

# TOWN OF TRURO

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## POLICY MEMORANDUM #66

Date: Adopted January 25, 2022; rev 9/13/2022

*\* 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**

Effective on the above date, the Town of Truro Select Board hereby adopts the following policy and procedures to be adhered to by all Town of Truro entities, departments, employees, volunteers, special municipal employees and members of multi-member bodies.

### **I. PURPOSE**

The communication policy aims to ensure that accurate and timely information about the Town of Truro is provided to the public. As the forms of communication proliferate, it is important that those who communicate on behalf of the town work in concert to promote the interests and goals of Truro.

### **II. POLICY**

The town's website, [www.truro-ma.gov](http://www.truro-ma.gov) is the primary vehicle for disseminating information. All communications from any Town of Truro department, board, committee or commission shall be submitted to the Town Manager for inclusion in the town newsletter, the website or any other official town channel of communication, including press releases, emails and social media platforms.

If a multi-member board, committee or commission wishes to distribute information via other channels, after using official town resources the decision to do so must be:

- 1) Made by a majority vote of the members of said body;
- 2) Must be typed on Town of Truro letterhead; and
- 3) Must adhere to all applicable local, state and federal public records and record retention laws, rules, budgetary, and procurement regulations and policies.

If any member of a board, committee, commission or department wishes, as an individual, to communicate any information, opinion, or point of view, it is imperative that the individual make clear that the

communication is personal and is not representing any board, committee, commission or department of the Town of Truro.

### **III. GUIDELINES AND CONSIDERATIONS**

**A. Intellectual Third-Party Rights.** When any department, board, committee or commission posts content in any form, it must ensure that it has the right to do so and it must seek advance approval from the town manager. In the case of copyrighted works (e.g. news reports, literary expression, photos, videos, etc.), it needs to ensure that either (a) it has the copyright; (b) written permission to use the work; or (c) the use of the work is permissible under statute. Written authorization from the third-party copyright holder or owner of the material is required.

**B. Privacy.** Under some circumstances, videos and images of individual(s) may only be used when a written release has been obtained from the individual or from the parent or guardian if the individual is a minor. Copies of these releases should be kept on file by the department, board, committee or commission. Alternatively, agencies may alter the videos or images to effectively hide the identity of individuals if no permission has been granted.

**C. Public employees, conflict of interest.** The state Conflict of Interest law applies to all public employees, including volunteers. The definition of public employee – in Truro’s case, municipal employee – is broad: anyone performing services for or holding an office, position or job in a municipal agency – whether elected, appointed or contracted and whether serving with or without compensation.

The law aims to assure that municipal employees do not use their official positions to obtain any special privileges or exemptions not available to others.

The law bars municipal employees from engaging in political activity and prohibits any use of public resources in connection with such activity. In addition, town-sponsored publications – electronic or print – or social media entities may not be used for political purposes. This includes election-related and non-election-related political activity, such as one directed at influencing governmental decision-makers or one supporting or opposing a town meeting warrant article.

Municipal employees may engage in private political activity without violating the Conflict of Interest Law. Where an impression might be given that an individual is acting in an official capacity, he or she should state that such activity such as speaking at a public meeting, to the news media or to an organization is as an individual, not in an official capacity. Individual board or committee members should not purport to represent the opinion of that board/committee, except when specifically authorized by a recorded vote to do so.

#### **D. Advertising, Endorsement Limitations**

State procurement and ethics laws largely prohibit municipal employees or agencies from endorsing products, businesses, or vendors.

### **IV. CORRECTIONS**

The Town of Truro is committed to providing accurate information in all of its communications. When an error in fact or misleading information appears in material disseminated by the town, the Town Manager

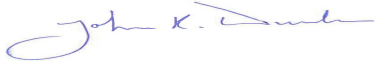
will determine the best method to correct the inaccurate information on all platforms through which it was distributed as soon as is practically possible. This includes the town website and any town newsletters, town-issued press releases, Truro TV, and any social media feeds, such as Facebook, twitter, Instagram.

Corrections will not repeat the original error, except in the circumstance that the correction would not be easily understood without repeating the error.



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Kristen Reed, Chair



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John Dundas, Clerk



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Robert Weinstein, Vice-Chair



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Susan Areson



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Stephanie Rein  
Truro Select Board