

**CITY OF NEW ORLEANS
CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE**

POLICY MEMORANDUM NO. 15 (R)

August 10, 2020

To: All Departments, Boards, Agencies, and Commissions

From: Gilbert A. Montaña, Chief Administrative Officer



Subject: **PROCEDURES FOR THE RELEASE OF INFORMATION TO THE
GENERAL PUBLIC BY CITY DEPARTMENTS AND GENERAL MEDIA
ADVISORY PROTOCOL**

I. PURPOSE AND USE

- A. The purpose of this policy is to re-establish the administrative framework for the dissemination of public information to ensure that communications are coordinated, effectively managed, and responsive to the diverse information needs of the public.
- B. This policy memorandum does not impact requirements related to public notices or public records requests. Please consult CAO Policy Memoranda 37(R) and 92 for additional guidance on legal noticing requirements or public records.
- C. This policy memorandum hereby rescinds and replaces CAO Policy Memorandum 110.

II. DEFINITIONS

- A. A **Media Inquiry** is a request for information or comment (whether on the record or off the record) made by an individual who identifies themselves as a member of the press or is generally known to be a member of the press. Requests for information from members of the general public are not considered media inquiries.
- B. A **Press Conference** is an event scheduled for the purpose of conveying information to members of the press. Meetings with community members, meetings of boards or commissions, and other events where members of the media may be in attendance but are not the target audience of the event are not considered press conferences.
- C. A **Public Information Officer** is a City employee designated by a department or agency head, pursuant to this policy, to serve as a liaison to the Mayor's Office of Communications. Nothing in this policy should be

construed to prevent an agency or department from hiring, retaining, or internally designating an employee a "Public Information Officer." However, the Public Information Officer is prohibited from exercising the authorities provided in this policy until that designation is communicated to the Mayor's Office of Communication.

- D. A **Media Release** is information prepared for the purpose of providing information to media outlets and released broadly to one or more media organizations.
- E. **Social Media** refers to websites or applications that enable users to create and share information and other content with a generally public audience. Examples of social media platforms include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube.
- F. An **Official Social Media Account** is a social media account or profile that explicitly represents city governmental entities, including any department/agency or city-sponsored initiatives. Personal accounts of city employees are not considered to be official social media accounts, but are still subject to the guidelines outlined in CAO Policy Memorandum 83(R).

III. POLICY

- A. The Mayor's Office of Communications (Office of Communications) is responsible for coordinating all public communications and providing news media coverage and communications support to City departments and agencies.
- B. All departments and agencies have the option to designate one or more Public Information Officer(s) (PIOs) that will function as a liaison to the Office of Communications. The Director of the Office of Communications may deny or revoke a PIO designation at any time by notifying the department/agency head. Departments and agencies must provide prompt notification when they wish to designate a new PIO or remove a PIO designation.
- C. Departments and agencies without an approved Public Information Officer must coordinate directly with the Office of Communications before responding to media inquiries, issuing media releases, or scheduling press conferences. In-person Media inquiries should be referred to the Office of Communications if there are no Office of Communications staff present during the inquiry.

- D. Designated PIOs and members of their staff may be authorized by the Office of Communications to generally respond to media inquiries, issue media releases, and schedule press conferences without receiving explicit approval from the Mayor's Office of Communications. However, PIOs must maintain compliance with any procedures or protocols issued by the Office of Communications.
- E. When feasible, PIOs should inform the Office of Communications of all press conferences at least 24 hours in advance of holding a press conference. When such advance notice is not feasible, PIOs should provide relevant information to the Office of Communications in as timely a manner as is feasible.
- F. The Director of the Office of Communications may designate a specific event or series of events as having a high level of media interest. Once an incident has received this designation, all communications regarding the event should be coordinated according to the Office of Communications' incident response protocols.
- G. Social Media. The Mayor's Office of Communications is responsible for general oversight of all official City social media accounts.
 - 1. Departments and agencies that maintain their own social media accounts must:
 - a. Designate a social media manager that will function as a liaison to the Office of Communications;
 - b. Establish an agency-specific social media protocol in consultation with the Office of Communications; and
 - c. Provide the Office of Communications with login credentials for all accounts and update the Office of Communications if these credentials change.
 - 2. Official City social media accounts shall comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and policies.
 - 3. The following is prohibited on official City accounts:
 - a. Release of confidential information as defined by any City policy, or local, state, or federal law;
 - b. Profane or obscene language or content;
 - c. Sexual content;
 - d. Threats;

- e. Defamatory statements;
 - f. Encouragement of illegal activity;
 - g. Violations of a legal ownership interest of any other party;
 - h. Solicitations of commerce;
 - i. Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination; and
 - j. Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems.
4. The Office of Communications is authorized to edit, hide, or delete social media posts or content on any official social media account without consulting with the impacted department.
- H. It is the responsibility of Department or Agency Heads to communicate this policy to their respective staffs.

IV. Inquiries

- A. Any questions concerning this policy should be referred to the Director of the Office of Communications.