



# Government Cable Channel Policy

SELECT BOARD

Town of Boxborough, MA

## Intent and Purpose

To establish a policy for the Mission, Objectives and Procedures for Boxborough’s Government Cable Channel Policy.

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## Channel Description and History

The Cable Television Regulatory Ordinance and the Cable Television Franchise Agreements, the latter of which the Boxborough Select Board (BSB) 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 BSB 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 Select Board is the Licensing Franchise Authority (LFA) for the Town. In December 2008, the BSB placed responsibility for development and implementation of this use policy with the Boxborough Information Technology Committee (BITcom). At the same time, subject to their oversight, the BSB delegated the authority to manage the Cable Franchise Agreement to the BITcom including all rates, customer service, and other compliance issues. When the BITcom became inactive, the BSB delegated the authority to manage the Cable Franchise Agreement to the Town Administrator including all rates, customer service, and other compliance issues, again subject to BSB oversight.

The BSB 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, Educational, and Government (“PEG”) cablecast services. As determined by the Select Board, under this policy, at this time, Boxborough will not operate a Public Access or Educational channel, and shall operate only the Boxborough **Government Cable Channel**. The Town Administrator or designee shall be the Boxborough Cable Content Officer (BCCO). The BCCO is the Town’s liaison with the Comcast/Verizon cable providers.

Under the authority of the Select Board and in accordance with this policy, the Town Administrator 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.

### Mission and Objectives

The Town of Boxborough’s Government Cable Channel is operated by the Town and cablecast from the Town Hall via Comcast & Verizon Communications video uplinks. The Town also provides Live Streaming of meetings through the Town’s On-Demand website to internet capable devices. 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 Town in such a manner as to maximize service to the public and provide efficient operations and communication within the community. The Town Administrator 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.

### Operational Procedures

#### Channel Designation

The Town Government Channel is established on cable channel 9 for Comcast customers and cable channel 39 for Verizon FiOS customers. The Channel has been designated “the Boxborough Community Television Channel” better known as “BxB-TV”. [Despite the name, this is a “Government Channel” and neither a Public Access or Educational channel.]

## Modes of Cablecast

### 1. Live Cablecasts

A limited amount of live coverage will be provided in specific locations. Generally, this will include cablecast of BSB meetings and other selected public meetings of governmental bodies (e.g., Planning Board, Town Meeting, 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 video graphed 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 (“bicycled 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, committee or commission (“board”) or department’s function and purpose. Programming must be approved by the BCCO before it is aired and such material should meet prevailing guidelines mentioned in this policy document and its revisions and follow the requirements of section 5 and 6 of the Access Policy.

## 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 Town Administrator and subject to the foregoing restriction regarding multi-member boards. Requests for such access by non-Town of Boxborough municipal agencies shall be coordinated through the corresponding Town of Boxborough entity.

## Appeals Process

The Town Administrator will establish a procedure to handle an appeal by a board or party whose requested program for cablecast has been denied by the Town Administrator. A requesting board or party can appeal for a review of its program request which will be handled per the established procedure.

## Program Content

### 1. Public Meetings and Content editing

Public meetings, including but not limited to BSB 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 does 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. [Note: a video

recording of is not an official public record of that meeting but can be used to define the style and tenor of a 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 or contact. Please reference the BXB-TV Town Website.

## **4. Emergency Messages / Announcements**

Government use of the Government Channel during emergencies and disasters declared by the Town's Emergency Management Director or 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 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 Town Administrator, 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 necessary, acceptable mature programming will be preceded by verbal and/or text information stating that the programming content is only 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 Town Administrator or BSB 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 boards 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 Town. With sponsorship by a cognizant board or official per Section 2, the Town 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 and follow the requirements of section 5 and 6 above.

### Endorsements

The Government Channel shall not endorse specific brand names of products for consumer use. There should never be a 'Call to action' to buy or do something specific.

Any program underwritten by any individual, business or organization may acknowledge that support as follows:

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

Editorial content and related decisions will rest with the BCCO and/or Town Administrator and not the sponsoring agency.

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

### Use of Town Equipment

Use of Town-owned video and related production equipment shall be restricted to Town activities and by personnel identified by the Town Administrator or designee. Loaning of equipment for personal or outside agency use shall not be authorized. In 2017 two sets of Entertainment and News Gathering (ENG) equipment (video camera, tripod and wireless microphones) were purchased by the Town for Town use. Training is available to Boxborough residents on the ENG equipment by Littleton Community Television (LCTV). Trained Boxborough residents can sign out the ENG equipment but only for Town productions. Final product should be made available for the airing on BXB-TV. Under the Intermunicipal Agreement (IMA) with the Town of Littleton/LCTV Boxborough residents have access to the Littleton Cable studio to

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use the video editing equipment and technical assistance for creating such productions. No private use of the Grange Hall broadcast equipment is allowed.

## Videography and Production

### 1. Requests for Programming

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 programming may be made via memorandum by Town Departments and Boards and by written request from outside governmental agencies to the BCCO. Such programming could include coverage of a League of Women Voters candidate forum or an Acton Boxborough Regional School District information forum.

Because of resource 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.

Requests for information to be cablecast on the video community 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. The Town cannot guarantee that requested announcements will be cablecast

### 2. Programming Recording and Download

Unrestricted access is allowed for the recording or downloading of programming for private use.

## Technical Standards and Human Errors

### 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 Town Administrator or a designated representative.

### 2. Human Errors

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

## Staffing

To administer the channel, part-time staff positions may be created in compliance with the Town Personnel Policy. All operational positions will work under the supervision of the Town Administrator or designee on matters related to video cablecast and channel operation and use.

Currently staffing, administration and management of BXB-TV is through an Intermunicipal Agreement with Littleton Community Television. The Town Administrators of Boxborough and Littleton are responsible for administering the yearly agreement.

## 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.

Technical support through the LCTV IMA requires previous authorization of the Town Administrator and the Select Board.

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## Funding

The source of funding for equipment, along with limited technical and programming support staff assistance is provided to the Town through the Cable Television Franchise Agreements. Personnel, small fixed assets, office supplies, some equipment and equipment repairs are budgeted, paid for, and administered by the Town Administrator and the LCTV IMA using funds from this source.

*This policy revokes and replaces all previous policies on this topic including the policy titled Policy for the Operation and Use of the Town of Boxborough's Government Access Channel revised February 1, 2009*