

**PUBLIC INFORMATION & MEDIA RELATIONS
ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE**

PURPOSE: To provide procedures and guidelines for coordinating and disseminating information to the public on behalf of the City of Moreno Valley. The procedure will be modified and expanded as necessary.

STATEMENT: The City of Moreno Valley shall provide timely and accurate information to keep the Council, staff and community apprised of pertinent City issues, services, and events. The City shall utilize appropriate and effective means to communicate its messages to both general and target audiences. This procedure contains guidelines that will achieve the City's communications objectives and facilitate a successful working relationship with residents, businesses, and the news media.

PROCEDURAL GOALS:

- Fully utilize the news and special interest media, social media platforms, MV3, City publications and the City website as an effective means of communicating with the community and targeted groups.
- Facilitate the timely flow of public information to appropriate media through appropriate channels employing an effective internal process that maximizes message consistency, ensures content accuracy, and proper City branding and positioning.
- Educate the community about how local, state, and federal government works and encourage participation in the policy-making process.

PROCEDURE:

I. General Public Communications:

- A. Letters and opinion surveys designed for mass distribution shall be reviewed by, and coordinated with, the City Manager's Office for content and format analysis and for placement strategies.
- B. All printed materials (fliers, posters, signs, pamphlets, brochures, advertisements, maps, presentation materials, etc.) designed for distribution to and/or viewing by the public shall be reviewed by the Public Information ~~and Intergovernmental Relations~~ Officer (PIRO), City Manager's Office and other City staff members as determined by the PIRO prior to printing, copying, or digital distribution channels.

II. Federal Regulations for Newsletters and Mass Mailings:

- A. **FPPC Compliance:** All newsletters and mass-distributed documents prepared at "taxpayers' expense" that are to be mailed or delivered to 200 or more residences or businesses in a single calendar month must comply with guidelines established by the Fair Political Practices Commission with respect to how elected officials are identified in these materials. (A complete copy of these regulations is printed in the California Code of Regulations, Title 2. Administration, S18901, et seq., and on file in the City Attorney's Office.) The following are major guidelines and restrictions for printed newsletters and mass media mailings:
 1. A newsletter may include an article which references the name of a City ~~Council member~~Councilmember only if the Council has no control or review authority over the content of that newsletter. (This "independence" test is not violated if the Council merely approves a budget item to fund the newsletter, hires the staff to produce it, and dictates the frequency ~~that with which~~ the newsletter will be distributed.) If City staff determines that the independence test has been met, then they may include references regarding the activities of ~~Council member~~Councilmembers as long as their names are not "featured."

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- a. "Featured" is defined as "...singles out the elected officer by the manner of display of his/her name or office in the layout of the document, such as by headlines, captions, type size, typeface, or type color." Therefore, except for the roster listing of all of the ~~Council member~~Councilmembers or use of letterhead, the name of an elected officer may not be set apart from the text, such as indicating that the author of the article was an elected official by putting their name in the caption to the article.
 - b. The name or office of a ~~Council member~~Councilmember may not be in the headlines of the article, because the type size and typeface of that heading is different from the type size and typeface of the text of the article.
 - c. The definition of "featured" also provides that the item distributed may not include the ~~Council member~~Councilmember's photograph or his/her signature.
2. The City or a ~~Council member~~Councilmember may send out informational notices on City stationery which meet the 200-per-month threshold as long as such notices do not reference the name of that elected official in the heading, text or by use of his/her signature. It may, however, be permissible to include the name of that elected official in the text of that notice printed on the City stationery as long as it was not prepared or sent in cooperation, consultation, coordination or in concert with that elected officer and it does not "feature" his/her name.
 3. FPPC regulations allow ~~Council member~~Councilmembers to send a letter which "features" their name by the manner of its display or by use of their photo or signature if it is a press release or editorial sent to members of the media. Therefore, there is no limitation on the content or format of any document sent only to members of the media. In addition, the number of copies of a mailing which is sent to the media is excluded from the 200-per-month threshold level.
 4. The FPPC has opined that the intent of the guidelines governing printed material also applies to video productions prepared at taxpayer expense; a ~~Council member~~Councilmember may not be featured in such video production in any way that may be construed as promotion of the ~~Council member~~Councilmember. The role of an elected official in a tax-supported video production must be limited to educating and informing the public, to retain FPPC compliance.

III. Media Response Philosophy:

- A. Timely and Accurate Responses: The City encourages accurate press coverage of programs, events, and decisions, which could be of interest and significantly impact the community. In this regard, the City and the media have a mutual responsibility to provide accurate, objective information of City affairs to City residents. Inquiries from the news media are to be given a high priority and 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 and messages properly developed and reviewed by pertinent City staff as determined by the ~~City Manager~~City Manager's Office or designee. Circumstances where responses are not necessary will be decided by the ~~City Manager~~City Manager's Office. In legal matters the City Attorney may provide guidance and/or suggested responses at the request of the ~~City Manager~~City Manager's Office.

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IV. News Releases (Press Releases):

News releases are any official written or verbal announcements initiated by City Hall to the media regarding official City business.

- A. Responsibility. All news releases relative to major citywide policies and actions shall be prepared and distributed by the City Manager's Office only. City Departments may prepare news releases for the City Manager's Office to review. The ~~City Manager~~City Manager's Office may provide direction on news release story angles, content, and publishing specifics (i.e., date, time, audience, channel, etc.) as needed.
- B. Assistance. Upon request, the City Manager's Office, via the Public Information ~~& Intergovernmental Relations~~ Officer, provides assistance creating news releases for City Departments. Substantive written information pertaining to the topic as well as any special distribution list must be provided to the City Manager's Office by an authorized representative of the requesting department. The requesting department representative must also provide timely and accurate information and support to the PIRO to ensure deadlines are met.
- C. Release Preparation & Format. News releases shall be prepared according to the City's established formatting standards and writing style guides. The City Manager's Office archives all news releases. The ~~City Manager~~City Manager's Office shall approve all news releases prior to distribution. News releases prepared for other City Departments must be reviewed by the requesting Department's designated representative prior to the ~~City Manager~~City Manager's Office's final review. The aforementioned approvals must be conveyed in writing, via email reply to draft review, or other correspondence within CRM, production, or project management platforms. City of Moreno Valley news releases must include a Spanish language translation to be created once all parties have approved the English version. Spanish language translations will be performed by a native Spanish speaking staff member, and when received by PIRO, will be considered accurate in content and tone-aligned with original English version.
- D. Mayor & City Council Member~~Councilmember~~ Quotation. Per the City of Moreno Valley Mayor's role, duties and responsibilities the Mayor is responsible for representing the City on matters of general concern to the City via the broadcast media, while permitting councilmembers to engage with the broadcast media to represent their districts on any matters affecting their districts.

Every City of Moreno Valley news release shall include a quote from the Mayor, and, when deemed appropriate by the criteria below. A quote from the ~~Council Member~~Councilmember representing the District being affected by the topic, event, or issue prompting the news release may be included as well. Quotes, which may be ghostwritten by PIRO or other ~~City Manager~~City Manager's Office-approved staff, must be reviewed and approved by the ~~City Manager~~City Manager's Office prior to Mayor and City Council review. Once approved by the ~~City Manager~~City Manager's Office, the Mayor and City Council shall review and approve their individual quotes (separately, in writing, via email or within other production or project management platforms). Quotes placed in ~~News Releases~~news releases from the Mayor and City ~~Council Member~~Councilmembers must be aligned with the City's current Mayoral and Council duties, and all relevant Federal, State, County, and City laws, ordinances, resolutions, and policies. The following are guidelines and examples for properly crafting quotes for the Mayor and City Council:

1. When a news release pertains to a Citywide project, topic, award, or issue, the Mayor shall be the default (and sole) member of the City Council to be quoted.

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2. When a news release pertains to a specific project, topic, or issue specific to one or more City Council Districts, the Mayor and City ~~Council Member~~Councilmember(s) represented in the aforementioned district must be quoted unless they decline or fail to respond within a reasonable timeframe.
3. News ~~r~~Releases pertaining to City events shall include a quote from the Mayor and the City ~~Council Member~~Councilmember(s), in which the event will be held. This excludes events taking place within the confines of the Civic Center (City Hall, Emergency Operations Center, Public Safety Building, Conference & Recreation Center, Civic Center Amphitheater, Calle San Juan De Los Lagos, and the City's Annex building). Per the City Attorney's Office events taking place within the Moreno Valley Civic Center are considered to be Citywide, thus identifying the Mayor as the sole member of the council to be quoted.
4. All quotes for the Mayor and ~~Council Member~~Councilmembers must be drafted with reasonable efforts to match their tone and writing style to be consistent with previously drafted Council quotes and remarks.
5. Quotes must remain consistent with the Mayor and City ~~Council Member~~Councilmembers point of view regarding the topic of the news release.
6. If the Mayor or City ~~Council Member~~Councilmember does not respond to a quote for review or approval after a reasonable amount of time, the ~~City Manager~~City Manager's Office will decide how to proceed. If the ~~City Manager~~City Manager's Office is not available, standard City signature and approval delegation protocols will be followed.

V. News Release Process:

- A. Draft News Release. Once the ~~City Manager~~City Manager's Office has deemed a story acceptable, a News ~~Release~~release draft may be produced following the guidelines above. The draft should include a quote from the Mayor and City Council (if appropriate). The ~~City Manager~~City Manager's Office shall approve the quote prior to the approval of the Mayor and City Council. Graphics for the ~~News Release~~news release will be requested at this time as well.
- B. Departmental Review. The Department requesting the release, or any Department represented within the release, must review and approve the draft prior to the ~~City Manager~~City Manager's Office's final review.
- C. Mayor & City Council Quotation. Quotes used in City ~~News Release~~news releases must be approved by the Mayor and City ~~Council Member~~Councilmembers.
- D. City Manager~~City Manager's Office~~ Review. The ~~City Manager~~City Manager's Office will review the final ~~News Release~~news release prior to translation and distribution, which includes an approved quote and all graphics.
- E. Spanish Language Translation. The final approved ~~News Release~~news release will be provided to the City's translation team.
- F. Distribution. The final approved ~~News Release~~news release and the Spanish translation will be entered into the City's distribution platform and thoroughly reviewed for accuracy.
- G. Online posting. Once the ~~News Release~~news release has been sent via the City's distribution

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platform, it shall be added to Moreno Valley's public website and social media channels.

VI. Release of Information Pertaining to Significant Issues & Events:

- A. Definition of Issues. It is the responsibility of ~~Department~~department ~~Directors~~directors to notify the ~~City Manager~~City Manager's Office of significant events or issues which occur within their departments which may be of major interest to the general public or media. Such issues include, but are not limited to:
1. An event/issue in an operating department or program that is controversial.
 2. Injury or death of a City employee while on or off official duty.
 3. Major malfunctions of a City facility which could impact the general welfare of the public or environment.
 4. An unexpected work stoppage or inability to provide a critical City service.
 5. The arrest or conviction of a City employee which may impact that individual's ability to successfully carry out his/her professional responsibility.
 6. Major police or fire activities.
- B. Reporting Procedure. Once receiving the information, the ~~City Manager~~City Manager's Office or designee will determine if it is necessary to contact the City Council, other department directors, and the City's Public Information ~~and Intergovernmental Relations~~ Officer. If public release of information is deemed appropriate, the ~~City Manager~~City Manager's Office, in consultation with the department director and the Public Information ~~and Intergovernmental Relations~~ Officer, will determine the most appropriate mechanism in notifying the press, and the aforementioned news release review and approval protocols will be followed (Section IV above).
- C. Back-up Procedure. If the ~~City Manager~~City Manager's Office is unavailable, the department director, in order, should contact the Assistant City Manager, then the Public Information ~~and Intergovernmental Relations~~ Officer, then the Media ~~and~~ & Communications Division Manager directly for dissemination of information.

On those occasions when neither of these individuals or a designee is available, the department director should use his/her own judgment in releasing information to the press on fast-breaking news stories.

VII. Who Responds to Media Inquiries:

- A. Spokesperson. The ~~City Manager~~City Manager's Office will respond directly or designate a media spokesperson to respond to an issue of major public significance to ensure that the information is disseminated quickly and accurately to all interested media sources. When such a designation is made, the ~~City Manager~~City Manager's Office will notify the appropriate department director(s) and the Public Information ~~and Intergovernmental Relations~~ Officer to forward all inquiries regarding the particular issue to the appointed spokesperson.

~~B. Media Contacts to Staff. Non-management employees shall refer media inquiries to their department heads. A department director may delegate an employee to respond to an inquiry because of her/his involvement with an event or issue. In such cases, the staff member should work with the department~~

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~~director and Public Information and Intergovernmental Relations Officer prior to the interview to develop appropriate responses to anticipated questions. The PHRO may elect to be present during the interview, attending in person or via video conference.~~

- ~~C.B.~~ C.B. City Council. Whenever possible, ~~Council member~~Councilmembers are encouraged to notify the ~~City Manager~~City Manager's Office or Public Information ~~and Intergovernmental Relations~~ Officer when they are approached by the media. Especially when having to respond to controversial issues, ~~Council member~~Councilmembers are encouraged to review the issue with the ~~City Manager~~City Manager's Office and Public Information ~~and Intergovernmental Relations~~ Officer prior to responding to formulate an appropriate and accurate response.
- ~~D.C.~~ D.C. Public Safety. The Disaster Director (~~City Manager~~City Manager's Office or designee) will work with the Public Information ~~and Intergovernmental Relations~~ Officer to develop media responses in the event of major emergencies and disasters. A more detailed description of emergency public information procedures are contained in the City's Standard Operating Procedures (SOP).
- ~~E.D.~~ E.D. Police & Fire Issues. Whenever there is a fast-breaking story involving a major police/fire activity, the primary media contact is the Police or Fire Chief or his/her designee, followed by the ~~City Manager~~City Manager's Office, public safety liaison, the Public Information ~~and Intergovernmental Relations~~ Officer, and the Media ~~and~~ Communications Division Manager.

Throughout the entire chain of responsibility, it is essential that each individual involved in providing information to the media is kept abreast and briefed on the status of the event as it occurs. The chain of command can be modified as needed to expedite the release of crucial information.

VIII. What to Do When Contacted by the Press:

All media inquiries received by staff should be responded to as quickly as possible, keeping in mind the frequent deadlines that are often imposed upon the working media. Clerical staff should be instructed to give priority to media calls by alerting their respective department head of the media inquiries.

- A. Determine Nature & Focus of Story. It is important to determine the focus of the story as well as the specific information desired by the reporter. What may seem to be an "innocent" information request, oftentimes can turn out to be a front-page story, distorting the data supplied by the City. That's why it is always important, when possible, to determine the reporter's focus and slant.
- B. Notification Procedure. Any staff member (management or non-management) who responds to a media inquiry, provides an interview, appears on a radio or television program, etc., shall notify his/her immediate supervisor, the department director, the ~~City Manager~~City Manager's Office and the Public Information ~~and Intergovernmental Relations~~ Officer either by phone or written memo.
- C. Controversial Matters. The ~~City Manager~~City Manager's Office and/or Public Information ~~and Intergovernmental Relations~~ Officer must be consulted before conducting the interview. This gives the spokesperson the opportunity to review anticipated questions and to formulate and properly position appropriate responses.
- D. Exceptions. Departments which have on-going daily contact with the media are not required to follow the notification procedure for every media contact, only those which involve significant issues of concern.

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IX. Media Etiquette:

There are some very important "do's" and "don'ts" that should be observed in strengthening the relations between City Hall and the local media.

- A. Responding to Council Actions. Staff should not publicly make judgmental comments regarding individual ~~Council member~~Councilmembers, Council actions, City administration or official City policy when responding to media inquiries. Staff should also refrain from anticipating an action or position which has not been formally taken by the City Council or City. Any inquiry regarding "why" an individual ~~Council member~~Councilmember voted in a particular manner on a specific issue should be forwarded to the ~~Council member~~Councilmember in question.
- B. Scope of Response. Staff members should not respond to media inquiries which are not directly related to carrying out the employee's professional responsibilities. If such a media inquiry is made, the staff members should assist the media in receiving the needed information by referring the source to the appropriate program manager or the Public Information ~~and Intergovernmental Relations~~ Officer.
- C. Inaccurate Information. The media should not be intentionally misled or provided with inaccurate information by a staff member regarding any City policy or event. Such tactics can lead to "City bashing," media skepticism, and unwanted investigations.

X. Public vs. Confidential Issues:

Most City records and official City meetings are open to the public and media. The media are no more or less privileged than the general public in being provided access to City Council meetings and City records. While City operations need not be disrupted or extraordinary accommodations made to provide access to public records, it should be emphasized that adequate information provided to the media or the public is beneficial both to citizens and the City in carrying out its public information efforts.

- A. Attendance at Meetings. The media and public are encouraged to attend and report on actions taken at Council meetings, study sessions, as well as regularly scheduled committee and commission meetings.
- B. Closed Sessions. Public and media attendance are not allowed at closed Council sessions.
- C. Public Records. The media and the general public shall be provided access to all records or proceedings which have been deemed to be of a public nature including:
 - 1. Written and taped proceedings of City Council meetings, committee and commission meetings, special ad hoc committee meetings and public hearings.
 - 2. Official City contracts and resolutions.
 - 3. Public Safety summary, which may include the following information and will be determined by the Riverside County Sheriff's Department:
 - a. crime reports
 - b. booking information
 - c. traffic collision reports
 - d. fire reports (accidents causing death, injury, severe damage)
 - e. fire inspection records for public assembly facilities

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4. Salary grades of City employees, upon request.
 5. FPPC/conflict of interest disclosure statements filed by the Council, commissioners and affected City staff.
 6. Interoffice correspondence that is not in draft form and does not address a personnel or confidential legal matter.
- D. Closed Records. City records that constitute an unwarranted invasion of individual privacy or involve confidential legal matters of City litigation are usually exempt from public disclosure. Such records include:
1. Personnel or medical records of City employees, including performance evaluations, background checks, disciplinary action, and such similar records.
 2. Actual proceedings of closed Council sessions. (The media can be told whether the Council will be discussing a litigation or personnel issue.)
 3. Preliminary labor negotiations leading up to labor contracts. Once executed, all employment contracts--both individual and union--become public records.
 4. Certain police/fire records, including juvenile records, prior criminal records or information regarding the character or reputation of an accused individual in a criminal action; and certain fire investigation records.
 5. Draft correspondence, including preliminary notes not yet finalized.
 6. Records pertaining to pending City litigation in which the City is a party.
 7. Confidential memos between the City Attorney and City officials/staff.
- NOTE:** In situations where there is a discrepancy or uncertainty on the part of a City employee regarding release of an official record to the media, the City Attorney should be contacted to make the final determination. Specific categories of records may be exempted by the Public Records Act.
- E. Litigation Issues. Staff members shall not respond to media inquiries regarding an issue involving City litigation or render personal or legal opinions on City policies or activities. If an employee is in doubt, the City Attorney should be contacted for clarification before responding to a media inquiry.

XI. **Correcting Misinformation:**

The City has an obligation to clarify or correct any information released by the media which contains inaccuracies or quotes taken out of context relating to a City issue.

- A. Factual Discrepancies. The Public Information ~~and Intergovernmental Relations~~ Officer shall contact the media when a story has been published or aired containing factual error which significantly impacts the public's perception of the issue being addressed. Managers are encouraged to notify the Public Information ~~and Intergovernmental Relations~~ Officer immediately when they believe incorrect information is being communicated by the press regarding a City issue or program.

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- B. Editorial Discrepancies. Managers should contact the Public Information ~~and Intergovernmental Relations~~-Officer when there is evidence that a specific editorial comment or news story has been published or aired which does not appropriately represent a balanced perspective of the issue being discussed. The ~~City Manager~~City Manager's Office, in consultation with the Public ~~Information and Intergovernmental Relations~~-Officer, will determine when an official City rebuttal or response is appropriate.
- C. Letters to the Editor. Department directors who believe an official City rebuttal is warranted regarding a news story should discuss the issue with the City Manager's Office. They will determine if a response is appropriate, as well as who should prepare and sign the letter. The ~~City Manager~~City Manager's Office must authorize and review all letters sent to editors on official City letterhead and/or by an employee who is acting in an official capacity commenting on City issues or programs.
- D. Responding as Private Citizens. City employees who choose to contact, initiate or respond to City-related news stories as private citizens shall not prepare such responses on City time, by City phones, on City stationery, or mail at City expense. Responses or letters shall not state or imply that the response is on behalf of the City. Use of City facilities or supplies is prohibited. These guidelines also apply to employees responding to or initiating press contacts as official representatives of City-sanctioned employee groups.

XII. Public Meeting Notification:

Public notices are any printed official announcement ~~which that~~ notifies the community of a scheduled public meeting or hearing. The announcement can take the form of a flyer, legal notice or form letter for mass distribution. A copy of all printed notices should be submitted to the City Manager's Office.

- A. Public Meetings. Departments will be responsible for developing and disseminating notices announcing public meetings and hearings. Most affected are the City Clerk's Office, the Community Development Department, the Economic Development Department, the Financial & Management Services, and the Public Works Department. The City Manager's Office will lend editorial graphics assistance in developing the notices.
- B. Agenda Notification. City Council agendas shall be made available to the public prior to Council meetings at the City Clerk's Office, at public facilities designated by the Clerk and the City's Web site. Copies shall be made available to the news media at the City Clerk's Office.

XIII. Advertising:

- A. Display Advertising. The City Manager's Office coordinates development and placement of media advertising to promote City programs, services, events, and issues. All requests for advertising must be submitted to the City Manager's Office, which will coordinate copy development, graphic design and media placement with the requesting department. This procedure does not apply to employment and legal advertising, which will be coordinated by the appropriate departments (i.e., Human Resources and City Clerk, respectively).
- B. Public Service Announcements. The City Manager's Office is the central coordinator for developing and placing public service announcements with the broadcast media (radio, TV and cable). PSA spots are announced free by the media as a community service. Two-to-three-week lead times are desired by most stations. All requests for PSAs must be submitted to the City Manager's Office, which will coordinate copy development and placement with the requesting department.

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XIV. **Social Media:**

The City Manager's Office coordinates design, development, scheduling and posting for all social media content. Moreno Valley's social media procedures are addressed in the Social Media Administrative Procedure.

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