

## **City of Barre City Council Email Use Policy**

**PURPOSE.** The purpose of this policy is to provide standards and procedures for the appropriate use of electronic communication in performing the duties as a City Councilor or Mayor. While this policy generally applies to an email address provided by the City of Barre I/T Administrator to members of the City Council, it should be noted that emails created via other email accounts for the purpose of performing duties as a City Councilor or Mayor are also subject to public records.

**APPLICABILITY.** Electronic Communication is defined as any written or recorded information, regardless of electronic form or characteristic, which is produced or acquired during city business. The City Council Email Use Policy helps elected officials use their email addresses appropriately. Email is an essential communication tool to performing duties as a City Councilor. The intent of this Policy is to ensure that elected officials understand the limitations of using email accounts, and to protect confidential data from breaches and safeguard official technological property of the Council.

**DEFINITIONS.** For purposes of this policy, the following words and/or phrases shall apply:

1. "Agency" means an agency, board, committee, department, branch, instrumentality, commission, or authority of the city.
2. "Custodian" means the person that has charge or custody of a public record.
3. "Devices" means all City electronic equipment including but not limited to computers, cell phones, smart phones, pagers and any other City devices that may be utilized to send or receive electronic communications.

**APPROPRIATE USE OF CITY EMAIL:** Elected officials are allowed to use their city email in performing the duties of the office elected. For example, elected officials can use their email to:

- Communicate with current or prospective residents and business owners.
- Log in to software or websites they have legitimate access to.
- Give their email address to people they meet at conferences, career fairs or other events for city purposes.
- Sign up for newsletters, platforms and other online services that will help them with their duties or professional growth.
- Register for city related classes or meetings.

**UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR:** The following behavior by elected officials is considered unacceptable and is subject to sanction by the City Council:

- Use of City Electronic Communications systems to set up personal businesses or send chain letters
- Forwarding of city confidential messages to external locations
- Distributing, disseminating or storing images, text or materials that might be considered indecent, pornographic, obscene or illegal
- Distributing, disseminating or storing images, text or materials that might be considered discriminatory, offensive or abusive, in that the context is a personal attack, sexist or racist, or might be considered as harassment
- Accessing copyrighted information in a way that violates the copyright laws
- Signing up for illegal, unreliable, disreputable or suspect websites and services.
- Unauthorized use of a password/mailbox belonging to the City's Communication System.
- Broadcasting unsolicited personal views on social, political, religious or other non-city related business

- Sending insulting or discriminatory messages and content
- Transmitting unsolicited commercial or advertising material
- Undertaking deliberate activities that waste staff time or networked resources
- Introducing any form of computer virus or malware into the City network

**EMAIL SECURITY:** Email is often the medium of hacker attacks, confidentiality breaches, viruses and other malware. These issues can compromise our reputation, legality and security of City equipment. Elected officials must:

- Select strong passwords with at least eight characters (capital and lower-case letters, symbols and numbers) without using personal information (e.g. birthdays.)
- Remember passwords instead of writing them down and keep them secret.
- Change their email password every six months.

Also, elected officials should always be vigilant to catch emails that carry malware or phishing attempts:

- Avoid opening attachments and clicking on links when content is not adequately explained (e.g. “Watch this video, it’s amazing.”)
- Be suspicious of clickbait titles.
- Check email and names of unknown senders to ensure they are legitimate.
- Look for inconsistencies or style red flags (e.g. grammar mistakes, capital letters, excessive number of exclamation marks.)

**EMAIL ADDRESS FORMAT:** The established address format for the Mayor and individual Councilors/shall be:

**1<sup>st</sup> initial.lastname@barrecity.org**      ([j.smith@barrecity.org](mailto:j.smith@barrecity.org))

In addition, a “universal” email group of [citycouncil@barrecity.org](mailto:citycouncil@barrecity.org) shall be established to facilitate constituent or public access to the entire Council via a single address.

**EMAIL SIGNATURE:** Elected officials shall create a professional email signature compliant with Council adopted protocol in accordance with the following template:

[Elected Official Name]  
[Elected Official Title], [City of Barre]  
[Phone number]

**PUBLIC RECORDS INSPECTION, COPYING, AND TRANSMISSION:** The Vermont Public Records Act, 1 V.S.A. §§ 315-320, provides access to a city’s public records for inspection and copying unless the records are exempt by law from public access. This policy is intended to conform with the Public Records Act as well as the City of Barre Public Record Inspection, Copying, and Transmission Policy.

**PUBLIC RECORDS LAW – RETENTION:** Relevant City records retention schedules apply to content in elected official emails. Content disseminated shall be retained pursuant to Vermont's Public Records Law in its standard format and in accordance with applicable disposition orders and retention schedules as established by the Vermont State Archivist.

**OPEN MEETING LAW:** Vermont's Open Meeting Law defines a public meeting as a gathering of a quorum of the members of a public body for the purpose of discussing the business of the public body or for the purpose of taking action. All meetings of a public body are to be open to the public at all times unless otherwise exempted. Members (elected or appointed) of any City public body should refrain from using City social media sites to discuss the business of the public body or taking action by the public body in violation of Vermont's Open Meeting Law. Furthermore, members of public bodies should refrain from commenting on or responding to

inquiries related to quasi-judicial matters within the subject matter jurisdiction of their respective public bodies.

Public boards and committees may utilize City social media for gathering of public input and fostering of public discussion related to the role with which it has been charged by statute or the City Council, provided that the use is authorized in accordance with and conforms to this policy.

Information posted by the City on its social media sites will supplement and not replace required notices and standard methods of providing warnings, postings, and notifications required to be made with regard to public meetings and hearings under Vermont law.

**PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS THAT CAN BECOME PUBLIC:** It is important for elected and appointed officials to remember that some personal communications may reflect on the City of Barre, especially if personnel are commenting on:

- Anything political in nature
- Federal, state or local government activities or,
- City business.

Remember that what you write is public and may be so for a long time. It may be spread to large audiences. Use common sense when using email or social media sites. It is a good idea to refrain from sending or posting information that you would be embarrassed to see in a newspaper or on a prominent website.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:** City Councilors and the Mayor who have been granted the right to use the City of Barre email services are required to confirm their understanding and acceptance of this policy confirm in writing to the City's I/T Administrator.

**By Order of the City Council this 13<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2018**

Thomas J. Lauzon, Mayor /S/  
Carolyn S. Dawes, City Clerk /S/  
Michael A. Boutin /S/  
John LePage /S/  
Lucas J. Herring /S/  
Sue Higby /S/  
Brandon Batham /S/  
Jeffrey M. Tuper-Giles /S/