

**CHAPTER 13**  
**VILLAGE WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA USE POLICIES**

**Section**

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***ARTICLE A: VILLAGE WEBSITE POLICY***

**§1-13A-1: MISSION STATEMENT**

The Village website is [www.villageoftowerlakes.com](http://www.villageoftowerlakes.com) and/or [towerlakes-il.gov](http://towerlakes-il.gov). The goal of the Village Website of the Village of Tower Lakes and the Village’s use of social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter (all collectively referred to herein as “the Village Website”) is to provide Village residents, local businesses and the public with information about the Village of Tower Lakes (hereinafter referred to as the “Village of Tower Lakes”, the “Village” or “Tower Lakes”), Lake County, Illinois, other units of local government, the community and special programs and events that serve to strengthen Tower Lakes’ identity and sense of community. This Chapter may be referred to as the “Village Website and Social Media Use Policies”.

**§1-13A-2: REGULATIONS GOVERNING USE**

(A) **Purpose:**

The purpose of this Chapter is to provide guidelines for the operation, maintenance, and utilization of the Village Website as a form of “governmental speech”, and to describe its purpose and use by the Village. The Village Website is a government website, and the Village is not required to provide on its website links to other websites that are not government-sponsored. The Village Website is committed to providing website links that assist Village residents, local businesses, and the public learn more about programs and services offered by the Village and other related units of local government, and community offerings and events sponsored by qualifying charitable, eleemosynary, civic, or governmental organizations which seek to strengthen and enhance certain aspects of the community in accordance with the Mission Statement (hereinafter referred to as “qualifying organizations”).

(B) **Objectives:**

1. To serve as an on-going source of information relative to the Village of Tower Lakes in the form of governmental speech for the Village residents, local businesses, and the public, and to enhance community understanding of the services provided by the Village.

2. To increase public knowledge of the functions and responsibilities of Village government, and of the respective functions of its Village Board (the terms “Village Board” and “Corporate Authorities” shall mean and refer to the President and Board of Trustees of the Village of Tower Lakes), its elected and appointed officials, operating departments, and advisory boards, commissions and committees.
3. To serve as an emergency information center, providing notice and updated information on local emergency situations related to such matters as weather, hazardous spills, water system status, crime, etc.
4. To strengthen community identity and involvement by announcing and/or providing links to audio and/or video coverage of Village meetings, local events and activities and highlighting local businesses and organizations.
5. To supplement the ongoing communications between the Village and its residents.
6. To provide information of general interest to Village residents, local businesses, and the general public relative to Village programs, services, activities, initiatives or areas of responsibility.
7. To act as a resource to the public for useful information about the community as well as directional information (maps, etc.), directories of services provided, notices of all public meetings and programs, etc.

(C) Website Administration:

1. The Village Website is owned, operated and regulated by the Village and is an operating branch of the Village Office Manager’s Office. The Village Office Manager, or his or her designee, shall act as the Website Coordinator (“the Website Coordinator”) and shall be responsible for posting on the Website Village meeting dates and other Village-sponsored activities and program schedules, which are established based on direction from the Corporate Authorities of the Village and/or as determined by the Website Coordinator and in accordance with this Chapter. It is the responsibility of the Website Coordinator, to coordinate and manage the Village Website, exercising professional judgment in administering policies set forth by the Corporate Authorities, and determining what information and/or other website links shall be posted on the Village Website. No Village department, division, or official entity governed by the Village may establish a website on the Internet, for or on behalf of itself or the Village, that is independent from the Village’s primary website without the express permission of the Website Coordinator, but decisions on matters of policy and website posting parameters shall be reserved to the Corporate Authorities.
2. The Website Coordinator is also responsible for reviewing requests from individuals and organizations to utilize the Village Website to provide information pertinent to the Village and to the community as a whole. The Website Coordinator is responsible for determining the appropriateness of the content of the Village Website and all information posted on and/or linked to the Village Website, based on the policies and procedures established herein or as amended from time to time by the Corporate Authorities. If the request for posting information and/or a website link is denied by the Website Coordinator, the applicant may appeal the denial to the Village Board within seven (7) business days of the denial. Denial of a submittal for posting to the Village Website shall be in writing, shall be sent to the applicant by regular mail, shall state the reason for the denial, and may, if appropriate, offer recommendation(s) for modifying the content of the submittal to qualify for posting on the Village Website. The appeal

of such denial shall also be in writing and shall state the basis for the appeal, and shall be submitted to the Website Coordinator. The Website Coordinator shall present said appeal to the Village Board who shall consider the appeal at its next regularly scheduled meeting, or at a special meeting, if the Village President determines that this is required by the nature of the matter being appealed. The party appealing may appear before the Board to present its appeal and the Website Coordinator or other applicable Village representatives may be given the opportunity at that same time to respond to the appeal in person or in writing. The appealing party may not address the Village Board on issues that have not been raised in its written notice of appeal.

3. The Website Coordinator is directly responsible to the Corporate Authorities for the efficient, effective, and responsive operation of the Village Website. As the elected officials of the Village, the Corporate Authorities retain final authority for establishing the overall policies and procedures related to the operation of the Village Website.

(D) Website Statement:

1. The Village Website will provide information to Village residents and businesses, visitors to the community, and the general public, concerning the Village, and the functions, activities, programs and issues of the Village. The Village Website constitutes governmental speech and is not intended to be used for the purposes of advertising and/or as a public forum by an individual, business, or group, nor as a mechanism for building exclusive support for a particular person, program or issue. This section shall not be construed to prohibit posting of links to candidate forums to which all candidates for the particular elected offices to be included in the forum are invited to participate and which is organized, sponsored and run by a nonpartisan organization (such as the League of Woman Voters) for the purpose of educating the electorate. Use of the Village Website shall be authorized by the Website Coordinator and governed by the operating procedures as set forth herein. The Village Website shall not be used by any person or group that seeks to foster, promote, or encourage disharmony based on race, ethnicity, or national origin or otherwise seeks to exploit differences among residents of the Village or among people in general.
2. The Website Coordinator reserves the right to review all website links, to determine its compliance with the Village Website regulations and purpose, objectives, priorities, restrictions, and access in accordance with the provisions of this policy. Any website link under consideration may be accepted as presented, may be rejected, or may be given conditional approval by the Website Coordinator. Conditional approval of a website link shall mean that such website link may be posted on the Village Website on the condition that any and all inappropriate, objectionable or offensive portions of said website link are removed before posting. The presenter of the proposed website link will then have the option of making all specified changes or withdrawing the proposed website link from consideration.

(E) Website Utilization Categories:

Except as otherwise set forth above, the Village Website may also be used for the following governmental speech purposes, which are listed in order of priority:

1. Emergencies:

Emergency use may consist of written, live, or pre-recorded informational postings and/or other applicable website links displayed at such time(s) as are appropriate to the particular

emergency. The purpose of such postings will be to inform residents of emergency situations, and to notify and instruct website visitors in evacuation, detour and/or escape procedures. In the case of an emergency, other regular website utilization may be preempted or canceled. The Website Coordinator shall approve in writing all content and scheduling of any emergency utilization pursuant to Village emergency plans, ordinances and policies.

2. Village of Tower Lakes Communication(s):

The content of Village communication(s) posted on the Village Website may include, among other things, informative communication(s) produced or purchased by the Village of Tower Lakes which are directly related to Village business or Village of Tower Lakes sponsored programs, services and events.

5. Taxing Bodies and Quasi-Governmental Entities Communications:

The content of communication(s) by Tower Lakes taxing bodies and quasi-governmental entities posted on the Village Website may include, among other things, informative communication(s) by the Village and/or by governmental bodies that have the authority to levy property tax on property within the corporate limits of the Village, and/or to provide service within the territory of the Village, and quasi-governmental entities of which the Village of Tower Lakes is a member. Such communications will be directly related to Village business or a local taxing body or quasi-governmental sponsored programs and services.

6. County, Regional, State and Federal Governmental Content:

The content of communication(s) by county, regional, state and the federal government posted on the Village Website may include, among other things, informative communication(s) produced or purchased by said governments. Such communications will be directly related to Village issues or governmentally sponsored programs and services.

7. Community Programs and Events:

Such content should be limited to communication(s) and material sponsored by qualifying community organizations. The content shall serve to strengthen community identity of the Village and must have community-wide appeal and participation. The content must be consistent with Village Website purpose, objectives, access, and content regulations and is subject to approval by the Website Coordinator.

8. Career Opportunity Announcements:

As approved by and at the sole discretion of the Website Coordinator, the Village may post on its website contact information for local businesses and organizations operating within the Village who are currently hiring employees for their respective business or organization.

For the purpose of this Chapter a qualifying community organization shall be a not-for-profit or governmental organization serving territory, residents, and/or businesses within the corporate limits of the Village of Tower Lakes or within the area covered by the Barrington Area Council of Governments (BACOG) sponsored by qualifying charitable, eleemosynary, civic, or governmental organizations which seek to strengthen and enhance certain aspects of the community in accordance with the Mission Statement. Only that content submitted by a qualifying community organization that is consistent with the Village Website purpose, objectives, access and content regulations set

forth in this Chapter and is approved in advance by the Website Coordinator will be posted on the Village Website.

(F) Website Content and Content Restrictions:

1. The Village Website shall contain, among other things, Village contact and other information such as the address of the Village Hall, Police Department, the names of the Village's elected and appointed officials, including the Village's Freedom of Information Act ("FOIA") officer(s).
2. Inappropriate Content Prohibited: Inappropriate website content shall be prohibited and shall include, but not be limited to, that which directly or indirectly endorses any person or organization not directly associated with the Village, commentary or personal opinions, photographs, music, video or graphics not having the written permission of copyright holder or proof of being royalty-free, and any content prohibited by Gov Internet Policies.
3. The Village also prohibits the following Website content, based upon prevailing local standards, and any communication or website link containing any of the following will not be permitted:
  - (a) Promotions, endorsements, or advertisements for any private business, except as expressly provided for in Section (E)(8) above, commercial service or product or any paid advertising materials in which commercial appeals for funds are made. Acknowledgment of grants or donations for programming purposes shall not be considered as advertising. Paid advertising material includes, but is not limited to, advertising by or on behalf of a candidate for public office and program material made available with or without charge by persons, corporations, or institutions which have a commercial interest in the subject matter. This provision shall not prevent the identification of persons or institutions providing grants or contributions to underwrite the cost of programs unrelated to the commercial interest of the donor or to programs which have a public interest overriding the private commercial interest.
  - (b) Materials or content intended to be used as a political forum by an individual or group or as a mechanism for building exclusive support for a particular person, program or issue. This section shall not be construed to prohibit candidate forums to which all candidates for the particular elected offices to be included in the forum are invited to participate and which is organized, sponsored and run by a nonpartisan organization (such as the League of Woman Voters) for the purpose of educating the electorate.
  - (c) Lottery or raffle information.
  - (d) Religious programming with the exception of holiday music.
  - (e) Any material or language which constitutes libel, slander, pornography, obscenity or violence.
  - (f) Trademarks or copyrighted material, unless written permission for use has been obtained in advance and a copy of which is provided to the Website Coordinator.
  - (g) Programming which is prohibited by applicable Federal, state or local laws.

4. In the case of content deemed to be consistent with the Village Website purpose, objectives, access, and content regulations but also containing some content or language that some persons may consider offensive, the following message may be posted prior to the website access to such content:

“The following material has been deemed worthy of communication through a link posted on the Village Website, but contains language or other content that may be offensive to some viewers. Viewer discretion and parental guidance are advised.”

(G) Access Policy:

Access to the Village Website may range from submitting a public service announcement, requesting coverage of and/or posting of information relative to a specific event, to working side-by-side with the Website Coordinator to produce contents for the website. In each case, the following procedures must be followed before access will be provided:

1. All requests for posting(s) on the Village Website must be submitted in writing to the Website Coordinator on a Village Request for Website Content Form which Form may be obtained from the office of the Website Coordinator, and must include the name of the organization for which the request is being made along with the name, address and phone number of the contact person and should be submitted at least five (5) working days prior to the requested start date.
2. Content should be concise, and should contain basic information concerning what, when, where, how, and how much. If necessary, the Website Coordinator will edit the content to meet space requirements, to improve readability of the content, and to insure that the content is grammatically correct.
3. All submissions received will be reviewed by the Website Coordinator and then posted to, linked to or denied posting on the Village Website, only at the sole discretion of the Website Coordinator. The Website Coordinator is responsible for determining the appropriateness of the proposed content. The Website Coordinator will use the Website purpose, objectives, regulations, and further limitations outlined in this Chapter or otherwise by the Corporate Authorities in making this determination. The determinations of the Website Coordinator may be appealed as provided herein.
4. If the Website Coordinator determines that the proposed content must be denied and/or is unsuitable for posting on the Village Website, the material in question will be returned to the applicant along with a written statement from the Website Coordinator stating the reason for the denial and advising the applicant that he, she, or it may appeal the denial to the Village Board in writing within seven (7) business days of the denial. When appropriate, the Website Coordinator's written statement may also offer recommendation(s) for modifying the material in order to qualify for posting on the Village Website.
5. The Website Coordinator will endeavor to give timely consideration to all submissions of proposed content, subject to priority, budgetary and staff-time constraints.

## **ARTICLE B: SOCIAL MEDIA USE POLICY**

### **§1-13B-1: PURPOSE**

The Village has an overriding interest and expectation in determining what is “spoken” on behalf of the Village on its official Village social media sites. In that regard, the Village has established a “Social Media Use Policy”, the purpose of which is to establish policies and regulations relative to the establishment and use by the Village of Tower Lakes of various social media sites, including but not limited to “Facebook” and “Twitter”, as a means of conveying information from the Village and/or about the Village to Village residents and other interested members of the general public utilizing expanding methods of communication.

For purposes of this policy, the term “Social media” shall be understood to be content created by individuals, using accessible, expandable, and upgradable publishing technologies, through and on the Internet. Examples of current social media tools include Facebook, weblogs, Viddler, RSS, YouTube, Twitter, FourSquare, Vine and Flickr. For purpose of this policy, the term “comments” includes information, articles, pictures, videos or any other form of communicative content posted on a Village social media site.

### **1-13B-2: GENERAL POLICY**

- (A) The Village Website, [www.villageoftowerlakes.com](http://www.villageoftowerlakes.com) or [towerlakes-il.gov](http://towerlakes-il.gov), shall remain the Village’s primary and predominant internet presence.
- (B) The Village’s use of social media tools falls generally into the following two categories:
  - 1. As a channel for disseminating time-sensitive information as quickly as possible (example: emergency information);
  - 2. As marketing/promotional channels which increase the Village’s ability to broadcast its messages to the widest possible audience.
- (C) The Village’s Office Manager, or his or her designee (hereinafter collectively referred to as the “Website Coordinator”), is responsible for the establishment and maintenance of any official social media site on behalf of the Village.
- (D) All social media sites established on behalf of the Village shall be administered and the content of each such site approved in writing in advance by the Website Coordinator.
- (E) Each and all social media sites established on behalf of the Village shall include a clear statement that such site is maintained by the Village and that the user thereof agrees to accept and comply with the Village’s Social Media Use Policy as established herein.

### **1-13B-3: COMMENT POLICY**

- (A) As a public entity the Village must comply with certain standards to serve all of its constituents in a civil and unbiased manner.
- (B) The Village’s Social Media sites shall be considered limited public forums and, as such, the Village reserves the right to restrict or remove any content thereon that is deemed in violation of the Social

Media Use Policy and/or in violation of the Village Website Policy established by this Chapter, the policies of any particular site used by the Village, or any applicable law.

- (C) Comments containing any of the following shall be and are considered inappropriate forms of content and shall not be permitted to be posted on Village social media sites and are subject to immediate removal and/or restriction by the Website Coordinator or his or her designee:
1. Comments not related to the original topic posted on said site, including random or unintelligible comments;
  2. Profane, obscene, violent, or pornographic comments, content and/or language;
  3. Content that promotes, fosters or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, or any other protected status;
  4. Defamatory or personal attacks;
  5. Threats to any person or organization;
  6. Comments in support of, or in opposition to, any political campaigns or ballot measures;
  7. Solicitation of commerce, including but not limited to advertising of any business or product for sale;
  8. Conduct in violation of any federal, state or local law;
  9. Encouragement of illegal activity;
  10. Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems; or
  11. Content that violates a legal ownership interest, such as a copyright, of any party;
  12. Content or posts that contain external links to other sites for the purpose of spam, viruses, link-baits, click-throughs, or other deceptive practices.
- (D) The Village reserves the right to report any violation of applicable laws to the appropriate law enforcement agencies and other authorities that have applicable jurisdiction.
- (E) A comment posted by a member of the public on any Village social media site is the opinion of the commentator or poster only, and publication of a comment does not imply endorsement of, or agreement by, the Village, nor do such comments necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of the Village, its officers, trustees, employees, agents, or appointees.
- (F) The Village reserves the right to deny access to Village social media sites for any person or entity that violates the Village's Social Media Use Policy or Village Website Policy, at any time and without prior notice.
- (G) Employees representing the Village via social media outlets are and shall be required to conduct themselves at all times as professional representatives of the Village.
1. Employees are not permitted to use Village-branded social media outlets to influence or affect the results of any election or nomination.
  2. When a Village employee responds to a comment, in his/her capacity as a Village employee, the employee's name and title should be made available as part of the comment or post, when possible.
  3. The employee shall not share personal information about himself or herself, or other Village employees, elected officials, appointed board or commission members, or candidates for such positions.
  4. Employees are and shall be prohibited from posting any privileged or confidential information.



5. Employees are and shall be prohibited from posting any information related to any commercial product, business, venture, partnership or other entity in which such employee holds an interest, for the purpose of selling or promoting such interest.
- (H) All comments posted to any Village social media site(s) are bound by those particular site's rules, regulations, rights, and responsibilities, and the Village reserves the right to report any violation of those rules, regulations, rights and responsibilities to the social media site with the intent of that site to take appropriate and reasonable responsive action.

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