



Town of Littleton Information Technology Use of E-Mail Policy

Version 2.0

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1 DEFINITION

E-Mail (electronic mail) is correspondence transmitted electronically to other computer users in a local, wide area or other network. E-Mail communications often improve relationships between different departments, facilitating the smooth operation of services.

2 PURPOSE

It has become common for persons, both at work and at home, to communicate through E-mail. This electronic method of communication has given rise to several issues regarding its proper use by town employees on the job and by town officials who are subject to the state's Open Meeting Law.

The Littleton Board of Selectmen has instituted this policy in order to direct town employees and elected and appointed officials on the proper and allowed uses of e-mail on the job and to assist town officials with compliance with the Open Meeting Law.

3 SCOPE

The following regulations apply to Town of Littleton employees and elected and appointed officials and may be updated from time to time and amended at the discretion of the Board of Selectmen.

3.1 USE OF E-MAIL BY TOWN EMPLOYEES

E-mail is a Town of Littleton resource and is provided as a business communications tool. In order to direct employees on the proper use of E-mail the Board of Selectmen have adopted the following policy:

- a) E-mail shall be used primarily for matters directly related to the business activities of the Town of Littleton and as a means to further the Town's mission by providing services that are efficient, complete, accurate and timely.
- b) Employees should have no expectation of privacy in their use of E-mail.
- c) No employee shall send E-mail under another employee's name without authorization and no employee shall change any portion of a previously sent E-mail message.
- d) E-mail shall not be used for outside business activities, political activity, fundraising activity, or charitable activity not sponsored by the Town of Littleton.
- e) E-mail shall not be used to promote discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, marital status, sex, political affiliation, religion, disability or sexual preference; promote sexual harassment; or to promote personal, political or religious business or beliefs.
- f) Occasional, incidental personal use of E-mail is permitted but subject to monitoring.

This policy is based on "Guidelines for the use of E-mail by members of governmental bodies." issued by the Middlesex County District Attorney's Office, and on Electronic Mail Personnel Policies issued by the Oregon Secretary of State's Office.

3.2 USE OF E-MAIL BY TOWN BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

The Open Meeting Law states that “All meetings of a governmental body shall be open to the public and any person shall be permitted to attend any meeting” and that “no quorum of a governmental body shall meet in private for the purpose of deciding on or deliberating toward a decision on any matter except as provided in this section.”¹ Meetings, as defined by the law, include discussion or consideration by a quorum of “any public business or public policy matter over which the governmental body has supervision, control, jurisdiction or advisory power.”²

Like private conversations held in person or over the telephone, E-mail conversations among a quorum of members of a governmental body that relate to public business violate the Open Meeting Law, as the public is deprived of the opportunity to attend and monitor the E-mail meeting. Private conversations should also be avoided as serial conversations may reach a quorum of members without the knowledge of all participants.

Certain “housekeeping” matters may be communicated outside of a meeting. Examples include meeting scheduling and cancellations, announcements and directions, requests to put items on an agenda and communications by members of governmental body to department heads or staff. Care must be taken not to use such communications to conduct deliberations.

Despite the speed and convenience of E-mail its use by members of a governmental body carries a high risk of violating the Open Meeting Law. For this reason it is the Selectmen’s policy that E-mail messages among members of a governmental body are best used carefully for matters of a purely housekeeping, reporting or administrative nature.

4 RESPONSIBILITY

4.1 SYSTEMS MANAGER

It is the responsibility of the Systems Manager or designee to provide this policy to users of e-mail when providing a Town of Littleton E-Mail account.

The Systems Manager or designee will provide licenses and updates to the e-mail client programs as needed. The Systems Manager or designee will assure that e-mail accounts are properly set up to archive e-mail. E-mail to be archived includes only that material which, if in paper format, would be subject to record retention policies. E-mail of a housekeeping nature, such as scheduling a meeting or inquiring about office hours need not be retained.

The Information Systems Manager or designee will provide access to training on the standard E-Mail software client. The Information Systems Manager or designee will also provide advice on the use of folders within the standard E-Mail client to facilitate archival and retrieval of E-Mail.

4.2 DEPARTMENT HEADS

The Department Head is responsible for ensuring that any employee who will be given access to computers and Internet services has read this policy, has understood this policy’s applicability to their activities, and has signed an agreement to abide by this policy. The Information Systems

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¹ MGL Chap. 39 Sec 23B.

² MGL Chap. 39 Sec 32A

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Department will not give access to an employee unless it receives a copy of the agreement signed by the employee and the department head. A signed copy will be placed in the employee's personnel file.

The Department Head will accommodate members of the public who request access to e-mail by providing a copy of the e-mail to the requestor. Acceptable formats for providing a copy include:

- Save the e-mail as a file and provide it on disk.
- Provide a printed copy of the e-mail
- Forward a copy of the e-mail to the requestor's e-mail account.

The method used will be at the discretion of the department head.

5 SUPPORTING POLICIES

This policy is to be used in conjunction with the Acceptable Use Policy.

6 ACKNOWLEDGMENT/RECEIPT FORM

I hereby acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Town of Littleton's E-mail Policy. I understand that all e-mail communications systems and all information transmitted by, received from, or stored in these systems are the property of the Town, and that I have no expectation of privacy in connection with the use of this equipment or with the transmission, receipt or storage of information in this equipment.

I agree not to access a file or retrieve any stored communication unless authorized. I acknowledge and consent to Town monitoring my use of e-mail at any time as provided by the E-mail Policy. Such monitoring may include printing and reading all electronic mail entering, leaving or stored on Town of Littleton equipment.

I have read and understand all the provisions specified in this policy.

Employee Signature

Date

Department Head Signature