

PUBLIC INFORMATION POLICY

The City of Camden is going through many changes in the way we do business. Communication is vitally important during this process and who and how information that impacts our community is shared. It is our objective and intent of sharing data that it is accurate and timely. To facilitate the information process flow, we have developed the following “Public Information Policy”.

I. Purpose:

The goal of this policy is to provide City of Camden personnel with guidelines for dealing with the news media, speeches and public statements, preparing and distributing news releases.

II. Scope:

This policy applies to all agencies/departments of the City of Camden. Individual departments may have additional policies and/or procedures for the release of information.

III. Policy Statement:

It shall be the policy of the City of Camden to maintain and promote open avenues of communication between the City and the news media, and provide accurate, informed, timely and relevant information to the press and to the public.

IV. General Policy:

Media Interaction

1. Prior to any formal speaking engagement or presentation, the employee participating will notify the Public Information Officer's office in writing of the event and its subject matter.
2. Prior to any statement to the media relating to City business, policies, programs or issues, all employees shall notify the Public Information Officer or Business Administrator for review and receive approval for the intended statement.
3. When communicating with the media, City staff should be mindful that they would be perceived to be acting on behalf of the City, whether or not they intend to be doing so. Therefore, staff will always behave professionally and courteously, staying focused on the message they are trying to convey, while avoiding extraneous commentary, speculation, falsification, or drawing of conclusions with incomplete information.
4. While truthfulness is required in all dealings, staff (as representatives of the City of Camden) should work towards the presentation of City issues in a positive manner.
5. The City of Camden is required to be responsive to the media. Directors and other city staff members may also be required to interact with the media, if requested by the Mayor or Business Administrator.
6. Employees, like all citizens, have a First Amendment right of free speech. On occasion, an employee's personal interest in an issue may be different

from the City's position. When this occurs, employees are required to clearly state that their position is personal. Notification following a conversation or interview with the news media must be made the same day of the contact. Notification of media contact must be made to the City's Public Information Officer and the employee's immediate supervisor. Notification must be in person, by telephone, or by e-mail.

Records

1. To insure that only accurate and legally open personnel and city government information is released, all requests for City documents, including personnel records shall be treated as public information requests. Public information requests must be made to the Office of the Municipal Clerk.
2. The Public Information Office provides a clipping service for all articles related to the Camden City government that appears in local/area newspapers. On occasion, articles about City government and staff appear in magazines and professional journals. In an effort to archive this information and to generate additional coverage for City staff and activities, staff members are encouraged to send copies of these articles to the Public Information Officer.

News Releases

1. Draft of all news releases developed by an agency or department will be submitted to the Public Information Officer for review, approval and distribution coordination.

2. Once approved, the Public Information Officer will be responsible for distribution to the news media. The initiating department is responsible for sending copies to their personnel.

Press Conferences

Press Conferences will be coordinated and facilitated solely by the Public Information Officer. Departments and agencies desiring to have a press conference will present their request in writing to the Public Information Officer. The Public Information Officer in consultation with the Mayor and Business Administrator will determine if a press conference is warranted.

Publications

All published reports, brochures, fact sheets, etc., are to be sent to the Public Information Office, from the specific sending agency or bureau, to be archived and considered for availability and future use and inclusion on the City's web site.

Adherence of this policy is required and expected of all City employees. Failure to comply will result in the administration of disciplinary actions up to and including termination of employment.