PURPOSE:

This policy establishes the guidelines on the use, management, administration and oversight of social media in its various platforms as it is utilized by Greenville County Sheriff's Office ("GCSO") personnel. It further establishes the protocol for personnel to use social networks, computer/phone applications, internet resources, and network/internet communications in a responsible, professional, ethical, and lawful manner.

Notably, the need to regulate this type of conduct is particularly high in the law enforcement context, wherein the GCSO has an interest in maintaining discipline, efficient operations, esprit de corps, morale, and uniformity.

DEFINITIONS:

For the purpose of this policy, the following definitions will apply:

1. Blog: A self-publishing record or commentary that may allow individuals to pose responses, reactions, or comments.
2. Employee: Any full-time or part-time staff, either sworn or non-sworn, reserves, and student interns. For the purpose of this policy any volunteers, during the time in which they are representing the GCSO, are to adhere to the same policy and standard of an employee.
3. Inappropriate Content: Any post or publication that:
    a. Defames, abuses, harasses, stalks, threatens or violates the legal rights of others.
    b. Includes racist, sexist, homophobic, hateful, slander, threatening, obscene, and/or vulgar remarks.
    c. Could harm the safety of others.
    d. Is considered a personal attack on another employee.
    e. Contains personal information about another person or violates another person's privacy.
    f. Compromises the integrity of a case or an investigation.

g. Contains material pertaining to an incident handled by the GCSO.

h. Include the intellectual property of others, without written permission.

i. Contains photographs or videos of employees or members of the public, without their permission

j. Includes information about actual or potential claims and litigation involving the County or the GCSO

k. Contains information deemed law enforcement sensitive.

4. Matters of Public Concern: Speech that "involves an issue of social, political, or other interest to a community," this however does not include "personal complaints and grievances about conditions of employment." *See Liverman v. City of Petersburg*, 844 F.3d 400, 409 (4th Cir. 2016).

5. Media Request: Any information that is intended to be published by the GCSO and is intended to be viewable to others via platforms that include television, print media, social media or any other resource used by media personnel to disseminate information.

6. Post: Material a person publishes, using video, photographs, written words, spoken words, or other forms of communication.

7. Profile: information used to describe a user on a particular site, to include social media platforms.

8. Social Media: Form of electronic communications through which users engage in online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content.

9. Social Network: Online platform where a user can create a profile, post or share information, and/or communicate.

10. Speech: Expression or communication of thoughts and/or feelings. Includes material considered insubordinate.

POLICY GUIDELINES

Employees may identify themselves as representatives of the agency. However, if they do, their actions are reflective of the agency and will conform to the instant policy. If the employee identifies their employment with the agency, they take on the

responsibility for representing the agency in a professional manner from that period forward, while still employed by the agency. If the employee identifies themselves as a member of the agency, the employee must make it clear that the opinions expressed are solely those of the employee and do not represent the views of the agency. A sample practice of this would include:

> "The posts on this account, including but not limited to images, links, and comments left by others, are my own and don't necessarily represent my employer's positions, strategies or opinions."

By identifying yourself on your personal social media accounts as an employee of Greenville County and of the GCSO, you create a blurred boundary between your professional life and your personal life. If you choose to identify yourself in a manner that informs others of your employment, be sure that the content is consistent with the high standards and values associated with this agency.

You should use common sense and recognize that you are legally liable for anything you write or present online. You can be sued by any person or entity that views your commentary, content, or images as defamatory, pornographic, proprietary, harassing, libelous or creating a hostile work environment. Employees are reminded that engaging in prohibited speech, may provide grounds for undermining or impeaching an employee's testimony in criminal and civil hearings.

TRAINING:

All employees will receive training to become familiar with and adhere to the provisions of this policy. Employees may also receive information and reminders pertaining to this policy via internal mail, and occasional network log-on reminders through PowerDMS.

All GCSO personnel shall use computers, computer applications, computer programs, Internet resources, and network/Internet communications in a responsible, professional, ethical, and lawful manner.

MEDIA REQUESTS:

By identifying yourself as an employee of the GCSO, users might receive inquiries for comments and/or interviews from media outlets. In accordance to General Order 115, all media

inquiries, on behalf of the GCSO must be routed through the Public Information Office.

PROHIBITIONS AND PRECAUTIONS ON EMPLOYEE PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA:

To the extent permitted by law, employees shall adhere to the following policies, to include those set forth in the definitions when using social media for personal use:

A. Without prior written authorization from the Sheriff or his designee, employees shall not: divulge information gained by reason of their authority; make any statements, speeches, appearances, or endorsements; or publish materials that appear to represent the views or positions of the GCSO.

B. Employees shall not post any material involving on-duty activity without authorization from the Sheriff or his designee.

C. Except for matters of public concern outweighing the GCSO's interests (noted in the "Purpose" section above), employees shall not post material that maligns, embarrasses, or causes disrepute to the agency, involving either themselves or other employees.

D. Employees shall not post GCSO or sub-division logos, banners, insignias, or other identifying items that would lead a reasonable person to believe the site or page represents the GCSO. This does not pertain to employees simply wearing attire that displays GCSO logos.

E. Employees should understand that information created, transmitted, downloaded, exchanged, or discussed in a public online forum may be accessed by the agency at any time without prior notice.

F. Unless otherwise directed by the Sheriff, no agency social media accounts or agency websites shall be used to solicit funds for any reason other than agency-specific purposes.

THIRD PARTY INVOLVEMENT:

Employees must not authorize, or facilitate any third party to display or post images or material involving him or herself that would violate any provision in this policy. Employees should make reasonable efforts to remove any posts made by a third party on the employee's site.

Hobart Lewis, Sheriff