



ARTICLE XXIX

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY POLICY

I. POLICY:

This policy covers the use of all technology resources owned, leased, used, managed, or operated by the Town of Selma. It includes, but is not limited to pagers, radios, computer software, all computer systems of any size and function and their attached peripherals, landline telephones, cellular telephones, faxes, voice mail systems, electronic messaging systems (i.e., email), network resources, and Internet resources. This policy applies to any user of Town technology resources and applies at all times and all places, whether the user is on or off the job site.

This policy also covers the creation and use of personal web pages or sites on any electronic communications device where individuals are allowed to express themselves and seek communication with other individuals for personal relationships, friendships, or just pen pal correspondence.

All Town technology resources are the property of the Town and are provided to enable employees and officials to provide services in a timely, efficient and effective manner. Any activity, use, or action that is inconsistent with this Policy is prohibited. Because technology systems are constantly evolving, the Town of Selma requires all employees to use a commonsense approach to the rules set forth in this Policy, complying with not only the letter but also the intent of this Policy.

This policy is intended for internal use by all Town employees defined as full-time, part-time, and temporary. Failure to adhere to this Policy places the employee at risk for legal liabilities, potential embarrassment, and disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

II. PURPOSE:

This Policy delineates acceptable uses of Town technology resources and specifies certain prohibited uses. It also serves as notice to employees and officials that there is no expectation of personal privacy in the use of Town technology resources. This Policy is intended to illustrate the range of acceptable, unacceptable, and prohibited uses of the Town's technology resources and is not exhaustive.

All employees are to be informed of the Town's Electronic Communications and Technology Policy and be made aware of its contents. Employees shall be given a copy of the policy and be required to sign an Acknowledgment of Receipt. All employees shall be expected to familiarize themselves with this Policy and to abide by all established rules and guidelines.

III. PROVISIONS:

Each Department Head shall administer this Policy and ensure that it is fully implemented. It shall also be the responsibility of each Department Head to ensure his or her department abides by the requirements and guidelines set forth in this document.

Technology users should have no expectation of privacy in anything they create, store, send or receive using the Town's computer equipment. Department Heads have the authority to inspect and access the contents of any equipment, files or email, for reasons to include but not limited to a network slowdown; system hardware or software problems; reasonable suspicion of a crime or violation of policy or breach of security; the need to perform work or provide a service when an employee is not available; and general system failure.

The Town has the right to monitor and log any and all aspects of its computer system and equipment including but not limited to Internet sites visited by users, file downloads and all communications sent and received by users in any form. All communication system users acknowledge that the Town may, at its discretion, inspect, use, audit, or disclose any electronic communications and/or data without notice to the employee. Employees must also be aware that the Town may utilize monitoring software that makes it possible to identify and block access to Internet sites that it deems inappropriate in the workplace in order to administer this Policy.

All employees should be aware that electronic communication is a public record like any other public document in accordance with North Carolina Public Records Laws (NCGS §132). Therefore, any communications created or received on the Town's computer system are to be assumed to be public documents and thus may be subject to legal requests for public disclosure, including what users may incorrectly think of as personal and private. Detailed public record information may be reviewed at the North Carolina Office of Archives and History website.

Employees should respect the legal protection provided by copyright and licensing of programs and data when using electronic communications.

Immediately upon separation, suspension or termination of an employee, access to all systems shall be terminated.

IV. Definitions

Anti-Viral Software. Computer programs that attempt to identify, thwart and eliminate computer viruses and other malicious software.

Chain Letter. Message that induces the recipient to forward copies of a document to other users which may contain viruses, false information, threats, etc.

Chatroom. A form of digital conferencing that can involve real time online conversations.

Disclaimer. When using Internet services provided by the Town, employees need to be mindful that they are always representing the Town of Selma and should avoid being drawn into discussions where disclaimers like “this represents my personal opinion and not that of the employee’s department or the Town of Selma” need to be used.

Electronic Communication Device (ECD). Includes but not limited to personal computers, electronic mail systems, voice mail systems, paging systems, Internet services, mobile digital terminals, facsimile transmissions, radios, cellular telephones, etc.

Electronic Mail (email). Messages, usually text, sent from one person to another via computer.

Hacking/Cracking. The unauthorized entry or attempted entry into any computer or system.

Hardware. The physical components of a computer system, i.e., monitor, CPU, keyboard, mouse.

Internet. A worldwide computer network with which users can send a letter electronically, chat with people electronically, or search for information on almost any topic.

Media. To include but not limited to optical disks, CDs, DVDs, thumb drives, diskettes, tapes, memory cards, standard computer hard drives, portable hard drives, digital voice recorders, and Internet air cards.

Mobile Devices. Computing appliances that are typically handheld, such as cellular telephones, radios, pagers, etc.

Online Games. Video games that are played over some form of computer network, most commonly the Internet, which can be either single-player (i.e., Solitaire, Minesweeper), two-player (i.e., Chess, Backgammon), or multi-player (i.e., Poker, Spades).

Peripheral Devices. Any equipment that attaches to a computer or the network, such as printers, copiers, facsimile machines, or scanners.

Personal Computer. An electronic machine which performs rapid calculations and processes text, affords access to stored information, and can be used to send and receive electronic mail.

Software. Collection of computer programs, procedures and documentation that perform some tasks on a computer system.

Town of Selma Website. The Town's collection of web pages hosted by a server.

Virus. A computer-generated message used to debilitate, destroy, or disrupt the proper functioning of a computer or system without permission or knowledge of the user.

V. Maintenance and Operation Procedures

Internet/Email/Computers

The Internet is a resource granted to employees and employees are encouraged to use the Internet to its fullest potential in order to provide effective Town services of the highest quality and to discover innovative and creative ways to use resources as well as to enhance staff development.

At all times when an employee is using the Town of Selma's technology or technology resources, he or she is representing the Town. The same good judgment should be applied in all resource use as in written correspondence, verbal discourse or in determining appropriate conduct. While in the performance of work-related functions, while on the job, or while using publicly owned or publicly provided technology resources, Town employees are expected to use them responsibly and professionally in accordance with the following guidelines:

- 1) Respect the privacy of other users. Do not intentionally seek information on, obtain copies of, or modify files, data, or passwords belonging to other users without obtaining explicit permission to do so.
- 2) Employee users are responsible for safeguarding their own computer access and are directly accountable for all activity connected to their user ID.
- 3) Each employee is responsible for maintaining the security and integrity of data and equipment with which he or she has been entrusted.
- 4) Passwords should be kept confidential and not shared with co-workers, with the exception of Department Heads and other upper management. Passwords should be memorized and not be written down where they may be found.
- 5) Passwords shall be changed at any time a user who believes his or her password has been compromised and affected management notified.
- 6) Any file, program or document received on any media, through the Internet or through file transfer must be checked for viruses immediately to prevent an infection of an

individual computer or an entire network. Be cautious when receiving an unexpected email message containing an attachment. Do not open email if you have any doubt about the type of file, content, or sender.

- 7) Keep all media away from magnets or equipment that may produce magnetic fields such as magnetic paper clip holders, speakers, electric pencil sharpeners, etc.
- 8) Employee users shall disclose to their Department Heads any suspected or confirmed unauthorized use or misuse of technology resources.
- 9) Any employee who visits a restricted or prohibited site by accident shall forward the website address to his or her Department Head.
- 10) Privately-owned computer systems, laptop computers or peripherals may be added to the Town system only with prior authorization from the Department Head.

Telephones/Cellular Telephones/Mobile Devices

The telephone systems (landlines and cellular phones) are a primary source for accomplishing the Town's business. Providing service to internal and external customers is always a priority. Remember that public perception is extremely important, and when using landline or cellular telephone systems employees must abide by the Town's policy on sexual harassment and use common sense, professionalism, proprietary, ethical behavior, confidentiality, and everyday courtesy. Treat others as you wish to be treated.

Personal use should be limited, and personal long distance calls on landlines are prohibited. Personal use is deemed excessive use when it prevents an employee from managing customer inquiries, complaints, and requests for service in a timely manner or if it interferes with the employee's ability to accomplish his or her responsibilities.

The use of cellular phones while driving Town-owned vehicles is potentially hazardous and is prohibited, unless using a hands-free device.

- 1) To minimize the risk of accidents, Town employees should not use **personal or Town** cellular telephones while operating Town vehicles or Town equipment.
- 2) If an employee must place a call while driving, it is advised that he or she pull off the road and park.
- 3) In all cases, adherence to current laws regarding cell phone use and distracted driving will prevail.

Telephone voice mail messages on both systems should be checked regularly and all calls should be returned promptly.

Printers/Copiers/Fax Machines

Photocopy machines, printers and facsimile machines shall be used for the transaction of Town business only. Any personal use must be pre-approved by the Department Head and reimbursement for personal use should be arranged prior to use.

Unauthorized copying of copyrighted material is strictly prohibited.

Equipment should be treated with care and respect. Employees should not sit or lean on machines or have food and drink around any Town equipment or peripherals that could cause damage or destruction.

VI. Uses and Restrictions of Technology Resources

Acceptable Uses of Technology Resources

Communication and information exchange directly related to the work tasks of a Town department are permitted.

Communication and exchange for professional development, to maintain currency of training or education, or to discuss issues related to the employees, Town activities are permitted and encouraged.

Use in applying for or administering grants or contracts for the Town's research and programs is allowed and advised.

Use for advisory, standards, research, analysis, and professional society activities related to the employee's work tasks and duties are allowed.

Any other governmental communications not requiring a high level of security is acceptable.

Restrictions and Unacceptable Uses of Technology Resources

Restrictions and Unacceptable Uses of Technology Resources are defined as those that do not conform to the purpose, goals, and mission of the Town of Selma or to each user's authorized job duties and responsibilities.

Employees shall not transmit, solicit or forward threatening, obscene, harassing, derogatory, inflammatory, racial, offensive, abusive, or politically natured messages or images by means of any Town technology resource.

No unauthorized users, including an employee's family or friends, shall be permitted to use or access any Town technology resources.

Attempting to and/or sending any email/faxed/telephone message anonymously, using a false or fictitious name or without a name is a violation of this Policy.

No employee shall use or develop computer programs that harass other users or infiltrate a computer or computing system and/or damage or alter software components of a computer or computing system, or otherwise interfere with data, hardware, or system operation. Nor shall any employee transmit or forward any email message that will fully propagate computer viruses.

No pornography, nudity or sexually oriented material such as jokes or images shall be viewed, except as deemed necessary to conduct criminal or child welfare investigations (as approved by the Department Head).

Websites that are offensive or discriminatory based on race, gender, religion, national origin, or any other protected classification of persons shall not be accessed by Town employees, except as part of a police investigation.

Vandalism of any hardware, software, computers, electronic communications, or Internet access is prohibited.

Personally owned software or software downloaded from the Internet which has not been authorized by the Town shall not be installed on any Town equipment.

Town computers, electronic communications and Internet access shall not be used for transmitting or receiving messages that violate the Town's policies prohibiting sexual harassment or workplace violence.

No confidential information shall be sent or forwarded by means of any Town technology resource including but not limited to juvenile records, certain information contained in personnel files (i.e., salary, performance reviews, complaints, grievances, misconduct, and disciplinary information), medical files, criminal history files, veteran information, and other data as defined by state and federal laws and agency regulations.

Computer hacking or cracking is strictly prohibited regardless of motivation or damage.

Attempting to access and/or use another person's password is prohibited.

Computer resources are not unlimited. Network bandwidth and storage capacity have finite limits and all users have a responsibility to conserve these resources. As such, the user must not deliberately perform acts that waste computer resources or unfairly monopolize resources to the exclusion of others. These acts include, but are not limited to configuration of a web browser's home or default page to allow online continuous flow of information, such as stock quotes, photographs, or sports scores; participation in Internet or browser-based chat rooms or news groups; sending or forwarding chain letters; downloading Internet-based computer games; uploading or downloading large files; accessing streaming audio and/or video files;

creating unnecessary loads on the Town's system associated with non-business related uses of the Internet and spending excessive amounts of time on the Internet for any purpose whether business or otherwise.

Screen savers and backgrounds are allowed but must be appropriate and in good taste

Personal Use of Technology Resources

Use of Town technology resources for operating a personal business or soliciting of any kind is prohibited. This includes any private or personal for-profit activities (i.e., consulting for pay). Furthermore, no employee shall use Town resources to engage in commercial advertising, union, and bargaining association activities, political, civic or religious causes or activities, solicitation or fund-raising.

Use of the Town communications systems by employees for personal use must be restricted to occasional use that does not interfere with the conducting of Town business. Personal use should be limited to personal time (breaks, lunch time) and personal use of the Internet should be minimal.

Any personal use of Town technology resources that incurs a cost to the Town, will result in termination. Personal use of the Town's technology must not violate any policies, provisions, guidelines, or standards of the Town.

Town email must not be used to advertise, notify, or announce any personal item for sale, to buy, or to give away.

Personal use of Town resources by an employee neither expresses nor implies sponsorship or endorsement by the Town of Selma.

Personal use of personal cellular phones and personal email accounts while working is only allowable in cases where there is no alternative form of communication and the need for personal use is immediate and compelling. If personal email accounts are accessed through Town-owned equipment, they are subject to the requirements of this Policy.

Personal Web Pages and Internet Sites

Employees who have personal web pages or other types of Internet postings that promote and allow individuals to express themselves and seek communication with other individuals for personal relationships, friendships or just pen pal correspondences (such as YouTube, My Space, Facebook, Hall Pass, etc.) which can be accessed by the public shall use appropriate discretion in their use of references to the Town of Selma and not discredit themselves or the Town.

Unless approval has been received in writing by his or her Department Head, an employee shall not identify themselves directly or indirectly as an employee of the Town of Selma nor have photographs or other depictions of the Town of Selma buildings, vehicles, uniforms, emblems,

or the Town seal. An employee wishing to use any such references, photographs and/or depictions shall:

- 1) Submit a request in writing to their Department Head.
- 2) Describe the proposed reference to the Town and its purpose; and
- 3) Provide any verbiage, graphic, photograph, artwork, etc. to be used.

Employees may not post any sexual, violent, racial, ethnically derogatory material, comments, pictures, artwork, video, or any other reference along with any Town-approved reference.

Employees should consider the possible adverse consequences of Internet postings, such as future employment, and public or private embarrassment.

Changes made to a previously approved web page, site or posting must be submitted for re-approval through the same approval process as described above.

VII. Violations

It is the user's responsibility to read and abide by the regulations and guidelines set forth in this Policy.

If any Town employee violates any of the provisions of this Policy or a Department Head knowingly permits a violation of this Policy, the employee and/or Department Head will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal as provided in the Town's Personnel Policy. Violation of local, state and federal laws may carry additional penalties.

Employees who do not make or fail to meet their arrangements to reimburse the Town for the personal use of technology resources will be subject to garnishment of their payroll.

Policy adopted by Selma Town Council

Effective Date: November 14, 2000
Amended August 11, 2015

As of August 10, 2021, this policy replaces and supersedes any previous policies, or unwritten policies or practices covering the same subject.