**Personal social media account use during work hours:**

City employees are entitled to incidental and occasional personal use of social media during work hours, provided the use is limited in duration and does not have a detrimental effect on productivity, as determined by the employee’s supervisor. Nothing in this policy is meant to prohibit employees from using social media to discuss their hours, wages, and conditions of employment, or to otherwise interfere with their rights to engage in concerted activity.

Pursuant to 21 V.S.A. § 495(l), the City will not request employees to disclose usernames, passwords, social media account contents, or alter privacy settings for personal accounts.However, accessing and using personal social media accounts by means of City information systems or during work time is subject to City policy. For these reasons, City employees are expected to comply with all City and Department policies, as well as the following standards, when using personal social media accounts during work hours or while using City equipment or systems:

* City employees should expect no right to privacy or confidentiality when accessing social media or personal social media accounts by means of City information systems or equipment.
* Postings and user profiles on personal social media accounts must not state or imply that the views, conclusions, statements or other social media content are an official policy, statement, position, or communication of the City of Burlington, or that they represent the views of the City or any City officer or employee, unless the head of the user’s Department and the Mayor’s Office have granted express permission for that user to do so.
* Any user profile, biography, or posting on a personal social media account that identifies that person as a City employee should include a qualifying statement in substantially the following form: “The views I express on this site are my own and do not represent the City of Burlington’s positions, strategies, or opinions.”
* If commenting on City business, employees must use a disclaimer that establishes that the comments represent their own opinions and do not represent those of the City of Burlington.
* Employees must not attribute personal statements or opinions to the City when engaging in private blogging or postings on social media sites.
* Employees must not use an employee’s City email account or password in conjunction with a personal social networking site.
* Employees may post personal photographs or provide similar means of recognition that may cause them to be identified as a City employee. Examples include promotion, recognition, appointments, events, and awards.
* Personal or business venture social media account names shall not give the appearance of being affiliated with the City of Burlington or any city department. For example, using “BED”, “Burlington Fire”, “City of Burlington”, or similar language in a personal Twitter handle is not acceptable.
* The following guidelines apply to personal communications using various forms of social media:
  + Use common sense when using social media sites.
  + Remember that what you write is public, may be public for a long time, and may spread to large audiences.
  + Refrain from posting information that you would not want your supervisors or other employees to read or that would be embarrassing to see in the newspaper or on television.
* The City expects its employees to be truthful, courteous, and respectful toward supervisors, co-workers, citizens, customers, and other persons associated with the City. Employees must avoid posts that are likely to create a hostile work environment, that contain content that is regarded as bullying or threatens violence, or that have the effect of harming others because of race, sex, disability, religion or any other status protected by law. An example of such prohibited conduct is posting information that the poster knows to be false to harm another’s reputation.
* Employees must respect copyright, fair use, and financial disclosure laws and protect sensitive and confidential City-related information such as personal health information or tax information of other individuals. Confidential information does not include information about employees’ wages, working conditions, or employment terms that is used for concerted activity.
* Employees must not use nonpublic information to further their own or another’s private interests, whether in financial transactions, through advice, or by unauthorized disclosures.
* Employees must not publish or report on conversations that are meant to be pre-decisional or internal to the City unless given permission by management.

**Personal social media account use generally:**

The City respects the right of employees to post and maintain personal websites, blogs, social media sites, and other web applications on non-work time. However, a City employee’s personal use of social media may reflect on the City or appear to represent City policy or to be on behalf of the City, even if performed outside the workplace or not on City information systems. Employees are free to express themselves as private citizens on social media sites to the degree that their speech does not impair or impede the performance of their duties, such as (but not limited to) by misrepresenting any position of the City, revealing confidential information gained from their position with the City, or implying that employees are authorized to speak on behalf of a Department when they are not.

Department heads and others in leadership positions, by virtue of their position, must consider whether personal thoughts published, even in clearly personal venues, may be misunderstood as expressing the City’s positions. All employees should assume that their team and those outside the City will read what is written. A public blog is not the place to communicate policies to City employees. Employees should assume that any thoughts expressed on social media are in the public domain and can be published or discussed in all forms of media.

Every employee is expected to consider their City association in participating in online social networks. If employees identify themselves as a City employee or have a position that is known to the general public, they should ensure that their profiles and related content (even they are of a personal and not an official nature) are consistent with how they wish to present themselves as a City professional, are appropriate with the public trust associated with their position, and conform to existing standards of conduct.

Violation of this policy by a City employee may result in discipline up to and including dismissal, subject to and in accordance with applicable collective bargaining agreements and the City’s Personnel Policies. In addition, some conduct may violate other laws for which there are criminal or civil penalties. While the City does not regularly monitor social media sites, if information is brought to the City’s attention that a City employee’s social media use may not be in conformance with this or other City policies, the City may consider discipline, and employees should not have an expectation of privacy in public engagements on social media.

An employee who wishes to determine ahead of time whether a particular social media use falls within the appropriate bounds of this policy is encouraged to consult directly with the employee’s Department Head or HR Manager. Each situation will be evaluated on a case by case basis because the laws and social media technology are evolving.