**SECTION 9 – SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

**9.1 Introduction**

Social media facilitates discussion of Town issues, operations and services by providing the public the opportunity to participate. Town of Chase City staff may use social media and social network sites to further enhance communications with various stakeholders and organizations in support of Town goals and objectives. Town staff has the ability to publish articles, facilitate discussions and communicate information through various media related to conducting Town business. This policy is designed to define social media, the process of using social media, and the rights and responsibilities of the Town in its use of social media.

**9.2 Purpose**

Social networking and Internet services have become a popular form of communication. The Town of Chase City believes that effective and efficient interaction with the public may be enhanced using online technology to present matters of public interest in the Town of Chase City.

**9.3 Scope**

This policy applies to all officers, agents and employees of the Town of Chase City. Employees who choose to participate in social networks in their capacity as Town of Chase City employees must adhere to this policy.

**9.4 Definitions**

Social Media - A group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content.

Blog - An abridgment of the term web log, a blog is a website with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other materials such as graphics or videos.

Author - An authorized Town of Chase City employee who creates and is responsible for posted articles and information on social media sites.

Articles - An original posting of content to a Town of Chase City social media site by a Town of Chase City author.

Commenter - A Town of Chase City employee or member of the public who submits a comment for posting in response to the content of a particular Town of Chase City article or social media content.

Comment - A response to a Town of Chase City article or social media content submitted by a commenter.

Moderator – The town manager or a designee that has the authority to monitor and police all social media sites related to the Town of Chase City, as well as to provide training on this policy.

**9.5 Organizational Rules**

All proposed Town of Chase City social media accounts or sites shall be submitted to, and approved by, the town manager. The site shall be published using approved Town social networking platform and tools.

Designees can be any department employee or volunteer designated by the Town that has a complete understanding of this policy and has appropriate subject knowledge and technical experience.

Town of Chase City social networking Web sites are considered a public record under Virginia public records law and will be managed as such. Non-employees may not know that social networking sites are public record. To assure that the public is aware of this, departments with a social networking site must display the following statement prominently on their social networking page:

“Employees of the Town of Chase City communicate via this site. Consequently, any communication via this site (whether by a Town employee or the general public) is subject to monitoring and disclosure to third parties. Relevant Town of Chase City and Virginia public records retention schedules apply to social networking content. Records required to be maintained pursuant to a relevant records retention schedule shall be maintained for the required retention period in a format that preserves the integrity of the original record and is easily accessible using the approved Town platforms and tools.”

All social network sites and entries shall clearly indicate that any articles and any other content posted or submitted for posting are subject to public disclosure.

Employees using social media to communicate on behalf of the Town of Chase City should be mindful that any statements made are on behalf of the Town of Chase City. Therefore, employees shall use discretion before posting or commenting. Once comments or posts are made, they can be seen by anyone and may not be able to be recanted. Consequently, the following are examples of unacceptable social networking content and comments:

* Profane or obscene language or content;
* 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;
* Solicitations of commerce;
* Infringement on copyrights or trademarks; and
* Confidential or non-public information.

Content submitted for posting that is deemed unsuitable for posting by the Moderator because it is not topically related to the particular social networking site objective or is deemed prohibited content based on the aforementioned list shall be retained pursuant to the records retention schedule along with the reason the specific content is deemed not suitable for posting.

The Town of Chase City reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of this policy or any applicable law.

Each Town of Chase City social networking site shall include an introductory statement or status statement which clearly specifies the purpose and topical scope of the blog or social network site. The social networking sites must link back to the departmental Town of Chase City Internet site and the Public Social Media Comments Policy where possible.

All Moderators shall be trained regarding the terms of this policy, including their responsibilities to review content submitted for posting to ensure compliance with the policy. All social networking sites shall clearly indicate they are maintained by the Town of Chase City and shall have Town of Chase City contact information prominently displayed. Employees representing the Town government via social media outlets must conduct themselves at all times as a representative of the Town and in accordance with all Personnel policies. Employees found in violation of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. Maintenance of the Town's website takes priority over maintaining a social media site. A social media site is used to enhance, not replace, website communications.

**9.6 Procedures**

Any employee who desires to create a social media site must receive approval from the town manager. The Town staff will process and retain request details and establish the appropriate services for archiving social media content. The Town of Chase City Moderator will establish a general account that aggregates all Town of Chase City social media accounts or sites to monitor on a routine basis. When a new site has been approved, the Moderator will subscribe to the new site feed. The Town of Chase City Moderator will be responsible for monitoring all comments posted to a Town of Chase City social media site for appropriateness. This person will be responsible for ensuring all content is suitable for posting, removing all content that is not suitable or prohibited based on the criteria listed in this policy. This person also is responsible for retaining all content that is removed in accordance with this policy. All sites shall be published using approved Town social networking platforms and tools. Requests for using other platforms must be submitted to the Moderator.

**9.7 Employee Guidance for Participating in Social Networking**

Town of Chase City employees should always consider whether it is appropriate to post comments that commit themselves or the Town to a course of action. Employees should never comment on areas that are not within the realm of their job responsibility. Employees should not post a personal opinion on Town accounts. Improper use of the Town's social media sites may result in appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. Great care must be given to screening any communication made on behalf of the Town. If there is any question regarding the content of a potential comment or post, do not post it. Employees who choose to participate in social networks as a Town employee should adhere to the following guidelines.

1. Town policies, rules, regulations and standards of conduct apply to employees who engage in social networking activities while conducting Town business and must comply with the Town's Personnel Policies. Use of a Town email address and communicating in your official capacity will constitute conducting Town business.

2. Town employees shall notify the town manager if they intend to create a social networking site or service to conduct Town business.

3. The town manager will determine the employee responsible for managing the social networking activities in their departments.

**9.8 Public Social Media Comments Policy**

The following Public Social Media Comments Policy will be posted on all social media sites:

“Welcome to the Town of Chase City’s (e.g. Facebook or Twitter) page. The Town of Chase City uses social media to interact with residents, businesses and visitors about public issues. Please submit your questions, comments and concerns. Please note this is a moderated online discussion site and subject to Virginia Public Records Laws, and e-discovery laws and policies. The Town reserves the right to delete unacceptable submissions. The following are examples of unacceptable social networking content and comments. The list is not intended to be all-inclusive. Examples are:

* Profane or obscene language or content;
* 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;
* Solicitations of commerce;
* Infringement on copyrights or trademarks; and,
* Confidential or non-public information.

Please note that the opinions and comments expressed on this social media site do not reflect the opinions and positions of the Town of Chase City government, its officers or employees. If you have any questions concerning the operation of this moderated discussion site, please contact the Town of Chase City Town Manager, 434.372.5136, cc.townmanager@gmail.com.”