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		REVISION	SUPERSEDES
SUBJECT Media Relations Policy		APPROVED BY: , City Manager	EFFECTIVE DATE

A. PURPOSE

To establish a policy and procedures for disseminating official City information to the media ("Policy").

B. SCOPE

This Policy provides guidance on the distribution of information to news and information media, in particular information that has the potential to generate media attention, public interest, or inquiry. To ensure the City communicates effectively with media representatives, this Policy shall be followed and adhered to by all paid and unpaid City staff including members of City boards, commissions, and committees.

C. POLICY EXEMPTION

This Policy shall not apply to the San Bernardino Police Department (SBPD). All employees of SBPD must adhere instead to SBPD Policy #346 titled News Media Relations contained within the San Bernardino Police Department Policy Manual.

D. POLICY

1. Inquires from the media shall be given a high priority by the City of San Bernardino.
2. Requests should be responded to as quickly and efficiently as possible.
3. Every effort should be made to meet media deadlines and ensure that all information released is accurate.
4. All media inquiries should be directed to the City's Public Information Officer ("PIO").
5. The PIO is responsible for the City's media inquiries, requests, and other press issues.
6. Due to the pressing nature of media deadlines, all departments shall respond as soon as practicable to PIO requests for information.
7. City departments seeking media publicity for events, activities, or program/project announcements shall notify the PIO in advance.

8. Department heads (or their designee(s)) shall notify the PIO of events that occur in their areas that, in their reasonable discretion, may be of major interest to the City Council, the public, or the media. Individual City personnel should notify their department heads of the same.
9. The City Manager or PIO may authorize another individual with expertise in and knowledge of a particular topic to assist with developing a response or responding directly on behalf of the City, when appropriate.

E. CITY SPOKESPERSONS

Unless otherwise authorized, the City's spokespersons are:

- Mayor
- City Manager
- Assistant City Manager
- Public Information Officer

Exceptions may be made at the discretion of the City Manager.

F. PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

The PIO promotes and provides background information about City issues, projects, and services to both the media and the public. The PIO is responsible for:

1. Facilitating communication with the media, including answering questions, responding to developing situations, and offering assistance as needed.
2. Issuing news releases and media advisories.
3. Conducting and coordinating news media relations for the City.
4. Establishing relations policies and priorities for news media, including online news media.
5. Coordinating and reviewing the performance of all news media relations policy and activities and making appropriate updates as needed.
6. All functions listed in the City's Emergency Operations Plan (Part I. Section 10: Public Information).

G. MEDIA INQUIRIES

The following procedure will be followed when media requests are received:

1. If the inquiry is received in person or over the telephone:
 - a. Inform the individual that the City's PIO coordinates the requests, and their inquiry will be forwarded for a response;

- b. Obtain the individual's name, media outlet, contact information, nature of the inquiry/topic of the story, and the deadline; and
 - c. Forward to the PIO by email immediately.
2. If the inquiry is received in writing, forward the correspondence to the PIO immediately.

The person or persons receiving an in person or telephonic media request shall not offer comment or respond to a request for comment, other than to note that the media request will be forwarded to the PIO and to expect a response from that office.

H. PRESS RELEASES AND MEDIA MATERIAL

Most proactive media contact on behalf of the City is processed through the PIO. This includes press releases, media advisories, and contacts with the press for coverage.

1. Departments seeking publicity for events and activities or needing to collaborate with the media to communicate information to the public shall coordinate with the PIO.
2. Departments should submit requests will all pertinent information to the PIO at least five (5) business days prior to the intended release date or date of the event, or as soon as feasible.

I. SENSITIVE OR CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

1. All media inquiries regarding sensitive or controversial issues must be referred to the City Manager, City Attorney, and PIO immediately.
2. The PIO will coordinate with the City Manager, the Assistant City Manager, or their designee to develop a response. PIO shall also coordinate with the City Attorney's Office to the extent the sensitive or controversial issue has legal implications.

J. PRIVILEGED AND PRIVATE INFORMATION

Most records and affairs of the City are public information which citizens, including the press, have the right to know; however, there are exceptions when information is deemed privileged or private. Exceptions include, but are not limited to, information pertaining to:

- Ongoing investigations
- Litigation or the threat of litigation
- Personnel matters

When a media request appears to involve a subject matter that may be privileged or private, the PIO will consult with the City Attorney to review the request and provide counsel.

K. PERSONAL POINTS OF VIEW

The City strives for a unified approach to communication initiatives. City staff and members of boards, committees, and commissions have a right to their personal points of view and the freedom to express

their opinions; however, it is recognized that personal points of view may conflict with the City's official policy. Therefore:

1. City staff members and members of boards, committees, and commissions who identify themselves as such when addressing a public meeting, participating in a media interview, or providing any written comment or statement must clearly state that the views shared do not represent the views of the City but are their own personal opinions.
2. Media contact made as a private citizen may not be communicated or prepared on City time, equipment, or in any way at the City's expense.
3. City personnel should be aware that any media contact that could be seen as "political activity," such as expressing support or opposition to any governmental decision, ballot measure, candidate, or elected official, may be subject to the limitations on public employees' political activity as set forth in Government Code section 3201, *et seq.* This includes, for example, engaging in political activity while wearing a City uniform, which is illegal under Government Code section 3206. Do not comment upon any media request related to any political activity or event if approached by a media contact by virtue of your position with the City.

L. ERRORS IN REPORTING

1. Errors in a media entity's public reporting discovered by City staff should be brought to the attention of the PIO who, in conjunction with the City Manager and appropriate Agency/Department Director, will determine the proper steps.

M. CRISIS OR EMERGENCY ISSUES

1. During a crisis or an emergency as defined in City of San Bernardino Municipal Section 2.46.090, or any successor section, all media relations will follow the guidelines specific in the City's Emergency Operations Plan.