


POLICY

	Policy:	MEDIA RELATIONS		
	Department:	Office of the CAO		
	Division:	Municipal Governance	By-Law No.:	2014-112
	Prepared By:	Karen Jacques	Approval Date:	November 17, 2014
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1. POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1. The Corporation of the Town of Amherstburg is committed to open and transparent communication with, and through, the media that enhances the knowledge and understanding of municipal affairs.
- 1.2. The Town will, whenever practicable, initiate media contact and respond to media inquiries through designated spokespersons to ensure consistent and accurate messaging.
- 1.3. The Town will engage in a proactive communications approach that utilizes a variety of formats to accommodate the diverse needs of the community

2. PURPOSE

- 2.1. This policy is intended to protect and promote the Town of Amherstburg, while ensuring accurate, timely, consistent and professional messaging.
- 2.2. This policy is designed to clearly designate corporate spokespersons and set guidelines for corporate communication, public statements made to media outlets, and the management of media inquiries.
- 2.3. This policy is intended to ensure appropriate, accurate, and consistent information is provided to the media that represents the municipality's policies, services and values.

3. SCOPE

- 3.1. This policy applies to all Town of Amherstburg staff and any individual retained by the Corporation who is acting on the Town's behalf. This includes, but is not limited to, full-time and part-time employees, firefighters, temporary and contract employees, appointees to agencies or boards, committees, volunteers, etc.
- 3.2. This policy does not apply to the Mayor or Councillors as they are governed by the Code of Conduct for Council Members Policy.
- 3.3. This policy does not apply to notification to media regarding Council meeting agendas.
- 3.4. In the event of an emergency, the communications protocols outlined in the Town of Amherstburg Emergency Response Plan will supersede this policy.
- 3.5. This policy shall be reviewed every two years from the date it becomes effective, or sooner at the direction of the CAO.

4. DEFINITIONS

- 4.1. Authorized Spokesperson – A Town employee authorized to speak to the media on behalf of their areas of accountability and responsibility. This individual is presumably the most knowledgeable individual on a specific topic, or can reasonably be expected to research said topic to provide an informed and appropriate response.
- 4.2. CAO – is the Chief Administrative Officer for the Town of Amherstburg
- 4.3. Confidential Information – is information that is not generally available to the public and is used in the course of the Town's operations. This includes sensitive information and personal information about employees, taxpayers, customers, volunteers, vendors, suppliers, elected officials, citizens and other stakeholders.
- 4.4. Intellectual Property – is a set of intangible rights held by musicians, authors, artists and inventors who have ownership of their intellectual and creative output. Others are prohibited from using intellectual property without prior and written permission. Intellectual property may have commercial value and encompasses the area of Copyrights, Trademarks, Patents, and Design.
- 4.5. Media Contact – is engagement of the media either through solicitation by the Town, or inquiries made by a member of the media.
- 4.6. Online Communications – is the provision of information through the internet. This includes website development and maintenance, email, online advertising, and social networking.
- 4.7. Public Relations – is the practice of managing the spread of information between an individual or an organization and the public.

- 4.8. Public Statement – is a declaration made by an authorized Town of Amherstburg employee on behalf of the corporation in any public forum that relates to the Town of Amherstburg, its employees, and/or business. It includes statements made in person, in the newspaper, by email, on blogs, in online forums or discussions, through social networking and anywhere else in public record.
- 4.9. Senior Management Team (SMT) – consists of the Town Directors and the CAO. In the absence of a Director, an alternate may be assigned to attend an SMT meeting.
- 4.10. Social Media or Social Networking – is any online site used to build profiles and share content, opinions, insights, experiences, and perspective in an online environment.
- 4.11. Town – is the Corporation of the Town of Amherstburg
- 4.12. Traditional Communication – is the sharing of information for any purpose through the use of commonly used or traditional tools.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES AND AUTHORITIES

5.1. The CAO has the authority and responsibility to:

- 5.1.1. Direct compliance with this policy
- 5.1.2. Facilitate responses to the media that are political, sensitive, or possibly controversial in nature in coordination with the Manager of Special Projects

5.2. The Manager of Special Projects has the authority and responsibility to:

- 5.2.1. Monitor the policy and accompanying procedures, and conduct a review of said policies and procedures every two years
- 5.2.2. Facilitate responses to the media that are political, sensitive, or possibly controversial in nature in coordination with the CAO
- 5.2.3. Provide media training to authorized spokespersons
- 5.2.4. Issue all media releases on behalf of the Town, with advance notice being provided to Council
- 5.2.5. Provide general information to media outlets and the public at large, and direct media inquiries on subject-specific matters to authorized spokespersons with subject-specific expertise
- 5.2.6. Scrutinize, edit, and approve public relations and media communications, including releases, advisories, newsletters, advertisements, flyers, brochures, guides, booklets, website content, social media postings, and any other print or non-print materials intended for public or media consumption that are, at times, assembled and/or created by others
- 5.2.7. Track and archive media exposure and contact

5.3. Directors have the authority and responsibility to:

- 5.3.1. Authorize designated spokespersons within their department to respond to media inquiries, in accordance with this policy

- 5.3.2. Provide media releases to the Manager of Special Projects a minimum of 36-hours in advance of their intended issue
- 5.3.3. Inform the CAO and Manager of Special Projects when media contact is political, sensitive, or possibly controversial in nature for their response
- 5.3.4. Notify the Manager of Special Projects of any instances of media contact for tracking purposes

5.4. Authorized Spokespersons have the authority and responsibility to:

- 5.4.1. Provide factual information on programs, activities, and initiatives that relate specifically to their business area in response to media inquiries, in accordance with this policy
- 5.4.2. Provide media releases to the Manager of Special Projects a minimum of 36-hours in advance of their intended issue
- 5.4.3. Inform the CAO and Manager of Special Projects when media contact is political, sensitive, or possibly controversial in nature for their response
- 5.4.4. Notify the Manager of Special Projects of any instances of media contact for tracking purposes

6. GENERAL CONDITIONS

6.1. Media Inquiries

- 6.1.1. The Manager of Special Projects shall serve as the primary media liaison, directing media inquiries on subject-specific matters to appropriate authorized spokespersons.
- 6.1.2. All inquiries of media shall be addressed in a meaningful, timely and accurate manner.
- 6.1.3. Town employees contacted by the media concerning political or potentially controversial information shall refer the request immediately to the CAO.
- 6.1.4. Corporate responses to media stories, comments, blogs and discussion forums about Town-related business shall be coordinated through the Manager of Special Projects.

6.2. Media Spokespersons

- 6.2.1. The CAO and the Manager of Special Projects shall be the chief staff spokespersons and may speak on behalf of the municipality regarding all functions of the organization.
- 6.2.2. A list of pre-approved spokespersons will be designated to deal with specific topics and recurring issues in their areas. This will maintain timely and consistent responses to the media. (See Appendix A)
- 6.2.3. Authorized spokespersons, may speak on behalf of their areas of accountability and responsibility.

- 6.2.4. In the absence of subject matter experts or designated spokespersons, all media inquiries are to be directed to the Manager of Special Project to address the best course of action to respond to the media inquiry.
- 6.2.5. Spokespersons are to remain neutral and factual. Spokespersons only speak to their areas of expertise. No spokesperson is to interpret or offer opinion on the decisions of Council.
- 6.2.6. Authorized spokespersons commenting on Town business, regardless of medium, must identify themselves at Town of Amherstburg employees.

6.3. Media Exposure

- 6.3.1. All media exposure shall be shared with the Manager of Special Projects, preferably in advance of airing or printing, for proper tracking and notification
- 6.3.2. Use of Town property, equipment, assets, logos or intellectual property for purposes unrelated to the Town is strictly forbidden.
- 6.3.3. Any employee that becomes aware of issues that may result in negative media exposure or media scrutiny is to advise the CAO and the Manager of Special Projects immediately.

6.4. Media Releases

- 6.4.1. All media releases will be issued to media outlets by the Manager of Special Projects
- 6.4.2. The Manager of Special Projects shall provide the CAO and Council with media releases a minimum of 24-hours in advance of their issue, where practicable.
- 6.4.3. Authorized spokespersons shall provide media releases to the Manager of Special Projects a minimum of 36-hours ahead of the intended time of official release to allow for proper notification to Council and the CAO.
- 6.4.4. Authorized spokespersons providing media releases shall remain as the contact person noted on the media release for all inquiries related to said media release

6.5. Confidentiality

- 6.5.1. In all forms of communication, employees may not disclose confidential, proprietary or sensitive information related to the Town, its business and affairs, employees, volunteers, vendors, suppliers, elected officials, citizens or other stakeholders.

6.6. Copyright

- 6.6.1. In all forms of communication, employees must comply with intellectual property laws, including the Copyright Act, to ensure the ownership rights associated with works subject to copyright are fully respected. There may be legal ownership in text, images, photographs, video footage, sound recordings, graphics, logos, artwork, photographs, publications or music created by others. Copyright law requires prior written permission from the copyright owner before reproducing, publishing or posting images, text or videos in any medium, including social media. Departments shall maintain a record of authorizations obtained to use copyrighted material. For clarification or assistance, consult the Manager of Special Projects.

6.7. Visual Identity

- 6.7.1. A clear and consistent visual identity assists the public in recognizing and accessing the Town's policies, programs, services and initiatives. Staff shall display the corporate logo in an approved fashion in all communications, regardless of medium, for internal and external use. For clarification or assistance, consult the Manager of Special Projects.

6.8. Plain Language

- 6.8.1. Whenever possible, plain language that is clear, concise, relevant and easy to understand shall be used in all communications.

6.9. Communications Planning

- 6.9.1. To ensure that media deadlines are met and that necessary approvals are provided, departments and committees using corporate communications or seeking media engagement shall provide sufficient advance notice to the Manager of Special Projects.
- 6.9.2. When preparing campaigns, strategies, events or initiatives that will include a public relations or media engagement component, consultation with the Manager of Special Projects is required.
- 6.9.3. For media releases, advisories, press conferences and advertising, advance notice to the Manager of Special Projects of 5 business days is required.
- 6.9.4. For public events and publishing services, early and regular consultation with the Manager of Special Projects is expected.
- 6.9.5. The Manager of Special Projects shall, upon request, assist with the preparation of speaking notes, briefing notes and fact sheets.

6.10. General

- 6.10.1. Media training will be made available to all designated spokespersons.

6.10.2. Contravention of this policy may result in disciplinary action.

7. REFERENCES AND RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Copyright Act of Canada
- Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
- Accountability and Transparency of Actions Policy
- Provision of Notice to the Public Policy
- Code of Conduct for Staff Policy
- Technology Use Policy 2012 Revision

APPENDIX A
Authorized Spokespersons

Topic	Primary Spokesperson	Alternate Spokesperson
Accessibility	Manager of Special Projects	
Animal Control	Manager of By-law and Enforcement	By-law Enforcement Officer
Budgets and Finance	Director of Financial Services	Chief Administrative Officer
Building and Demolition	Chief Building Official	Director of Economic and Community Development
By-law Enforcement	Manager of By-law and Enforcement	By-law Enforcement Officer
Committees	Committee Chair	Council Representative
Communications	Manager of Special Projects	Chief Administrative Officer
Community Improvement	Manager of Planning Services	Director of Economic and Community Development
Council Agendas	Manager of Municipal Governance	Manager of Special Projects
Drainage	Public Works Manager	Director of Engineering and Public Works
Economic Development	Chief Administrative Officer	Director of Economic and Community Development
Elections	Manager of Municipal Governance	Elections Coordinator
Facilities	Manager of Parks and Facilities	Director of Engineering and Public Works
Fire	Fire Chief	Deputy Fire Chief
Infrastructure	Director of Engineering and Public Works	Manager of Engineering and Operations
Licensing	Manager of By-law and Enforcement	
Libro Centre	Manager of Operations	Director of Community Services
Parks	Manager of Parks and Facilities	Director of Engineering and Public Works
Planning and Zoning	Manager of Planning Services	Director of Economic and Community Development
Police	Chief of Police	Deputy Chief of Police

Public Works	Director of Engineering and Public Works	Manager of Engineering and Operations
Recreation	Manager of Business Development and Programs	Director of Community Services
Staffing	Manager of Human Resources	Chief Administrative Officer
Taxes	Director of Financial Services	Chief Administrative Officer
Tourism	Manager of Tourism and Culture	Tourism Coordinator
Wastewater Collection and Treatment	Manager of Environmental Services	Director of Engineering and Public Works
Water Treatment	Manager of Environmental Services	Director of Engineering and Public Works
Weeds	Manager of By-law and Enforcement	By-law Enforcement Officer

In instances where an alternate spokesperson is not defined, or authorized spokespersons are not available, media inquiries shall be directed to the Manager of Special Projects to address the best course of action to respond.