

# Town of Brunswick Communications Policy

A quick guide for effective, consistent messaging.



## PURPOSE

The Town of Brunswick is committed to open and meaningful communication with residents, businesses, staff and visitors. Effective communication requires transparency and coordinated, timely, accurate information, provided in ways that people want to receive it. The purpose of this guide is to ensure that the Town is communicating a clear, dependable message, with consistent branding and tone. Its purpose is also to address the fast-changing landscape of the Internet and the way residents communicate and obtain information.

## GOALS

- Branding a clear identity for the Town and building on that image and reputation
- Establishing “one clear voice” throughout all communication channels
- Maximizing awareness and support of the Town’s actions, goals, services, and programs
- Achieving coordinated and consistent communications; both internal and external
- Establishing and maintaining constructive and proactive media relations
- Clearly establishing the Town Manager’s Office as the primary sources of information, providing services to Councilors, departments, directors, staff, residents, and visitors
- Developing and implementing policies and procedures for collateral management of all materials produced and distributed by the Town
- Unless expressly authorized by the Town Manager’s Office, all communications by and from the Town will and must relate directly to Town business

## TEMPLATES

Neat, consistent, professional documents, forms and public presentations are all critical to our reputation, credibility, and the image we project as a team. All staff will use the provided letterhead, memo, business card and other templates, including Powerpoint presentations, especially those intended for presentation to the Town Council. Templates can be found in the shared drive XXXXX. Department-specific letterhead is permitted and will be provided, upon request, by the Town Manager’s Office. **(Do we do these things? Do we need to create something?)**

## SOCIAL MEDIA

The Town of Brunswick encourages the use of social media to further the goals of the Town and the missions of its departments, where appropriate. The Town has an overriding interest and expectation in deciding what is "spoken" on its behalf on social media sites. Currently, the Town's "social media" refers to Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. The best, most appropriate uses of social media tools fall into two categories:

- As channels for disseminating time-sensitive information as quickly as possible
- As marketing/promotional channels used to increase the Town's ability to broadcast its messages to the widest possible audience

The Town will approach the use of social media tools as consistently as possible. Rules are necessary to ensure that communications are properly authorized, accurate, in the correct form and voice, and pertinent. Content posted on social media must relate directly to Town business.

Any pages or sites maintained by an individual department or program of the Town will comply with this Communications Policy. Only individuals authorized by the Town Manager's Office may publish content to the Town's website or social media sites. Items/events/news will only be shared via social media if they're appropriate for the page or in the event of a public safety emergency.

All use of social media must comply with applicable federal, state, and county laws, regulations, and policies. This includes adherence to established laws and policies regarding copyright, records retention, Freedom of Access Act (FOAA), First Amendment, privacy laws.

Social media sites are not to be used for making any official communications to the Town, for example: reporting crimes or misconduct, reporting dangerous conditions, giving notice required by statute, ordinance or regulation (e.g. notice of claim), etc. This is included in our Social Media Terms of Use.

The Town Manager's Office will respond to comments in a timely manner and has the authority to pick and choose which comments to respond to. has the authority to hide prohibited content from any Town social media site at any time. IMPORTANT: Posts and comments on the Town's social media pages should never be deleted, but hidden from the page, to comply with FOAA and public records retention laws.

Articles and/or comments containing any of the following content shall not be allowed (and will be hidden from the page:

- Comments not related to the particular topic being commented upon
- Comments in support of or opposition to political campaigns or ballot measures
- Profane or inflammatory language or content
- Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation

## **SOCIAL MEDIA, cont.**

- Sexual content or link to sexual content
- Solicitations of commerce
- Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity
- Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public

The Town Manager's Office will not oversee the social media of the Fire Department, Police Department or Parks and Rec. maintain a list of all Town social media sites and will also be designated as a page administrator with full administrative rights on each one. Designated page administrators will monitor content on social media sites to ensure adherence to this Communications Policy for appropriate use, message, and branding and shall respond to inquiries in a timely, accurate and friendly manner.

As a courtesy, when posting to the Town's social media, staff members making the post need to schedule it through Meta so that the Town is careful about not posting on top of another post.

Terms of Use for site visitors will be posted on the website, pinned in Facebook, and added as a link (to website) in the bio for Instagram. (To happen in July 2025.)

## **APPS, TEXT ALERTS, NOTIFY ME**

Apps that allow staff to broadcast information/updates on behalf of the Town shall be managed in a way that is consistent with the Social Media section above.

Messages should be clear, concise, of interest to recipients and streamlined in consideration of character limits (e.g., 160 characters per text). Content distributed must relate directly to Town business. Employees wishing to push out text or email alerts shall submit their requests to the Town Manager's Office.

## **MEDIA**

Effective communication with/to the media is critical for the Town's ability to carry out its mission of serving the public and promoting important Town programs. Effective media relations best serve the Town by:

- Informing the public of what we can do for them
- Promoting the Town's achievements, activities, and events of significance
- Expanding the general visibility of the Town
- Ensuring that accurate information is conveyed to the public with transparency regarding incidents/issues of a controversial and/or sensitive nature

## **MEDIA, cont.**

The Town Manager serves as the official Town spokesperson and conveys the Town's official position on issues of general townwide impact or significance, or situations that are of a particularly controversial/sensitive in nature. Inquiries from the media about such issues should be referred to the Town Manager's Office. The Town Manager may designate another department director to serve as spokesperson on a particular issue. In cases of critical significance to the Town, the Town Manager will work with other Town officials to develop a "fact sheet" to detail the known facts of the situation and summarize Brunswick's position.

In the event of a crisis or emergency situation, the Town Manager and/or Police Chief will handle all contacts with the media and will coordinate the information flow from the Town to the public. In such situations, all departments should refer calls from the media to the Town Manager's Office.

## **PRESS RELEASES**

All press/media releases (and any details/content appearing therein) must be sent to the Town Manager's Office for approval prior to distribution/dissemination in a Word document through email at least a day before the desired distribution date. Content disseminated via press release must relate directly to Town business. Releases must be on the appropriate Town of Brunswick press release template. The Town Manager's Office will proofread and edit as needed and distribute to the local media or return it to the employee for distribution.

Police, Fire, Parks and Recreation, and Public Works, will have their own unique press release templates. All other departments will use the approved template. Due to public safety concerns and the importance of timely dissemination of public safety information, Police, Fire, Parks and Recreation, and Public Works are exempt from the one-day submission deadline.

When distributing the release, the Town Manager's Office or employee will send two separate e-mail messages: one to all staff, and one to the media. A town-approved Media Distribution List is available from the Town Manager's Office on request. Any variation from this approved list must be approved by the Town Manager's Office.

When appropriate, the Town Manager's Office will post releases on official Town of Brunswick social media pages as well as the website.

## **POSTING AT TOWN HALL**

All posters, flyers, notices, etc. to be displayed or affixed on the doors, windows, lobbies/public areas, within Town Hall must be reviewed and approved by the Town Manager's Office. Any items that are posted without approval will be removed. All items posted must relate directly to Town business.

## **COMPLIANCE**

Each department director shall be responsible for enforcing compliance with this communications policy by their employees.