

## **MUNICIPAL WEBSITE CONTENT POLICY TOWN OF MIDDLETON MASSACHUSETTS**

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of the Town of Middleton website is to provide information of a factual nature about the town and its departments and operations, including various services and resources available in the Town of Middleton.

In providing an official website, the Town of Middleton does not intend to create a forum for public discourse, exchange of opinions, or discussion on issues of any nature, with the exception of an occasional survey to assist the town in service delivery.

### **GOALS**

Goals of the Town of Middleton website are:

- A. To encourage increased citizen participation in town government by making public information more readily available including the posting of board and committee agendas, minutes and documents.
- B. To provide electronic access to town information through a logical single point of entry at <http://www.middletonma.gov>.
- C. To keep the public informed of community events, municipal meetings and Town programs.

### **DEFINITIONS**

#### **A. Links**

The Town of Middleton website may provide links to websites that encourage citizen participation in government; promote local businesses, organizations and attractions; and inform the public of community news and/or events.

The Town is not responsible for and does not endorse the information on any linked website unless otherwise stated.

#### **B. Non-Profit and Community Organizations**

For the purposes of this policy, a non-profit organization is a business which is registered with the Secretary of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and/or which has been granted tax-exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) as a 501(c)(3) organization. Other community organizations may not be registered with the Commonwealth or as a 501 (c)(3) but should serve the public in some manner through the provision of goods and/or services.

#### **C. Website Administrator (Administrator)**

The Middleton Town Administrator shall appoint a Website Administrator, who is responsible for the appearance, behavior, content and technical aspects of the website. Each Town Department is responsible for regularly updating their own respective sections of the Town website. The Website Administrator shall provide support to staff on an as-requested basis. The name and e-mail address of the Website Administrator shall be made available on the town website. Committee and Board

Chairmen, town staff and meeting secretaries are responsible for forwarding all committee and board meeting agendas to the Town Clerk's Office in a timely manner for public posting in Memorial Hall and the town website, consistent with Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 30A.

## **PUBLICATION CRITERIA**

The following criteria will be used to determine if submitted content is appropriate for the website.

- A. Calendar - The Town of Middleton website may provide event details for volunteer, non-profit organizations providing recreation or enrichment programs for the Middleton community.
- B. Alerts and News Items - News and information related to the duties, obligations and goals of various Town departments, committees, and boards may be submitted to the Town Administrator's Office for electronic distribution. News and/or event content that otherwise meets the website publication criteria may also be submitted. Suggested content may include, for example:
  - 1. Current Town Department, Board, and Committee activities and initiatives of interest to the community
  - 2. Requests for community input / involvement / assistance with activities of a particular Board or Committee
  - 3. Volunteer opportunities for Board and Committee vacancies and town employment postings
  - 4. Citizen surveys
  - 5. Feature Stories highlighting the accomplishments and outcomes of specific Town Department, Board, and Committee initiatives and projects.
- C. Other Content - The Town's Website may provide news items, announcements and/or links to websites for:
  - 1. Government and non-profit educational institutions serving the Middleton community
  - 2. Elected local legislators for the purpose of disseminating legislative information and updates
  - 3. Generally recognized volunteer community organizations, established in, or having a significant membership / participation from Middleton.

## **EXCLUDED CONTENT**

Except as specified elsewhere in this policy, the Town's Website will not publish content including:

- A. Opinions or endorsements regarding candidates for office, political issues, or municipal, county, state, or federal initiatives.
- B. Promotion or advertisement of businesses or special interest groups.

- C. Campaign Websites for incumbent and challenging candidates for local, state, or federal office. Further, if an existing website link of a seated candidate is found to be of a campaigning / self-promotional nature, it will be removed from the Town of Middleton website.
- D. Political organizations or other organizations advocating a candidate; a position on a local, state, or Federal issue; or pending legislation.
- E. Corporate or other for-profit organizations unless they fit any of the criteria stated above.
- F. Individual or personal home pages.
- G. Any submission considered by the Website Administrator and Town Administrator to be inappropriate or out of line with the Purpose and Goals of the Website or the criteria herein.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Confidential information should not be posted on the town's website. While the Town of Middleton website may track overall site traffic, it does not collect individual user details unless a user voluntarily submits such information. It does not share that information with outside sources, and is committed to keeping such information confidential. If at any time a user believes that the Town of Middleton's website is not protecting his or her privacy, the person should e-mail the Website Administrator, who will attempt to assess and, if necessary, correct the problem.

## **FEEDBACK**

Feedback regarding the web policy should be brought first to the attention of the Website Administrator. If a complainant is unsatisfied, s/he may appeal any decision of the Website Administrator to the Town Administrator who will respond within 15 business days. Further, any resident may appeal the decision of the Town Administrator to the Middleton Board of Selectmen. The decision of the Middleton Board of Selectmen is the final word on matters arising from implementation of this policy.

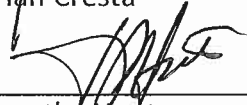
## **DISCLAIMER**

The materials and information contained on or obtained from the Town of Middleton website are distributed "as is" without warranties of any kind, either express or implied, including without limitation, warranties of title or implied warranties of merchantability of fitness for a particular purpose. Information contained on the Town of Middleton website, including information obtained from external links thereon, is provided without any representation of any kind as to accuracy or content and should be verified by the user. The Town of Middleton is not responsible for any special, indirect, incidental or consequential damages that may arise from the use of, or the inability to use, the website and/or the materials contained on the site whether the materials contained on the website are provided by the Town of Middleton, or by a third party. Data contained on the website are subject to change without notice.

This policy was voted on and adopted by the Board of Selectmen on July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017.



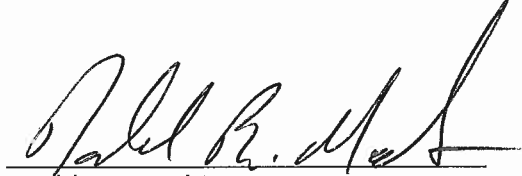
Brian Cresta



Timothy Houten



Rick Kassiotis



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