Communication, Marketing and Outreach Policy

I. Purpose

The City of Union City (City) is committed to open and honest communication with residents, businesses, community stakeholders, City employees, and visitors. The City strives to provide the public and its employees with accurate and timely information that is communicated in a professional manner using the most effective means necessary.

There are three principles that the City abides by when it comes to considering city communication:

a) **We prioritize it.** Communication is key in the development and planning of projects, programs and services, as well as, when we are responding to events or carrying out the day-to-day operations of city services.

b) **We strive to be accurate, concise and timely.** In today's age, people are overwhelmed with information and it comes to them at a fast pace. The City has a responsibility to combat misinformation, communicate good information in concise terms and deliver it as quickly as possible.

c) **Proactive, responsive and transparent communication will build the public’s trust and confidence in the City.** As in any relationship, communication is the cornerstone to a successful relationship we have with the public.

II. Role of the Public Information Officer

The Public Information Officer strives to communicate timely and accurate information to the public. Most critically, the Public Information Officer:

a) Serves as the central point of contact for receiving and distributing sensitive and timely information to the public during emergencies or on matters of critical importance to the City;

b) Responds to inquiries from news media and works to represent the City in a positive and professional manner;

c) May need to consult with employees, the Mayor, and the City Council to craft appropriate messaging to the public regarding important topics;

d) Reviews material to ensure information is useful, timely, accurate, grammatically correct and concise; and

e) Utilizes multiple social media and software platforms to deliver public information.

III. Approved Communication Platforms for Public Information

The following are city-operated communication platforms used to provide public information:

a) City Email (reference appropriate APM for policy)
b) Email and Text Notification via a subscriber-based system
c) Website
d) Social Media
e) Emergency Mass Notification System (reference Police Policy)

IV. Official Use of City Website

The City website (www.unioncity.org) is a rich platform that provides information about city services, city news and general information that is useful to residents, businesses and visitors. The City website is also a place for residents and businesses to access certain online services. Design and maintenance is centrally controlled to ensure communication consistency and technical effectiveness throughout the City website. The purpose of the City website is as follows:

a) To provide a convenient and information-rich resource for residents, visitors, businesses, non-profit organizations, and other public agencies to obtain and disseminate specific information related to city government;

b) To provide information and resources that contribute to the health, safety and welfare of the public;

c) To employ the latest technology designed to improve customer service and communication;

d) To contribute to the improvement of City services, foster economic development, and enhance the sense of community within the City; and

e) To allow users to conduct City business transactions such as recreation registration, licensing and permit activities.

V. Official Use of Social Media

The City approves the secure use of social media technology to enhance communication, collaboration and information exchange. However, the application of social media must not compromise data confidentiality and integrity. The same standards of conduct, principles and guidelines that apply to City employees in the performance of their assigned duties apply to employee social media technology use. The use of the City’s social media accounts shall not prohibit or infringe upon any communication, speech or expression that is protected or privileged under law. This includes speech and expression protected under state or federal constitutions as well as labor laws or other applicable laws.

City social media websites should make clear that they are maintained by the City of Union City and that they adhere to the City’s policy on social media use.

It is against city policy for employees to create a city social media account without the approval of the City Manager or his/her designee. Employees are only allowed to utilize City-approved social media networks for hosting approved city-related business.

There are designated Social Media Coordinators responsible for overseeing department-specific social media activity, policy compliance, and security protection. Employees who are considering the use of a city social media account shall coordinate with their supervisor for approval and contact a Social Media Coordinator to establish a comprehensive social media work plan that considers the department’s mission and goals, target audience, legal risks,
technical capabilities, security issues and ability to respond and engage back with constituencies.

The following forms of content posted by external and authorized users are subject to removal if they contain:

a) Comments not related to the business of the City (or specific Department if Department-specific Site), or not relevant to the original topic;

b) Profane language or content;

c) Content that promotes, fosters or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, gender, gender identification, sexual orientation, marital status, age, or physical or mental disability or any other of protected status;

d) Sexual, obscene or lewd content or links to sexual content.

e) Solicitations of commerce or advertisements including promotion or endorsement;

f) Pursuant to prohibitions on using public resources for campaign purposes, content in support of, or opposition to, political campaigns, candidates or ballot measures;

g) Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity;

h) Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems;

i) Content that defames any person, group or organization;

j) Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party, such as trademark or copyright infringement;

k) Making or publishing of false, vicious or malicious statements concerning any employee, the City or its operations;

l) Violent or threatening content.

VI. External Requests to Promote Information on City Website and Social Media

The City has a legitimate interest in limiting information, links to information, or organizations that may be promoted on the City Website and Social Media sites. The City may exercise discretion to ensure that content promoted on City sites complies with this policy. Each proposal shall be reviewed to determine its relevance and appropriateness to the purpose of City Website and Social Media sites. Pursuant to prohibitions on using public resources for campaign purposes, the City does not allow information in support of, or opposition to, political campaigns, candidates or ballot measures to be posted to the City Website or City Social Media sites. In most cases, consideration to post information to the City Website or City Social Media sites should be given to:

i. Governmental and public educational institutions.

ii. Nonprofit organizations that provide services to Union City residents.

iii. Organizations partnering with the City to meet the City’s strategic goals.

iv. Partner agencies that provide a service to Union City residents, such as the Alameda County Water District or the Alameda County Fire Department.

VII. Official use of City Logo
Pursuant to Union City Municipal Code Chapter 1.08, the City's logo may not be used by any entity outside the city organization without permission from the City Manager or his/her designee. If publicized content is found to be in violation of this policy, the City will seek to have it removed from public visibility immediately until the content can comply with this policy.

For the purpose of this policy, the City's official Brand Guidelines and City logo can be found at:

www.unioncity.org/branding

Official City business shall be transcribed on an approved brand template with the City logo, to include official City letterhead, official City memoranda, official City staff report, official City powerpoint, and any other approved official City communication and marketing template. Employees shall not create their own brand template for the purpose of transcribing official City business.

Official City-sponsored print and digital promotional content shall have the City logo visibly placed, such as on printed flyers, social media advertisements and printed banners.

In no case is the City Seal allowed to be used, unless permitted or directed by the City Manager or his/her designee.

Except for what is identified as an official City logo in the Brand Guidelines, no other logos shall be used to represent official City business.

External requests to use the City logo shall be made to the City Manager or his or her designee. If an external entity is using the City logo without the proper authorization, a formal request will be made to that external entity to remove the City logo from their content.

The following design rules apply to the official use of the logo:

a. The City logo cannot be modified or altered in any way, including changing the colors, design, scale or skew.
b. The tagline "Where Innovation Grows" cannot be separated from the City Logo.
c. The City logo must be placed on solid backgrounds, preferably not over an image or pattern.
d. When placing the logo on a solid color background, the white version of the logo shall be used. The color or black version of the logo must be used on solid white backgrounds.
e. Other design standards shall be followed as stated in the Brand Guidelines.

VIII. Sensitive Factors to Consider When Communicating to the Public
Cultural awareness and sensitivity: Our communication should reflect, recognize, and celebrate the diversity of our community. Staff is obligated to craft content that is sensitive to the audience that is receiving the information.

Bilingual communication: When possible, employees should make a reasonable effort to coordinate for translation services when communicating with individuals who speak English as a Second Language (ESL) or who do not speak English at all. Human Resources has a list of employees who speak a variety of languages. When appropriate based on the audience, public materials should be translated to languages that are primarily spoken by community members.

Accessibility: The City website is intended to be accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for reasonable accommodations relating to equal access to communication, or other issues relating to City website accessibility, should be directed to:

City of Union City  
Attn: City Manager  
34009 Alvarado Niles Road  
Union City, CA 94587  
City-manager@unioncity.org

Plain Language: Information should be provided in a manner that is simple, concise and avoids the use of formal or technical language that may be difficult to understand. Employees should consult the Federal guideline for writing in plain language:


Transparency: Business conducted by the City is public information and subject to the California Public Records Act unless an applicable exemption applies. Exemptions include records regarding pending litigation, certain law enforcement records, and personnel-related information. The City Attorney's Office should be consulted if there are questions as to whether certain information should be published across any platform. All communication conducted regarding City business or through the use of an approved City communication platform is considered public pursuant to the California Public Records Act.

IX. Crisis Communication

An effective communication strategy is a key component of an effective response to and recovery from an emergency or critical incident. The City understands that its image can be positively or negatively impacted by public perceptions of how an incident is handled. Crisis communication helps to coordinate internal and external communications and procedures in devising and implementing an event-specific crisis communication strategy. Crisis communication covers emergencies or crisis, such as:

- Weather and natural disasters
- Human-sourced – active shooters and other violent events
- Health – outbreaks, food safety, chemical and other hazardous issues
- Public services – impacts to utilities, roadways, water supply
The City Manager or his/her designee is the only authorized City employee to speak on behalf of the City during an emergency. In emergency cases that involve law enforcement, the City Manager or his/her designee may assign a Police Department PIO to assist in or lead communication efforts.

When an emergency or a critical incident occurs, the PIO team is responsible for gathering information, crafting a holding statement and disseminating it to the public as soon as possible. The holding statement should be concise with consideration towards showing empathy and competency to resolve the matter. The holding statement will serve only as an initial response to a crisis, therefore setting the stage for future communications.

When appropriate, the PIO should consider providing timely, accurate and appropriate incident information to partner agencies, the public, the media and other constituent audiences. The PIO is also responsible for coordinating a Joint Information System to ensure there is a consistent model in place to foster the flow of information throughout an incident.

If the emergency requires activation of the Emergency Operations Center and/or the organization initiates the Incident Command System structure in response, the City will designate responsibilities to an appropriate number of PIOS to support 24/7 release of critical public information.

a. Non-emergency Crisis Communication

The implementation of crisis communication strategy can also come into play when the organization is facing harm to its reputation, such as through:

i. Employment-related issues, such as layoffs, arrests, terminations, injuries, strikes, or malpractice
ii. Community-related issues, such as significant social events
iii. Negative news reports

When a non-emergency crisis occurs, the Public Information Officer and the City Manager or his or her designee should be consulted and assist in the development of a crisis communication team, which may include senior managers, the designated public information officer and other key city employees to develop and execute a crisis communications strategy. The first step that stems from the crisis communication team should be the development of a holding statement until further message development and strategy can be determined.

X. News Media

The news media can be an important resource in disseminating information to the public in an effective and timely manner. The City also seeks opportunities to proactively notify local, professional, and trade media about City achievements, awards, accomplishments, and innovations.

It is in the City's best interest to maintain a good working relationship with the news media. Inquiries from the news media are a high priority and should only be handled by a City PIO
and/or their designee. Efforts should be made to meet media deadlines and to ensure that all information released to the media is accurate.

The City centralizes media information requests through a designated PIO. Journalists and reporters may request interviews and seek information directly from any City Department, to which employees should respond consistent with this policy and direct them to the designated City PIO. Upon handling requests from the news media, the PIO is responsible for ensuring that the City Manager is notified.

Absent exigent circumstances or prior approval, employees shall immediately notify the PIO and should not attempt to respond to the media when:

a) A media request is made regarding a high profile or sensitive subject;
b) The media request can have a significant impact on a large segment of the community;
c) The media request relates to an emergency situation.

When possible, news media strategies should be determined or planned ahead of City Council taking critical action on a policy, launching a new initiative, making changes to city services or any other matters of public importance

With the approval of the PIO and/or a Department head or his/her designee, employees who have the most relevant knowledge and experience on a specific topic may be interviewed by the media as the City’s representative.

XI. Community Engagement

Community engagement is a process that the City uses to promote meaningful public discussions at times when the public can influence proposed actions, services, or policy changes by the City. When planning policy actions, employees must consider the following criteria to determine whether a community engagement process should be initiated:

a) The action has significant citywide impacts that can either affect fundamental services or establish restrictions or requirements that may alter the everyday life of our residents and visitors.
b) The action is politically or culturally sensitive to a particular community group or neighborhood.
c) Community engagement is required by any applicable laws.

The process for community engagement may be carried out in several ways including, but not limited to:

a) Early notice to impacted stakeholders regarding a proposed action through way of website, social media, email or mailers.
b) The engagement format should strive to optimize community feedback. There are two options for community engagement formats: Digital engagement or engagement through meetings or workshops.
   i. Community meetings or workshops should be noticed at minimum a week in advance using an appropriate mix of outreach tools, including the posting of relevant information on the website.
ii. Digital engagement should include social media, Survey Monkey, the website and email outreach.

iii. When providing the public with a survey, always state its purpose on the survey form and include information about critical timelines and/or closing dates.

   c) Deploy a logical and ethical way to review and measure the community's feedback;
   d) When possible, report information back to community on proposed action(s).

Timing is critical in the community engagement process. The process should begin at the point when public participation can be most meaningful to the planned action and in advance of the public learning about information through other sources.

Appropriate community engagement strategies should be assessed by the City Manager or his/her designee based on the type and complexity of the incident.

EFFECTIVE DATE

The effective date of this Administrative Policy is March 26, 2019.

Antonio E. Acosta, City Manager

27 March 2019

Date