**CHAPTER 3 – ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION POLICY**

*NOTE: The Electronic Communication Policy was adopted by Council on December 2, 2002 as part of the Personnel Policy. When Council approved a new Personnel Policy on July 11, 2005 (which became effective on August 1, 2005), the Electronic Communication Policy was intentionally omitted from the new Personnel Policy and was left intact as a stand-alone policy by Resolution #R-05-019.*

Section 1. Purpose of the Policy 66

Section 2. Definitions 66

Section 3. Ownership by the Town of Elizabethtown 66

Section 4. Prohibitions 66

Section 5. General 67

Section 6. Public Record 67

Section 7. Violations of Policy 67

**Section 1. Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for the appropriate use of electronic communication systems, including but not limited to the Internet and Electronic Mail (Email) by Town of Elizabethtown employees.

**Section 2. Definitions**

For the purposes of this policy, the following words and phrases shall have the meanings respectively ascribed to them by this section:

***Email***: The distribution of messages, documents, files, software, or images by electronic means over a phone line or a network connection. This includes internal Email, external Email, and Internet Email.

***Internet***: A worldwide network of computer servers connected by phone lines that allow access to the public through a special language (HyperText Markup Language or HTML) and a special protocol (HyperText Transfer Protocol or HTTP).

**Section 3. Ownership by Town of Elizabethtown**

All electronic communication resources owned by the Town of Elizabethtown are provided as working tools to enable the Town to carry out its services in an efficient and timely manner. Electronic communication systems and all messages generated on or handled by electronic communication systems are the property of the Town of Elizabethtown and shall be subject to inspection by the Town Manager or Department Heads without advance notice.

**Section 4. Prohibitions**

The following behaviors are not permitted on the Town’s network:

1. Sharing confidential information in regard to Town employees.
2. Sending or displaying offensive messages or pictures, such as pornography or sexually explicit materials.
3. Using obscene language.
4. Harassing, insulting or attacking others.
5. Engaging in practices that threaten the network.
6. Violating copyright laws.
7. Trespassing in another’s folders, documents or files.
8. Employing the network for commercial purposes.
9. Joining personal chat rooms.
10. Using the Town’s Email address for contests or to join memberships not work related.

**Section 5. General**

At all times when an employee is using Town of Elizabethtown technology resources, he or she is representing the Town. Use the same judgment in all resource use that you would use in determining appropriate conduct. Employees shall make no intentional use of Town electronic resources in an illegal, malicious, inappropriate or obscene manner. When sending or forwarding email, all employees shall identify themselves clearly and accurately. Anonymous or pseudonymous posting is expressly forbidden.

Anytime information is transmitted through electronic media, there is a possibility that it could be intercepted. Therefore, confidential and sensitive Town of Elizabethtown information such as performance reviews, disciplinary actions, attorney-client privileged information, personnel information, and health or medical information may not be transmitted electronically without the prior approval of the Town Manager.

Except as provided elsewhere in this policy, the examination, modification, copying, or deletion of files and/or data belonging to other employees without their prior consent is prohibited.

**Section 6. Public Record**

Employees should be aware that information that passes through, or is stored on, any Town of Elizabethtown computer network is considered public record per the requirements of North Carolina General Statute 132-1. As a public record, the public may request copies of electronic mail messages or electronic schedules.

**Section 7. Violations of Policy**

If the Town of Elizabethtown determines that an employee has used technology resources in a manner that violates this policy or other Town policies, the Town will take appropriate disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

The Town of Elizabethtown is not responsible for any illegal activity in the use of these systems.