



## **OPERATING POLICIES**

# **MERIDIAN TOWNSHIP GOVERNMENT ACCESS CABLE CHANNEL**

Originally approved by the Cable Communications Commission on March 4, 1992  
Approved by the Township Board on October 8, 1992  
Revised & approved by the Cable Communications Commission on February 19, 1993  
Amendments recommended by the Activity Coordination Committee on April 14, 1993  
Amendments recommended by the Personnel Committee on April 26, 1993  
Approved by the Township Board on May 4, 1993  
Revised & approved by the Cable Communications Commission on September 2, 1998  
Approved by Township Board on September 15, 1998  
Revised & approved by the Cable Communications Commission on April 28, 2000  
Approved by Township Board on July 5, 2000  
Revised and approved by the Cable Communications Commission on January 7, 2009  
Approved by the Township Board on April 7, 2009  
Revised and approved by the Cable Communications Commission on February 1, 2012  
Revised and approved by the Communications Commission on December 2, 2020  
Revised and approved by the Communications Commission on March 26, 2025

## **PREAMBLE**

The Communications Commission, previously called the Cable Communications Commission, was established in 1977 to oversee the administration and implementation of the Cable Franchise Agreement, including:

- I. To advise the Township Board regarding the implementation of the Franchise Agreements.
- II. To encourage the use of access channels, including public, educational, and governmental channels.
- III. To formulate a policy relating to the access channels. All such policies are subject to approval by the Township Board.

(For a complete list of functions, refer to the Township Ordinances, Title XV, Chapter 115).

The government access cable television channel serving Meridian Township is known as HOMTV. HOMTV's Operating Policies are based upon the goals and objectives of the Communications Commission and the Communications Department. These policies and procedures are intended to consolidate and regulate the implementation of the goals and objectives. The Communications Commission shall monitor the implementation of these policies and procedures administered by the Communications Manager.

The Township Personnel Policy governs employees within the Communications Department who operate HOMTV. Matters related to programming are governed by the Communications Commission and Communications Manager.

## **SECTION ONE: GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR PROGRAMMING AND PRODUCTION**

- I. The Communications Manager is responsible for generating program ideas and implementing and overseeing their production, either directly, or by delegation through their subordinates. The Communications Manager is to make all programming decisions, except for live meeting coverage, according to established policies and guidelines approved by the Communications Commission.
- II. The Communications Manager shall develop programming with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) principles in mind and strive to represent the unique makeup of the Meridian Township community. Programming should also be made accessible to all.
- III. The Communications Manager must avoid programming of non-local origin in all but the most exceptional situations. Such exceptions shall only be approved by the Communications Manager. In the case where programming of non-local origin is used, it must be presented with locally originated opening and closing statements.
- IV. All production decisions are to be made by the Communications Manager directly or by delegation through their subordinates.
- V. The HOMTV production equipment and facilities are to be operated only by Meridian Township staff members and interns who have been trained and approved for equipment use under the direction of the Communications Manager.
- VI. Special production requests must be submitted to the Communications Manager at least one week before the requested filming date.

## **SECTION TWO: TOWNSHIP MEETING COVERAGE**

- I. The Communications Department staff and HOMTV interns are responsible for providing live coverage of regular meetings of the Township Board, the Planning Commission, the Park Commission, the Zoning Board of Appeals, and the Environmental Commission. Based on staff and facility capabilities, the Township Communications Commission may recommend to the Township Board expansion or limitation of meeting coverage responsibilities.
- II. Live coverage of regularly scheduled Township meetings shall be the number one programming priority to air on HOMTV. Program schedule adjustments must be made to accommodate irregular start and end times of televised meetings.

- III. To cancel regular meeting coverage, the staff liaison to the Board or Commission in question must present the cancellation notice to the Communications Manager in writing as early as possible before the scheduled meeting.
- IV. To schedule special meeting coverage, the staff liaison to the Board or Commission in question must present the television coverage request to the Communications Manager in writing at least two weeks before the meeting.
- V. When a Board or Commission goes into a "closed session" during the live coverage of a meeting, HOMTV is authorized to display a message describing the current status of the meeting. When a Board or Commission goes into "recess" during the live coverage of a meeting, HOMTV is authorized to display a message describing the current status of the meeting or to continue live coverage of the meeting room during the break. In most circumstances, live coverage of the meeting may resume following a recess or closed session.
- VI. Video recordings of the live coverage of Township meetings are not to be edited for replay unless technical issues occur, such as audio or video loss, that require a backup recording of the meeting to be published.
- VII. Video recordings of Township meetings shall not be considered the official record and shall not be treated as such. These recordings will be available online and retained on the HOMTV archiving system. Staff liaisons to the televised Board and Commission meetings are responsible for recording their minutes in case all versions of the HOMTV recording experience technical issues.

### **SECTION THREE: TOWNSHIP ELECTION COVERAGE**

- I. HOMTV shall include programming regarding Meridian Township elections. The Communications Manager shall determine the scope and format of such coverage and work with the Township Clerk to provide materials announcing pre-election and Election Day information.
- II. The Communications Manager shall make special efforts to produce programming in "even year" Township elections, with a maximum emphasis on elections held to fill positions on the Township Board and/or the Park Commission. All registered candidates shall be allowed to be included in this coverage. The Communications Manager shall determine the scope and format of such election-year programming and may consist of an interview program for candidates that involves the same list of standardized questions for every candidate.

- III. The Communications Manager shall ensure that all programming featuring registered candidates is balanced with programming featuring their opponents. In cases where balance is not possible due to the lack of participation of one or more candidates, the participating candidates will receive balanced coverage compared to the entire field of participating candidates.
- IV. Candidates for elected office shall not be included in HOMTV programming 90 days before an election, with the exception of coverage of Township meetings, special election coverage, and incumbents performing official duties. The Communications Manager shall decide if equal time for opposing candidates is necessary to balance the coverage of incumbent candidates performing official duties.

#### **SECTION FOUR: PROGRAMS AND PROGRAM-SERIES**

- I. Program series will be produced to air on HOMTV under the direction of the Communications Manager. Staff aims to produce programs on a regular basis to form a series. The Communications Manager shall decide which programs to produce as a series, supervise their production, and regulate their format and frequency.
- II. Other programs may be produced to air on HOMTV that do not fit into any existing program series. These will be considered "specials" and may be of any format.
- III. There shall be a computer graphics message display sequence and/or virtual channel of promos and PSAs to air on HOMTV during times when there is no live or taped programming. Staff will display messages of an emergency nature as soon as possible.
- IV. Staff will determine the HOMTV program schedule. Primary concepts for program schedule formulation include variety and high frequency of program replays.

#### **SECTION FIVE: LOCAL PROGRAMMING DEVELOPMENT**

- I. Meridian Township officials, employees, and the public may request program suggestions. Requests must be made in writing. The Communications Manager will respond to requests for programming within a reasonable time based on staff and facility limitations.
- II. The Communications Manager shall use any of the following criteria to make judgments regarding the initiation of new programming:
  - a. The programming is about Meridian Township, its residents, employees, elected officials, and/or appointed officials.
  - b. The programming is in demand by Meridian Township residents and/or employees.
  - c. The program is a public service for Meridian Township residents.

- d. The programming serves to promote Meridian Township as a community.
  - e. The programming serves as communication between Meridian Township employees and Meridian Township residents.
- III. The Communications Manager shall use any of the following criteria to make judgments regarding the denial of new programming:
- a. The programming shall include no pornographic material.
  - b. The programming shall include no religious material.
  - c. The programming shall include no paid advertising.
  - d. The programming shall include no direct appeals to purchase commercial goods or services.
  - e. The programming shall be of sufficient technical quality to match the channel's current minimum quality level.
  - f. The programming does not meet one or more of the criteria outlined in paragraph II of this Section.
- IV. The Communications Manager shall use any of the following criteria to make judgments regarding the termination of existing programming:
- a. The programming has served its original purpose.
  - b. Another local access channel can more appropriately produce the programming.
  - c. Staff or facility limitations cause the need to reduce programming levels in general.
  - d. The criteria for denying new programs can also be used to terminate existing programs. (See paragraph III above).

## **SECTION SIX: GENERAL POLICIES**

- I. Staff shall not be used to produce video programming for private or commercial organizations. However, as determined by the Communications Manager, staff may be able to collaborate with and charge a fee for services to other public agencies and similar organizations to develop programming that further serves the public interest. Sponsorships for HOMTV programming, special events, websites, and other digital platforms may also be available.
- II. Staff aims to program at least eight (8) hours per day, seven (7) days per week.
- III. Staff will make duplicate copies upon request of programs as a whole for a nominal fee according to the attached fee schedule. Segments and/or raw footage are unavailable for duplication unless the Communications Manager grants pre-approval.
  - a. The Communications Manager may waive fees for people closely involved with the production of the program being copied.
  - b. Staff will only make duplicate copies of programs aired on the channel or uploaded online to HOMTV's on-demand sites.
- IV. Expenditures to finance the operations of HOMTV may be made by the Communications Manager upon approval of the Township Finance Director and authorization of the Township Manager, subject to all requirements of the Township Purchasing Policies and within maximum amounts appropriated in the Township Budget. Purchases proposed by staff that are projected to exceed the total budget appropriations shall require a budget amendment recommended by the Communications Manager upon approval of the Township Finance Director, authorization of the Township Manager, and approval by the Township Board, in conformance with Township purchasing and budget policies. Transfers among line items within the total amount appropriated in the operating budget may be made by the Communications Manager upon approval of the Township Finance Director and authorization of the Township Manager.
- V. All HOMTV video recordings shall remain the property of HOMTV.

# FEE SCHEDULE

## Video Copies

1. \$15.00 flat rate per order.
2. \$10.00 per hour of running time on order, or any increment thereof.
3. \$6.00 for videotape supplied by staff for the copy.
4. \$6.00 Shipping & Handling.

## Audio Copies

1. \$10.00 flat rate per order.
2. \$10.00 per hour of running time on order, or any increment thereof.
3. \$4.00 for audiotape supplied by HOMTV for the copy.