

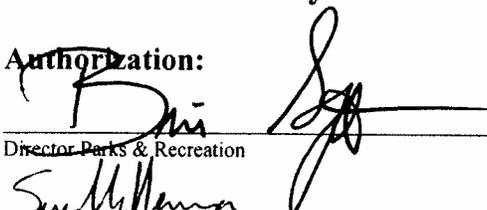


Parks & Recreation Department Standard Operating Procedure

Policy Number: PRD-06-05
Pages: 1 of 2
Subject Area: Administration
Date of Issue: 12/19/06
Revised:

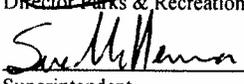
Title: Media Policy

Authorization:



Director Parks & Recreation

Date: 12-19-06



Superintendent

Date: 12-19-06

GENERAL

It is our policy to interact openly and professionally with the media. The goal of any interaction with the media is to ensure the media is forwarded to the person most appropriate for responding and to ensure media are given accurate and appropriate information.

SPOKESPERSON (S)

The Director shall be the official spokesperson for the department when interacting with the media.

Supervisors, Recreation Program Coordinators, Park Planners and Design/Construction Managers are authorized to respond to media inquiries regarding their specific program areas if they feel properly briefed on the specific topic. Any Parks and Recreation Department employee may be assigned by the Director or a Supervisor to provide a response to, or initiate contact with, the media.

Inquiries from the media regarding commissions or committees shall be forwarded to the department liaison for that group.

If the appropriate program/project staff or liaison is not available, the Office Administrator or Customer Service Specialist may assume the role of spokesperson if they feel properly briefed on the topic.

FRONT OFFICE STAFF

Frequently, members of the media phone the department general phone line when attempting to locate information regarding a subject. Front office staff shall endeavor to determine the appropriate program/project staff or liaison and facilitate their contact with the media.

If it is known that a staff person will be unavailable to respond to media the same day (out off office), front office staff shall refer media to the Office Administrator, Customer Service Specialist or Director.

UNANTICIPATED MEDIA CONTACT

Occasionally the media may personally approach or telephone staff directly. It is our goal to ensure the media is forwarded to the person most appropriate to respond to their questions.

Employees are not required to respond to “on-the-spot” media questions. They are required to be courteous and, if comfortable doing so, may answer questions about the specific work they are performing at that moment, in accordance with this policy. Supervisors may amend this policy for their part time and/or seasonal staff persons.

Employees are encouraged to decline immediate response to a media request if they are uncomfortable or not fully informed of a situation. When declining to talk to the media an employee shall immediately refer the media representative to the appropriate program/project staff, their supervisor or the director.

It is important that employees who do not feel comfortable answering on-the-spot media questions remember that there is no reason to feel defensive, embarrassed, or any need to be evasive. Referring the media representative to a supervisor for follow-up is perfectly proper and acceptable.

MEDIA PROCEDURE

- Be sure you are the appropriate person to discuss the issue. If you aren't, facilitate their contact to the right people/person.
- Be helpful, friendly and courteous
- Issues that may involve liability on the part of the City, or if other lawyers are involved should be immediately directed to the Director.
- Please provide information that is correct. All statements to the media should be facts, and not the personal opinion of the employee.
- Don't beat around the bush. It's frustrating for both you and the reporter when he/she can't understand what you're trying to say. Keep it short and don't engage in a lengthy conversation. There is no such thing as “off the record.”
- All personnel matters are confidential and should be referred to the Director.

PRD = Parks & Recreation Department
REC = Recreation Division
PRK = Parks Division
BMD = Building Maintenance Division

Tips on Effective Communication

- State your purpose clearly. Organize your ideas carefully, leave out everything else, and avoid jargon and acronyms. It helps to write down what you want to say before speaking with the reporter.
- Know your facts. Don't guess or assume anything. If you are not sure about something tell the reporter you do not know and you will call him/her back when you have verified the information, or refer the reporter to a source you believe will be reliable.

Good News and Bad News

- Not every story is going to be positive, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't try to put our best face forward.
- If you ever find yourself in the middle of a story that sounds controversial, or one you are uncomfortable speaking with a reporter about, refer to your Supervisor.

No Reason to Panic

- When a reporter calls, don't panic! They are simply doing their jobs by reporting the news. They're calling you because they want your views for their story. They aren't "out to get you." Hostility from reporters only comes when they feel you aren't being helpful. If you wish to speak with a reporter but are too busy to talk at the time, don't want to be rushed or need some time to get your thoughts together, ask the reporter what the story is about, ask what his/her deadline is, and tell him/her you'll call back at a mutually convenient time.
- If a reporter or camera crew just shows up at your door, contact your supervisor. Don't let them press you for quick responses. Take your time to collect your thoughts, comb your hair, or jot down some notes. They may be on deadline, but they will wait. Remember to be succinct in your responses. Broadcasts are notorious for creating "sound bites," and you'll want to get your point across quickly. Television camera crews often like to get "B-roll" for their story (background images), so they may ask you to go outside -- recommend places for them to get good images, City logo in background, park setting, etc.

Most importantly:

- Tell the truth – always and in all ways.
- Answer reporters' questions openly and honestly. If you don't know the answer, say that you don't know or that you'll have to get back to them with the answer.
- Always return phone calls to the media. If you need advice before returning the call, please refer to your supervisor.
- Never say "no comment." This looks as if you are trying to avoid giving a truthful answer. If there is a reason you can't comment, let the reporter know.
- Everything you say to a reporter is "on the record." If you can't say it "on the record," don't say it. A reporter is under no obligation to honor your request that something be "off the record."
- Try to answer negative questions with a positive response. If the question contains incorrect information, correct it immediately.
- If the reporter is hostile, remain calm and polite. Don't raise your voice. You can choose to end the interview at any time.
- Do not expect to control the questions you are asked or to edit the story prior to its publication.
- After you've spoken with a reporter, it is good practice to let your supervisor know.