

Programming Policies and Guidelines Township of Franklin's Governmental Access Channels (Currently Comcast Channel 29 and Verizon Channel 33)

I. Introduction

The Township of Franklin in Somerset County, New Jersey (herein referred to as Township) Government Access Channels (herein referred to as the access channels are Governmental Access Channels) as provided for under the FCC Cable Communications Act of 1984, the Township's cable franchise agreement with Comcast, and the New Jersey State franchise agreement with Verizon. The access channels function as a division under the government of the Township of Franklin.

The access channels are owned and operated by the Township. The Township Manager is responsible for the day-to-day operation and programming activities of the station.

The purpose of this document is to define the function of the access channels and provide guidelines and policy to manage its operations effectively and efficiently. All programming decisions are to be made in accordance with these policies and guidelines.

II. Mission Statement

The mission of the access channels is to provide programming that will inform, educate, enlighten and encourage participation in local government, its services, activities and decision making.

III. Objectives

- A. To serve as an on-going source of government information for the citizens of the Township.
- B. To increase citizens' awareness, understanding, and participation in areas of municipal, county and state government.
- C. To increase citizen access to local government meetings by providing live and/or taped coverage of Township Council and other municipal public meetings.
- D. To provide on-going and updated information about government services and programs.
- E. To promote special events in the community sponsored and supported by the Township.
- F. To provide public service information relevant to Franklin Township residents from other local, county, state, and federal governmental entities.
- G. To provide information in the case of an emergency affecting the Township.

IV. Programming Policy

- A. All programming broadcast on the access channels must support the channel's mission and objectives. All programming shall be government related, and/or of local interest that provides community benefit to the residents of the Township. Coverage of public meetings of the Township Council shall be the programming priority of the station.
- B. The access channels are created for the dissemination of government-related information to the public. They are not public access or educational channels, and are -not intended for general public use.

- C. The program policy of the access channels is to provide direct information to the citizens of Franklin Township concerning the operations, services, functions, activities, programs, issues, and deliberations of its municipal government.
- D. The access channels are not intended to be used as a mechanism for building support for a particular person, party, program, or issue, nor are they a medium to be used by any elected or appointed federal, state or local officials for political or personal use.
- E. The programming of the access channels will primarily consist of public meetings, informational programs and a Municipal Bulletin Board.
- F. No commercial programming will be considered for broadcast.
- G. Promotional announcements for events, charities or outside organizations in which the Township has no official sponsorship shall not be permitted.
- H. The Township Manager or his designee is responsible for all programming decisions in accordance with these policies and mission statement.
- I. The Township Manager or his designee is responsible for day-to-day decisions in accordance with these policies and mission statement.
- J. All programming produced by the access channels shall be deemed the property of the Township.
- K. The access channels, the Township of Franklin and its administration, officers, employees, volunteers and agents are not responsible for the accuracy of any information broadcast.
- L. The Bulletin Board will be used for the posting of messages related to activities, programs, services, and events sponsored in whole or in part by Franklin Township. This includes notices of an emergency nature, government meeting times and places, and Township job openings, as well as any other information relative to Franklin Township government functions, services, and events. The Bulletin Board will also be used to display the access channels' programming schedule.
 - 1. The access channels reserve the right to reject any Bulletin Board messages that fail to conform to the Bulletin Board format and/or station policies and guidelines.
 - 2. Franklin Township shall not be held responsible for the accuracy of any information displayed on the access channels' Municipal Bulletin Boards which was submitted by outside sources.

V. Programming Restrictions:

The access channels shall not be used for the presentation of:

- A. Commercial advertising, or other information designed to promote or endorse the sale of any products or services offered. This does not prevent the access channels from seeking sponsors for grants to offset the production costs associated with its programming. Additionally, this does not prevent the station from acknowledging sponsorship or grants supporting a program or event. Contributors or underwriters may be acknowledged briefly in the opening and/or closing credits of the program.
- B. Programs or bulletin board content that solicits money or other items of value for any private, non-governmental or political purpose.
- C. Any material which would violate any federal, state or local law, including FCC regulations.
- D. Any programming material that is obscene, indecent, profane, or an invasion of privacy.
- E. Subject matter which is defamatory in nature, other than with matters which may occur during 'gavel-to-gavel' coverage of public meetings.
- F. Promotional announcements for events, charities, or outside organizations in which the government has no official interest or sponsorship.
- G. Programming which promotes, advocates and/or endorses a particular religious belief.
- H. Political advertising or other material on behalf of or opposing a registered candidate for public office. Any material on behalf of or opposing any ballot measure currently under consideration by the Township Council or any other regulatory body.
 - 1. NOTE: The exclusion does not apply to persons who receive airtime as part of public meeting coverage, nor does it apply to the access channels' coverage of elected officials acting in their official capacity and as part of their regular duties.

2. NOTE: This exclusion shall also preclude the presentation of programming that provides non-partisan background information concerning any ballot measure or registered candidate.
- I. Any material that is copyrighted or subject to ownership or royalty rights without the necessary releases, licenses or other use permissions from the owner of such said rights. Outside agencies submitting programming are responsible for obtaining all copyright clearances and shall hold the Township, its officers and agents harmless in any case of copyright infringement.

VI. Use of the Access Channels' Equipment and Facilities

- A. Use of the access channels' equipment and facilities is restricted to government-access-related activities, and only to trained personnel under the direction of the Township Manager or his designee.
- B. The Township Manager will maintain inventory records of all equipment owned and operated by the access channels, as well as any related materials.
- C. Requests for recordings which meet the access channels' Policies and Guidelines should be sent to the Township Manager at least three (3) months in advance of the event. Anything submitted less than three (3) months prior to the event will not be given priority or consideration, depending on the professional judgment of the Township Manager.

VII. Ownership and Retention of Recording Media

- A. All video and audio contained in the recordings produced by the access channels are protected by United States copyright laws.
- B. Recordings of government meetings are intended for broadcasting purposes only and shall not be considered the official record of the meetings.
 1. Provision of a copy of the meeting tape does not imply that reliance may be placed on such copy as a complete or error-free record of the meeting.