



Administrative Policy & Procedure No. 300.020

Communications Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

The City of Spokane Valley provides regular, timely, clear and accurate information to inform and engage the community and creates opportunities to increase community participation and input to inform city decision-making.

2. REFERENCES

- a) Internal Communications Procedures
- b) Writing Style Guide
- c) Brand Standards
 - (1) City Logo Style and Standards Guide
 - (2) Website Style Guide
 - (3) Economic Development Brand Style Guide
 - (4) 2024 Updated Color Palette (draft)
- d) Codes and Resolutions
 - (1) [SVMC 1.06 City Logo](#)
 - (2) [Resolution 18-009](#)
 - (3) [SVMC 2.75 Public Records](#)
- e) Related plans
 - (1) City of Spokane Valley Emergency Operations Plan (draft 2024)
 - (2) City of Spokane Valley Continuity of Operations Plan (draft 2024)
 - (3) City of Spokane Valley Governance Manual
- f) National Incident Management System (NIMS)

3. DESCRIPTION AND IMPLEMENTATION

- a) **Pro-active Approach.** The City assumes a proactive approach to communications, providing timely information that is accurate, clear and complete, and ensuring information is readily available via city communications channels.

- b) **City Vision, Values and Goals.** Communications are intended to support and be consistent with the city's adopted vision, values and goals.
- c) **Training.** Training in media relations and communications is provided as appropriate to make available the tools and techniques critical to effective communication with constituents.
- d) **Review of Information.** Public information materials shall be routed through the Communications Division for review and recommendations prior to the final draft and release to the community.
- e) **Notification.** If a city employee identifies an existing, or developing issue of importance or a communication problem, he/she shall notify the department director, who in turn may consult with the city manager, deputy city manager, communications manager and appropriate employees to coordinate a course of action.
- f) **Communication Channels.** The City uses various communication channels to share information, build relationships and gain feedback from the community.
- g) **Policy Updates.** The City of Spokane Valley can modify this policy without notice. Any modification is effective immediately upon posting the updated policy on the city's website at SpokaneValleyWA.gov.

4. Social Media Policy

The City of Spokane Valley utilizes social media platforms to engage with the community. Communication is intended to provide timely, accurate and transparent information, to recruit community involvement that informs city decision-making, and to increase participation in city events, programs, services and activities.

Social media is broadly defined as internet-based communication tools, including but not limited to, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn and Nextdoor.

- a) **Posting Guidelines.** The City of Spokane Valley welcomes dialogue with the public. All messages and comments must be appropriate for all ages and shall not violate the city's social media policy. City staff will review all comments during regular business hours Monday through Friday between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. The city's social media is a limited public forum, and as such, the City is not required to allow any and all dialogue that the users desire to post. Comments will not be edited by staff, however, any comments deemed in violation of the city's social media policy shall be hidden and retained for public records retention. Content or comments that include any of the following are deemed inappropriate and in violation of this policy:
 - i. Violate the platform's terms of service

- ii. Profanity, obscene or explicit language
- iii. Hate speech, violence, personal attacks, threats or personal insults
- iv. Sexual content
- v. Unrelated to the topic of the social media thread
- vi. Discriminatory content based on race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability, transgender status or sexual orientation
- vii. In support of or opposition to political campaigns or ballot measures of any kind
- viii. Advertising or promotion of commercial services or products
- ix. Suggest or encourage illegal activity or violate any law or legal ownership interest of any other party
- x. Information that would compromise the safety or security of the public and/or public systems
- xi. Personal information of another person published without that person's consent
- xii. Copyrighted and other proprietary material without clear permission

b) **Public Records.** Content, including comments by the public, shall be retained and is subject to public record retention laws. Any content removed or hidden based on these guidelines will be retained in adherence to public retention laws.

c) **Terms and Conditions.** Individuals accessing or using city social media sites accept the terms and conditions stated in this policy without limitation or qualification. Followers of the city's social media platforms are advised that if you post content, you participate at your own risk, taking personal responsibility for your comments, username and any information provided.

Content posted through social media does not constitute a legal or official notice or comment to the City or any official or employee of the City for any purpose.

Copyrighted and other proprietary material may not be posted or submitted in any form unless permission to do so is clearly indicated. In posting his or her own comments or other work, a commenter grants the City, and anyone viewing the site irrevocable permission to copy, distribute, make derivatives, display or perform the commenter's work publicly and free of charge.

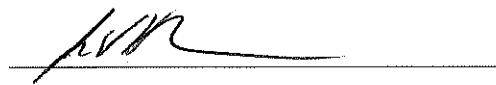
5. Media Policy

The City of Spokane Valley proactively provides regular, timely, clear and accurate information to the community and responds to inquiries from members of the media. The city's media policy ensures that information shared with the community is accurate and within our purview, encourages a cooperative working relationship with the media, and establishes consistent procedures to provide city staff guidance for responding to media inquiries.

- a) **Staff Lead.** The city's communications manager, serving as the city's public information officer (PIO), will be the main point of contact for the media. The PIO shall foster a cooperative working relationship with local media and utilize the media as a resource to share city information and updates, particularly in emergency, disaster or crisis situations.
- b) **Spokesperson.** In most cases there will be one spokesperson designated for response to each inquiry. The PIO will coordinate with the city manager or designee on who will serve as the spokesperson, most likely the city manager, deputy city manager, department director, Councilmember or PIO. The city manager or director may recommend a manager or staff project lead to serve as the spokesperson.
- c) **Media Contact Guidelines.** Staff shall consider the following guidelines when interacting with the media.
 - i. Respond to priority media inquiries as soon as possible.
 - ii. Speak factually about the City of Spokane Valley and avoid commenting about other organizations or their actions.
 - iii. Do not offer personal opinions about the action of the City of Spokane Valley.
 - iv. Do not offer legal opinions on city policies or activities.
 - v. Do not discuss employee or personnel actions.
 - vi. Do not speculate about what action the City will take.
 - vii. Draft key messages about the topic prior to participating in the interview and work with the subject matter expert (SME) to ensure accuracy.
 - viii. For more complicated topics and as time allows, the spokesperson and PIO may role play to walk through possible questions and answers.
- d) **Public Records.** Responses to requests from media for public records, whether or not part of any communication effort, shall be provided pursuant to RCW 42.56, Public Records Act, Chapter 2.75, SVMC.
- e) **News Releases.** The City will disseminate news releases to share newsworthy information with the media and community.
- f) **News Conferences.** The city manager or designee may elect for the City to hold a news conference to announce or respond to an issue of significance. A news conference allows city officials to respond effectively to the media at one sitting rather than responding individually to many media contacts. A news conference

allows city officials to address issues personally and conveys a willingness to discuss them openly.

6. **Emergency Communications.** In the event of an incident triggering the National Incident Management System (NIMS), the City and appropriate staff shall refer to the city's Emergency Plan documentation and participate in emergency support functions under the Spokane City/County Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan.



City Manager/Deputy City Manager