routine events and basic information that is readily available to the public, requests for interviews or information from the media are to be routed through the Director of Communication & Educational Services, State & Federal Relations staff (legislative matters) or Executive Director. Media requests include contact from people who say they represent: print publications, such as weekly and daily newspapers and magazines; electronic media such as television and radio stations; and, informational websites.

#### **Electronic and Social Media Communication on Behalf of MMA:**

MMA communicates to members and the public via its website ([www.memun.org](http://www.memun.org)). The MMA website is our primary internet presence and is the electronic "face" of MMA.

Social media include sites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and others. MMA recognizes that members and the public increasingly gather information through these and other electronic sites, sometimes to the exclusion of traditional media. It is necessary to use these tools to communicate effectively and fully.

The best, most appropriate uses of social media generally fall into three categories:

- To disseminate time-sensitive material quickly.
- To enhance MMA's ability to put its messages before the widest audience possible.
- And, to initiate transparent conversations among MMA, our members, the media and citizens.

MMA recognizes that the instantaneous, yet permanent, nature of these electronic tools can pose risk without effective controls. A starting point for discussion is that information and statements posted on websites and through social media reflect directly on MMA and municipal government. Great care should be used when doing so. MMA will post its Facebook page as a non-interactive, business/non-profit page on which we can limit and largely control outside posts.

Communication via electronic and social media on behalf of MMA can be done only by the following employees: Executive Director; Director of Communication & Educational Services (and designated staff); Director of State & Federal Relations (and designated staff).

#### **'Personal' Communication That Can Become 'Public':**

It is important for employees to remember that some personal communication of employees may reflect on MMA, especially if employees are commenting on: anything political in nature; federal, state or local government activities; or, MMA business. The following guidelines apply to personal communication including various forms of social media (Facebook, Twitter, blogs, YouTube, etc), letters to the editor of newspapers and personal endorsements.

- Remember that what you write is public and may be so for a long time. It may be spread to large audiences. Use common sense when using email or social media sites. It is a good idea to refrain from sending or posting information that you would not want your supervisor or other employees to read, or that you would be embarrassed to see in a newspaper or on a prominent website.
- MMA expects its employees to be truthful, courteous and respectful toward supervisors, co-workers, members, citizens, customers and other persons associated with MMA. Do not engage in name-calling or personal attacks.
- In the workplace, MMA employees should always identify themselves as such during official communication.
- MMA resources and working time should not be used for personal profit or business interests, or to participate in personal political activity.
- Personal social media account names or email names should not be tied to the association (e.g., MMADirectorGuy)

#### **Other MMA Policies and Guidelines:**

This guideline does not usurp or replace MMA guidelines on computer usage and other HR policies already in place.

#### **QUESTIONS**

Questions related to this policy should be directed to your supervisor or the Director of Communication & Educational Services.