

**Communication Policy Statement**

1. Purpose

The Board of Selectmen (Board) recognizes that communication is critical to an efficient Board and Town government but that some forms of communication can impact efficiency in a negative way or even go contrary to State law.

This policy is also intended as guidance to the members of the Board in communicating about town business. It applies to individual members of the Board and not to the Board acting as body.

2. Definitions

Public Meeting: For the purpose of this policy any discussion of town business involving 3 or more members of the Board including planned or unplanned gatherings, phone conversations and electronic mail.

3. Enactment

This policy is enacted upon a majority vote of the Board of Selectmen and may be amended or repealed from time to time by the Selectmen or by Town Meeting.

4. Policy

It is the policy of the Board that members of the Board will abide by the following during public meetings;

Communicate respectfully with the public, employees and other members of the Board. Avoid harsh words or profanity.

It is the policy of the Board that, at all times while holding the office of Selectman, members of the Board will abide by the following when communicating;

a. With Other Selectmen,

Selectmen should not discuss town affairs in groups with more than one other selectman unless in a public meeting convened in accordance with the Board of Selectmen Ordinance (Ch 11 Art II). This includes email, phone calls and face-to-face discussions.

The Right-to-Know act determines much of what can be communicated between selectmen in an unnoticed meeting. An unnoticed meeting is any communication of a quorum of the Board of Selectmen. Currently the quorum is set at 3 and includes: unplanned meetings ( at morning coffee, for example), phone conference calls, email and letters or memos.

b. With Town Employees (excluding the Town Administrator),

Communications by a Selectman with any Town employee should be limited to soliciting information to allow the selectmen to be informed. Communications for other purposes such as to give direction, instructions or suggestions should only be done by or at the direction of the Board as a whole and usually through the employee’s supervisor.

c. With the Town Administrator,

Communications by a Selectman with the Town Administrator is limited to receiving or conveying information or opinions. Any directives to the Town Administrator must come through a motion and vote of the Board as a whole.

d. With the Public,

It is the responsibility of the Board of Selectmen to keep the public informed. This applies not only to matters of proper notification governed by law but also to matters of any importance to the community.

The Board should, from time to time, send mailings to the entire community in order to:

- Apprise the community of important developing issues
- Solicit opinion or volunteers to serve on committees or boards

Communications between the public and a non-quorum subset of the selectmen can be considered confidential and not a matter of public record.

e. With Other Town Boards, Committees or Commissions,

Communication to other entities should always come from the Board as a whole unless a Selectman has been explicitly authorized to represent the Board by a majority vote.

While attendance and participation in meetings by individual Selectmen is encouraged they must be clear at each meeting when they have been authorized to represent the Board and when they have not.

f. With the Town Attorney,

Communication with the Town attorney is made through the Town Administrator unless the Board has clearly designated some other individual (Selectmen or other individual) by vote or consensus. In this case the Board must make clear the scope of the designee's task and typically this a limited set of related questions.

g. With the Media,

Generally, communication with the media should be accomplished through press releases that have been reviewed and approved by the Board. Communications by individual selectmen with members of the media should be done with great care and generally should be limited to reporting Board action and not personal opinion or speculation.

5. Electronic Mail

In an article entitled Right-to-know: Common Myths (Maine Townsman, May 2007) the Maine Municipal Association opines: *“Using email for procedural notices or one-way transmission of materials seems both appropriate and innocuous, but email conversations between board members about board business may run afoul of the obligation to conduct such business openly and in public.”*

6. Adoption and Revision History

Adopted on: 2/13/2013 YES 5 NO 0 Attested: \_\_\_\_\_.