



Cobb TV Government Access Channel Policy

Board of Commissioners Meeting Room Access Policy

Effective Date: October 1, 2019

Owner	Cobb County Communications Department
Reviewer(s)	Communications Director
Approver(s)	Communications Director and BOC
Related Policies	N/A
Related Standards	N/A
Storage Location	iCobb
Last Review Date	September, 2019
Next Review Date	September, 2021
Review Cycle	Every two years

1. PURPOSE

To provide procedures for access to and operations of CobbTV, CobbTV equipment, and meeting rooms under the supervision of the Communications Department.

2. SCOPE

All CobbTV programming.

3. GOVERNING LAWS, REGULATIONS & STANDARDS

Guidance	Section
Georgia Computer Systems Protection Act	O.C.G.A. 16-9-90, et Seq.
Georgia Open Records Act	O.C.G.A. 50-18-70, et Seq.
Georgia Archives as adopted by County Code	https://www.georgiaarchives.org/records/retention_schedules
And all other applicable laws and regulations	

4. DEFINITIONS

Ballot Issue Debate - A formatted discussion between two or more persons with opposing views on a referendum or amendment that will appear on a ballot for a yes or no vote.

Candidate - A person who has registered with the proper authorities as a candidate for elected office and who has qualified with proper authorities.

Political Candidate Debate - A formatted discussion of issues between two or more candidates for an elected office. Each candidate is permitted to present his or her views and responses to the other candidate(s)'s statements during fixed increments of time.

Political Candidate Forum - An open presentation and discussion of issues as presented by candidates for office without a requirement of opposing views on issues.

5. POLICY

The Cobb County Communications Office under the supervision of its director (the "Director") will operate a government access channel on all cable systems operating within Cobb County. CobbTV will be the designated government access channel for all cable systems in Cobb County. The goal of the Communications Office is to utilize CobbTV to develop and implement dynamic programs; to maintain effective communications between County government and County residents; to promote Cobb County as an ideal destination; educate and inform citizens with respect to local and state issues and opportunities; and to display



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and preserve Cobb County's image as an efficient, professional organization that positively reflects the community it serves.

6. GUIDELINES

CobbTV will operate within guidelines established by the Board of Commissioners.

- 6.1 **Channel Designation** - CobbTV shall operate on a franchised cable systems in Cobb County. Programs will be simulcast. CobbTV will also stream programming on social media, our web page, and other outlets.
- 6.2 **Management of CobbTV** - At the direction of the County Manager, CobbTV will be managed by the Communications Office under the supervision of its Director. Programming and scheduling decisions will be made by the Director in conformance with the policy(s) adopted by the Board of Commissioners.
- 6.3 **Programming Types and Standards**
 - 6.3.1 Programming Types:
 - 6.3.1.1 **Live Programming** - Live coverage of selected meetings, shows, and events will be provided. This will typically consist of Board of Commissioners meetings, town hall meetings and other special events.
 - 6.3.1.2 **Recorded Programming** - Programming (meetings, shows, news, events, etc.) may be recorded in advance for broadcasting or streaming at a later date.
 - 6.3.1.3 **Staff Programming** - Programs produced by the CobbTV staff of the Communications Office or contractors hired by and supervised by CobbTV to include: live and replayed broadcasts of Board of Commissioners meetings, programming offered by various County departments, boards and authorities related to government issues or funded with public dollars. These programs may be either live or replayed.
 - 6.3.1.4 **External Programming** - Videos related to municipal, state or federal government produced by an outside source that can be purchased, rented, borrowed or otherwise legally accessed for broadcast.
 - 6.3.1.5 **Crawl** - Printed onscreen text messages announcing upcoming events, activities, or informational messages concerning government operations, various County departments, boards and authorities related to government issues or funded with public dollars, or safety related issues. Messages must be submitted in text or word format that can be easily and efficiently copied.
 - 6.3.2 Programming Standards

Standards - All programming aired on CobbTV must meet broadcast quality standards for quality and content. Programs that do not meet this standard will not be considered acceptable programming.
- 6.4. **Editing**
 - 6.4.1 **County Meetings**- Broadcasts of County meetings shall not be edited or subjected to editorial comment. Meeting coverage will be from gavel to gavel. Meetings may be recorded for later re-broadcast. CobbTV personnel may edit out breaks or other periods in the program where no activity is taking place before posting the meeting for later viewing.



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- 6.4.2 **Video Programs-** Programs produced by CobbTV may be modified or edited as appropriate based upon an approved script. Editing will be dictated by scheduling and staffing requirements.
- 6.4.3 **Crawl-** Messages to be added to the crawl portion of CobbTV should be submitted two weeks in advance of the requested start date. Staff may edit at their discretion to provide clarity and maximum utilization of available space.
- 6.5 Endorsements**
- 6.5.1 CobbTV and the Government Access Channel will NOT endorse an issue, candidate, specific person, company or brand name product.
- 6.6 Promotions**
- 6.6.1 Promotional announcements for County and/or municipal sponsored events will be permitted over the cable channel. Promotional announcements for events, charities or outside organizations not government sponsored shall NOT be permitted.
- 6.7 Equipment and Facilities**
- 6.7.1 Access
- 6.7.1.1 Use of County-owned audio and video equipment shall be restricted to employees of the Communications Office or trained persons under the direction of CobbTV staff. Loaning of equipment for personal or non-government-related tasks is prohibited.
- 6.7.1.2 Utilization of County-owned production facilities and equipment shall be limited to Communications Office staff or trained persons under the direction of CobbTV staff.
- 6.7.2 Procedures
- 6.7.2.1 **Board of Commissioners Meeting Room (“The BOC room”)** – The BOC room may be reserved by a Cobb County employee or Cobb County citizen. Any person or group wishing to reserve the room for use must schedule it at least two weeks in advance by contacting the Communications Director, CobbTV Station Manager, or the Cable Franchise Authority representative. All official Cobb County Government meetings will have priority. Use of audio and video equipment in the room must be coordinated with the CobbTV Station Manager. Any irregularities or problems with the room or its equipment should be reported to the CobbTV Station Manager immediately. Absolutely NO food or drink is allowed in the room at any time.
- 6.7.2.1.1 **After Hours Use** – Any person or group wishing to use the BOC room after 5 p.m. must agree to fund usage of off-duty law enforcement personnel to staff the security checkpoint. This checkpoint must be staffed by three people. The rate for each law enforcement officer is set at \$50/hour. The person or group using the BOC Meeting Room will agree to fund these personnel during a period one hour prior to the event’s starting time and ending one hour after the event concludes.
- 6.7.2.1.2 **CobbTV Staffing** – Any non-County entity desiring use of CobbTV to broadcast or stream their event, including those



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events as described in Section 7 of this policy, must agree to reimburse the Communications Department at the rate of \$100/hour.

- 6.7.2.2 **CobbTV Studio** - Productions must be related to Cobb County Government elected officials, various County departments, boards and authorities related to government issues or funded with public dollars. Use of Studio may only be reserved by Cobb County employees. All studio productions must be scheduled at least two weeks in advance by contacting either the Communications Director or CobbTV Station Manager. They will determine whether to authorize the requested production as well as determining priority of productions if a conflict exists. Any irregularities or problems with the studio or its equipment should be reported to the CobbTV Station Manager immediately.

6.8 Visual Presentations by Members of the Public

- 6.8.1 Any person wishing to show visual presentations (including; pictures, videos, PowerPoints, etc.) during public meetings or events that are broadcast by CobbTV must present their material(s) to a member of the Communications Department staff prior to the meeting. The items can be sent by email, linked via file-sharing, or presented on a physical device, but they must be provided early enough that the item can be scanned and ingested prior to the meeting's start.

6.9 Retention and Ownership of Tapes, DVD's and Digital Media

- 6.9.1 All videotapes, DVD's and digital media shall be the property of Cobb County. It shall be the general policy of this office to retain videotapes/DVD's/digital media of staff produced programs, meetings and events for a six-month period. At the end of that time the videotapes/DVD's/digital media may be reused and the original material erased at the discretion of CobbTV. Requests for longer retention should be made in writing prior to the end of the six-month period. CobbTV staff will in most cases post meetings on social media outlets for as long as the outlet allows.
- 6.9.2 The videotapes/DVD's/digital media shall not be considered official records of any meeting or action of the County, its officers, Commissioners, or boards and there shall be no liability for inadvertent erasure or omissions.

6.10 County Responsibility

- 6.10.1 Cobb County and/or CobbTV shall not be responsible for the accuracy of any information cablecast over CobbTV that is submitted by outside sources.

7. ACCESS

7.1 Access Channels

- 7.1.1 **Government Access Channel** - All programming cablecast over the Government Access Channel must be government related or further a legitimate government interest. Programs may include meetings, activities, programs, services and events of Cobb County or other governmental entities. The Government Access Channel is not to be utilized for announcements for programs from the general public. Public access channels are available for that purpose. Utilization of the Government Access Channel for personal gain or favor is not permitted.



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7.1.2 **Public Access Channel** - Public access channels are available for announcements from the public. Cable providers should be contacted directly for information regarding public access. CobbTV is NOT considered a public access channel.

7.1.3 **Education Access Channel** - Educational access channels are operated by local schools, colleges and universities. Cable providers should be contacted directly for information regarding educational access. CobbTV is NOT considered an education access channel.

7.2 Access Priorities

The following is a list in order of general priorities that will apply to the Government Access Channel.

7.2.1 Programming of an emergency nature involving public safety or health matters.

7.2.2 Programming of or about meetings of policy making bodies of County government.

7.2.3 Programming of various departments and their services.

7.2.4 Programming providing information on any ballot issue affecting County policy or services.

7.2.5 Programming that is produced by or for local, state and federal governments and/or other agencies that use public dollars.

7.2.6 Programming produced by external sources that is relevant to local government.

7.3 Elected Officials

Elected officials representing Cobb County may access CobbTV with the following restrictions:

7.3.1 **Board of Commissioners** - Each board member will be allotted one hour per month in addition to regularly televised public meetings or events in which they participate.

7.3.2 **Other County Elected Officials** - Each elected official, including the Sheriff, District Attorney, Solicitor, Tax Commissioner, Clerks of State and Superior Courts, and Judges, will be permitted one hour per month.

7.3.3 **Limitations** - Notwithstanding the foregoing, elected officials will be restricted from utilizing CobbTV as follows:

7.3.3.1 In an election year, beginning at the end of the qualifying period as set by the Cobb County Board of Elections and Registration, where an elected official's office will appear on the November ballot, elected officials may not utilize CobbTV except to appear on regularly televised public meetings or in Political Candidate Debates or Forums in which they qualify to appear.

7.4 Candidate Debates, Political Candidate Forums and Ballot Issue Debates

7.4.1 The Cobb County Communications Office, acting in accordance with policy set by the Board of Commissioners, shall permit the live cablecasting of Political Candidate Debates, Political Candidate Forums and Ballot Issue Debates on CobbTV as follows:

7.4.1.1 The cablecasting of Political Candidate Debates, Political Candidate Forums and Ballot Issue. Debates may occur for each elective office or ballot issue, except for non-contested offices.



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- 7.4.1.2 CobbTV will not cablecast any Ballot Issue Debates unless both sides of the issue are represented.
- 7.4.1.3 The sponsoring organization is responsible for notifying Candidates. Each candidate will receive a minimum of 21 days' notice prior to the scheduled date of the Debate or Forum. The sponsoring organization is required to provide the management of CobbTV a certificate of mailing indicating the date each notification was mailed and the address that each notification was mailed to.
- 7.4.1.4 All requests for Political Candidate Debate or Forum coverage must be submitted to the Communications Office in writing at least 21 calendar days prior to the Debate. CobbTV will not sponsor, moderate, originate or solicit participation of any candidate or organization for a Political Debate or Forum.
- 7.4.1.5 General Election Debates and Forums may be sponsored by non-partisan organizations, non-profit organizations and by the newspaper that serves as the County's legal organ and/or the newspaper with the highest paid circulation within Cobb County. Sponsoring organizations may limit participation to specific elective offices but must give each eligible Candidate for the specified elective office the opportunity to participate.
- 7.4.1.6 Primary Election Debates and Forums may be sponsored by non-partisan organizations, non-profit organizations, partisan organizations and by the newspaper that serves as the County's legal organ and/or the newspaper with the highest paid circulation within Cobb County. Sponsoring organizations may limit participation to specific primary elections and may further limit participation to candidates within the sponsoring organization's political party. Each eligible Candidate for the specified primary election for which coverage has been requested must be given the opportunity to participate.
- 7.4.1.7 Ballot Issue Debates may be sponsored by non-partisan organizations, non-profit organizations and by the newspaper that serves as the County's legal organ and/or the newspaper with the highest paid circulation within Cobb County.
- 7.4.2. CobbTV will provide coverage for Political Candidate Debates and Forums that meet these policy requirements unless there is a conflict due to location, scheduled time or date, and/or resources. The Director at the direction of the County Manager, will determine if a Political Candidate Forum or Debate is to be covered by CobbTV. All covered Political Candidate Debates and Forums will occur in the Cobb County Government building located at 100 Cherokee Street in Marietta.
- 7.4.3 Political Candidate Debates and Forums will be cablecast live as they occur from gavel to gavel and shall occur between 7p.m. and 9p.m. Eastern Standard Time, Monday through Friday. Coverage will not exceed two hours in length.
- 7.4.4 Political Candidate Debates, Forums and Ballot Issue Debates may be replayed one time within 72 hours of the live debate or forum.
- 7.4.5 All participating parties must agree to fund staffing of the 100 Cherokee Street building's security checkpoint (as outlined in Section 6.7.2 above) and sign any documentation deemed necessary by the County.



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7.5 Crawl

Access to the crawl will be available on CobbTV to the following organizations or to announce the following events:

- 7.5.1 Any governmental department or office located in Cobb County
- 7.5.2 Any government-sponsored event held in a publicly owned facility located in Cobb County.
- 7.5.3 Events sponsored by Cobb County Travel and Tourism or any organization partnered or affiliated with Cobb County Government.
- 7.5.4 Any event or service provided by or sponsored by a municipality within the jurisdictional boundaries of Cobb County.

7.6 Change of Policy

This policy may be amended at the discretion of the Board of Commissioners.

*(as defined by the FCC. See; <https://www.fcc.gov/media/program-content-regulations>)

Revision History

Version ID	Revision Date	Author	Reason for Revision
v.1.0-2019	September, 2019	Communications	Reformat