

# Section 2: Employment

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## Policy #8: Media Relations

Effective Date: April 1, 2018

### I. Purpose

The Town of Mooresville seeks to inform its residents, businesses, and visitors by engaging in pro-active communications. One of the most effective and quickest ways to communicate Town policies and activities is by working in partnership with the news media.

### II. Scope

This policy shall apply to all persons holding a paid position as an employee of the Town, except the Town Manager, Town Attorney, a member of any appointed or volunteer board or committee, or any others that may be hired or appointed by the Town Board. For this purpose, and subject to the exceptions set out herein, Town employees shall be defined as those employees in departments and offices for which the Town Board serves as the final budget authority.

### III. Background

None

### IV. Definitions

None

### V. Legislation

None

### VI. Policy

Inquiries from the news media are given a high priority by the Town of Mooresville and should be responded to as quickly and efficiently as possible. Every effort should be made to meet media deadlines and ensure all information released is accurate.

The Public Information Officer is responsible for the Town's media relations, including most public safety issues. All Town employees should notify the Public Information Officer of any media inquiries.

## **VII. Provisions**

### **A. Town Spokespersons**

Unless otherwise authorized, the Town's spokespersons are:

1. Mayor and Town Commissioners
2. Town Manager, Assistant/Deputy Town Managers
3. Town Attorney, Assistant Town Attorney, Town Clerk
4. Public Information Officer
5. Department Directors
6. Exceptions regarding spokespersons may be made at the discretion of the Public Information Officer.

### **B. Media Inquiries**

All media inquiries received by Town staff should be referred immediately to the Public Information Officer and employee's Department Director.

### **C. Sensitive Or Controversial Issues**

All media inquiries regarding sensitive or controversial issues should be referred immediately to the Public Information Officer and employee's Department Director. The Town Manager, Department Director and Public Information Officer will coordinate a response, if appropriate.

### **D. Litigation, Personnel and Election Issues:**

Generally, the business conducted by the Town of Mooresville is public and therefore is public information. Inquiries regarding pending litigation, matters involving a significant exposure to litigation, and certain personnel-related information are exceptions.

Inquiries regarding pending litigation or exposure to litigation should be referred to the Town Attorney. Inquiries regarding personnel-related information should be referred to the Director of Human Resources.

Inquiries regarding election and campaign issues should be referred to the Town Clerk.

### **E. Personal Points Of View**

It is recognized that all employees have the right to their personal points of view regarding any issue. However, personal points of view may conflict with the Town of Mooresville's official policy. Therefore, Town employees who write letters to the editor of any newspaper may not use official Town stationary. If an employee chooses to identify himself or herself as a Town employee in any personal letter or email to the editor, he or she must include language which states the views set forth in the letter do not represent the views of the Town, but rather, are the employee's personally held opinions.

Similar disclaimers must be given if an employee addresses a public meeting, participates in a talk show, or is interviewed for a broadcast program unless the employee is officially representing the Town. Employees who are representing the Town in any of the above formats must identify themselves as an official spokesperson for the Town.

F. General or Routine Issues

Broadcast media: Calls from broadcast media (TV and radio) should always be referred immediately to the Public Information Officer and employee's Department Director.

Local print media: Calls from local print media regarding most departmental issues and programs may be handled by each Department's Director. On occasion, the Director may designate an employee in their department to respond to specific questions from print media. The Public Information Officer should be informed of these media requests---including the reporter and topic---before or immediately following these interviews.

G. Town-Initiated Information

Most proactive media contact is initiated through the Public Information Office. This includes, but is not limited to, press releases, media advisories and direct contact with media representatives. Departments seeking publicity for events or activities should discuss their needs with the Public Information Office as soon as possible to ensure the best media coverage of their activities. Departments should not initiate media contacts.

H. Public Safety Issues

Because the Police and Fire-Rescue departments operate 24/7 and their work generates a high volume of media calls, those departments have designated personnel who work with the Public Information Officer and follow specific guidelines when releasing information. Any media calls to other Town staff regarding a public safety issue should be referred immediately to the Public Information Officer. All information released to the media by the public safety departments should be reviewed or managed by the Public Information Office.

I. Crisis Or Emergency Issues:

During a crisis or major emergency (e.g., flood), the procedure for handling the media is highlighted in the Town's Emergency Plan. The plan designates the Public Information Officer as the main point of contact for the media. The Public Information Officer is assisted by the Police Chief and Fire Chief when preparing and disseminating emergency public information.

**VIII. Authorization**

Approved by:

Dave Treme  
Town Manager

April 1, 2018  
Date