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CITY ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY

Policy No: 1.1.5	Media Interview Requests and Public Communications	Effective Date: 07/31/2025
Revision No:	Policy Administrator: Public Information Officer	Next Review Due: As Needed
Related Policies and Procedures: N/A	Approved by: Deanna J. Santana, Interim City Manager 	Date Approved: 08/11/2025

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure consistency, accuracy, and alignment in all external communications with the media. It outlines the proper procedures for handling media inquiries and interview requests, and it establishes the central role of the Public Information Office (PIO) in coordinating public communication efforts.

This policy also clarifies the unique media response protocols applicable to the City's public safety departments (Fire and Police) due to their operational requirements and immediate response obligations.

2. POLICY

To maintain the integrity and consistency of public messaging, all media inquiries, interview requests, or statements intended for public release must be directed to the Public Information Office. The PIO will evaluate requests, determine appropriate response strategies, and coordinate messaging with relevant departments. If the public information manager is unavailable for an urgent issue, the request may be directed to the City Manager or Assistant City Manager.

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all City employees who receive media inquiries through any communication channel including phone, email, social media, or in person.

4. RECEIPT OF MEDIA INQUIRY

Upon receiving a media inquiry, employees shall:

- Refrain from responding directly to the reporter or media outlet.
- Document the following information promptly:
 - Reporter's name and contact details
 - Media outlet
 - Date and time inquiry was received
 - Questions or topics requested
 - Response deadline, if provided

4.1 Notification

Employees must immediately forward all inquiry details to the Public Information Officer (PIO) via email or phone. Timely notification is critical for coordinating responses. Concurrently, employees must inform their Director and supervisor to ensure awareness.

4.2 Evaluation and Coordination

The PIO will:

- Assess the inquiry and determine the appropriate response.
- Draft and issue official statements, as necessary.
- Coordinate interviews or prepare talking points.
- Consult with relevant subject matter experts or departments.
- Escalate sensitive or high-profile topics to executive leadership as needed.

4.3 Notification of City Manager's Office

The PIO will keep the City Manager informed of all media inquiries by providing:

- A summary of the inquiry.
- The response issued or planned.
- Details of any scheduled media engagements.

4.4 Authorized Spokespersons

Only the PIO or designated spokespersons are authorized to represent the City in media interactions. Typically, only department directors are authorized to talk to the media, but other staff may be authorized by the PIO depending on the situation. Any staff member requested to participate in interviews must:

- Coordinate with the PIO prior to engagement.
- Receive briefing on key messages and talking points.
- Report the engagement to the City Manager's Office.

5. EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

- Do not engage with media unless expressly authorized.
- Refer all media inquiries immediately to the PIO, regardless of perceived significance.
- When uncertain about handling an inquiry, notify the PIO to err on the side of caution.

6. EXEMPTION: FIRE AND POLICE DEPARTMENTS and OFFICE OF THE CITY ATTORNEY

The Fire and Police Departments operate under distinct protocols due to their emergency response roles and the immediate nature of public safety communications. These departments maintain their own department-specific Public Information Officers (PIOs), trained and designated to respond directly to media inquiries involving public safety matters.

Media expectations for timely responses from Police and Fire necessitate on-scene and rapid communication, particularly during emergencies, incidents, or active investigations.

Despite operating independently in these instances, the Fire and Police PIOs are expected to maintain communication with the City's primary Public Information Office, and ensure notification is provided to the City Manager's Office and/or Council when applicable.

Additionally, the City Attorney reports independently to the City Council and may, if they choose, respond to media directly without coordinating first with the PIO.

7. ENFORCEMENT AND COMPLIANCE

Failure to follow this policy may result in unauthorized or conflicting public messaging, and corrective action may be taken. All employees are expected to comply with this policy and direct any media-related questions to the Public Information Office.