

| CITY OF APPLETON<br>PERSONNEL POLICY  |  | TITLE:<br>MEDIA RELATIONS POLICY  |  |
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## I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines and assign responsibilities for the media relations function of the City of Appleton.

## II. POLICY

To provide timely and accurate information to the media **when requesting information concerning business, in accordance with applicable laws, regulations and City policies.** ~~adhering to prescribed guidelines and procedures for releasing information.~~

To provide continual internal communications to assure the alderpersons, Mayor's office and City department spokespersons are appraised of events that will be in the media (prior to release, if possible). Note: Fire, Library, Police and Valley Transit matters will be handled by their respective media personnel. Violations of this policy are subject to discipline, up to and including termination.

## III. DEFINITIONS

- 1) Citywide **Communications Specialist** ~~Media Relations Coordinator~~ (central contact person): City employee who facilitates or documents discussions with the media about City **business and activities issues or functions.** He/She would also coordinate media contacts regarding citywide **business issues** and unpublicized City plans. **For the purpose of this policy, the citywide Communications Specialist will be referred to as the Communications Specialist.** ~~The Mayor will designate this Coordinator.~~
- 2) Authorized Department Spokesperson: An employee in a specific department who would serve

as the key media relations contact for that department. This spokesperson would be available to field media inquiries and discuss information about his/her department. In addition, this spokesperson would work with the **Communications Specialist** ~~Citywide Media Relations Coordinator~~ to inform the **Communications Specialist** ~~Coordinator~~ of media contacts (and what information was shared) or to assist the **Communications Specialist** ~~Citywide Media Relations Coordinator~~ in disseminating information to internal employees and the public. (See Attachment 1.)

- 3) City Employee: For purpose of this policy, “employee” includes all employees and volunteers who work for the City, except for alderpersons.
- 4) Routine information: Information about the City, its services or its personnel that is provided to the media on an ongoing basis, including such information as staff announcements, general events, current happenings, status of Citywide projects or general community and Common Council business.
- 5) Substantial, non-routine information: Information about the City, its services or its personnel that is not considered normal or routine maintenance news. Examples of substantial, non-routine information may include a bomb threat at a municipal building or a water main break in the City.
- 6) Unpublicized City information: Any information concerning tentative major programs or plans, unfinalized, unfinanced or uncoordinated with other department heads that has not been presented in a public meeting. This information should only be released by the Mayor or Citywide Media Relations Coordinator, unless with prior approval by the Mayor.

#### **IV. RESPONSIBILITIES**

- A. **Communications Specialist** ~~Citywide Media Relations Coordinator~~ will be the primary liaison with the media. The **Communication Specialist** ~~Coordinator~~ will:
  - 1) Assist media representatives in covering newsworthy activities of the City.
  - 2) Review and disseminate press releases that involve multiple departments or unpublicized City plans (see definition above).
  - 3) Prepare and distribute press releases on citywide issues.
  - 4) Forward the appropriate City department spokesperson’s name to the media for information on a specific department.
  - 5) Collect articles/recordings, which result from media contacts.
  - 6) Maintain a current list of all media contact information and share this information with department spokespersons when requested.
  - 7) Facilitate media training with department spokespersons.
  - 8) Keep alderpersons and department spokespersons apprised of current City issues.
  - 9) Arrange for/Assist at news conferences.
  - 10) Serve as **the main a** point of contact for media during a citywide crisis situation (**unless**

otherwise noted in City Emergency Operations Plan).

11) Maintain ongoing professional relationships with media contacts.

B. Authorized Department Spokesperson

- 1) Share substantial, non-routine press releases (or those that affect multiple departments) with the **Communications Specialist** ~~Media Relations Coordinator~~ prior to release, if feasible. If in doubt of the impact of the press release or its content, seek input from your Department Director or the **Communications Specialist** ~~Media Relations Coordinator~~.
- 2) Promptly respond to media to answer any questions or gather information for them.
- 3) For issues that impact more than your department, refer the media to the **Communications Specialist** ~~Media Relations Coordinator~~.
- 4) Keep your department employees informed of citywide issues that appear in the news.
- 5) Participate in training for all department spokespersons.

C. Employee/Volunteer

As a general rule, employees are discouraged from releasing information over the telephone. However, to maintain a good working relationship with the media, sometimes you may need to release limited information via telephone to the media. When doing so, you should follow these guidelines:

- 1) When contacted, immediately obtain the caller's name, news organization and timeliness of his/her request.
- 2) If contacted by the media regarding issues *about the City or your department*, politely decline making comments and refer all questions to the **Communications Specialist** ~~Media Relations Coordinator~~ or your department spokesperson.
- 3) If contacted by the media *regarding your personal opinions*, answer the media's questions (if you wish), but make it clear that these comments are your personal opinions and not made on behalf of the City **or because of your role as a City employee**.
- 4) Inform the **Communications Specialist** ~~Media Relations Coordinator~~ or your department spokesperson prior to distributing any press releases. Give them a copy of the press release **for review and/or approval before release, if time permits** ~~in case they receive any questions~~.
- 5) Assist **Communications Specialist** ~~Media Relations Coordinator~~ or department spokesperson in compiling information for the media. Forward this information to the **Communications Specialist** ~~Media Relations Coordinator~~ when requested.
- 6) Alert **Communications Specialist** ~~Media Relations Coordinator~~ of any unusual media contacts or incorrect published information about the City **as soon as possible** (so the error can be corrected).

*This policy applies to all City employees and volunteers. For questions on this policy, please contact the City of Appleton Human Resources Department or the **Legal Services** ~~City Attorney's~~ office.*

## City of Appleton Media Relations Departmental Contacts (3/15)

**Citywide ~~Communications Specialist~~ Media Relations Coordinator**: Chad Doran (832-5814/Cell: 419-0292)

### **Departmental Spokespersons:**

- **Community Development** Karen Harkness, Department Director (832-6408)
- **Facilities /Parks & Rec** Dean Gazza, Department Director (832-5572)
- **Finance** Tony Saucerman, Department Director (832-6440)
- **Fire** Len VanderWyst, Fire Chief (832-1703)
- **Health** Kurt Eggebrecht, Department Director (832-6433)
- **Human Resources** Melody Lewis, Staff Dev./Training (832-3941)
- **Legal Services (Attorney)** Jim Walsh, City Attorney (832-6423)
- **Library** Tina Babler, Library Assistant Marketing (832-1695)
- **Mayor**
  - 1) Mayor Hanna (832-6400)
  - 2) Nancy Kohlman (832-6400)
- **Police** Dave Lund, Public Information Officer (832-5509)
- **Public Works**
  - 1) Paula Vandehey, Dept. Director (832-6474)
  - 2) DPW—Ross Buetow, Deputy Director (832-6474)
  - 3) MSB—Nate Loper, Deputy Director (832-5804)
- **Information Technology Services** Dean Fox, Department Director (832-5892)
- **Utilities** Chris Shaw, Department Director (832-2362)
- **Valley Transit** Nicole Voelzke, **VT Communications Specialist** Marketing Coordinator (832-2293)