

POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR GASKILL POINT

Variable Message Sign

I. Purpose of the Township VMS

- A. The purpose of the Township's VMS (variable message sign) at Gaskill Point is to provide timely information to its residents and other members of the public who travel past this location. It is also the intent that the board always contain a message as follows:

II. Authority to Manage

- A. The Township Administrator is responsible to manage the day to day operation of the VMS in accordance with this policy.
- B. The Township Administrator is authorized to refuse posting any message he/she has reason to believe could create a negative issue for the Township.
- C. The Township Administrator's decision is final unless appealed to the Township Committee at a Committee meeting. Therefore organizations are advised to provide their requests well in advance of the desired posting dates.
- D. Except as outlined below for the Chief of Police, no other persons are authorized to post messages on the Township's VMS.
- E. Until such time as a policy is developed and approved by the Township Committee the Township Administrator shall not post the name of any business or function specifically benefiting any business or businesses.
- F. No religious or political advertising of any kind will be allowed on the Township's VMS, nor any notice regarding a lottery or gift enterprise depending in whole or in part upon a game of chance.

III. Messages approved for posting

- A. The Township Administrator or his/her designee is authorized to post the following messages:
 - (1) Routine:
 - (a) Standard Items
 - (b) Date, Time, and Temperature
 - (c) After 5:00 p.m. "Welcome to Historic Mays Landing"
 - (d) Meeting Reminders
 - (i) Township Committee
 - (ii) Township Planning Board
 - (iii) Township Zoning Board
 - (e) Veterans Day Celebration
 - (f) Memorial Day Celebration
 - (g) 9/11 Memorial Services
 - (h) Hometown Celebrations

- (i) Promotion of the operating days and times of the Cove Swimming Area
 - (j) Any notice authorized by the Township Committee
 - (k) Notices for other Township sponsored events
 - (l) Township Hall and Local School Closings
 - (m) Township Employment Opportunities
- (2) Special; as Requested:
- (a) Fire Company events
 - (b) Rescue Squad events
 - (c) Main Street Merchants events (no specific business names)
 - (d) Events for Volunteer Organizations created to serve residents of Hamilton Township
 - (e) Township of Hamilton Historical Society
- (3) Public Safety:
- (a) Drive Safe School is open (during the school year and just before)
 - (b) Amber Alerts
 - (c) Missing persons Alerts
 - (d) Warnings and Alerts issued by the Office of Emergency Management
 - (e) State of Emergencies, both State and Local
 - (f) Public Service Announcements (e.g., "Buckle Up/It's the Law")

IV. Chief of Police Authorized to Post Messages

- A. The Chief of Police is authorized to post Public Safety Messages in the best interest of the safety of Township Residents.
- B. Amber Alert
- (1) The Amber Plan, established in 2002, uses the Emergency Alert System, television, radio, and highway VMS to provide timely emergency information to the public regarding a child abduction. However, studies have shown that motorists will slow down to read Amber Alert messages, because the public recognizes the message is important and wants to help. To promote safety, the following procedures will be followed:
- (a) An Amber Alert message shall only be posted when there is verification of a legitimate Amber Alert activation from the NJ State Police.
 - (b) No Amber Alert message shall be displayed on the Township's VMS at the request of any other law enforcement office.
 - (c) The following uses typically have a higher priority than the display of an Amber Alert message:
 - (i) Road or ramp closure
 - (ii) Incidents or crashes
 - (iii) Construction or maintenance operations
 - (iv) Adverse weather or environmental conditions
- (2) Unless the Amber Alert is updated with additional vehicle information, or reissued, the message should be displayed for no more than eight hours or until the Amber Alert is officially called off, whichever occurs first. Exceptions are:

- (a) Extension: If the issuing agency requests and extension, two hours will be added to the remaining display time. If still needed, an additional two hours may be given at the request of the issuing agency.
 - (b) Update: If an update is needed (such as new color, make or model of the vehicle or license plate information) any VMS previously activated will be updated with the new information. If the update is within the first four hours of the Amber Alert, the message will continue to be activated for the original 8-hour period. If the update occurs after the first four hours, the updated message will extend two hours beyond the original 8-hour period.
- (3) An Amber Alert message should be discontinued if there is a need to warn motorists of road conditions needing an immediate response.
- (4) Approved Amber Alert Messages
- (a) No phone numbers are to be placed on the VMS.
 - (b) Two-Frame Amber Alert message:
 - Frame A:
 - AMBER
 - ALERT
 - Panel B:
 - [VEHICLE DESCRIPTION]
 - [LICENSE PLATE NUMBER]
 - (c) If the Amber Alert is activated and there is no license plate information, the message will be placed as follows:
 - AMBER ALERT
 - TUNE TO
 - LOCAL NEWS
- (5) Files of messages, display times, and the operator who posted the message should be maintained. Records may be electronic or other media and should be secure and accessible for review, retrieval and printing.

V. Message Content

- A. Messages requests must be made in writing on the approved organization’s letterhead. Messages should include “Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How” as well as display date (starting and ending).
- B. Message requests must be made at least two weeks in advance of the start date requested. The Township may at its discretion waive this requirement in the display of certain timely messages.
- C. The Township reserves the right to edit messages for space, clarity and content. Guidelines for editing messages include (but are not limited to):
 - (1) Additions to complete or clarify information
 - (2) Deletions of excessive or redundant information
 - (3) Omission of entire message if it is unclear and contact person is not available

- D. All requesting organizations will assume complete responsibility for the content of their message. Requestors shall hold the Township harmless for all liability of any kind, including the cost of legal defense, arising from the presentation of messages provided by the requestor.

VI. Message Design, Frequency, and Wording

- A. Because of the Historic nature of the Gaskill Point Location, the format of each sign is important. White letters shall be used in most cases. Any new format submitted must be approved by the Township Administrator prior to posting.
- B. The frequency and timing of the above messages shall be established by the Township Administrator and/or the Chief of Police unless this list is specifically amended by Resolution of the Township Committee.
- C. Wording of all messages must be carefully reviewed to prior to posting to minimize the potential for un-intended consequences.

VI. Basic Message Design Considerations

- A. A top priority for VMS messages is safety of the motoring public. Messages must convey information to motorists safely and effectively with a minimum of driver distraction. Knowledge of basic message design considerations is a necessary prelude to designing and displaying effective messages. Message design involves recognition of the basic principles for the following:
 - (4) MESSAGE CONTENT – refers to specific information. Essentially, what is wrong ahead and what the motorist should do about it.
 - (5) MESSAGE LENGTH – refers to either the number of words or the number of characters and spaces in a message.
 - (6) MESSAGE LOAD – refers to the amount of information in the total message, usually expressed in terms of units of information (informational units).
 - (7) UNIT OF INFORMATION (INFORMATIONAL UNIT) – refers to the brief answer to a question a motorist might ask.
 - (8) MESSAGE INFORMATION FORMAT – refers to the order and arrangement of the informational units on a VMS.
- B. Units of Information and Message Load
 - (1) A unit of information is each data item in a message that a motorist could use to make a decision. Each answer is one unit of information. A unit is usually 1-3 words, but can be up to 4 words. The messages in the following tables serve to illustrate the concept of UNITS OF INFORMATION.

QUESTION	ANSWER	INFO UNIT
1. What happened?	CONSTRUCTION	1 unit
2. Where?	RT 559S	1 unit
3. What effect on traffic?	CLOSED AHEAD	1 unit
4. Who is advisory for?	SHORE TRAFFIC	1 unit
5. What is advised?	TAKE RT. 40	1 unit

QUESTION	ANSWER	INFO UNIT
1. What is happening?	HOMETOWN CELEB.	1 unit
2. Where?	MAIN STREET	1 unit
3. What effect on traffic?	ROAD CLOSED	1 unit
4. Who is advisory for?	THRU TRAFFIC	1 unit
5. What is advised?	TAKE RIVER RD	1 unit

QUESTION	ANSWER	INFO UNIT
1. What is happening?	SOCCER SIGNUPS	1 unit
2. Where?	UNDERHILL PK	1 unit
3. When?	MAR 5&6	1 unit
4. What time?	10 AM-2 PM	1 unit

- (2) Messages shall be displayed at exposure rates of 1 second/word or 2 seconds/unit of information.
- (3) Maximum of 10 words in a single message frame.
- (4) No more than 3 units of information shall be in a single message frame, and no more than 5 units of information in total shall be in one VMS message split into two frames.
- (5) No more than two frames (phrases) shall be used.
- (6) Each frame must be understood by itself.
- (7) Compatible units of information shall be displayed on the same frame.
- (8) A message line shall not contain portions of two different units of information.
- (9) Words shall not flash, strobe or "travel"; each frame shall be displayed as one image at a time.
- (10) White letters are to be used as much as possible.