

## **Media Relations Policy**

Adopted by the Council: 10/26/11

The following procedures and standards will be used by all departments as applicable to media relations within the Town of Hooksett.

### **Spokesperson**

The Town Administrator (Administrator) serves as the primary spokesperson and will serve as the primary source of information for the Town and conveys the Town's official position on routine media inquiries, issues of town-wide significance and situations that are sensitive and controversial in nature. Also, any media contact regarding Town Council actions or policies should be referred to the Administrator.

### **Media relations and News Releases**

Media inquiries or news releases, whether verbal or written, are to be directed to the Administrator who will evaluate the request and provide an answer, or direct it to the appropriate spokesperson. Non-routine media requests should be forwarded to the Administrator prior to response. These may include responses that require the interpretation of policy, employee information and emergency situations.

### **Exceptions**

- a. Routine media requests may be responded to by the department supervisor if the response is of a factual, incidental or inconsequential nature (i.e. special event schedule, meeting dates). The Administrator is to be advised of routine inquiries.
- b. The Fire Chief may designate his/her own department spokesperson to handle media inquiries related specifically to public safety emergencies (for example: fires; accidents). Post emergency media relations shall be handled under general provisions of this policy. Staff members who provide emergency medical care to the public should refrain from speaking to the media and refer them instead to their department's spokesperson. The Administrator should be advised within a reasonable period of time when this exception clause is used.

### **Council Member Communications with the Press**

When speaking to the press, Council Members will clarify whether they are speaking on behalf of the Town Council or themselves. No member shall hold him/herself out as representing or speaking on behalf of the Council on any matter unless, prior thereto, the Council, by a majority vote taken during a duly noticed Council meeting, has authorized the member to act and/or speak on behalf of the Council.

### **Guidelines for Employees Acting as Private Citizens**

The following guidelines are offered employees who may choose to contact the media as a private citizen. These guidelines do not prohibit such contact but support other Town policies regarding improper use of Town equipment and property. These guidelines also apply to employees responding to or initiating media contact as official representatives of employee groups.

- a.** Letters to the editor may not be prepared on Town time, printed on Town letterhead stationery, or mailed at Town expense.
- b.** Telephone contact may not be made on Town time using Town telephones.
- c.** Use of Town email is prohibited.
- d.** Use of Town facilities or supplies is prohibited.