

TOWN OF WEATHERSFIELD, VERMONT
ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS/INTERNET USE POLICY

I. POLICY OBJECTIVES

- (a) The use of a personal computer is an important part of conducting Town business and the computers are public property. As such, the Town management has the right to inspect the contents of any publicly-owned computer or any computer used on municipal time, including hard drives, floppy disks, or any other media, to insure that the users are complying with the provisions of this Policy.
- (b) Records protected by State or Federal confidentiality statutes and/or regulations are exempt from this Policy.

II. GENERAL PRACTICES

- (a) Computers are provided to Town employees and elected/appointed officials for conducting public business. As such, private use of computers should be kept to a minimum and must not interfere with job performance.
- (b) No public computer should be used for any profit-making activity either during, or after, the workday.
- (c) Use of computers for private business should be similar to the use of the telephone.
- (d) All correspondence received on a public computer, involving public business, is addressed by the 'Open Meeting Law' and 'Public Records' provisions of the Vermont Statutes Annotated, in that such correspondence is available to the public under the terms Statutes. Therefore, no correspondence is to be deleted if it is of a public nature. Public business e-mail may be separated into folders labeled "public" and "exempt," but must be retained.

III. COMPUTER SECURITY

- (a) Computer security is the responsibility of each user, who shall make sure that adequate data protection, through the use of passwords and other resources, is in effect.
- (b) Employees and elected/appointed officials must use passwords to access the operating system of the Town's local area network, and provide those passwords to the Town Manager for a confidential master password list.
- (c) The employee or elected/appointed official, with the knowledge of and permission from the Town Manager, may change passwords.
- (d) Employees and elected/appointed officials may install only approved software on municipally owned computer equipment. Permission must be obtained from the Town Manager prior to the installation.
- (e) All installation diskettes or compact disks shall be scanned with the approved and up-to-date anti-virus software prior to installation on any municipally owned computer equipment.

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- (f) Employees and elected/appointed officials shall not install non-licensed, or 'pirated' software on municipally owned computer equipment. For the purposes of this Policy, non-licensed software shall include those applications purchased for single unit installation and which are installed on multiple computers or any software that is not legally licensed to the Town of Weathersfield.
- (g) For the purposes of internet access, Town employees and elected/appointed officials shall use Netscape Version 4 and Eudora Light Version 3, as provided by the Town, for web site access and e-mail access. These applications may be upgraded or changed as necessary by direction of the Town Manager.

IV. COMPUTERIZED VIRUS PROTECTION

- (a) Each computer user is responsible for insuring protection from viruses.
- (b) The Town shall provide a virus protection software package which shall be installed on all Town-owned computers. The primary user of each computer shall be responsible for updating the virus definitions, via the Internet or local area network, on a minimum of a monthly basis.
- (c) Computer users should not open any file or program unless they know the source or are expecting a file. This is especially true for e-mail attachments.

V. ELECTRONIC MAIL [E-MAIL]

- (a) Transmission of electronic messages on communications media shall be treated with the same degree of propriety, professionalism, and confidentiality as written correspondence. However, employees and elected/appointed officials do not have any expectation of privacy to e-mail that is sent or received on a Town-owned computer or on Town time. E-mail sent or received is not considered "confidential." The Town Manager, or his designee, has the right to authorize the viewing of a person's e-mail.
- (b) E-mail is for authorized users. The transmission of materials or messages that involve the use of obscene/offensive language, images or jokes, sexually explicit materials, or messages that disparage any group or classification of individuals is prohibited, whether or not a recipient has consented to or requested such material. Unsolicited e-mail that does not reasonably appear to be of a public nature should be deleted unopened. Any questions to the application of this Policy should be addressed to the Town Manager.
- (c) Employees and elected/appointed officials may use e-mail to communicate with individuals outside Town government. This use will be similar to personal use of the telephone in that it cannot interfere with the execution of their duties and it may not be for personal gain, illegal, disruptive, or unethical activities.

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- (d) Citizens contacting Town government shall have the same right to a timely response as with any other form of communication. It shall be the responsibility of each employee or elected/appointed official assigned an e-mail account to review the account on a daily basis during the work week.
- (e) Users are prohibited from using e-mail to send chain letters, solicitations for private gain, or any information in violation of this Policy. Users shall take reasonable measures to limit the size of e-mail messages and not attach large files to sent messages.

VI. INTERNET ACCESS

- (a) Internet access is an important part of many employees' and elected/appointed officials' ability to perform their jobs. However, access has been provided to these persons for municipal use. Any violation of this Policy can result in an employee and elected/appointed official being disconnected from the Internet, which may effect job performance.
- (b) Accessing materials or messages that involves the use of obscene/offensive language, images, jokes, sexually explicit materials, or messages that disparage any person, group, or classification of individuals is prohibited whether or not a recipient has consented or requested such material. Unsolicited material is to be removed from the screen immediately, whether obscene or not.
- (c) Internet access is not to be used for personal gain, commercial activity, or investment activity during or after work hours.

VII. DISCIPLINE

- (a) Town management has the right to review the contents of any user's computer hard drive, floppy disks, or other media at any time to ensure compliance with this Policy.
- (b) The user has the right to be present during such a review.
- (c) Any items found in violation of this Policy shall be grounds for disciplinary action against an employee under the Town of Weathersfield's personnel rules and regulations. Such action may include written warnings, suspension, or termination depending on the severity of the offense.
- (d) In addition, the Town of Weathersfield shall have the right to suspend, terminate, or revoke internet access privileges for any person found in violation of this Policy.

VIII. INCONSISTENT POLICIES REPEALED

This Policy shall amend and replace any provisions of any policy of the Town of Weathersfield in effect at the time of enactment of this Policy governing any activity included in this Policy.

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IX. SEVERABILITY

If any section, subsection, subdivision, paragraph, sentence, clause, or phrase of this Policy, or any part thereof, is for any reason held to be unconstitutional or invalid or ineffective by any court of competent jurisdiction, such decision shall not affect the validity or effectiveness of the remaining portions of this Policy or any part thereof.

The Board of Selectmen hereby declares that it would have passed each section, subsection, subdivision, paragraph, sentence, clause, or phrase thereof irrespective of the fact that any one or more sections, subsections, subdivisions, paragraphs, sentences, clauses, or phrases be declared unconstitutional or ineffective.

X. DISTRIBUTION

- (a) This Policy shall be incorporated in to the Town of Weathersfield's personnel rules and regulations.
- (b) A copy of this Policy shall be provided to each employee and appointed/elected official of the Town of Weathersfield.

XI. EFFECT

No section of this Policy shall be construed to supersede or replace any Vermont statute.

This Policy shall be entered in the minutes of the Board of Selectmen's meeting.

The foregoing Policy is hereby adopted by the Selectmen of the Town of Weathersfield, Vermont, this second day of July, 2001, and is effective as of this date until amended or repealed.

C. Peter Cole, Chairperson

Randy S. Brown
Patricia W. Daniels

Frederick W. Crowley
David T. Fuller

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RECEIPT

I hereby acknowledge that I have been provided a copy of this Policy.

I further acknowledge that I am responsible for familiarizing myself with the contents and provisions of this Policy.

[Signature]

[Printed Name]

[Date]