



TOWN OF PLYMOUTH

26 Court Street
Plymouth, Massachusetts 02360

Policy Number	SB-012125
Title	Town of Plymouth Media Relations Policy
Established	January 21, 2025
Revision Approval Dates	January 21, 2025

1. PURPOSE

The Town of Plymouth seeks to provide the highest quality services to residents by listening and communicating with the public in helpful and transparent ways. The news media play an important role as public information partners for residents and local government. As such, town government will coordinate with members of the press to respond to media inquiries to the best of our ability providing timely and complete information on non-confidential matters.

The Town policy establishes guidelines for how non-elected Town personnel should engage with members of recognized news media organizations. The intended purpose of establishing a Town media relations policy is to ensure a coordinated response with the Town Manager's Office to share public information on behalf of the Town.

This policy governs the Town Manager and staff, Town department heads, all other Town employees but not elected officials.

1.1 Changes to Policy

This Policy may be updated and amended at the discretion of the Town Manager with the approval of the Select Board.

2. CONTACT PERSONS

2.1 Official Spokespersons

- 2.1.1 Often, the media will need to interview specific Town employees who can act as a spokesperson for a specific topic or event. These spokespersons may serve as individuals for on-camera interviews or be quoted in public statements to demonstrate authenticity in the reporting of public information. Official spokespersons for the Town will be designated as follows:
 - 2.1.1.1 The Town Manager, or their designee, will be authorized as a spokesperson to speak on behalf of the Town.
 - 2.1.1.2 The Communications Coordinator will be authorized as a spokesperson to speak on behalf of the Town on an as needed basis.
 - 2.1.1.3 The Police Department and Fire Department designates Public Information Officers (PIO's) as primary authorized media relations officers for their respective departments.
 - 2.1.1.4 The commissioner or director of each department is also designated as primary spokespersons for their respective departments and/or divisions.

2.2 The Communications Coordinator

- 2.2.1 Media inquiries are to be sent to the Communications Coordinator. When Town employees receive a media inquiry directly, Town staff should notify the Communications Coordinator as soon as possible of any media interactions - including, the nature of any conversation or inquiry, the identity of the media outlet, the contact, and relevant background information.
- 2.2.2 The Communications Coordinator will work with Town employees to coordinate responses to media inquiries.
- 2.2.3 The Communications Coordinator may collaborate with Town employees to establish standard media response protocols, ensuring timely and effective communication.
- 2.2.4 During a public safety incident or emergency, the Police and Fire Departments will coordinate with their Public Information Officers to manage media inquiries, keeping the Town's Communications Coordinator informed and involved.

3. PROCEDURE

All media **must** submit media inquiries via email to media@plymouth-ma.gov. We ask that the media allow a reasonable amount of time for responding when possible; we understand certain inquiries may require a more timely response.

3.1 To expedite responses, media inquiries should include the following information:

- Name of Reporter
- Media outlet being represented
- Inquiry request: an in-person interview, an audio interview via phone call, an interview in-person on camera, or an interview via virtual meeting
- For interviews, it is very helpful to provide interview questions or describe the topic or issue the interview will cover and the nature of the interview
- We encourage specific inquiries – for example:
 - **Inquiry Example A:** *What can you tell us about the new media relations policy?*
 - **Inquiry Example B:** *What is the progress of the Town's media relations policy; has it been approved by the Select Board and how will this improve communication efforts moving forward?*
 - *Inquiry Example A is broad and may require several emails and correspondence to identify the appropriate subject to interview. Inquiry example B identifies a specific topic. This allows the Communications Coordinator to quickly identify an interview subject and help schedule an interview or a clear response from a subject matter expert within Town government.*
- Email and email signature should include the reporter's contact information, show affiliation to news media outlet, and reinforce his/her credibility

3.2 Mainstream media inquiries are sometimes made directly to Town employees in the field. If this occurs, inquiries should be directed to the department head who must coordinate with the Communications Coordinator.

4. GUIDELINES FOR MEDIA RELEASES

4.1 All press releases and public messages from Town government should be published through the Communications Coordinator, except for those from the Police and Fire Departments, which will be issued by their respective Public Information Officers

(PIOs) in coordination with the Town's Communications Coordinator; all press releases and public messages will be archived for public record.

- 4.2 Proactive media outreach is a vital component of the Town's communications strategy. This includes press releases and announcements highlighting ceremonies, notable achievements, events, activities, programs, and initiatives that showcase and promote the municipality. Town employees are encouraged to share information that highlights the Town's efforts, accomplishments, or community initiatives with the Communications Coordinator.
- 4.3 Town press releases should be archived for a minimum of three years in digital copy and maintained on a medium freely available to the public such as on the Town's website.

5. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 **Litigation**
The policies of the Town of Plymouth do not allow for public comments and constrain the availability of certain information related to matters involved in ongoing, expected, or reasonably anticipated litigation. The Town will consider litigation ongoing until a final adjudication has been entered and all appeals exhausted, or a final settlement has been reached. These policies protect the legal rights of the Town and protect the Town from potential liability.
- 5.2 **Ongoing Investigations**
The policies of the Town of Plymouth do not allow for public comments and constrain the availability of information during an active investigation. These policies preserve the integrity of the investigation and of the individuals involved in the investigation. The role of determining guilt, innocence, or cause, should not be affected by parties outside of appropriate investigation or legal channels. This also violates the right to due process and creates liability for the Town of Plymouth.
- 5.3 **Requesting Information on Town Employees**
Not all information is available via a media request. The Town does not comment on personnel matters to maintain a level of privacy for our employees.
- 5.4 **Public Records Request**
Not all information is available via a media request. If the information being requested is a matter of public record, it should be submitted as a public records request through our [FOIA Direct](#) webpage.

You can also submit your public records request by phone at 508-322-3388, or via emailing the Town Records Access Officer.

Signed By:



Brian J. Antalik

Chair, Select Board



Town Manager

1/24/25

Date

1/22/25

Date