

November 10<sup>th</sup> 2025  
adopted by  
Bethel Selectboard

## Bethel Fire Advisory Board – Google Account Use Policy

Effective Date: October 7, 2025

### Purpose

This policy establishes guidelines for the appropriate use of a Google Account by the Bethel Fire Advisory Board to support administrative functions, document storage, and meeting organization, while ensuring compliance with **Vermont Open Meeting Law** and **Robert's Rules of Order**.

### Scope

This policy applies to all members of the Bethel Fire Advisory Board and any authorized Town of Bethel staff who may assist in managing digital board-related materials.

## 1. Account Ownership & Management

- The **Board Chair** shall be the **official owner and administrator** of the Google Account.
- The Chair may grant **limited access** to designated board members or town staff for uploading documents or maintaining calendar events.
- Login credentials shall be stored securely and only shared on a need-to-know basis, as determined by the Chair.

## 2. Permitted Uses

### A. Google Drive – Document Storage Only

- Google Drive shall be used **exclusively for document storage and access**. This includes:
  - Agendas
  - Meeting minutes

- Supporting reports and documents
- Public notices
- State and municipal references relevant to board operations
- **Board members must not use commenting, editing suggestions, chat, or collaborative tools** to communicate opinions or discuss board matters on Google Drive. This restriction ensures compliance with Vermont's Open Meeting Law and Robert's Rules.
- Documents may be uploaded and maintained by the Chair or designated administrative support.

## B. Google Calendar

- May be used to:
  - Schedule regular and special board meetings
  - Track key deadlines or deliverables
  - Create and share links to virtual meeting platforms (e.g., Google Meet, Zoom)

## C. Virtual Meetings

- The Google Account may be used to facilitate virtual meetings, **provided they are properly warned and accessible to the public**, in accordance with Vermont Open Meeting Law.
- All remote meetings must allow:
  - Public access via the internet or telephone
  - Opportunity for public comment, where applicable

### 3. Prohibited Uses

- No deliberation, decision-making, or group discussion shall take place via:
  - Email
  - Google Docs comments or chat
  - Shared editing suggestions
  - Google Chat or Meet outside a properly warned public meeting
- **All communication between a quorum of board members about board business must occur in a duly warned public meeting.** This includes discussions of potential actions, policies, or board positions.

### 4. Compliance with Vermont Open Meeting Law

Board members are reminded that:

- **A quorum (majority of members)** discussing board business outside of a properly warned meeting—**even via digital tools**—violates Vermont's Open Meeting Law (1 V.S.A. § 310–314).
- All meetings must be:
  - Publicly warned
  - Open to the public
  - Minutes must be publicly available within five days of the meeting

## **5. Security & Confidentiality**

- Only official Bethel Fire Advisory Board documents may be stored on the Drive.
- Sensitive or confidential materials (e.g., involving personnel, public safety concerns) should only be stored in compliance with applicable Vermont laws and town policies, and never shared beyond authorized parties.

## **6. Training & Acknowledgment**

All board members shall:

- Be provided with a copy of this policy
- Acknowledge understanding of permitted and prohibited uses
- Be offered guidance by the Chair or Town staff if clarification is needed

## **7. Enforcement**

Violations of this policy, including inappropriate communication or use of digital tools to bypass public meeting requirements, may be:

- Referred to the Town Manager or Town Attorney
- Result in temporary or permanent access restrictions
- Subject to additional action under Vermont's Open Meeting Law

## **8. Policy Review**

This policy shall be reviewed annually by the Board and updated as necessary to reflect changes in state law, town policy, or technology use standards.