

Correspondence Guidelines

Draft by Ray Appel Feb 16, 2026

Guiding Principles

The following Correspondence Guidelines are intended to supplement the Board's Communications Policy and Flow Chart. They do not *replace* policy. These guidelines are meant to be living documents and will be reviewed from time to time to reflect changes in practice or law, respond to community feedback, and improve clarity and consistency.

Correspondence Guidelines provide a more comprehensive reference for board and committee members on what to do in this situation without wasting policy space on details that constantly need to be updated, avoid having to reinvent the wheel every time a situation arises, and generally help streamline process.

How Correspondence Is Managed

Once correspondence is received, it is date stamped and logged by the CO, retained in accordance with records management and FOIPPA requirements, and continue to be circulated to Trustees even if it is not intended for publication. The correspondence is then reviewed to determine Board decision or direction, or whether it should be referred to staff, a committee, or another appropriate body (see Flow Chart).

Publication and Disclosure (Defamation, Criticism, Legal Context)

We will have to distinguish between **criticism** and **defamation**. The Chair and CO have been tasked with getting guidance from a lawyer on legal matters that include types of correspondence. The findings should explain not just what libel/defamation is, but also what is **not**, and to clarify the difference between criticism and defamation and provide concrete examples. There's plenty of case law in this area so this should be a straightforward request?

Some questions: What is the route for appeal if someone feels that their correspondence is pertinent based on published guidelines and has been excluded for no good reason? Is there a third party who can mediate?

Typically Made Public	Typically Withheld or Limited
Requires a Board decision or direction	Contains personal, personnel, legal, or confidential information
Provides relevant information related to an agenda item	Raises human resources or employment matters
Raises a substantive governance or policy issue within the Board's authority	Is subject to legal review or legal advice
Helps the public understand how the Board is responding to community concerns	Could be harmful or misleading if published without context

Summarizing Correspondence

If we choose to do summaries, the summaries could be kept brief and factual, for example noting that correspondence was received from a member of the public on a particular subject. Detailed paraphrasing or rewording of a writer's views will be avoided. This approach helps reduce the risk of unintentionally changing the tone, emphasis, or intent of the original correspondence.

Anonymous Correspondence

Anonymous submissions shouldn't be ignored without reason. In looking at anonymous submissions, the Board should recognize that there can be legitimate reasons for someone to remain anonymous and not necessarily judge the personal motivations behind that choice.

Anonymous correspondence could be published when it raises a real governance, policy, or safety issue that the Board actually has the authority to deal with and can be understood without knowing who wrote it. This includes things like pointing out a safety concern, highlighting a policy gap, or adding relevant information to something already before the Board. If anonymity is needed to protect the writer and the content can be shared without causing harm, the focus stays on the issue itself, not the person behind it.

Sensitive Complaints and Whistleblower Considerations

The District recognizes that some matters are sensitive and need to be handled carefully, especially complaints or allegations involving staff, officers, or Trustees, or situations that require confidentiality or independence. These situations are dealt with through separate policies, such as complaint or whistleblower procedures adopted by the Board.

Appeals and Review

If someone feels their correspondence was excluded even though it seems to meet the published guidelines, they can ask for a review or clarification. The issue may be referred to the Communications Committee and/or brought to the Board for consideration. Where appropriate, third party advice or mediation may also be considered.

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