Select Board Policy for Email and Written Communication

Select Board/Town Manager Email Exchanges:

Each individual Bethel Select Board Member is assigned an official Town of Bethel email address which shall be used to conduct all official business.

Email about Town business is public record subject to public inspection and copying unless the contents are confidential under law. This is so even if email is sent to or from a Select Board member's personal account. To prevent a personal account from being exposed to public or judicial scrutiny, and to effectively archive and manage all email relating to municipal business, it is important that Select Board members and the Town Manager use their official Town of Bethel email addresses.

The Select Board and Town Manager shall refrain from the use of email as a substitute for deliberating or deciding substantive matters properly confined to public proceedings. Email among a quorum of board members about substantive Town business will constitute an illegal "meeting" in violation of the FOAA's open meetings requirements (see 1 M.R.S.A. § 406).

Select Board and Town Manager email exchanges about procedural matters such as scheduling meetings, developing agendas and distributing materials are permissible. (1 M.R.S.A. § 402)

Select Board/Town Manager Email Exchanges with the Public:

If a member of the public would like to email the Select Board, we ask that they email all 5 Select Board members and the Town Manager. All submitted correspondence will be a matter of public record and may be discussed at a meeting of the Select Board. All information within an email that is considered confidential by State law will not be disclosed to the public. This includes, but is not limited to content subject to a recognized legal privilege such as the attorney-client privilege or the work-product privilege, content describing security plans or procedures designed to

prevent acts of terrorism, medical records, juvenile records, and the personal contact information of public employees contained within records.

The Town Manager will respond to all emails addressed to the Select Board and Town Manager to acknowledge receipt within 1-2 business days, or as soon as is practical.

Correspondence will be triaged by the Town Manager to help expedite a response.

A. If the email relates to routine matters of Town operations, the Town Manager will respond.

B. If the email does not relate to routine matters of Town operations, then the Town Manager may include the correspondence in the public comment/communication section on the next agenda of a duly posted meeting of the Select Board, give written copies of the email to the full Select Board and a response to the email, if necessary, will be determined by the group. Residents will receive an answer to their email from the Town Manager or Select Board Chair after it has been addressed at the meeting.

C. If the email relates to matters related to public safety, the Town Manager will consult necessary department heads to take care of the problem and keep the Select Board informed.

This policy does not prevent an individual Select Board member from discussing any matter with their constituents. Select Board members may decide to forward an email sent to a member’s personal government email address to the entire Select Board and Town Manager to be addressed by the Town Manager and Select Board.

Written correspondence between the Select Board/Town Manager and the public.

Written correspondence received through the mail or hand delivered to the Select Board shall be handled in the same manner as email.

APPROVED BY BOARD 11/4/2026