



PUBLIC RELATIONS  
COMMUNICATION/MEDIA POLICY  
Resolution No. 2008 -390  
Effective date: November 17, 2008

**SECTION 1 - STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

The purpose of the Communications Policy is to provide guidelines for the City of Ankeny to keep the media and the public fully, fairly and accurately informed of programs, services, events and issues in a timely and forthright manner.

Efficient and effective communication with the media and the public is critical to the City of Ankeny's ability to present information in a manner consistent with Ankeny City Council policies and philosophy of open government. Coordination, uniformity, accuracy and timeliness are cornerstones of strong and productive public relations.

This Communication Policy exists to support the several components of the City of Ankeny's Vision Statement including, but not limited to:

- We value the importance of "sense of community" has on the quality of life in Ankeny.
- We value high quality, efficient municipal services and the impact they have on the lives of our residents and businesses.
- We value our residents and their contributions to our community.
- We value the high quality service residents receive for their tax dollars.
- We value our business community and their contributions to our city.
- We value the benefits received from strategic planning and sound fiscal management.

**SECTION 2 - GOALS OF COMMUNICATION POLICY**

Effective public relations best serves the City through:

- Providing accountability to the public and transparency of government.
- Ensuring that timely and accurate information is conveyed to the public regarding incidents or issues of a sensitive or controversial nature.
- Establishing and maintaining an accurate public perception of the city.
- Increasing the visibility of the city of Ankeny on local, statewide and national levels.
- Informing residents of city programs and services.
- Promoting the City's achievements, activities and significant events.

**SECTION III - SCOPE**

This policy applies to all City employees.

## **SECTION IV – MEDIA RELATIONS**

The following procedures and standards will be used by all departments as applicable to media relations within the city of Ankeny.

1. **Spokesperson.** The Public Relations Officer (PRO) serves as the primary spokesperson for the City of Ankeny and conveys the official city position on routine media inquiries, issues of citywide significance and situations that are sensitive and controversial in nature.
2. **Primary City Contact.** The Public Relations Officer (PRO) will serve as the primary source of City information, providing background information about City issues, projects and services.
  - a. The Assistant City Manager (Management Services) serves as PRO in the absence of the Public Relations Officer.
  - b. The City Manager or appointed designee serves in the absence of the Public Relations Officer and Assistant City Manager.
3. **Secondary City Contact.** Directors are required to designate a press/media liaison. This will be kept on file in the Public Relations office.
4. **Media.** Media inquiries, whether verbal or written, are to be directed to the Public Relations Officer who will evaluate the request and provide an answer, or direct it to the appropriate spokesperson. Priority attention should be given to all media inquiries. Every effort should be made to meet media deadlines and ensure that all information released is accurate. Accuracy of information takes precedence over media deadlines. If another priority prevents an immediate response, a courtesy call should be made to the reporter confirming what information is requested and advising when the requested information will be available.
5. **Exceptions.**
  - a. **Routine media requests** may be responded to by the department media liaison if the response is of a factual, incidental or inconsequential nature (i.e. special event schedule, meeting dates). The PRO is to be advised of routine inquiries.
  - b. **The Police Chief and Fire Chief** may designate their own department spokespersons to handle media inquiries related specifically to public safety emergencies (for example, crimes, fires, accidents). Post emergency media relations shall be handled under general provisions of this policy. Staff members who provide emergency medical care to the public should refrain from speaking to the media and refer them instead to their department's designated Public Information Officer (PIO). The Public Relations office should be advised within a reasonable period of time when this exception clause is used.
  - c. **Non-routine media requests** should be forwarded to the Public Relations Officer prior to response. These may include responses that require the interpretation of policy, employee information and emergency situations.
6. **News Releases/Media Notifications**
  - a. All news releases, media notifications and alerts are to be forwarded to the Public Relations office prior to their release for review and approval, unless it is an emergency. The Public Relations Officer shall have discretion to rewrite draft news releases submitted by a department. Department directors or other staff who initiate a news release shall have the opportunity to review any edits before its release.
  - b. Emergency press releases, media notifications and alerts should be verbally cleared with the department director or designee. A copy shall be forwarded to the Public Relations office upon release to the media.

- c. Designated department spokesperson should be prepared to respond to questions from the media following release of information.
- 7. **News Briefings** may be conducted to educate the news media about potentially controversial issues and provide reporters an opportunity to ask in-depth questions. In most briefings, the City provides extensive background materials, fact sheets and explanatory materials. The PRO will be responsible for scheduling any such briefings.
- 8. **News Conferences** will be held at the direction of the City Manager or Mayor (or designee/successor) to announce or respond to an issue of significance or controversy with a united voice pertaining to facts, information, rules, and emergency or crisis situation or the established policy/rules of the City.
- 9. **Emergency Media Relations.** In the event of a disaster or emergency that requires the Ankeny Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to be activated, the City's Emergency Operations Plan designates the Public Relations Officer (PRO) (or designee) responsible for primary media relations as Public Information Officer (PIO). The plan also designates a line of succession to this responsibility when the PIO is absent or when a second shift is required.
  - a. Upon the Proclamation of a Local Emergency by the Ankeny city council, the mayor, mayor pro tem or designee may conduct the first news conference announcing such Proclamation.
  - b. The Public Relations Officer will work with the city manager and public safety officials to prepare for a news conference.
  - c. Contact with the media by elected officials shall be arranged by the city manager and PIO.
- 10. **Photo Opportunities**
  - a. Departments should advise the Public Relations office about possible photo opportunities that may occur on projects that are resident sensitive (tree trimming, construction projects, sidewalk repairs, etc.).
  - b. Include this information in the press release.
- 11. **Television Appearances/Interviews**
  - a. The designated department spokesperson should respond to the media and alert the PRO.
  - b. Any television appearances or interviews for print should be cleared through the Public Relations office prior to the interview. If prior notification is not possible, the PRO should be notified shortly after the interview.
  - c. The PRO can provide assistance and advice in dealing with the media.
  - d. Employees should remember they are representing the City and their comments should reflect the interpretation and administration of city policy. At no time should personnel issues be discussed with the media.
- 12. **Media Relations Training** required of management/supervisory staff with more intensive training provided on an "as needed" basis.
- 13. **Guidelines for Employees Acting as Private Citizens**  
 The following guidelines are offered employees who may choose to contact the media as a private citizen. These guidelines do not prohibit such contact but support other city policies regarding improper use of city equipment and property. These guidelines also apply to employees responding to or initiating media contact as official representatives of employee groups.
  - a. Letters to the editor may not be prepared on city time, printed on city letterhead stationery, or mailed at city expense.
  - b. Telephone contact may not be made on city time using city telephones.
  - c. Use of city email is prohibited (Refer to employee handbook Appendix H)
  - d. Use of city facilities or supplies is prohibited.

## **SECTION V - EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS**

The following procedures and standards will be used by all departments as applicable to external communications including those identified under Section IV.

1. All printed or online materials are to be coordinated through the Public Relations office, unless it is an emergency including, but not limited to:
  - a. **Brochures/Flyers/Fact Sheets** - Text and draft layout should be forwarded to the Public Relations office for review, copyedit, page layout and design edit and approval.
  - b. **Quarterly Newsletter** - City departments are encouraged to offer copy ideas for each newsletter. The Public Relations office will be responsible for final editing, printing and distribution.
  - c. **Annual Reports** – Department annual reports should be submitted in draft form to the Public Relations office for final editing prior to printing and distribution.
  - d. **Other** – All other forms of public information should be forwarded to the Public Relations office prior to production and distribution for review, edit and approval. This includes, but is not limited to, computer generated presentations, videos, podcasts, and other social media outlets.
  - e. **Notices to Residents**
    - i. Notices should be provided for street closings, tree trimming, parking restrictions, information meetings, etc.
    - ii. The text and suggested layout should be forwarded to the Public Relations office for final approval. If notices are for emergency purposes, the department may issue without prior review and approval.
  - f. **Door to door distributions** should not be placed into mailboxes, but attached to doors with rubber bands or hand delivered to residents.
  - g. **Department Forms** should follow the guidelines established in the Ankeny Graphic Standards Manual, including layout, color palette and fonts.
  - h. **Grammar, clarity, punctuation and spelling** should be triple checked for accuracy prior to submission to the Public Relations office for review and approval. Jargon should be eliminated.
  - i. **Public Relations Office** is the clearinghouse for communications program activity.
2. **Speaking Engagements**
  - a. General requests to city departments shall be directed to the Public Relations office for assignment prior to the event.
3. **Promotional Events**
  - a. Primary coordination is the responsibility of the department including school tours, special events, contests, etc.
  - b. The Public Relations office is to be apprised of the activities including date, audience, purpose and activities to determine whether an organizational message is appropriate.
4. **Information Meetings**
  - a. Primary consideration resides with the department
  - b. The Public Relations office will be notified prior to the meeting including date, purpose, and audience.
  - c. At the conclusion of the event, a brief summary of the event will be submitted to the Public Relations office.

**5. Advertising**

- a. Text and suggested layout will be forwarded to the Public Relations office for final copy edit and approval including telephone book advertisements, newspaper, yearbook, etc.

**SECTION VI - INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS**

All internal communications directed to an audience of more than one department are to be reviewed by the Public Relations office prior to distribution.

**SECTION VII – PUBLIC RECORDS REQUESTS**

Public Records Request from the media or general public must be made through the City Clerk's office in accordance with the City's Public Records Policy.