

WaCoHo Email Guidelines

PROPOSAL: Policy on the Use of the Wasatch Commons Community Email List

Proposed by the Process Committee, October 26, 2014.

Mil by Consensus November 12, 2014, as below with modifications included.

Why we feel this proposal is helpful: We want:

- To assure our community members that their emotional safety is important.
- To remind members of the importance of positive communication.
- To provide an agreed-upon reference that we can each use to evaluate our emails.
- To help make our email communications something that people want to read, and will welcome.

As a community, we encourage direct, face-to-face communication whenever possible, based on the belief that this builds and enlivens community. Email also is a wonderful tool for communication within the community when our busy lives limit the amount of face-to-face communication that we can have. It enables us to reach out to everyone at once. When we read it, we can be kept aware of what is happening.

However, poor or careless use of email can create negative feelings and mistaken interpretation of the sender's intent, and even cause people to withdraw. It can be too easy to circumvent respect by lashing out through email. Face-to-face conversation should be used if at all possible when issues or emotions are tense. If this is difficult, the Process Committee and other community members are willing to help.

Email SHOULD be used for community building, such as:

- Thank-you and acknowledgement of service to the community.
- Sharing: borrowing items, ride sharing, etc.
- Meetings: announcement of time and place, agendas, minutes.
- Announcements pertaining to community events or members.
- Logistics: driving directions, carpooling, meeting places.
- Invitations.
- Drafts of proposals.
- Factual information about community issues under discussion, background or research.
- Ideas for community building.
- Promoting cohousing.

Email should NOT be used for:

- Trying to resolve conflicts.
- Interpersonal relationships or issues, sharing upset feelings.
- Complaints, either general, personal or anonymous ("Someone did . . .")
- Giving personal feedback about each other's behaviors.
- Making disrespectful references to individuals or groups.

- Discussions that have emotional charge.
- Sarcasm.

Tips to make email effective:

- Be brief. If it contains reference material, make an attachment, or put it in a separate section. For those who have trouble opening attachments, print a few copies and note where they can be found.
- Make sure the subject line clearly states the purpose of the email.
- Always identify the author of the email.
- Forwarding outside emails that do not relate directly to the community or community building may not be welcome by some community members.
- If you receive an email which has upset you, do not reply via email. Break the chain—either pick up the phone, ignore it, or write something back like, “Can we schedule a time to discuss this message further?” Other community members should keep an open mind and be aware that NOT responding does not mean that the statements in the accusing email are true.