


POLICY

	Policy:	Media Relations		
	Department:	Office of the CAO		
	Division:	Office of the CAO	By-Law No.:	2024-083
	Administered By:	Chief Administrative Officer	Approval Date:	Dec. 16, 2024
	Replaces:	Media Relations – November 18, 2014		
	Attachment(s):	N/A		

1. POLICY STATEMENT

The Corporation of the Town of Amherstburg recognizes that communicating through the media is one of the most effective ways to publicize information about the Town's programs, services and events. The Town is committed to open and transparent communication with the media that is accurate, timely and mutually beneficial.

2. PURPOSE

- 2.1. This policy describes how the Town will work proactively with the media to promote public awareness and understanding of municipal policies, programs, services and initiatives.
- 2.2. This policy outlines who can interact with media in an official capacity on behalf of the Town, and when to initiate or respond to inquiries from print, broadcast, online and social media outlets.
- 2.3. This policy is designed to promote media relations in a manner that is objective, understandable, open and transparent within the allowable limits as directed by legal counsel.

3. SCOPE

- 3.1. This policy applies to all Town of Amherstburg staff and any individual retained by the Corporation who is acting on the Town's behalf. This includes, but is not limited to, full-time and part-time employees, firefighters, temporary and contract employees, appointees to agencies or boards, committees, volunteers, etc.
- 3.2. This policy does not apply to the Mayor or Councillors as they are governed by the Code of Conduct for Council Members Policy.
- 3.3. In the event of an emergency, the communications protocols outlined in the Town of Amherstburg Emergency Response Plan will supersede this policy.
- 3.4. This policy shall be reviewed every five (5) years from the date it becomes effective, and/or sooner at the discretion of the CAO or designate.

4. DEFINITIONS

- 4.1. **Authorized Spokesperson** is a Town employee who has the authority to make statements to the media on behalf and representative of the organization.

- 4.2. **Confidential Information** is information that is not generally available to the public and is used in the course of the Town's operations. This includes sensitive information and personal information about employees, taxpayers, customers, volunteers, vendors, suppliers, elected officials, citizens and other stakeholders.
- 4.3. **Intellectual Property** is a set of intangible rights held by musicians, authors, artists and inventors who have ownership of their intellectual and creative output. Others are prohibited from using intellectual property without prior and written permission. Intellectual property may have commercial value and encompasses the area of Copyrights, Trademarks, Patents, and Design.
- 4.4. **Media** refers to news media including traditional media such as newspapers and forms mass media such as television and radio stations.
- 4.5. **Media Contact** is engagement of the media either through solicitation by the Town, or inquiries made by a member of the media.
- 4.6. **Public Relations** is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between an individual or an organization and the public.
- 4.7. **Public Statement** is a declaration made by an authorized spokesperson on behalf of the Town in any public forum that relates to the Town, its employees, and/or business. It includes statements made in person, in the newspaper, by email, on blogs, in online forums or discussions, through social media, and anywhere else in public record.
- 4.8. **Social Media** is the use of web-based and mobile technologies for broadcasting information. It encompasses a wide variety of platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn, among others.

Common definitions, acronyms, and terms are available in the Glossary located on the Town's Policies webpage.

5. **INTERPRETATIONS**

Any reference in this policy to any statute or any section of a statute shall, unless expressly stated, be deemed to be reference to the statute as amended, restated or re-enacted from time to time. Any references to a by-law or Town policy shall be deemed to be a reference to the most recent passed policy or by-law and any replacements thereto.

6. **GENERAL CONDITIONS**

6.1. **Guiding Principals**

6.1.1. Authorized spokespersons for the Town who communicate with the media in an official capacity shall:

6.1.1.1. Identify themselves by name and position;

- 6.1.1.2. Speak on the record for public attribution;
- 6.1.1.3. Remain neutral, factual, and only speak to their areas of expertise;
- 6.1.1.4. Refrain from interpreting or offering personal opinions on the decisions of Council;
- 6.1.1.5. Respect privacy rights, security needs, matters before the courts, and Town policies;
- 6.1.1.6. Refrain from disclosing confidential, proprietary or sensitive information related to the Town, its business and affairs, employees, volunteers, vendors, suppliers, elected officials, citizens, or other stakeholders;
- 6.1.1.7. Ensure comments are factual, positive in nature and reflect positively on the Town;
- 6.1.1.8. Work proactively with the media to promote public awareness and understanding of municipal policies, programs, services, events, and initiatives;
- 6.1.1.9. Respond to media in a timely manner;
- 6.1.1.10. Use plain language that is clear, concise, relevant, and easy to understand in all communications;
- 6.1.1.11. When possible, provide speaking notes, briefing notes or fact sheets;
- 6.1.1.12. Use the Town logo to assist the public in recognizing and accessing the Town's policies, programs, services, and initiatives;
- 6.1.1.13. Comply with intellectual property laws, including the Copyright Act, to ensure the ownership rights associated with works subject to copyright are fully respected. Written permission must be obtained from the copyright owner before reproducing, publishing, or posting images, texts, or videos in any medium, including social media. Copyright law requires departments to maintain a record of authorizations obtained to use copyrighted material.

6.2. Media Inquiries

- 6.2.1. All inquiries of media shall be addressed in a meaningful, timely and accurate manner.
- 6.2.2. Media inquires concerning political or potentially controversial information shall be directed immediately to the CAO's office.
- 6.2.3. Responses to media stories, comments, blogs and discussion forums about Town-related business shall be coordinated through the CAO's Office.

6.3. Media Spokespersons

- 6.3.1. The Mayor is the official spokesperson of the Town. The CAO shall be the chief staff spokesperson and may also speak on behalf of the Town regarding all functions of the organization.
- 6.3.2. Authorized spokespersons may speak on behalf of their areas of responsibility and expertise.
- 6.3.3. Authorized spokespersons commenting on Town business, regardless of medium, must identify themselves as Town of Amherstburg employees.
- 6.3.4. Media training will be made available to all designated spokespersons.

6.4. Media Exposure

- 6.4.1. All media exposure shall be shared with the CAO's Office in advance of airing or printing.
- 6.4.2. Use of Town property, equipment, assets, logos or intellectual property for purposes unrelated to the Town is strictly forbidden.
- 6.4.3. Any employee that becomes aware of issues that may result in negative media exposure or media scrutiny is to advise the CAO's Office immediately.

6.5. Media Releases

- 6.5.1. All media releases will be issued to media outlets by the CAO's Office or designate.
- 6.5.2. Authorized spokespersons shall provide media releases to the CAO's Office a minimum of 36-hours ahead of the intended time of official release, when possible, to allow for proper notification to Council.
- 6.5.3. Authorized spokespersons providing media releases shall remain as the contact person noted on the media release for all inquiries related to said media release

6.6. Communication Planning

- 6.6.1. To ensure that media deadlines are met and that necessary approvals are provided, departments and committees using corporate communications or seeking media engagement shall provide sufficient advance notice to the CAO's Office.
- 6.6.2. When preparing campaigns, strategies, events or initiatives that will include a public relations or media engagement component, consultation with the CAO's Office is required.

- 6.6.3. For media releases, advisories, press conferences and advertising, advance notice to the CAO's Office of 36-hours is required.

7. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 7.1. The **Mayor** has the authority and responsibility to:
 - 7.1.1. Convey the official position of the Corporation of the Town of Amherstburg.
- 7.2. **Council** has the authority and responsibility to:
 - 7.2.1. Adopt the Media Relations Policy.
- 7.3. The **CAO** has the authority and responsibility to:
 - 7.3.1. Ensure appropriate oversight is in place within respective areas of responsibility to ensure compliance with Media Relations Policy.
 - 7.3.2. Facilitate responses to the media that are political, sensitive, or possibly controversial in nature in coordination with the Mayor, as appropriate.
- 7.4. **Directors** have the authority and responsibility to:
 - 7.4.1. Authorize designated spokespersons within their department to respond to media inquiries, in accordance with the Media Relations Policy;
 - 7.4.2. Provide media releases to the CAO a minimum of 36-hours in advance of their intended issue;
 - 7.4.3. Inform the CAO when media contact is political, sensitive, or possibly controversial in nature for their response.
- 7.5. **Authorized Spokespersons** have the authority and responsibility to:
 - 7.5.1. Provide factual information on programs, activities, and initiatives that relate specifically to their business area in response to media inquiries, in accordance with the Media Relation Policy;
 - 7.5.2. Inform the CAO when media contact is political, sensitive, or possibly controversial in nature for their response.
- 7.6. **Staff** have the responsibility to:
 - 7.6.1. Ensure their understanding and compliance with the Media Relations Policy and seek clarification where needed to follow the policy expectations.

8. LEGISLATIVE REFERENCES AND RELATED DOCUMENTS

- 8.1. Copyright Act of Canada
- 8.2. Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
- 8.3. Provision of Notice to the Public Policy