

County of Elgin

Section: 2

Human Resources Policy Manual

Subject: Communications

Policy Number: 2.140

Code - A

Date Approved: July 14/09

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Date Last Revision:

PURPOSE: To ensure the County of Elgin exercises effective communications policies and activities to inform its resident, businesses, visitors and partners via partnerships with the news media.

POLICY STATEMENT: Inquiries from the news media are given a high priority by the County of Elgin and should 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.

The responsibility for media relations falls mostly to the Administrative Services Department, with the exception of most public safety issues. That said it is the responsibility of the County departments to participate in carrying out effective media relations.

All County employees should notify Administrative Services about media inquiries.

Because the media often work on tight deadlines, it is important that all departments respond as soon as possible when requests are made for department information or a spokesperson for the media. Specific guidelines to media requests follows.

County Spokespersons:

Unless otherwise authorized, the County's spokespersons are;

Warden and

Chief Administrative Officer

Or other designated officials.

PROCEDURE:

Media Inquiries:

In a community as small as Elgin County, media outlets often make direct contact with departmental staff. While media inquiries received by County staff can be referred to Administrative Services and management staff, it is recognized that staff are sometimes the most appropriate people to answer media queries. If staff are uncomfortable answering a query from the media, an appropriate response would be, "I'm sorry I don't have the full information regarding that issue. I will give your request to my Manager who will respond to you as soon as they are available." Please ensure to obtain the reporter's name, phone number, topic of story, and deadline.

Whether staff respond to media queries directly or forward the query to a spokesperson, they should inform Administrative Services promptly.

In the interest of keeping everyone informed, staff should email the Chief Administrative Officer, their Director and other relevant staff following a consequential media interview. The email message should indicate the media outlet and the interviewer; summarize the interview topic, the reporter's questions and responses given; and indicate when the article or broadcast is expected to run or air.

Sensitive or Controversial Issues:

All media inquiries regarding sensitive or controversial issues should always be referred immediately to Administrative Services and to management staff. Administrative Services staff will coordinate a response including designating a spokesperson after consultation with the CAO and the appropriate Department.

Litigation, Personnel and Election Issues:

Generally, the business conducted by the County of Elgin is public, and therefore, is public information. Inquiries regarding pending litigation, matters involving a significant exposure to litigation and certain personnel-related information are exceptions.

Inquiries regarding pending litigation or exposure to litigation should be referred to Administrative Services. Inquiries regarding personnel-related information should be referred to the Human Resources Department and Administrative Services.

Inquiries regarding election and campaign issues should be referred to Administrative Services as appropriate.

Personal Points of View

It is recognized that all employees have the right to their personal points of view regarding any issue. However, personal points of view may conflict with the County's official policy. Therefore, County employees must be aware the County Code of Conduct takes precedence in relation to views expressed in any public forum.

Personal opinions are not permitted. Staff are expected to report on factual information without note or comment.

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General or Routine Issues:

Broadcast media: Calls from broadcast media (TV and radio) should always be referred to Administrative Services. Administrative staff will coordinate a response after consultation with the Chief Administrative Officer and the relevant department.

Local print media: Calls from local print media regarding most departmental issues and programs may be handled by each department's director provided the response is factual in nature. Administrative Services should be informed of these media requests – including the reporter and topic – either before or immediately following these interviews.