



## City of Mandan Media Relations Guidelines

*Adopted by the Mandan City Commission on September 15, 2015*

### **Premise**

The City of Mandan is committed to creating and maintaining consistent, accurate and timely communication with all members of the media and the public regarding programs, projects, planning, activities and policy decisions of the City Commission. The City values the role media play in communicating City news and information to the public and the value of reporting the public's views and opinions of the City of Mandan.

Media representatives are welcome to attend all regular and special meetings for the City Commission as well as the City's various commissions, boards and committees appointed for specific purposes.

This document establishes guidelines for the news media regarding inquiries of the City of Mandan elected officials and staff and likewise guides City of Mandan elected officials and employees regarding their communication with the news media.

### **Ways to Stay Informed**

One of the easiest ways to stay informed is by making use of the city website, [www.cityofmandan.com](http://www.cityofmandan.com). You can sign up for e-mail updates to receive notices of various meetings, news and announcements. Other ways to stay informed include:

- Review of City meeting agendas, minutes.
- Attendance at City meetings or review of televised meetings via Government Access Channel 2, in high definition on 602, and archived at [www.freetv.org](http://www.freetv.org).
- City news releases · Contact the City Business Development and Communications Department to be sure you are on the e-mail distribution list by 701-667-3485 or sending an e-mail to [info@mandan.govoffice.com](mailto:info@mandan.govoffice.com).
- *Mandan Messenger* newsletter · contact the City Business Development and Communications Department to be added to the mailing list or sign up online to receive an e-mail notification when the newsletter is posted to the city website. Archives are available on the city website.
- E-Messenger · coming soon
- City Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/CityofMandan](http://www.facebook.com/CityofMandan))
- Made in Mandan Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/MadeInMandan](http://www.facebook.com/MadeInMandan))

### **Inquiries from Reporters**

The City Business Development and Communications Department can assist members of the media who need help determining the appropriate contact person(s) for a story. Call 701-667-3485.

### **Contacting City Staff**

Reporters who already know names and phone numbers of staff members they wish to interview may contact those individuals directly. A list of department phone numbers and addresses is available on our [City Departments](#) webpage.

## SPOKESPERSON ROLES

*All spokespersons shall attempt to provide a timely and thorough response to all media requests for information and interviews, but may ask for and expect to be afforded additional time to research relevant issues and prepare for the interview. The City Administrator and Business Development and Communications Department staff are available to provide assistance and advice in preparation for media encounters.*

*If the City position on a topic is unclear or if the subject matter is controversial in nature, consultation with the City Administrator and Communications Department is recommended to assure an accurate and consistent response.*

**Elected Officials.**<sup>1</sup> The mayor is the official spokesperson for the City Commission. The mayor is the designated representative of the Commission to present and speak on the official City position. If the media contacts the mayor or an individual commissioner, the Commission member should be clear about whether his or her comments represent the official City position or a personal viewpoint.

**Employees.** All employees are permitted to respond directly to the media. Employees should limit their discussion of city operations to those areas where they have specific knowledge, referring other requests to the appropriate subject matter expert. After speaking directly with members of the media, employees, with the exception of Police and Fire, are asked to notify their appropriate department director, who will then notify the City Administrator and Business Development and Communications Department.

The City Administrator is the City's official spokesperson for all City departments, except Police and Fire, or as directed by the City Administrator. Staff assigned with public information responsibilities will promote information about City initiatives, projects and services to the news media and public.

- Business Development and Communications Department staff are available to facilitate communications with the media, including answering questions, responding to developing situations, and offering assistance as needed.
- Business Development and Communications Department staff members are available to all City elected officials and employees for advice, consultation, and assistance in media relations.
- When the City Administrator is unavailable to serve as the City's spokesperson, the Business Development and Communications Director may serve as an alternate unless otherwise designated by the City Administrator.

**Public Safety.** The Police Chief and Fire Chief may designate a member(s) of their respective departments to serve as the City's official spokesperson for public safety incidents, including but not limited to criminal reports and fire scene reports. The Police and Fire designees should share news releases and media announcements with the Business Development and Communications Department to coordinate corresponding posting as appropriate to Department and/or City websites and social media. On the scene of an active police or fire incident, the incident commander will serve as the media contact until Police or Fire designee is present unless an alternate spokesperson is designated by the Police Chief or Fire Chief.

<sup>1</sup>Leadership Code for Elected Officials, p. 17

**Department Representation.** Each department director will serve as the media liaison or primary contact for the respective department, unless otherwise approved by the City Administrator. The Business Development and Communications Department will maintain a list of all authorized department media representatives. Their role is to provide official, accurate information to media on behalf of their department and the City. Each liaison will inform the City Administrator of media requests for information and other contacts with the media.

**Other City Staff.** When employees other than designated liaisons are contacted by the media requesting readily available information about City operations known to be public, employees are encouraged to treat the reporter as a customer with courtesy and professionalism. Please make a reasonable offer to provide basic requested information, or refer the media to the appropriate department director or City Administrator. Such information includes, but is not limited to, City staff names, titles and extensions; public meeting dates, locations and agendas; provisions of City ordinances or City charter; and copies of materials prepared by the City for public distribution.

If the employee is unsure how to respond to the inquiry, he or she should forward the request to the appropriate department director. In passing requests along to others, please help in assuring a timely media response by obtaining the journalist's name, media outlet, contact number, deadline and topic.

## **MEDIA OUTREACH**

Departments may prepare media announcements and news releases for direct distribution to the media as the situation warrants or they may utilize the services of the Business Development and Communications Department as needed. A list of local media contacts may be obtained upon request from the Business Development and Communications Department. Departments should provide the Business Development and Communications Department with a copy of all such announcements and news releases.

## **EMERGENCY/CRISIS SITUATIONS**

The main focus of the City during any emergency will be on the security and safety of the public and on the preservation of property. City officials will work with law enforcement to secure and manage an emergency and to provide information to the community via the news media and direct methods as feasible.

In the event of a declared emergency crisis, the City Administrator will designate a formal media area, if needed. Potential sites include the Ed Bosh+Froehlich Room at City Hall, 205 Second Avenue NW, or the Morton County Commission meeting room in the basement of the County Courthouse, 210 Second Avenue NW. The City Administrator will also designate an official spokesperson for dissemination of information. The Business Development and Communications Department director or designee will be available in the Emergency Operations Center to assist with dissemination of information to the public and response to media inquiries.

## **TRAINING**

The Business Development and Communications Department will provide or arrange for basic instruction in media relations for all elected officials, department directors and others designated to serve as media contacts for their respective departments. Formal, hands-on training is to be provided approximately on an every other year basis with basic instruction provided as needed with changes in positions.