



POLICY FOR THE OPERATION AND USE OF

**The
Town of Boxborough's
Government Access
Channel**

Revised Feb 1, 2009

CONTENTS

I. CHANNEL DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY	3
II. MISSION AND OBJECTIVES.....	4
III. OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES	4
A. Channel Designation	4
B. Modes of Cablecast.....	4
1. Live Cablecasts	4
2. Delayed Cablecast.....	4
3. Municipal TV Produced Programs	5
4. Outside Source Programs.....	5
C. Access Policy	5
D. Appeal Process	5
E. Program Content	6
1. Public Meetings	6
2. Informational Programming	6
3. Public Service Announcements	6
4. Emergency Messages / Announcements	6
6. Prohibited Cablecasting.....	8
7. In-Service Training.....	8
F. Endorsements	8
G. Promotions.....	9
H. Use of Town Equipment.....	9
I. Videography and Production	9
1. Requests for Programming	9
2. DVD Duplication	10
J. Program Content.....	10
1. Technical Standards	10
2. Human Errors	10
K. Departmental Responsibilities.....	11
L. Staffing.....	11
M. Funding.....	11

I. CHANNEL DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY

The Cable Television Regulatory Ordinance and the Cable Television Franchise Agreements, the latter of which the Boxborough Board of Selectmen (BoS) has executed with Comcast and Verizon, set forth the terms for the Town Government Channel that can be operated by and for the Town of Boxborough. In the Cable Television Franchise Agreements, the BoS established that the cable companies “shall set aside and dedicate two or more channels for Town governmental purposes” and that the “use of the channel shall rest exclusively with the Town.”

The Boxborough Board of Selectmen is the Issuing Authority for Cable Franchise Agreements for the Town. Subject to their oversight, the BoS has delegated the authority to manage the Cable Franchise Agreement to the Boxborough Information Technology Committee (BITcom), including all rates, customer service and other compliance issues. In **December 2008**, the BoS placed responsibility for development and implementation of this use policy with the BITcom.

Upon the recommendation of the BITcom, the BoS has determined that the town shall operate only a Government channel, in accordance with the terms of its franchise agreements with Comcast and Verizon governing Public Access, Government, and Educational cablecast services. As determined by the Board of Selectmen, under this policy, at this time, Boxborough will not operate a Public Access or Educational channel, and shall operate only the Boxborough **Government Channel**. The Chairman of the BITcom or a person so designated by the BITcom shall be the Boxborough Cable Content Officer (BCCO). The BCCO, in conjunction with the BITcom, is the Town’s liaison with the Comcast/Verizon cable providers.

Under the authority of the Board of Selectmen and in accordance with this policy, the BITcom is responsible for providing cablecast content services on behalf of the Town of Boxborough to document Town events and promote public awareness of Town services. This document shall serve as a guide to the development and usage of this channel.

II. MISSION AND OBJECTIVES

The Town of Boxborough's Government Channel is operated by the Town and cablecast from the Town Hall via Comcast & Verizon Communications video uplinks. The Government Channel's main objective is to provide non-political, non-editorialized direct information to the citizens of Boxborough concerning Town government operations and programs. The channel may also provide programs concerning the operations and programs of the Acton-Boxborough Regional Schools and of other governmental agencies.

The Town of Boxborough's Government Channel operates as a function of the BITcom in such a manner as to maximize service to the public and provide efficient operations and communication within the community. BITcom will coordinate and exchange with other local governments involved in video programming and production to establish and maintain cooperative arrangements with local cablecast and cable companies and other production groups.

III. OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

A. Channel Designation

The Town Government Channel was established initially on cable channel 9 for Comcast customers and has since been expanded to channel 39 for Verizon FIOS customers. The Channel has been designated "the Boxborough Government Channel".

B. Modes of Cablecast

1. Live Cablecasts

A limited amount of live coverage will be provided. Generally, this will include cablecast of BoS meetings and other selected public meetings of governmental bodies (e.g., School Committee, Finance Committee, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Conservation Committee, Board of Library Trustees, etc) and of Town sponsored events.

2. Delayed Cablecast

Many public meetings and events will be recorded for cablecast at a later time.

3. Municipal TV Produced Programs

The Town may produce or contract for the production of programs which illustrate the functions or operations of Town government. These may include videographed documentary programs on the various Town services provided to and for citizens, public service announcements, crime prevention outreach programs, emergency response and management information, and Town sponsored cultural events.

4. Outside Source Programs

Programming produced outside the Town may be cablecast so long as the programming is consistent with the governmental purpose of this channel and is consistent with the sponsoring Town board or department's function and purpose.

C. Access Policy

The Town of Boxborough's Government Channel is not a "public access" channel. Access to the Town's government channel shall be limited to the Town, its boards and officials. In the case of a multi-member board, access shall be limited to the board itself. Individual members of an elected or appointed board shall have no right of access to the channel. In addition, programming concerning the operations and functions of the Acton-Boxborough Regional Schools and of other governmental agencies may also be cablecast, subject to the approval of the BITcom and subject to the foregoing restriction regarding multi-member boards. Requests for such access by non-Town of Boxborough municipal agencies shall be co-ordinated through the corresponding Town of Boxborough entity.

D. Appeal Process

BITcom will establish a procedure to handle an appeal by a board whose requested program for cablecast has been denied by the BITcom.

A requesting board can appeal for a review of its program request which will be handled per the procedure established.

E. Program Content

1. Public Meetings

Public meetings, including but not limited to BoS meetings, School Committee meetings, Town Meeting, Town Counsel Workshops or all meetings of official public record, may be cablecast either live or in delayed replay, will be shown gavel-to-gavel, *and shall not be edited for content*. Meetings in which there are long delays for recesses or executive sessions may be edited, but only to exclude those recessed portions of the meeting. Public forums or symposiums which are not a matter of public record, and/or in which a quorum of elected officials do not attend and/or vote may be edited for playback when the program is intended for (and is presented as) portions or highlights of the meeting.

2. Informational Programming

Informational programming may only be sponsored by and presented on behalf of regular appointed or elected boards and officials of the Town. Individual members of a multi-member appointed or elected board shall have no right of access to the channel. The BCCO must approve format and length. Such cablecasts are intended to provide information useful to Boxborough residents regarding Town operations, services and events and must be consistent with the governmental purpose and/or functions of the sponsoring Town board or department.

3. Public Service Announcements

Video announcements (usually 2-3 minutes in length) of Town-sponsored events or informational messages about Town programs and services are produced as needed. These Public Service Announcements may be cablecast on the Government Channel. Public Service Announcements will identify the Town of Boxborough and Town department, where appropriate, as sponsor or producer.

4. Emergency Messages / Announcements

Government use of the Government Channel during emergencies and disasters declared by the Town's Emergency Management Director or his designee has absolute priority over all other programming. During such emergencies or disasters, the Government Channel shall be permitted to accept live, recorded, character-generated or audio information from other governmental or non-governmental entities when such announcements are deemed necessary by the Town's Emergency Management Director or his designee to provide important public information pertaining to the emergency or disaster or other conditions requiring protection of the public health, safety and welfare.

5. Other Programming

Town Government Channel may, upon occasion, cablecast other programs such as, but not limited to:

- ◆ Selected items from the official Town of Boxborough website, including the calendar
- ◆ Budget hearings and community forums
- ◆ Town-sponsored events, job announcements, and programs via a video bulletin board. This service may be cablecast in conjunction with regular programming
- ◆ Other local area governmental meetings. The Government Channel is accessible, through the BITcom, to other local governments and public authorities for cablecasts of governmental meetings and activities
- ◆ Promotional announcements for Town-sponsored or sanctioned events
- ◆ It shall be the policy of the Town Government channel to cablecast acceptable and approved mature content programming during FCC specified safe harbor hours when children are less likely to constitute a significant portion of the viewing audience. When possible, acceptable mature programming will be preceded by verbal and/or text information stating that the programming content is intended for a mature audience
- ◆ Open discussion at a public meeting of a Town governmental body, related to ballot questions, warrant articles, override issues

6. Prohibited Cablecasting

The following activities are not permitted to be cablecast on the Government Channel:

- ◆ Commercial advertising or other information which promotes the sale of any product or service, including but not limited to any lottery, gift enterprise or similar promotion
- ◆ Programming which directly promotes religious beliefs or religious philosophies
- ◆ Subject matter which is defamatory in nature (e.g., slander)
- ◆ Programming content which, in the opinion of the BITcom or BoS is indecent, obscene or illegal.
- ◆ Programs containing copyrighted materials without proper copyright authorization. Outside agencies submitting programming for telecast are responsible for obtaining all necessary copyright clearance and shall hold the Town and its successors, departments, officers, employees, servants, attorneys and agents, harmless in any case of copyright infringement
- ◆ Materials provided by or for declared candidates for elected office. Candidates for elected office may not use the Government Channel as a part of a campaign effort. This exclusion does not apply to persons who receive air time as part of official public meeting coverage, candidate forums, special election coverage and coverage of incumbents performing official duties which warrant cable casting
- ◆ Programming related to political campaign purposes, such as the election of a candidate or the passage or defeat of a ballot question or override-related article, as well as programming advocating support or defeat of town meeting warrant articles

7. In-Service Training

Production of videos for training and education of Town employees or recruitment videos for new employees, which are not intended for the general public, may be considered for cablecast. These programs are generally not provided or produced by the BITcom. With sponsorship of a cognizant board or official per Section 2, BITcom may cablecast on the Boxborough Government Channel training materials for volunteer boards produced elsewhere. Such material should meet prevailing guidelines mentioned in this policy document and its revisions.

F. Endorsements

The Government Channel shall not endorse specific brand names of products for consumer use. Any program underwritten by any individual, business or organization may credit that support by acknowledgment as follows:

“This program was made possible (in part) with funds provided by _____.”

Editorial content and related decisions will rest with BITcom and not the sponsoring agency.

G. Promotions

Promotional announcements for Town-sponsored events and public service announcements for Town agencies are acceptable for cablecast. Requests for such announcements from outside governmental agencies are subject to approval by the BCCO, who shall, if necessary, direct questions of appropriateness to the Town Administrator or the BoS for resolution.

Promotional announcements for political events and activities are not permitted on the Town's Government Channel.

H. Use of Town Equipment

Use of Town-owned video and related production equipment shall be restricted to Town activities and by personnel identified by BITcom. Loaning of equipment for personal or outside agency use shall not be authorized.

I. Videography and Production

1. Requests for Programming

Requests for programming may be made via memorandum by Town Departments and by written request from outside governmental agencies to the BCCO. In order to allow for sufficient time for production, scheduling, and publicity, requests must be made at least **four weeks in advance** of the intended cablecast date.

Requests for information to be cablecast on the video bulletin board must be submitted in writing, along with the start and end dates of the announcements at least one week in advance of the start date. BITcom cannot guarantee that requested announcements will be cablecast.

Because of programming commitments, requests for filming of programs or services provided by the Town for cablecast on the Government Channel will be granted on a limited basis. Government Channel programming remains the property of the Town and unauthorized use is prohibited without the expressed, written consent from the BCCO.

2. DVD Duplication

Viewers are encouraged to record programs from the cable channel, and unrestricted access is allowed for the recording of programming off the air for private use. Citizens may request copies of previously cablecast materials still retained within the town video archives. These will be provided in DVD format only, for a service fee of \$15.00 per copy. Such requests must be submitted in writing to the BCCO or Town Administrator, accompanied by a check or money order for the total fees due.

J. Program Content

1. Technical Standards

Before externally produced programs or other productions may be scheduled for cablecast, they must be approved for minimum technical and cablecast aesthetic standards, to be determined by the BITcom or a designated representative.

2. Human Errors

Should human error result in the cablecast of incorrect information over the Government Channel, the Town of Boxborough, its officers, employees, and agents shall be held harmless.

K. Departmental Responsibilities

Boards and Departments requesting program development must be willing to assist in writing and producing the program in its entirety. The requesting entity shall be responsible for content development and must identify a contact person to provide necessary information, including but not limited to research, data, persons, and props to be used for the production. The contact person must be available to be present on-site during production and post-production as needed.

L. Staffing

To administer the channel, part-time staff positions may be created as per the town recruitment procedure and are limited to 19 hours/week. All operational positions will work under the supervision of the Town IT Director, who will be guided by BITcom, through the Town Administrator, on matters related to video cablecast and channel operation and use.

M. Funding

Limited funding for equipment, along with limited technical and programming support staff assistance is provided by the Town through the Cable Television Franchise Agreement. Personnel, small fixed assets, office supplies, some equipment and equipment repairs are budgeted by the BITcom.