



CITY OF
FORESTPARK

Title: Public Information Office Communications Policy
Date Adopted: XXXXXXXX, 2021
Effective Date: XXXXXXXX, 2021, as amended
Reference: XXXXXXXX
Policy Amended: XXXXXXXX

Mission Statement

The Public Information Office Communications Policy exists to ensure that information released by the City of Forest Park is timely, accurate, comprehensive and relevant to all aspects of communications with the general public, internal staff and members of the media. It is the mission of the Public Information Office to promote and enhance city government via media relations, print and digital publications, social media, strategic marketing campaigns and the city's website. This includes:

- Information on local government services
- General information to the public about city meetings and sponsored/managed events
- Emergency and public safety information
- Live and taped coverage of government meetings, events and activities

Roles of the Public Information Office

A. **External Communications**

1. All news releases and other external communications to the news media and for the city's website are to be written, distributed and/or approved through the city's Public Information Officer (PIO). At the discretion of the City Manager, the PIO is responsible for writing and distributing new releases for events, programs and happenings that are sponsored/managed/produced by the City of Forest Park Mayor, City Council and/or citywide departments. Exceptions can and will be made in the event of a declared emergency or at the discretion of the City Manager.
2. Every effort should be made to send information and requests for news releases about city events, meetings, workshops and programs to the PIO a minimum of 10 workdays prior to the event, with the exception of emergency situations (natural disasters, declared emergencies, etc.).

Each department shall be responsible for informing the PIO when there is a newsworthy event happening.

3. The PIO serves as the primary point of contact for the media. At the direction of the City Manager, each media request shall be independently researched, evaluated and discussed in order to determine the best way to provide information that responds to the request and is in line with the city's overall mission and objectives.
4. If a member of the news media contacts a city employee directly to obtain information or comment regarding recent events or actions, their request shall be immediately referred directly to the PIO. City of Forest Park employees are under no obligation required to respond to a reporter nor can they be compelled to answer questions on the spot. It is the city's policy to refer all media inquiries to the PIO or assigned designee. The PIO will be on-call 24 hours a day, seven days a week to respond to requests from members of the media.
 - There are times when the PIO may request for a city employee (department directors, project lead, etc.) to serve as the subject matter expert and respond directly to a media request. This will only be done after vetting the story with the reporter and receiving prior approval from the City Manager.
 - If a city employee does respond to questions from the media without first notifying the City Manager or the PIO, they should do so as soon as the media request has been made.
5. In certain situations, the PIO will work with the Mayor, City Council, City Manager and department directors to set up news conferences. In general, while news conferences are useful, most members of the media prefer one-on-one interviews rather than a large news conference. **All city-related interviews with members of the media shall be coordinated through the Public Information Officer and approved by the City Manager.**
6. The PIO or designee serves as the lead communications officer during activations of the city's emergency command Center. During an emergency activation, all information shall be channeled through the Public Information Office and approved by the City Manager, assigned incident commander and/or applicable department director before being released to the media and general public.
7. For special events, including ribbon cuttings, building dedications and/or groundbreaking, city departments should coordinate the event with the PIO, who will assist with the communications aspects for the planned event. The PIO will assist all departments and divisions with publicity and promotions for City of Forest Park events and activities via news releases, media coverage, video, photography, advertising and the use of social media.
8. Letters, op-eds, blogs (online columns) and guest columns shall not be submitted to the media as an official city statement, unless it is reviewed by the PIO and approved by the City Manager or designee. However, city employees are permitted to write letters, blogs and columns stating their personal opinion on issues, as long as it does not reflect an official statement from the City of Forest Park.

9. The City of Forest Park has a series of official logos. There is also a set palette of colors to complement the use of these elements in printed and electronic productions.



Palette Colors (RGB Color Code):

- Brown (150, 48,12)
- Autumn (251, 178, 51)
- Green (135, 185, 79)
- Mustard Yellow (230, 198, 22)



10. The official logos for the City of Forest Park shall be maintained by the PIO. **City departments, divisions and offices are not authorized to alter or use a different logo for city promotions without prior approval from the City Manager.** Digital copies of the city logos can be obtained from the PIO.
12. All printed materials must include the City of Forest Park logo prior to distribution. All printed materials include, but are not limited to:
- Flyers and Signs
 - Brochures
 - Posters
 - Newsletters
 - Print Ads

B. Internal Communications

1. Distribution of newsworthy mass emails to all city employees can be done by the PIO, City Manager or other assigned designee. Only mass emails that relate to city government and/or public service information will be sent to city employees except when otherwise directed by the City Manager.
2. The PIO will handle promotions for internal employee communications and activities. This can include newsletters, news clippings, links to media stories, directives and more.

C. Website

1. City of Forest Park webpages for departments and/or divisions must be located on the city's official website (www.forestparkga.gov) and are to be coordinated through the Public Information Office.
2. Information posted on the city's website must relate to programs, services and/or events managed or primarily sponsored by the City of Forest Park Mayor, City Council and/or city departments, divisions and offices. Posting information regarding other governmental agencies and community centers will be at the discretion and approval of the City Manager.
3. Each council member may post information or opinions about city or ward events and issues on ward-specific pages of the city's official website. However, these postings may not be used for campaign or personal purposes. **Further, due to public records laws, no council member shall criticize or comment on any other council member's opinion, position or vote on any topic in any posting on any official city website.**
4. All city departments, divisions and offices shall have a designated staff person responsible for regularly updating the content on their webpages and ensuring the accuracy of all posted information. Information on the website is considered a public document.
5. Departments, divisions and offices are encouraged to utilize the city's website to provide convenient public access to current information, forms and procedures.
6. The request to add an external link to the city's website shall be coordinated through the Public Information Office and/or, in some instances, the city's Information Technology Department. Primary consideration will be given to government agencies or committees specified by the Mayor, City Council and/or City Manager. All those who request external links will be notified as to the direction of their request.
7. The City of Forest Park's website provides links to federal, state and local governmental agencies and educational institutions including school districts, colleges and universities.
8. Websites are considered official when:
 - They are created and presented to communicate information on official City of Forest Park services, events and programs.
 - Contain official City of Forest Park branding or logos and/or events or programs managed by the city.
 - Websites containing any of these official elements will appear under one of the official City of Forest Park domains. Unique subdomains and URLs are to be used only after approval has been obtained from the PIO and City Manager.