



City of Kannapolis Media & Public Information Policy

I. Purpose

The purpose of this media policy is to provide City personnel with guidelines for interacting with news media, and coordinating media interaction through the City's Director of Communications. The goal is to have a positive exchange with media and to present communications to the media and public that is timely, accurate and consistent with the City's mission and Brand.

II. Scope

This policy applies to all departments of the City of Kannapolis. Only the Police and Fire & EMS Departments have additional policies and/or procedures for the release of news information as it pertains to emergency and crisis situations.

III. Policy Overview

It shall be the policy of the City of Kannapolis to maintain and promote open avenues of communication between the City and the news media, and to provide accurate, informed, timely, and relevant information to the media and to the public.

IV. General Policy Guidelines

Media Interaction

1. Media should direct all queries and requests for interviews and information to the Director of Communications. If the request is for police or fire incident information media are welcome to contact the Director of Communications or the Public Information Officers at the Police and Fire Departments.
2. The Director of Communications can best direct the media representative to the most appropriate department/person as well as ensure the City is best represented as we work to avoid confusion, the reporting of inaccurate information, ensure transparency to the public, and deliver consistent information that reinforces our brand messaging.

3. When a member of the media contacts department heads or City staff the media should be referred to the Director of Communications. If the situation does not allow the department head or City staff to first contact the Director of Communications, staff members and department directors should only discuss areas or programs for which they are responsible for or have expertise. The Director of Communications should be notified as soon as possible of any contact by media.
4. If elected officials are contacted by the media they are welcome to direct inquiries for information to the Director of Communications or City Manager; answer the query or refer them to the Mayor. In most instances, the Mayor serves as a spokesperson for the City Council and thus can provide the most accurate concise information/message for the City.
5. If a reporter contacts an employee for specific fact verification and the reporter has already interviewed the employee in regards to a story, it is not necessary to contact the Director of Communications before speaking with the reporter. If an employee has not previously had contact with the reporter and is contacted for fact verification, the employee should seek assistance from the Director of Communications, after first contacting their Director or immediate Supervisor. The Director/Supervisor will work with the Director of Communication to ensure information disseminated is accurate. No employee should speak with the media without prior reporting this contact to their Supervisor/Director.
6. When communicating with the media, City staff should be mindful that they are perceived to be acting on behalf of the City. All employees should behave professionally, courteously and avoid editorializing as much as possible. Employees should be dressed professionally and/or in uniform when interviewed by media.
7. City staff is required to be responsive to the media in a timely fashion. When a member of the media contacts a City employee, it is expected that the employee refer the inquiry to their department head and the Director of Communications as soon as possible. Always ask what the reporter's deadline is.

News Releases

1. News releases should be submitted to the Director of Communications for review, approval, and distribution. The exception will be those events and situations that are an emergency or need immediate attention. The Police or Fire Public Information Office should send copies of any information sent to media to the Chiefs, their Supervisor and the Director of Communications. Information should be sent to the Director of Communications prior to distribution to the media whenever possible.
2. Once approved, the Director of Communications will be responsible for distribution to the news media. If necessity requires a department to distribute its own news releases, then a copy should be sent to the Director of Communications as soon as possible.
3. All news releases issued should follow generally accepted media formatting.

V. Social Media

The City will have one account on any social media platforms. At this time the City has accounts with Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. City staff will work with the Director of Communications to determine access and efficient accurate messaging on these platforms. Please refer to the City's Social Media Policy for specific guidelines).

VI. All Other External Communications

All communications to be distributed externally such as inserts, brochures, publications, website information, mass-produced letters, advertisements, etc., should be forwarded to the Director of Communications for approval.

All must be given to the Director of Communications with a minimum notice of three weeks. Approval is dependent on the Director of Communications. Basic information or updates to items will need only the Department Head and Supervisor's approval.

VII. Public Records Requests

As a local government entity, the City may receive requests for information. While most business conducted is open to the public, some pieces of information are not public record. In order to avoid confusion and to not violate the N.C. General Statutes, Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, and all other relevant statutes, employees should take the following steps when they receive a request for information:

1. Should a member of the media or the general public make a request to see something of public record, employees should notify:
 - Director of Communications
 - City Clerk
 - City Manager/Deputy Manager
 - City Attorney
2. City staff should advise the requesting party to contact the City Clerk or the Director of Communications for the information.
3. City employees will not release any records until they have received verification from one of the following: City Clerk, Director of Communications, City Attorney, and the City Manager that it is acceptable to do so.