



Personnel and Administrative Policy and Procedure

SUBJECT: Media Management	EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2003 REVIEWED: REVISED: December 1, 2020
CATEGORY: 100 POLICY NUMBER: 100.3	CROSS REFERENCE: Resolution 76-2020

Purpose: This policy speaks to the treatment of the news media and sensitive information by city employees in a reactive scenario. It does not address the role of the city's employees or the public information officer (PIO) in the execution of public relations activity, which is a proactive scenario designed to generate positive attention about the city or its activities.

Relationships of trust and confidence with the news media and the community are extremely important to the fulfillment of the many missions of the city. Uninformed responses to news media inquiries can cause public confusion as well as damage to the city's programs and credibility. Inconsistent or hasty responses concerning developing issues affecting the city can detract seriously from the ability of the city and its individual professionals to complete their tasks in a professional manner. Ignoring media inquiries can result in imaginative or speculative journalism that is detrimental to the city. Furthermore, if city staff continuously ignores a reporter's request for information, it very well may create a relationship in which the reporter may be predisposed to ignore a city request for publishing information. If the PIO is not informed promptly of issues that concern the city's business, it may become impossible to provide complete, accurate and timely information when inquiries are received.

Definitions

News Media: Online, digital, radio, television or print entities that provide information for public consumption.

Press Release: A document sent to media outlets informing the reporter of basic information they will use in developing a news story. A press release should include the basic who, what, when, where, and why of a given event or happening, and also include the contact information of those most directly involved.

Tip: A more informal transmittal of a story idea to a reporter. Often less informative than a press release, and is often conveyed verbally, rather than written.

On the Record: When speaking with a reporter "on the record," anything you say can be attributed to you in a news story.

Off the Record: Going "off the record" with a reporter means you do not wish to be linked with the information you are transmitting. Can be potentially damaging, as "off the record" can mean different things to different reporters.

Source: Anyone who provides information for a news story.

PIO: Public Information Officer (PIO), the organization's primary contact with media outlets.

Police PIO: Police Public Information Officer.

Deadline: The date and time the reporter must file their story before being disseminated to the public.

Hook: The main piece of information or concept the reporter will build the rest of their story around.

Objective: This administrative procedure seeks to inform the city staff, the council and the public of how the city's media interface should function in general terms. Specific situations may warrant ad hoc consultation with the PIO, the city manager and/or the immediate supervisor of the employee in a situation.

Scope: This policy applies to all employees, city officials, or other personnel of the City of Milwaukie.

Policy: The city's policy regarding reactive news media contacts is generally, to encourage all employees or other representatives of the city, to be forthcoming, accurate, consistent and responsible with information about the city or its affairs. As a public agency, the city has a responsibility to share almost all city information with the public. The only exceptions to this rule include information about personnel matters, active real estate negotiations, or litigation actions. In the interest of projecting the most credible, professional stewardship of public affairs, it is the policy of this city to opt for full public disclosure when a controversial matter may be generating media curiosity. While this may appear to be "bad press" in the short term, it preserves the integrity and credibility of the city as a public agency in the long run. This is not to say that we must actively publicize the controversies, mistakes and crises of our public officials or public servants. But that we must be prepared to respond professionally and ethically in these situations. To put it plainly, mistakes are bad, but cover-ups about mistakes are worse.

Guidelines for Use

- All contacts with the media should be reported to the PIO prior to the occurrence if possible. If that is not possible then they must be reported to the PIO within 24 hours of the occurrence.
- Contacts with the media should not be used by the city employee or public official to advance a personal agenda or endeavor.
- Contacts with the media should be polite, factual, accurate and timely.
- Written contacts with the media should be on city letterhead.
- Email contacts with the media should include the originator's full contact info, title and credentials (if appropriate). The PIO should be copied on them or forwarded them.
- Verbal contacts with the media should be documented by the employee or official having such contact, so that they and/or the city are protected, and the misinformation can be credibly corrected.
- When there is dispute about the accuracy of city-generated information, the PIO is to be notified and is charged with clarifying the facts.
- Press releases should be reviewed and approved by the PIO before issuance.

Procedures, Equipment and Training

The city's news media policy requires observance of the following procedures:

The city's employees are responsible for exercising judgment in the early identification of issues which are likely to generate public attention and news media interest. At the earliest possible opportunity, employees should call these matters to the attention of the PIO. Inquiries from legislators or other government officials (local, state, and national) are also important to identify because they may have an immediate media impact.

If a request for an immediate interview is received, the person receiving the request should advise and consult with the PIO and/or their supervisor in advance of the interview whenever possible. Routine requests for information regarding on-going programs or projects would be the exception to this rule.

No press releases may be issued with city letterhead under any circumstances without the prior express authorization of the PIO. In the case of the police department, this authorization may come from the police department's PIO, who will follow up with the city's general PIO.

Members of the bargaining units who are contacted by the media as officers or members of the union to speak on union issues, are not obligated to report such contact to the PIO. Furthermore, they may also grant an interview with the media regarding union issues without consulting with the PIO.

Equipment needed for media management may include any information conveyance tool from a note pad to a database to a tape recorder to a camera. Typical office equipment is generally used to convey, interpret or prepare information.

Training needed for media management may include basic courses in writing, reporting, public speaking, graphic design, website development, conflict resolution, emergency management or courses in using another language if the situation requires it.

Responsibilities

PIO:

- The Public Information Officer is the guardian of the public trust. The PIO may at times be required to verify, corroborate, or expand upon information that has been initially conveyed by another city employee or city official.
- To write or edit, and ultimately approve press releases, official statements, or press conference transcripts.
- Organize and conduct press conferences when the need arises.
- Represent the city in this capacity when the emergency operations center (EOC) is activated. A back up PIO should be designated as well during an EOC activation. When an EOC is activated the PIO reports to the incident commander.

Staff:

- To check with the PIO before issuing press releases.
- To notify the PIO or city manager prior to giving a statement to the press if possible. If that is not possible, then within 24 hours.