

## THE CITY OF ALEXANDRIA POLICY

<b>Department</b>	Communications Department	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Media Relations Policy</b>
<b>Division</b>	Office of the Mayor	<b>Prepared by</b>	Susan Broussard

### 1. POLICY

The City of Alexandria (the “City”) is committed to working cooperatively with the media to deliver information of public interest and concern in an accurate, complete, and timely manner.

### 2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this media policy is to ensure positive message consistency and appropriate transparency. This policy applies to all City of Alexandria full-time, part-time, contract and temporary workers, and volunteers.

### 3. RESPONSIBILITY

3.1 The Chief of Staff is designated as the City’s Public Information Officer (PIO) and is responsible for the implementation of the Media Relations Policy. When the City PIO is unavailable, he or she may designate a spokesperson as the acting PIO.

3.2 Department or Division Directors will forward any media inquiries received to the City PIO for response.

3.3 Employees, Contractors and others working on behalf of the City should refer any media inquiries received by City staff immediately to their Department or Division Director who will forward the contact to the City PIO for response.

### 4. GENERAL GOVERNING RULES

4.1. The press should be treated like a customer of the City. All city employees or officials who engage with the press shall follow the People First policy.

4.2. Inquiries from the news media are given a high priority by the City and should be responded to as quickly and efficiently as possible. Every effort should be made to meet media deadlines and to ensure all information released is accurate and complete. Employees must not initiate contact with the media unless authorized to do so.

4.3. If the City PIO determines that the City’s goal can best be achieved by having someone with more background or expertise speak for the City on a particular topic, he or she may authorize a spokesperson to assist with or give the City’s response.

4.4. Media releases must be approved by the PIO. This includes press releases, media advisories and personal contacts with reporters and editors for coverage. Releases should follow the appropriate template to indicate official City business and media statements.

- 4.5.Planned public information and events should be shared with the PIO or designee one week prior to the event. Employees should provide advance warning of the likelihood of contentious issues.
- 4.6.Employees must advise the PIO of significant events or comments, which occur in his or her area as soon as possible.
- 4.7.Departments seeking publicity for events or activities, needing to collaborate with the media to communicate important information to the public, or accepting public speaking or appearance engagements will coordinate with the City PIO.
- 4.8.City employees, who personally write letters to the editor or email comments to media outlets, post on social media platforms or addresses a public meeting or the media, must be clear that their views are not necessarily the views of the City nor do they officially represent the City unless authorized to do so. If a City employee writes a letter to the editor, responds to email comments, or makes posts on social media on matters of public concern should state, the employee's views are personal in nature and does not represent the position of the City.

## **5. GOVERNING RULES FOR PUBLIC SAFETY**

- 5.1.Alexandria Police Department (APD) shall designate an officer or officers as APD Public Information Officers (APD PIOs) and follow specific guidelines when releasing information.
- 5.2.When the City PIO is notified by a City staff member of a media call regarding a police investigation or general criminal activity, the City PIO will immediately refer the inquiry to the APD PIO and work with the APD PIO for the appropriate response.
- 5.3.All information released to the media by the APD PIO should also be copied to the City PIO, who will determine if others in the administration require the information, as well.
- 5.4.Media inquiries concerning matters of police personnel, general police policies and procedures, or in any way reflecting upon the competency or integrity of police personnel or police administration will be routed to and handled directly by the City PIO or designee.
- 5.5.APD shall respond to media requests for records concerning traffic and/or criminal investigations. All record requests should be directed to the APD Records Division at [APD-records@cityofalex.com](mailto:APD-records@cityofalex.com).
- 5.6.In law enforcement situations, on-scene requests for media interviews will be referred to the APD PIO, and the APD PIO shall notify the City PIO that an interview will be conducted. If an unforeseen law-enforcement situation arises, and the APD PIO is approached by the media for an interview, the APD PIO shall make every effort to notify

the City PIO at the earliest possible time. The City PIO may write and distribute press releases based on information provided by the on-scene APD PIO.

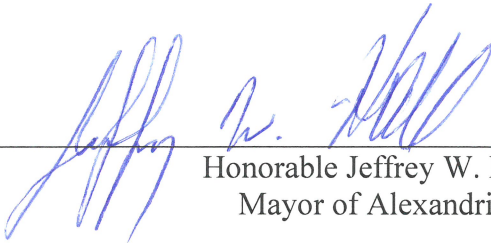
5.7. In fire and EMS situations, on-scene requests for media interviews will be referred to the Alexandria Fire Department Fire Chief. The Commander will notify the City PIO that an interview will be conducted. The City PIO may write and distribute press releases based on information provided by the on-scene AFD Incident Commander.

5.8. In a combined law enforcement/fire/EMS situation, only one person will speak on behalf of the City as determined by the City PIO.

## **6. GOVERNING RULES FOR CRISIS OR EMERGENCY ISSUES**

6.1. During a crisis or major emergency (i.e. flooding, tornado, mass casualty incident, hurricane, etc.) the procedure for communicating with the media is highlighted in the City's Crisis Communications Plan. The plan designates the City PIO as the main point of contact for the media. His or her designees including Communications personnel and the APD PIO, to prepare and disseminate emergency public information, will assist the City PIO.

This policy was approved on the 27<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2019 by the Appointing Authority.

  
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Honorable Jeffrey W. Hall  
Mayor of Alexandria