CITY OF CRESTVIEW

Communications Policy

<u>Purpose</u>

The City of Crestview mission is to improve the quality of life by providing exceptional municipal services. **Communication** - the giving or exchanging of information - is central to that mission. This policy is intended as a guideline to cultivate open, honest, effective communication with the City's various publics in order to nurture better understanding and support of City goals, programs and services.

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Contact information:

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198 Wilson St N
Crestview, Fl 32536

Key Publics

Citizens. Our highest priority are the citizens Crestview - those who live work and play here - who benefit from our services, elect our leaders and influence our future and policies. We must make every effort to comprehend the needs and expectations of our residents and, in turn, employ every avenue (media, newsletter, flyers, brochures, web sites, area managers, community meetings) to keep them informed of what we're doing and why.

Employees. More than 200 employees form the City of Crestview government. Until we are "all on the same page" we cannot accurately communicate to our citizens. Lack of information leads to misunderstanding; therefore, it is essential that administration, departments and elected officials proactively share pertinent information with each other. Employees are encouraged to use Department meetings, e-mail, and the intranet, to address concerns or disseminate information.

News Media. The media is neither an ally nor an adversary, but a resource. Through newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and the Internet, the City has a powerful platform to inform, instruct and influence public opinion - we need to take full advantage of it. If we're doing our jobs right and communicating with the media effectively, there's nothing to fear. Conversely, the media often serves as an excellent source of information and gauge of public opinion.

Okaloosa County. We encourage a spirit of cooperation, not competition, by openly sharing information with other cities and banding together to find "win-win" solutions on topics of mutual interest.

Okaloosa County School Districts. Because schools are an integral part of the quality of life in Crestview, it is essential City government keep abreast of developments within the schools and offer information and assistance when possible.

<u>Guiding Principles</u>

Because the City of Crestview exists to serve the public, we are accountable to them. Therefore, the City of Crestview maintains a policy of transparency regarding the public's right to know, examine and question the inner workings of government. When dealing with the public, keep the following guidelines in mind:

City Mission: To improve the quality of life by providing exceptional municipal services

Be engaging: Ask open ended questions, be confident, make eye contact and tell a story.

Be an active Listener. Listen first; then speak. It is important the City take time to listen to and understand the concerns of its constituents. Then those concerns may be more accurately addressed.

Be proactive. It is difficult to correct misinformation. That's why it's important to communicate before acting, if possible, anticipating and answering questions and concerns before they arise.

Be basic. Speak in terms the average citizen would understand. The use of technical jargon may cause confusion or misunderstanding.

Be positive. Whether deserved or not, it's important to realize government is usually suspect and criticism is a constant. While we don't deny there are positives and negatives to every issue, our communications should be tailored to the positive resolution of community problems and concerns.

Be timely. Return phone calls or e-mails daily. If more time is needed to gather a response, let the inquirer know when to expect an answer, then deliver.

Be professional. Remember, whether on or off duty, you're an ambassador of the City. Be polite and avoid arguing, finger pointing or use of foul language.

Be familiar with your topic. Discuss topics you are well informed with, do not speculate.

<u>Roles and Responsibilities:</u>

In general, the role of the Administrative Services Department is to act as a clearinghouse for outgoing mass communications and as a consultant to other City departments on media- related issues. Our goal is to coordinate, clarify and ensure continuity in messages and publications issued by the City.

Administrative Services Department Responsibilities

1. Be aware of all activities in, and all actions of, the City.
2. Assist media in gaining information from department directors, City Council members, Commission and Advisory Board members and public records.
3. Track media coverage of City-related meetings, events and issues.
4. The announcement of major City decisions or significant events.
5. Approve **all** news releases prepared by City departments **before** distribution.
6. Release City reports, press releases, and announcements, simultaneously to appropriate news media representatives.
7. Coordinate all media interactions.

Role of Department Directors

1. Keep the Administrative Services Department informed of employee or department accomplishments, and items of human interest. Such stories promote positive public relations. Examples include recognition of employee who complete their education, ceremonial events such as retirement of a tenured employee, or departmental participation in a community event or fundraiser.
2. Ensure information relating to all activities within the city is provided to the Administrative Services Department.
3. Keep the Administrative Services Department informed of any potentially negative press.

Role of City employees:

1. Notify the Administrative Services Department of activities - positive or negative - that are likely to draw media interest.
2. ALWAYS inform the Department Director and the Communications Department by telephone or e-mail when contacted by the media - especially regarding a controversial issue. All contacts to and from the news media must be handled by the Administrative Services Department. Due to the nature of the job, Police and Fire need only inform the Administrative Services Department.
3. Direct all media inquiries to the Administrative Services Director.
4. Be available to the Administrative Services Department for questions related to media inquiries.

<u>Media Policy</u>

With the exception of executive sessions, media representatives may attend and report on actions taken by City Council, Planning & Zoning Commission, or any Advisory Board or Commission. Audio/video recording is allowed provided it does not disrupt the proceedings.

Members of the news media **must** call the Administrative Services Department to obtain information or request an interview. City employees should **ALWAYS** inform the Department Director and the Administrative Services Director by telephone or e-mail when contacted by the news media. The Administrative Services Director is available to City staff for professional advice and assistance in dealing with the news media. Our goal is to be prompt, professional, knowledgeable and accurate in responding to media inquiries.

City Media Relations Objectives

1. Use the media as a resource.
2. Anticipate, identify and monitor major newsworthy issues.
3. Foster cooperation between City government and the media.
4. Ensure information released accurately represents the City.
5. Provide timely information

Guidelines for Media Interviews

Information provided to the media should reflect City management's interpretation of City Council policy and not the employee's personal views. Interviews will only be conducted in conjunction with the Administrative Services Department.

Records Requests

Requests for public records must be submitted to the City Clerk's Office. The City Clerk's Office will collect records from the department and communicate with the requestor on the release of the records.

Note: E-mail is a public record and therefore may be accessible to the news media and general public.

Publications

The Administrative Services Department **must** approve all communications intended for public distribution. Allow 48 hours for the department to review all materials.

News Releases. News releases are generated by the Administrative Services Department to gain exposure for the City's programs, services or events. Departments should provide the Public Information Officer (PIO) with all relevant information, such as date, time, place, and be available for follow up. Once the release is prepared both the department and the Administrative Services Director must approve the release before it is released to the media.

News Leads/Photo Opportunities. Human-interest stories (employee collections, hobbies, experiences), unusual occurrences (a pig comes to council meeting) or events with particular visual appeal are of interest to media outlets and are a good opportunity for the City to promote positive news. Contact the Administrative Services Department with story ideas and a few key facts.

Media Kits. For major projects or announcements, media kits are an excellent way to disseminate accurate information. The kit typically includes a news release, fact sheet, architectural drawings, maps, charts or photographs.

Employee Newsletter. The employee newsletter is produced by the Public Information Officer and distributed on-line to all City employees through the City's intranet site HubNet.

Department materials. To enhance communication with customers, individual departments sometimes produce flyers or handouts. These flyers must be reviewed by the Administrative Services Department prior to printing and distribution.

Staff Letters to the Public. Any staff member preparing a letter to be distributed to more than five residents or businesses must receive approval from the Administrative Services Department prior to distribution.

Collateral Materials. Brochures, flyers, catalogs and other miscellaneous publications are especially effective for quick explanations of programs and services. Many are used to draw attention to a one-time event. They should be visually interesting and include basic facts: who, what, when, where and possibly, why. The Administrative Services Department will assist with the production of these specialty materials. All materials must be approved by the Administrative Services Department prior to printing and distribution.

Other sources:

CodeRed. Mass Communication via text message and phone calls is used only during an emergency. This system is maintained by the IT department. All employees are required to sign up to be notified in case of an emergency.

CivicView. The city's podcast is hosted by the Digital Media Specialist and is a conversation between multiple parties discussing upcoming city events or actions. Podcast episodes are limited and require substantial lead time.

Social Media. The city's social media platforms include Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube, and Instagram.

Video. The city produces videos for social media and the city website. Video request require substantial lead time and request should be submitted to the Digital Media Specialist.

Website

The official City of Crestview website (www.cityofcrestview.org) is managed and operated by the City of Crestview Administrative Services Department under the direction of the Information Technology Manager.

All other web addresses will fall under www.cityofcrestview.org. Individual departments within the City will not be hosting their own web pages. The City website is intended primarily to provide public information concerning City services, activities and policies to promote a positive image for the entire community. It is the exclusive property of the City of Crestview.

The IT division develops and conducts training on internet use, internet-related City policies, website content and serves as a resource to the City's Website User's Group.

Permitted Content: City web pages that contain time-sensitive material that is not updated periodically will be subject to removal. The City of Crestview website does not accept commercial advertising or promotions; however, opportunities exist for sponsorships or partnerships.

Prohibited Materials: Political or religious issues; City of Crestview website pages shall not advocate support or opposition to political candidates, parties or ballot measures at any level of government, or promote any religious beliefs. Offensive materials; All postings shall respect the human dignity of all people and shall not contain materials that may reasonably be considered offensive. Such content includes, but is not limited to, sexual comments or images, racial slurs, derogatory gender-specific comments or beliefs, national origin or physical attributes.

Development and editing: Departments shall designate a representative(s) to update their respective page. Representatives can update content, but not change the format of the page. Departments may request help in the development of web pages for the City's website through the IT department.

All pages should be designed to meet requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

On-line documents: Frequently requested documents may be placed on the City of Crestview website. Those include: City Council agendas and minutes, Planning & Zoning Commission agendas and minutes, directory of city phone numbers, demographics, calendar of events and meeting times, press releases, relocation information, forms and other information.

Links to non-city websites: The City of Crestview permits certain links to other non-city websites to provide greater public access to community information – these external sites will be marked as "Community Resources." External links will be limited to the following:

- Official government websites including federal, state and local.
- An organization whose website primarily promotes the economic welfare, tourism, volunteerism and industry of Crestview.
- An organization whose website provides recreational, health, public safety, natural disaster or weather information that affects the City of Crestview.
- An organization whose website primarily provides public transportation related information.
- Public educational institutions.
- Utility companies that serve City of Crestview residents.

Disclaimer: The City of Crestview does not accept any responsibility for the content of links and reserves the right to refuse or delete any link inconsistent with this policy.

Copyright: If the content, graphics, photographs – even the design – of pages were not created by City employees for City use, then an appropriate legal release must be obtained from the content creators or copyright holders. Each page will display the City of Crestview copyright notice. Example: © 2020 City of Crestview, Florida.

Graphics, photos, video, music or art must be submitted separately from digital text and must be original art, accompanied by written permission of the copyright holder.

Special Projects/Events

Understanding communication is a key component of any special event or project, the Administrative Services Department should be included in advance planning of all special events and projects (i.e. groundbreaking ceremonies, news conferences, Fourth of July and other holiday celebrations). In addition, the Administrative Services Department is available to consult with each City department to promote City services and programs.

Graphics & Style Guide

City of Crestview government is a single institution with the common goal of serving the residents. Therefore, it is important to maintain a consistent, easily identifiable graphic identity in communicating with our target audience. By standardizing logo applications on equipment, signs, facilities, correspondence, uniforms we enhance the identity and professional image of local government.

The City has a number of registered logos, images and graphics. These images are a matter of public record, but the registered trademark means unauthorized uses may be subject to prosecution.

Official City Seal

This logo should appear on all printed materials representing the City, including but not limited to, stationery, business cards, brochures, flyers, banners, vehicles, signs, banners, advertisements, announcements, specialty items and internal and external public communication materials. Along with the City logo, address, contact telephone number, fax number, website address and/or e-mail address should be included when appropriate. Contact the Public Information Officer for specific applications.

City employees may not grant the use of the official logo to outside organizations. Requests for use of the City's official logo must be forwarded to the Administrative Services Department for approval.

Some departments also have their own seal, such as the Fire and Police departments, which can be used in conjunction with the official city seal.

Logotype

The logotype is used in limited applications. Please consult the Public Information Officer before use of the logotype.

Color
To ensure consistency, exact PMS colors are required in all printed materials.
Red – PMS 032; RGB 239, 51,64 (for use in Microsoft Office)
Blue – PMS 072; RGB 16,6,159
Light Blue (Cyan) – Pantone Process Cyan; RGB 0,133,202

Alternative colors maybe used for special applications such as seasonal materials or special effects such as titles.

Font
The official city font is Futura.
Alternative font options:
A serifed font like this one may be substituted for Futura Light or Book in large blocks of body copy. Suggestions include Palatino, Caslon and Garamond, which this is.
For special applications, such as special events and activities, alternative display fonts may be used as the headline, when appropriate to the event and to comprehension. Avoid using fancy fonts such as scripts and Gothic fonts that are too ornate to be easily read. Never use such ornate fonts in body copy.

City Motto
In 2019 the city adopted and informal motto of "One City, One Mission". This motto designed to reinforce the city's mission statement.
In 2020, the city adopted an informal motto of "A Community Coming Together" to showcase the city's efforts to engage the community.

City Mission and Vision Statement

Mission Statement:
"To improve the quality of life by providing exceptional municipal services."

Vision Statement:
"To be known as a forward thinking, hospitable, and growing community that embraces diversity with a family-centric culture."

Signs

The city has access to multiple signs, both digital and traditional, and billboards throughout the city. Departments should contact the Administrative Services Department to develop media for this platform.

Construction Signs

Construction Sign details and specifications are available from the Administrative Services Department. Signs are used to announce a new project, confirm details, and reduce speculation.

Emergency Communications

In the event of a major crisis or incident, an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) will be established and the City Manager is the designated as City spokespersons. Other people, designated by the City Manager, may serve as spokespersons.

Information deemed urgent in nature includes any situation that may cause alarm, affects the health, safety, or welfare of the City as a whole or the daily operations of the organization can also be distributed via the CodeRed alerting system.

Members of the crisis team will report to the EOC, or other designated location, and the mayor, City Council, and employees will be notified that a crisis or incident exists.

All information regarding the crisis is to be immediately communicated to the crisis management team. No statements will be made to the media until the crisis team has time to assess impact of the crisis. The crisis team through the designated spokesperson will release all information.

Board members and elected officials should not make any statements to the news media until meeting with the crisis team. The mayor and City Council should obtain regular briefings from the City Manager. However, it is recommended that any statements made to the news media come only through the designated spokesperson. If incorrect or misstated information is released, the legal consequences could be severe. It's the spokesperson's responsibility to ensure the appropriate people on the crisis team clear all outgoing information.

The media may not be satisfied with comments from the official spokesperson, however, that does not mean that others are obligated to comment. City employees who personally disagree with the City's plan for recovery should discuss it behind closed doors, not with the media. It is the spokesperson's job to provide regular updates to employees, as well.

Internal Communications:

The City of Crestview values good internal communication and believes it is a critical element of creating a successful and highly engaged organization. Internal communication encompasses both "official" communication (announcements, memos, publications, policies and procedures, etc.) and "unofficial" communication that occurs among and between employees (the exchange of ideas, information and opinions).

Internal communication occurs in all directions and the city encourages all employees to actively participate in internal communication by sharing information, knowledge and ideas.

This policy acknowledges that due to the confidential nature of some business activities it is not possible to share all information with all employees. Therefore, a balance must be struck between keeping staff informed and protecting confidential and sensitive information.

This Policy outlines the city's internal communication framework, the objectives which support it, and the roles of staff, supervisors and managers in establishing effective internal communications within City of Crestview.

Scope:
This policy applies to all City of Crestview employees.

Definitions:
Employee- all city staff including supervisors, department heads, and volunteers.

Policy:

Objectives
Through our communications with our employees, we aim to:

• Provide employees with the information they need to do their jobs effectively

• Provide employees with clear standards and expectations for their work

• Provide employees with feedback on their own performance

• Help maintain a shared vision throughout the organization

Message
Our messages should be:
• Purposeful

• Tailored to the audience (both in delivery and content)

• Timely

• Consistent

Expectations and responsibilities
Employees:
As an employee, you can expect to be:

- provided with relevant information and kept informed of relevant developments in a timely manner;

- consulted on issues relevant to your area and the wider organization;

- given the opportunity to raise questions or issues relevant to your work. Your questions should be treated seriously, respectfully and answered timely.

As a employee, you should:
- actively participate in internal communication by providing information to relevant departments

- raise relevant questions or problems with your supervisor or manager (or through other channels if necessary, including the complaint process)- your questions should be treated seriously and respectfully;

- attend meetings as requested

- read relevant correspondence, including emails, notices etc.

Supervisors and managers (including the Department Heads)
As a supervisor or manager, you can expect to:

- communicate most issues (particularly relating directly to your own area) to your staff yourself;

- briefed on any sensitive or significant issues in advance of your staff being informed, so that you are in a position to answer questions from your employees;

- consulted on projects which will affect your area, to ensure that proposals are "workable" on the ground;

- kept informed of general developments by your supervisor or department head

In addition to the responsibilities of all employees, if you are a supervisor or a manager, you also have responsibility to:

- communicate with your staff about relevant issues, how they apply to your work area, whether proposals are "workable" or how they could be improved etc.;
- treat questions from your staff seriously and respectfully. Respond to all questions (whether immediately or after further investigation) and provide an explanation for the answer;
- raise any significant problems or issues of concern in your area (which you cannot resolve) with your supervisor;
- be as informed as you can be about the issues relevant to your area and your employees;

- empower your staff by providing them with information to enable them to do their jobs as well as possible;

- Hold regular meetings with direct reports to discuss developments, plans and performance within your area/department, as well as city-wide developments where relevant

Procedures

When implementing or changing procedures:

1. Discuss with staff first

   o   Be prepared to address why and when

   o   Ask for feedback

2. Present the new process prior to implementation

   o   Be sure to include all affected parties, including other departments

   o   Information should be presented with as much advance notice as possible based on the situation.

3. Provide training, when needed based on the complexity of the procedure

4. Document how the information was disseminated

   o   Acceptable formats include meetings with accompanying agenda or memo sent via email with a read receipt.

5. Procedures should be complied and available for employee reference; those that affect multiple departments will be posted on the intranet.

When implementing or changing policies:

1. Discuss with staff

   o   Be prepared to address why and when

   o   Ask for feedback

2. Present the new policy prior to implementation

   o   Policy changes must be approved by the City Manager.

   o   Be sure to include all affected parties, including other departments.

   o   Information should be presented with as much advance notice as possible based on the situation.

3. Provide training, when needed

4. Have employees sign off

   o   Acceptable formats include in-person meeting with agenda and sign in sheet, memo sent via email with a read receipt, or a signed form accompanying distribution of the policy.

5. Provide a copy of the new policy to the clerk for record keeping

6. Policies will be posted on the intranet for reference.

Methods of communication

We recognize that we have a diverse group of employees- differing in working hours, location, tenure and type of work. The city is committed to identifying the best methods of communication to suit and reach our diverse team.

To ensure consistency, quality and appropriateness, the Administrative Services department is responsible for monitoring all **city-wide** internal communications (i.e. emails, memos, publications, face-to-face meetings). Therefore, all city-wide internal communications must be reviewed by the Administrative Services department prior to distribution/implementation.

Employees (including supervisors, department heads and elected officials) are not authorized to distribute city-wide communications without first obtaining authorization from the Administrative Services Director.

HubNet- City Intranet

The City of Crestview maintains an Intranet for internal communications, nicknamed the HubNet. The Intranet encourages communication by empowering workers to access and share information. For example, individual departments can upload important documents, leadership can make announcements, and product teams can share launch updates. "HubNet" currently contains forms and other information that are utilized across departments. Departments wishing to utilize this tool shall designate a representative(s) to update their respective page. Representatives can update content, but not change the format of the page. Departments may request help in the development of web pages for the City's website through the IT department.

Internal E-Mail

City of Crestview personnel utilize e-mail for a variety of work-related reasons. The primary function of the City's e-mail system is for the exchange of information in a timely or real-time manner. Typically, the Administrative Services Department and/or the City Manager's Office are the sole sources for the distribution of information across the entire organization, especially when the information for distribution is considered urgent in nature.

The following policy is established specifically for the purpose of providing direction to City staff regarding the dissemination of information deemed urgent in nature across the entire organization via the citywide e-mail distribution list.

It shall be the policy of the City of Crestview to disseminate information that is relevant to the mass via the City's e-mail system.

Information deemed urgent in nature includes any situation that may cause alarm, affects the health, safety, or welfare of the City as a whole or the daily operations of the organization can also be distributed via the CodeRed alerting system.

The Administrative Services Director shall be responsible for the dissemination and is the only authorized position besides the IT Manager who may utilize the citywide e-mail distribution list.

Breach of Policy

As with all city policies, failure to comply may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.