

MID ROGUE FIRE DISTRICT

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR COMMUNICATION PROTOCOL HANDBOOK – Policy #2026-002

(Aligned with ORS 192.610–192.705 Oregon Public Meetings Law)

1. PURPOSE

This handbook establishes expectations for communications between the Executive Director and individual members of the Board of Directors outside of publicly noticed meetings, consistent with Oregon Public Meetings Law (ORS 192.610–192.705).

The purpose is to ensure compliance with Oregon law, preserve public transparency, and prevent unlawful deliberation outside of a public meeting.

2. GOVERNING LAW AUTHORITY

This policy is interpreted and enforced consistent with:

- ORS 192.610–192.705 (Oregon Public Meetings Law)
 - ORS 192.610(5): Definition of “meeting” requiring quorum and deliberation toward a decision
 - ORS 192.610(3): “Deliberation” includes discussion or communication in the decision-making process
 - ORS 192.610(2): “Decision” includes any motion, vote, or final disposition by a governing body
 - ORS 192.690: Limited exceptions permitting certain communications that are purely informational or non-substantive
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3. CORE LEGAL PRINCIPLE

The Executive Director shall not engage in any communication that could reasonably be interpreted as:

- A deliberation toward a decision by the Board, or
- An attempt to obtain consensus, direction, or informal approval outside a public meeting.

All Board decisions must occur during properly noticed public meetings.

4. APPROPRIATE COMMUNICATION (DO’S)

The Executive Director MAY communicate with individual Board members when such communication is:

- Purely factual or informational in nature
- Related to scheduling, logistics, or administrative coordination

- Providing background information for upcoming agenda items
 - Clarifying publicly available documents or prior Board actions
 - Responding to direct questions that do not require deliberation or polling of other members
 - Shared simultaneously with all Board members when the subject matter could reasonably relate to future Board deliberation
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5. INAPPROPRIATE COMMUNICATION (DON'TS)

The Executive Director SHALL NOT:

- Engage in discussions that constitute “deliberation” under ORS 192.610
 - Seek or provide direction on matters requiring Board action outside a public meeting
 - Conduct informal polling or consensus-building among Board members
 - Provide selective or preferential information to individual members
 - Discuss or influence anticipated votes or positions on agenda items
 - Participate in serial communications that could constitute a “meeting” under Oregon law
 - Allow any Board member to direct operational activity outside formal action
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6. SERIAL COMMUNICATION PROHIBITION

The Executive Director shall not participate in serial or intermediary communications that, taken together, could constitute deliberation among a quorum of the Board.

This includes:

- Email chains
- Text message sequences
- Individual “back-and-forth” discussions with multiple Board members on the same issue

Such conduct may constitute an unlawful meeting under ORS 192.610 definitions of “convening” and “deliberation.”

7. ONE-ON-ONE COMMUNICATION SAFEGUARD

When communicating individually with Board members, the Executive Director shall:

- Limit discussion to informational content only
- Avoid substantive policy debate

- Redirect decision-related matters to a properly noticed public meeting
 - When appropriate, provide identical information to all Board members simultaneously
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8. EMAIL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATION RULES

- Assume all written communications are public records under Oregon law
 - Avoid substantive policy discussions via email with individual Board members
 - Use “reply all” or full-board distribution when providing operational updates
 - Do not engage in extended email exchanges that resemble deliberation
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9. EXECUTIVE SESSION COMMUNICATION

Communications related to executive sessions shall strictly comply with ORS 192.660 and applicable Oregon Public Meetings Law provisions.

The Executive Director shall not disclose executive session content except as authorized by law or Board direction.

10. RESPONSE TO IMPROPER REQUESTS

If a Board member requests:

- Direction on operational matters
- Pre-vote commitments or opinions
- Confidential or restricted information
- Discussion that could constitute deliberation outside a public meeting

The Executive Director shall:

1. Politely decline
 2. Reference ORS 192.610–192.705 compliance requirements
 3. Redirect the discussion to a properly noticed public meeting
 4. Document the interaction if necessary for institutional protection
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11. DOCUMENTATION STANDARD

Significant communications that may reasonably relate to Board deliberation or future action should be documented and retained in accordance with Oregon public records requirements.

12. VIOLATIONS AND RISK MITIGATION

Violations of this handbook may expose the District to:

- Public Meetings Law challenges under ORS 192.610–192.705
- Nullification or challenge of Board actions
- Administrative or legal complaints

Any violation shall be reviewed as a matter of governance compliance and performance accountability.

13. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The Executive Director shall acknowledge understanding of and compliance with this policy as a condition of employment.

Adopted by the Mid Rogue Fire District Board of Directors on this _____ day of _____, 2026

Board President: Mark Jones

Signed: _____

Vice President: Vincent Ownbey

Signed: _____

Secretary/Treasurer: Ralph Weidling

Signed: _____

Director: Tom McGowan

Signed: _____

Director: Randy Benetti

Signed: _____