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MEDIA RELATIONS HANDBOOK

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MEDIA RELATIONS HANDBOOK

DEFINITIONS

To better meet the media's needs, council, board, commission and staff members should have a working understanding of commonly used terms. Here are a dozen frequently used media terms.

On-the-record: Remarks, information, explanations, quotes that are given to a member of the media who may use them for publication/broadcast. This includes written, recorded or taped comments. Statements are always assumed to be on-the-record; the reporter has no responsibility to indicate so.

Off-the-record: Remarks, information, explanations, quotes that are given to a member of the media and are expressly described as NOT for publication/broadcast by the City representative. Off-the-record does not assume any degree of confidentiality. (For example, a reporter may share off-the-record comments with an editor.) City representatives should avoid asking to talk "off-the-record" and should not be led into talking "off-the-record."

Confidential: Remarks, information, explanations, quotes that are given to a member of the media for his or her information only; not to be shared or discussed with anyone else.

News release: Written information supplied to the news media.

PSA (public service announcement): Brief notices of events or programs used by radio or television.

News conference: Meetings conducted for the release of information, to which several news media are invited.

Media event: An event or presentation specifically planned to highlight a program or plan for media coverage.

Interview: A series of questions by representative(s) of news organization(s).

Advertisement: Purchased space that provides information, promotes an activity, program or a point of view.

Editorial: An opinion expressed, in written or oral form, by such individuals as an editor, publisher, editorial board, news director or station manager/owner.

Letter to the editor: An opinion expressed in writing by a citizen.

5ws +: The key components of any story: who, what, when, where, why. The "how" of a story is often also a crucial element.



MEDIA RELATIONS HANDBOOK

INTERVIEW PREPARATION

An interview gives a media representative a one-on-one opportunity to "quiz" a City representative about a particular topic, or perhaps a few topics, of current interest within the community. Sometimes an interview is conducted to obtain an outlook on the City's future course and more general subjects are discussed. With some preparation, a City representative can effectively use an interview to present accurate, concise information, convey the City's attitude or position, and meet the reporter's needs.

- ◆ If you are contacted by a member of the media for an interview, you may do your own scheduling or you may ask the reporter to make arrangements through the Public Information Officer. If you make your own arrangements, be sure to ask about the following four areas.
- ◆ Ask who will be conducting the interview and the identity of the media organization. Do not request a particular reporter.
- ◆ Ask what subjects will be covered. Do not ask for specific questions and do not insist that a reporter cannot ask about certain subjects.
- ◆ Let the reporter know if you are not the correct person to interview (if you don't have knowledge on a particular topic). You can recommend someone else to be interviewed.
- ◆ Ask about the format and length of the interview. You may, and should, ask who else will be interviewed, but don't insist that the reporter not interview an adversary.
- ◆ Offer to provide some written background material before the interview.
- ◆ Before the interview, prepare notes on each subject the reporter may inquire about. You can draft a list of three to five points that you want to convey to the reporter. Be able to support these with data. The more times you repeat your message, the more likely it is to appear.
- ◆ Be able to write or verbally deliver quotable quotes of 12-15 words.
- ◆ Be prepared to emphasize the positive aspects of a subject.

- ◆ Write or verbally deliver quotable quotes of 12-15 words or less.
- ◆ Ask whether you have made yourself clear.
- ◆ Be positive, not defensive. Never argue with a reporter. Remain calm.
- ◆ You may attack an issue; never attack a person or organization.
- ◆ Do not respond to questions about hypothetical situations.
- ◆ Avoid using acronyms or jargon.
- ◆ Do not volunteer more than what you want to discuss.
- ◆ If you make a mistake, state that you would like to clarify it. Do not demand that an answer you have given not be used.
- ◆ If you are doing a television interview, talk to the reporter, not the camera. Never joke into a "dead" mike.
- ◆ Be sensitive to non-verbal messages -- posture, use of hands, facial expressions. They should be consistent with what you are saying. Maintain good eye contact with the reporter.
- ◆ Avoid repetitive gestures (such as jingling money in your pocket, clearing your throat, checking your watch).
- ◆ Speak slowly for emphasis; avoid verbal pauses. Speak distinctly and correctly. Intensity in your voice can reflect confidence, competency and openness.
- ◆ Be able to pronounce and spell names you use.
- ◆ Avoid standing behind a lectern or other physical barrier.
- ◆ Avoid asking to talk "off the record" and don't be led into talking "off the record."
- ◆ Do not make side comments or confidential remarks.
- ◆ Always tell the truth.
- ◆ The media often wants viewpoints as much as facts. You need to identify your remarks as your own unless you are presenting the opinion of the council, board, commission or staff. Do not let the media infer that you are speaking on behalf of the City and do not use your City "title" if you are speaking as a private citizen.
- ◆ After an interview, remember that you are still "on-the-record."
- ◆ Do not ask to see a copy of a written story before it is printed or to preview a tape; you can't and this may annoy the reporter. If you want to be sure a reporter has correctly recorded information such as statistics, ask the reporter to read the numbers back to you.
- ◆ If significant mistakes are made in the reporting of the story, call the reporter to politely point out the error and request a correction. Do not call the editor/news director first.



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CITY POLICY

The City's manual of General Procedure Guidelines includes a policy on "Release of information to the news media." A copy is attached.

- C. News Conferences: Meetings for the release of information to which several news sources are invited.
- D. News Releases: Written information supplied to the news media.
- E. Public Service Announcements: Brief notifications to be run as radio and TV fillers; generally air for one to two weeks.

V. Procedure

A. Departments/Divisions

1. Departments or divisions planning to release information to the news media shall complete the Publication Request and Information Form and forward the Form to the Public Information Officer.
2. Notification to the media of scheduled disruptions in City services shall be coordinated through the Public Information Officer.
3. All Forms requesting media releases shall be signed or initialed by the department or division head. Until the Form is reprinted with a signature line, the department or division head may sign or initial the form below the "Name" field.
4. When practicable, the Public Information Officer should be informed of a pending interview at the time the interview is requested and may be consulted for help in preparing for the interview.
5. Timeframes for receipt of the Form by the Public Information Officer are:
 - Informational Advertising: One to two weeks ahead of the event.
 - News Conferences: One week ahead of the event.
 - News Releases: One week ahead of the event.
 - Public Service Announcements: Three to four weeks ahead of the event.

City of Richland
PUBLICATION REQUEST AND INFORMATION FORM

1. For use:	<input type="checkbox"/> Media release	<input type="checkbox"/> Employee Newsletter
2. Who or what is involved:		
3. Description of "event" (meeting, new program, outage, policy change, promotion, training completion, new employee, etc. etc.):		
4. How does this "event" affect Richland residents/city employees:		
5. Date and time of "event":	Date:	Time:
6. Location (be as specific as necessary):		
7. Additional information:		
8. For additional information, public/employee may contact:		
Name/title:	Phone:	

Form submitted by:

Name: _____ Extension: _____ Date: _____

Submit completed form to the Public Information Officer.

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