

# ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS AND COMPUTER USAGE

## POLICY

99-03

### I. INTRODUCTION

This Policy is intended to provide guidance on the appropriate use of the Town's electronic communication and information equipment and systems ("Systems"). Such Systems include, but are not limited to, computer workstations, laptops, tablets (such as iPads), hardware and software, electronic mail ("e-mail"), telephones, cellular phones, pagers, smartphones, facsimile machines, and the Internet.

Use of the Town's Systems by any employee, elected or appointed official, contractor, consultant, or volunteer ("user") shall constitute acceptance of the terms of this Policy and any such additional related policies that may be issued by the Town.

Access and use of the Town's Systems is intended for business-related purposes, including communicating with coworkers and colleagues, and researching topics relevant to Town business. All existing state, federal, and local laws and Town policies apply to your conduct while using the Town's Systems, particularly those that govern intellectual property protection, sexual or other harassment, misuse of Town resources, privacy rights, and confidentiality.

This Policy sets forth general guidelines and examples of prohibited uses of the Town's Systems for illustrative purposes, but does not attempt to identify all required or prohibited activities by users. Questions regarding whether a particular activity or use is acceptable should be directed to the Town Manager. These guidelines may be supplemented by more specific administrative procedures and rules governing day-to-day management and operation of the Town's Systems. Furthermore, this Policy may be amended from time to time, and is meant to be read in conjunction with all other applicable policies of the Town of Groton.

### II. PRIVACY

Users should not expect any right of privacy in said Systems, including electronic communications and information made or stored on the Town's Systems. The Town retains the right to inspect its Systems, including any Town-owned or leased computer or electronic communications equipment, any data contained in such equipment, and any data sent or received by that equipment. The Town will exercise that right when reasonable and in pursuit of legitimate needs for supervision, control, and the efficient and proper operation of the workplace. Users should be aware that appropriately-authorized network administrators may monitor network traffic, and/or access all files, including e-mail files and Internet use history, stored on any equipment.

All electronic files and documents originating from or passing through the Town's Systems are considered to be the property of the Town.

### III. SECURITY

All usernames and passwords are for the exclusive use of the individual to whom they are assigned. The user is personally responsible and accountable for all activities carried out under his/her username, and should take all reasonable precautions to protect his/her password. The password associated with a particular username must not be given or divulged to another person (with the exception of the Systems administrator). No one may use, or attempt to use, a username or password assigned to another person, or pose as another user.

### IV. INTERNET GUIDELINES

While we increasingly use the Internet as a tool in the workplace, misuse or abuse of the Internet can result in wasted time, as well as potentially violate laws, bylaws, ordinances, regulations, or other Town policies. Therefore, users should adhere to the following Internet Guidelines.

- A. Use for Official Business. It is the Town's policy to restrict Internet access to official Town business. Abuse, in the opinion of the Town Manager, of the Internet for personal matters is prohibited.
- B. Authorization. Authorization for Internet access must be obtained through the Systems administrator. Once authorization is approved, each user is responsible for the security of his or her account password and will be held responsible for all use or misuse of such account (see Section III, Security, above).
- C. Compliance with Laws. Users must not utilize the Internet to knowingly violate any state, federal or local law, or the laws of any other nation. United States copyright and patent laws may apply to information and material(s) accessed through the Internet, and care should be taken to not violate the copyrights or patents of others on or through the use of the Internet.
- D. Viruses. All appropriate precautions should be taken to detect viruses, including scanning all computer files (including attachments) that are downloaded and/or opened from the Internet, before installation or execution of such files/attachments. Users should direct any questions regarding the proper use of virus detection software to the Systems administrator prior to downloading and/or opening any computer files/attachments. If you suspect a virus, notify the Systems administrator.
- E. Town Monitoring. As noted above, users should not have any expectation of privacy as to their computer or Internet usage, including the receipt and sending of e-mail. It is possible for the Town to monitor Internet usage histories and/or patterns, and the Town may inspect, without limitation, any portion of its Systems, including files stored either on the computer hard drive or the Town's server, to the extent necessary to ensure compliance with this Policy or any other applicable state, federal, or local law or Town policy.
- F. Prohibited Practices.

- 1) Users shall not use Town computers knowingly to download or distribute pirated software or data. Any software or files downloaded via the Internet may be used only in ways that are consistent with their licenses or copyrights. The downloading of games or other programs for amusement/entertainment purposes is strictly prohibited.
- 2) Users shall not make an unauthorized attempt to enter into another person's computer (commonly referred to as "hacking").
- 3) All computer hardware and software shall at all times remain the property of the Town of Groton, and may not be removed from their respective sites or downloaded onto personal computer equipment. The installation or upgrade of computer software programs on computer hardware, without the express written approval of the Systems administrator, is strictly prohibited.
- 4) Users must not utilize the Internet to deliberately propagate any virus, worm, "Trojan horse," trap-door or back-door program code, or knowingly disable or overload any computer system or network, or to circumvent any system intended to protect the privacy or security of another user.
- 5) Users shall not disclose confidential information or promote personal political beliefs, discrimination, sexual harassment, and any unlawful activity; nor shall the Town's computers be used for private financial gain, or commercial, advertising or solicitation purposes.
- 6) Use of the Town's Systems, including computers, to display any kind of image or document that is obscene, pornographic, sexually explicit or sexually suggestive, is prohibited. Additionally, these materials may not be archived, stored, distributed, edited, or recorded using Town's network, printing, or computing resources.
- 7) Users shall not utilize the Town's Systems for the purpose of sending "chain-letters," unsolicited mass e-mails, or other "spam."
- 8) Users shall not maliciously use or disrupt Town's computers, networks, or Internet services; nor breach the Systems' security features; nor misuse or damage the Town's equipment; nor misuse passwords or accounts; nor attempt to access unauthorized sites; nor use the Town's Systems after such access has been denied or revoked; nor attempt to delete, erase or otherwise conceal any information stored on any portion of the Town's Systems.
- 9) Users shall not abuse access to the Internet for non-work related purposes, including but not limited to: social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, non-work related blogs or websites, or personal shopping sites during work hours using either the Town's Systems or devices supplied by the user.

**V. ELECTRONIC MAIL ("E-MAIL") GUIDELINES**

- A. The Internet does not guarantee the privacy and confidentiality of information. Sensitive material transferred over the Internet may be at risk of detection by a third party. Users must exercise caution and care when transferring such material in any form.
- B. The Secretary of State's Office of the Commonwealth has determined that e-mail qualifies as "public records," as defined in Chapter 4, section 7(26) of the Massachusetts General Laws. Therefore, all e-mail mail sent by or received through the Town's Systems shall be archived by the Systems administrator. All users shall retain either a printed or digital record of e-mail sent by or received through the Town's Systems, in the same manner that other paper records are kept by their departments, and in accordance with the Record Retention requirements.
- C. Users should be aware that opening programs or files attached to email messages may cause computer viruses to infect the Town's Systems, and thus should only open such attachments from anticipated and trusted sources.
- D. Employees shall not broadcast messages to all employees via e-mail without permission from the Town Manager.
- E. Town email is to be used for official Town business only.

## **VI. TELEPHONE USAGE**

Telephones (including cellular phones and smartphones) are provided for business use. Personal telephone calls may be permitted, but users should exercise good judgment in making such calls. Managers/department heads are responsible for monitoring their employees' telephone usage. Excessive usage for non-business related purposes, as well as misuse of telephones, such as to make harassing or threatening calls, may result in discipline, up to and including termination from employment.

Employees are reminded that text messages or other similar messages sent via cell phones or smartphones may constitute public records, and, therefore, any such messages pertaining to official business of the Town should be maintained as public records, in the same manner as e-mail messages (see Section V, above)

## **VII. VIOLATIONS OF POLICY**

A violation/violations of this Policy may result in either the suspension or permanent loss of the privilege to use the Town's Systems. It may also result in disciplinary action being taken against the employee, up to and including termination from employment. Any disciplinary action taken against any employee may be appealed up to the Board of Selectmen. Additionally, users shall be personally liable for any losses, costs or damages incurred by the Town related to violations of this Policy. Similarly, the illegal use of the Town's Systems may result in referral to law enforcement authorities. Employees shall report violations

of this Policy to their supervisor, or in the case of department heads, directly to the Town Manager. Retaliation against another user for reporting a violation or violations of this Policy, including the use of e-mail or the Internet in a retaliatory manner, is strictly prohibited by the Town.

**ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS AND COMPUTER USAGE POLICY**

This acknowledges that I have received and reviewed the Electronic Communications and Computer Usage Policy of the Town of Groton. By signing this form, I agree to abide by the Policy and any Guidelines promulgated thereunder, and I agree to review periodically any changes or modifications. I recognize that the law and associated Policy regarding the use of the Internet, electronic mail and the Town's electronic communications and information systems are continually evolving. Therefore, I understand that my regular review of this Policy, as it may be amended, is required.

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*To be included in employee's personnel file.*