

TOWN OF TRURO

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POLICY MEMORANDUM #66

Date: Adopted January 25, 2022. Revised September 13, 2022; February 25, 2025

** This policy was revised at the September 13, 2022 Select Board meeting solely to reflect the titles used in the Town Charter for the Town Manager and Select Board and to modify language to be gender neutral. No changes were made to the content of the Policy at that meeting.*

Subject: **TOWN OF TRURO PUBLIC COMMUNICATION POLICY**

INTRODUCTION

All communications generated or received by the Town of Truro, including those from employees, elected or appointed officials, and volunteers in their official capacity, are governed by Massachusetts Public Records Law. This includes written, electronic (emails, text messages, social media), and public relations communications.

PURPOSE

This policy establishes clear standards for communication among town officials, employees, and volunteers, ensuring transparency and accountability while respecting individuals' First Amendment rights to express personal opinions distinct from their municipal roles.

This policy aligns with:

- Policy #54: Code of Conduct
- Policy #62: Social Media Policy

APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to all Town employees, elected and appointed officials, and volunteers when acting in their official capacity.

EMAIL, CELL PHONE & TEXT COMMUNICATIONS

- Town-issued email accounts must be used for all official communications and not for personal use or expressing personal opinions on town matters.
- Communications must adhere to the standards of civility, respect, and integrity outlined in the Code of Conduct.
- Responses to public or media inquiries must specify whether the individual is speaking personally or on behalf of the board/committee.

- Personal email accounts used for town business are subject to the same guidelines and public records law.
- "Reply all" should not be used in board/committee emails to comply with Open Meeting Law, except for scheduling matters. Information shared with fellow committee members may be relayed through their staff liaison if outside of public meeting.
- All official email correspondence should be copied to the relevant department head, Town Manager, or Assistant Town Manager, as appropriate.
- Anonymous emails will not be responded to.
- Blind copying (Bcc) in official town emails is not permitted for board and committee members. Employees may only use blind carbon copy (BCC) in email communications in limited circumstances, including: (1) for HR-related matters requiring discretion and confidentiality, or (2) when sending to a large distribution list to protect recipient privacy and prevent excessive reply-all responses.

PUBLIC RECORDS & RETENTION

- Town boards and departments must securely maintain public records.
- Public records must be stored in a municipal building.
- The Town Clerk serves as the records custodian and provides access upon request per Massachusetts Public Records Law.

MEDIA INQUIRIES & PUBLIC STATEMENTS

- The Town Manager or designee serves as the primary spokesperson and may delegate media responses to department heads or staff.
- Board/committee members responding to media must clarify if they speak as an individual or represent the board, which requires a majority vote.
- Official town statements cannot be printed on town stationery or town-sponsored media without approval.

SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION & STATEMENTS

- Only designated employees may post on official Town of Truro social media accounts.
- Posts must be accurate, respectful, and relevant, complying with public records law.
- Employees and officials using personal social media must clarify when expressing personal opinions and should avoid discussing town matters unless explicitly stating they do not represent the town.
- Refer to [social media policy # 62](#) for policy and procedures for use of social media platforms.

CELL PHONES

- Town-issued or reimbursed cell phones are subject to public records requests.
- Town-issued phones may not be used for personal purposes.
- Personal cell phones used for town business may be subject to public records requests.

PUBLIC COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION DISSEMINATION

- The town's website (www.truro-ma.gov) serves as the primary source for official information.
- Any communication from a town entity for public dissemination must be submitted to the Town Manager or designee for inclusion in official town channels.
- Boards/committees may seek to use additional communication methods. They must have a majority vote and approval from the Town Manager or designee, and comply with public records and ethics laws.
- Individuals communicating opinions must clarify they do not represent the town unless authorized by a board vote.

LEGAL & ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Town communications must comply with conflict-of-interest laws (<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/summary-of-the-conflict-of-interest-law-for-municipal-employees>), barring municipal employees from using their positions for personal gain or political activity.
- Town-sponsored publications and social media cannot be used for political advocacy, as defined in Massachusetts General Law.
- Employees and officials must ensure they have legal rights before posting third-party content.
- Privacy considerations apply when sharing images or videos of individuals in some settings, which may require consent or modification to obscure identities.

CORRECTIONS

- The Town Manager or designee will oversee corrections of factual errors in official communications across all relevant platforms.
- Corrections will be made as soon as practical and will not unnecessarily repeat the original error.

This policy ensures the Town of Truro's communications remain professional, transparent, and legally compliant. For further guidance, contact the Town Manager's office.



Susan Areson, Chair



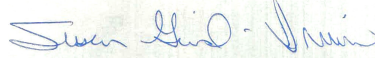
Nancy Medoff, Clerk



Robert Weinstein, Vice-Chair



Stephanie Rein



Susan Girard-Irwin
Truro Select Board