

MANUAL OF PERSONNEL RULES, PRACTICES,

AND PROCEDURES

SECTION: 1.00

Personnel Conduct and Standards of

Employment
SUBJECT: 1.55

Media Policy

SUPERSEDES: March 1, 2000 **NEW EFFECTIVE DATE:** January 1, 2006

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APPROVED BY CITY MANAGER:

I. PURPOSE

To improve media relations, protect and enhance the image of the city of Pasadena and ensure that accurate, appropriate information is released to the news media.

II. POLICY

A. Priority

Inquiries from the news media should 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 ensure that all information released is accurate.

B. Public Information

Generally, the business conducted by the city of Pasadena is public and therefore is subject to the federal Freedom of Information Act and the state Public Records Act. Exceptions include works in progress that have not been publicly distributed, matters involving pending litigation, issues that are subject to ongoing negotiation, and confidential personnel-related matters.

C. Sensitive and Controversial Issues

The appropriate department head, the city manager and the public information officer must be informed immediately of inquiries from the news media that relate to sensitive or controversial issues, potential litigation, ongoing negotiations or personnel matters; and must be made aware immediately of potentially sensitive issues when it is anticipated that those issues may reach the media. The city manager will communicate directly with the PIO, the appropriate department head and other city officials as necessary, including the city attorney and director of human resources on an as-needed basis, to develop strategies for each issue and determine an appropriate spokesperson.

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Any city employee who speaks to a reporter or editor about a sensitive or controversial issue without authorization and prior approval by the city manager will be subject to disciplinary action. The public information officer must be made aware of any such authorization or approval.

D. Examples of Sensitive or Controversial Issues

Examples of sensitive or controversial issues include, but are not limited to, performance evaluations related to any city employee; legal claims or lawsuits filed against the city of Pasadena by any city employee, city council member or other elected official, individual, business or organization; negotiations related to economic development or redevelopment; court appearances by any city employee, member of the City Council, or spouses or other families members of either; and hiring, disciplinary or termination processes related to any city employee.

E. Spokesperson

In most cases, there will be one spokesperson designated for response to each inquiry, and all related inquiries will be directed to that spokesperson. For citywide issues the spokesperson will most often be the city manager or the PIO; for department-related issues the spokesperson will most often be the head of a department or division; in some instances the spokesperson will be the employee, regardless of rank, who can best answer specific questions about a particular issue. The spokesperson will work directly with the PIO to ensure that information for specific media issues is communicated appropriately.

F. Public Records Requests

Requests from the media or the public for City of Pasadena records may be written or verbal. Staff is required, if necessary, to help requesters make focused and effective requests that reasonably describe identifiable records. For records other than standard documents (agenda reports, etc.), the PIO must be informed of the request and a representative of the City Attorney's Office must approve the response before it is released. The Public Records Act allows up to 10 days for this process, but departments are encouraged to provide information in as timely a manner as possible.

G. News Releases

City departments may issue routine news releases and consult with the Public Affairs Office as necessary. The public information officer must receive a copy of

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every news release that is distributed by any city department. Any news release issued by any department of the city of Pasadena that relates to or is requested by an elected official - city council member, county supervisor, assembly member, senator, etc. - must receive approval from the city manager before being written or released.

H. Media Briefings

When necessary, briefings may be conducted to educate the news media about potentially controversial issues and provide reporters an opportunity to ask indepth questions. In most cases, appropriate city staff and reporters review extensive background materials, distribute fact sheets and explanatory materials, or discuss at length a particular issue or upcoming report to the City Council. The PIO will be responsible for scheduling any such briefings.

I. Press Conferences

When necessary, press conferences may be conducted to make extremely important announcements and facilitate the flow of immediate, accurate information when several reporters request information that city officials cannot respond to on an individual basis. The city manager and the public information officer must be notified in advance of a department's intent to hold a press conference. The public information officer will be available as needed for consultation with appropriate staff regarding the strategy, preliminary statement, materials, media alert and general set-up of the conference. The city manager is responsible for notifying the City Council of any breaking news.

III. EMERGENCY MEDIA RELATIONS

In the event of a disaster or emergency, the Fire Department, Police Department or Public Works and Transportation Department will assign a spokesperson to be responsible for primary media relations. The city's public information officer serves as spokesperson during an emergency only when the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is activated.

IV. DEPARTMENTAL MEDIA POLICIES

A. Development of Departmental Policies

Each department in the city organization will establish a media plan for non-controversial, day-to-day inquiries from the news media. The plan will include a the appointment of a spokesperson(s) to represent the department to the media.

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The city's PIO is always available for consultation and will, on request, be present at interviews between reporters and city staff.

B. Filing of Departmental Policies

Department media policies must be on file in the City Manager's Office and the Public Affairs Office.