

City of Maple Plain

Administrative Communication Policy

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish clear expectations for internal and external communications conducted by City staff. This policy is intended to:

- Promote transparency and professionalism
- Ensure accurate and consistent messaging
- Support effective collaboration between staff, the City Administrator, and the City Council
- Prevent miscommunication or unexpected public messaging
- Establish consistent proactive communication

2. Guiding Principles

All City communications should adhere to the following principles:

- **Clarity:** Information should be easy to understand and appropriate for the audience (generally 8th-grade comprehension level for public communications).
- **Accuracy:** Information must be factually correct and verified prior to release.
- **Consistency:** Messaging should align across all platforms (website, social media, print, etc.).
- **Timeliness:** Communications should be shared in a timely manner, especially for operational or public safety matters.
- **Coordination:** Significant communications must be coordinated internally prior to release.
- **No Surprises:** The City Administrator and Mayor should be informed in advance of communications that may generate public interest or concern.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

City Administrator

- Approves sensitive, high-impact, or policy-related communications
- Ensures alignment with Council direction and City priorities

Assistant City Administrator

- Responsible for drafting communications
- Ensure information is accurate and complete
- Maintains the communications calendar
- Edits and formats communications for clarity, tone, and consistency
- Manages publishing across platforms (website, social media, newsletters, etc.)
- Coordinate with the City Administrator prior to release when appropriate

Rebranding Committee

- Acts as a liaison between the City Council and staff
- Quarterly Newsletter: Reviews topics (adds/subtracts), reviews content for potential political positioning issues, and does a final pass of the newsletter before going to print

- Leaflet: Reviews topics (adds/subtracts), reviews content for potential political positioning issues

City Council

- Provides policy direction through formal action
- Does not direct staff communications outside of established channels with the Rebranding Committee
- May request information through the City Administrator

4. Communication Categories

Priority Communications

Examples:

- Event announcements
- Service reminders (e.g., recycling, snow removal)
- General updates

Process:

- May be prepared and released by staff
- Should follow established templates and tone guidelines
- Logged on the communications calendar

Timing & Publication Standards:

- Posts published at least 2-3 weeks in advance of events or deadlines when possible
- Service reminders should be posted 1–3 days prior to occurrence
- Content should align with the Communications Calendar to avoid overlap
- Non-urgent updates may be scheduled for regular posting cycles (e.g., weekly content)

Routine & Operational Communications

Examples:

- Construction updates
- Utility notices (water, sewer, stormwater)
- Service disruptions

Process:

- Reviewed by Department Head where appropriate
- Shared with City Administrator prior to release
- Coordinated across all platforms

Timing & Publication Standards:

- Planned work: publish at least 3–7 days in advance when feasible
- Major disruptions: provide initial notice as soon as confirmed, ideally within 24 hours
- Ongoing projects: provide regular updates (weekly or as milestones change)
- Time-sensitive service impacts: update the public same day when conditions change

Sensitive or High-Impact Communications

Examples:

- Public safety issues
- Legal or enforcement matters
- Topics likely to generate public concern or media attention
- Policy changes or Council actions

Process:

- Must be reviewed and approved by the City Administrator
- Mayor should be informed in advance when appropriate
- Messaging should be coordinated and consistent across all channels

Timing & Publication Standards:

- Urgent/public safety issues: communicate immediately upon verification of facts
- High-interest topics: release information as soon as practical following approval
- Updates: provide frequent, timely follow-ups as new information becomes available
- Media-sensitive issues: ensure internal coordination is completed prior to release, even when rapid response is required

5. Communication Channels

Approved City communication channels include:

- City website (primary source of record)
- Social media platforms (Facebook)
- Email notifications and newsletters
- Press releases and media outreach
- Printed materials and public notices
- Electronic sign

All communications should be consistent across platforms and, when possible, link back to the City website for full details.

6. Communication Standards

All communications must:

- Be professional, neutral, and non-political
- Avoid personal opinions or commentary
- Use plain language and avoid jargon
- Include clear calls to action when appropriate
- Provide contact information for questions or follow-up

7. Internal Communication Protocol

- Staff should inform the City Administrator of upcoming communications that may be sensitive or high-profile
- A shared communications calendar should be maintained and regularly updated

- Drafts should be circulated for review when coordination is required
- Major topics should be discussed in advance to ensure alignment

8. Media Relations

- The City Administrator serves as the primary media contact unless otherwise designated
- Staff should not respond to media inquiries on behalf of the City without authorization
- Media inquiries should be directed to the City Administrator promptly

9. Social Media Use

- Social media is an official communication tool and must follow all City standards
- Content should be informational, not opinion-based
- Comments are disabled
- Inappropriate or offensive content may be removed in accordance with City policy

10. Crisis Communication

In emergency situations:

- Public safety messaging takes priority
- Information should be released as quickly as possible with confirmed facts
- Coordination with public safety partners (e.g., West Hennepin Public Safety and West Suburban Fire District) is required
- Updates should be provided regularly as new information becomes available

11. Review and Updates

This policy should be reviewed periodically and updated as needed to reflect changes in communication tools, organizational structure, or best practices.