

Town of Easton
Government Access Television

Government Access Television Policies and Procedures

POLICY

The Easton Government Access Television shall be used to provide information to residents. It shall not be used for partisan political purposes or commercial purposes.

PROCEDURES

1. Easton Government Access Television (“EGAT”) shall be supervised by a committee (the “EGAT Committee”), appointed and charged by the Board of Selectmen, which may modify the committee and its charge from time to time. The initial committee shall consist of five (5) residents, no more than three (3) of whom shall be from the same political party. The members shall serve for a term of two (2) years provided that at the initial appointment, three (3) members shall be appointed for a term of one (1) year and two (2) members shall be appointed for a term of two (2) years, with terms beginning on January 1st and initial terms beginning January 1, 2006.
2. The objectives of EGAT shall include, but not be limited to the following:
 - A. To provide information about programs and services offered to the Easton community by Town departments and Town-funded agencies;
 - B. To expand community awareness of local government and its decision making process;
 - C. To expand the availability of programs and services by transferring some presentations and educational materials to videotape or other electronic media;
 - D. To assist with internal training of Town personnel by providing some presentations or educational materials on videotape or other electronic media;
 - E. To provide emergency alert information in the event of disaster or widespread service disruption.
3. EGAT materials are to meet the highest standards of accuracy and objectivity and are not to be used for partisan political purposes or for commercial purposes.
4. The following general provisions shall apply:
 - A. EGAT will provide nonpartisan information to citizens of Easton concerning the operations and deliberations of the Town’s governmental entities and information of general civic importance to the community.

- B. The primary priorities will be as follows:
 - 1. Local governmental meetings;
 - 2. Alphanumeric display of information regarding local governmental bodies;
 - 3. Alphanumeric display of information regarding services and programs offered by Town departments and Town-funded agencies;
 - 4. Special programs on current events or particular community issues;
 - 5. Programs regarding Town services.
- C. The secondary priorities will be as follows:
 - 1. Reports to citizens from elected or appointed public officials;
 - 2. Programming obtained from outside sources to supplement locally produced government programming;
 - 3. Public service announcements;
 - 4. Alphanumeric display information regarding noncommercial community events;
 - 5. State or federal government meetings of special local interest;
 - 6. Special productions which feature community services provided by private, nonprofit organizations which are funded, in part, by the municipality.
- D. Programs which contain, in whole or in part, any of the following subject matter will not be produced or distributed:
 - 1. Commercial messages or material: Anything promoting a product or service with the primary objective of producing a monetary profit for a specific organization or individual will not be produced or distributed. **NOTE:** This is not to preclude incidental mention of a business or product as part of a program where the primary purpose is to disseminate information of public benefit. Businesses, individuals and organizations may be acknowledged for assistance in the production of a program or the provision of other means of support.
 - 2. Political Campaigning: EGAT will be not used for political campaigning by individuals or organizations seeking public office or legislation. Neither will the service be used for the solicitation of funds for political purposes. **NOTE:** During the four month period preceding an election, programs which feature elected officials who are candidates for re-election will not be produced or distributed. This will not preclude their participation in public meetings or special forums of public debate. The debates between or among candidates may be taped and aired.
 - 3. Religious Material: Program material which would advocate a particular religious belief will not be produced or distributed. Religious organizations or ideals may be mentioned as incidental information as part of a program. **NOTE:** This is not to preclude the appearance of an individual representing a particular religion as part of a program which provides general information. This will

also not preclude the distribution of announcements of public events which are sponsored or conducted by religious organizations.

4. Violation of law or regulation: Program material which constitutes libel, slander, violation of trademark or copyright, or which might violate any local, state, or federal laws, including regulations of the Federal Communications Commission, will not be produced or distributed.
5. Controversial subject matter: Programs which contain controversial subject matter must provide an opportunity for opposing views.
6. The following program production and distribution provisions shall apply:
 - A. Public meetings:
 1. All public meetings of the Town's commissions, boards and committees are authorized for electronic media recording and distribution, except for executive sessions.
 2. All public meetings will be recorded and distributed in their entirety, gavel-to-gavel. Recesses will not be recorded and distributed. Explanatory information identifying agenda items and individuals may be provided to aid the viewer.
 3. Informal comments among persons attending either, before, during, or after a public meeting, will not be recorded.
 - B. Informational programming:
 1. The primary entities eligible to request program production or distribution will be Town government departments.
 2. The secondary entities eligible to request program production or distribution will be private, nonprofit entities to whom the Town contributes funds to carry out specific Town-sanctioned services;
 3. Production and distribution requests will be subject to review by the EGAT Committee for compliance with the policies and procedures and technical and logistical considerations. The decisions of the EGAT Committee may be appealed to the Board of Selectmen.
 4. The following criteria will be applied by EGAT committee when considering a production and/or distribution request:
 - a. The program must support the purposes and objectives of local, state, or federal government;
 - b. The program must pertain to a specific service or program provided or funded by local, state, or federal government;
 - c. The program must provide information of general civic importance;
 - d. The program must adhere to the policies and procedures.
 - C. Written permission for the use of copyrighted materials must be authorized in advance by the materials owner and obtained by the department or agency sponsoring the local use of the materials.

D. Community information messages:

1. Information for distribution on an alphanumeric display device as part of the “Community Information Message Display” may be submitted by any government department, Town-funded agency or bona fide nonprofit organization which serves the residents of Easton.
2. Messages submitted must announce events or services which are noncommercial, open to the general public, and do not discriminate based on age, sex, race, religion, national origin, physical impairment, or sexual orientation.
3. Messages submitted must not solicit funds. They may, however, provide general information about a specific fundraising event.

E. Statement by individuals:

1. Statements by members of the general public and elected officials will be permitted in the regular discourse of a public meeting (pursuant to the rules of such meeting) or as participants in a panel discussion.
2. The EGAT will provide time and format opportunities for both the executive and legislative branches of local government and semiannual opportunities for federal and state legislators who represent Easton.
3. Statements by announced candidates for public office will be permitted in the regular discourse of a public meeting (pursuant to the rules of such meeting) or within a forum of public debate with other declared candidates under the oversight of a non-partial third party using mutually agreeable ground rules.
4. Panel discussion programs will not be modified or edited.
5. At no time will the EGAT endorse specific brand name products or service providers.
6. The EGAT is an operating entity of the Town of Easton and, as such, Easton reserves the right to identify any material as unsuitable for production or distribution.
7. The Town of Easton, its officers, employees and agents do not warrant the accuracy of any information, produced or distributed.