

Stan Joyner
Mayor

Maureen Fraser, *Alderman*
Billy Patton, *Alderman*
John Worley, *Alderman*
Missy Marshall, *Alderman*
John E. Stamps, *Alderman*



Molly Mehner
Town Administrator

Kristie Diamond
Town Clerk

Town of Collierville

MEDIA RELATIONS POLICY

GOAL

The Town of Collierville seeks to inform its residents, businesses, and visitors by engaging in a proactive communications program. This program recognizes that one of the most effective and quickest ways to communicate Town policies and activities to citizens is by working in partnership with the news media.

POLICY

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

The Public Information Office is responsible for the Town's media relations, except for some public safety issues. All Town employees should notify the Public Information Officer (PIO) about media inquiries. Most Town media requests are initiated when the media contacts the Public Information Office. Because the media often works on tight deadlines, it is important that all departments respond as soon as possible when the PIO requests department information. Specific guidelines for responding to media requests follow below.

TOWN SPOKESPERSONS

Unless otherwise authorized, the Town's spokespersons are:

- Mayor and Aldermen
- Town Administrator, Assistant Town Administrator
- Town Attorney
- Public Information Officer
- Police and Fire Department Public Information Officer Representatives (Police and Fire have specific media policies that govern their procedures)
- Exceptions regarding departmental spokespersons may be made at the discretion of the Town Administrator

MEDIA INQUIRIES

Any media inquiries received by other Town staff should be referred immediately to the Public Information Office. An appropriate response to the media would be, "I'm sorry I don't have the full information regarding that issue. I will give your request to my Town's Public Information Officer who will respond to you as soon as he/she is available." Please obtain the reporter's name, phone number, topic of story and deadline.

SENSITIVE OR CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

All television, radio, newspaper, or other media inquiries regarding sensitive or controversial issues should always be referred immediately to the Public Information Office. The PIO will contact the Town Administrator and coordinate a response including designating a spokesperson after consultation with Administration and the appropriate department.

LITIGATION AND PERSONNEL ISSUES

Generally, the business conducted by the Town of Collierville 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's Office. Inquiries regarding personnel-related information should be referred to the Human Resources Department. Either case will contact the Town Administration Office as appropriate.

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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's official policy. Therefore, if an employee chooses to identify himself or herself as a Town employee in any personal letter or email to a member of the media, 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 participates or is interviewed in a radio talk show/podcast or television program, unless the employee has approval to officially represent the Town. Employees who are representing the Town in any of the above formats must have approval to represent the Town through the Public Information Office.

GENERAL OR ROUTINE ISSUES

Broadcast media: Calls from broadcast media (TV and radio/podcast) should always be referred immediately to the Public Information Office. The PIO will contact the Town Administrator and coordinate a response including designating a spokesperson after consultation with the Town Administration and the relevant department.

Local print media: Calls from local print media regarding most departmental procedures and programs may be handled by each department's Director or Assistant Director. On occasion, the Director/Assistant Director may designate an employee in their department to respond to specific questions from print media.

The Public Information Office should be informed of these media requests---including the reporter and topic---either before or immediately following these interviews.

TOWN-INITIATED INFORMATION

Most proactive media contact is initiated through the Public Information Office. This includes issuing press releases and media advisories. Departments seeking publicity for events or activities must contact the PIO as soon as possible to ensure the best media coverage of their activities. Departments should not initiate news media contacts without the approval from the Public Information Office.

PUBLIC SAFETY ISSUES

Police and Fire Departments have designated sworn personnel who act as media spokespersons and follow specific guidelines when releasing information. If requested by Police and Fire Administration, the Public Information Officer will serve as a media liaison or spokesperson. Any media calls to other Town staff regarding Police or Fire matters should be referred immediately to the Public Information Office. All information released to the media by the Police and Fire Departments should be provided immediately to the Public Information Office so that the Administration Office is brought up to date.

CRISIS OR EMERGENCY ISSUES

During a crisis or major emergency, the procedure for handling the media is highlighted in the Town's Emergency Plan. The plan designates the Town's Public Information Officer as the main point of contact for the media. The Public Information Officer is assisted by alternates including the Police and Fire Public Information Officer Representatives who prepare and disseminate emergency public information.