

RESOLUTION R2019-4

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**CITY OF MYRTLE BEACH
COUNTY OF HORRY
STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA**

Resolution setting forth the City of Myrtle Beach’s policy of open government, commitment to transparency and goal of proactive communication for members of the city staff and the City Council.

WHEREAS, The City of Myrtle Beach is a South Carolina public body operating under the Council-Manager form of government, with a mayor and six Council members elected at-large for four-year, staggered terms; and

WHEREAS, The City of Myrtle Beach strives to be an outstanding example of transparency, open government and proactive communication among all governments in the State of South Carolina; and

WHEREAS, The Myrtle Beach City Council hereby pledges to be open and transparent in its deliberations and decision-making and welcomes public input and involvement in the process, subject to standard rules of decorum and, where applicable, limitations on time; and

WHEREAS, The residents, businesses, visitors and neighbors of the City of Myrtle Beach deserve no less than a deliberate effort to provide responsive and responsible government, based on transparent decision-making and clear communications;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Myrtle Beach City Council will:

1. Plan and schedule a new community-wide visioning process, soliciting ideas and feedback from residents and businesses as part of the state-required update of the city’s Comprehensive Plan;
2. Undertake a third-party survey of current public opinion on a wide range of topics, using statistically sound methods, to establish a baseline against which future improvements and communications can be measured;
3. Host a quarterly “newcomers” meeting for new residents of the City of Myrtle Beach and surrounding areas, as a welcome to the greater community and an introduction to city services and facilities;
4. Schedule monthly City Council workshops to publicly discuss long-range issues and policies affecting the City of Myrtle Beach and its residents and businesses;
5. Welcome inquiries from citizens and the news media and respond promptly to questions with accurate information, correcting the record on a case-by-case basis, as needed;
6. Encourage more city staff members to speak to the news media and the public in their areas of expertise, as multiple voices help to demonstrate the city’s openness, responsiveness and willingness to assist;
7. Continue to comply fully with requirements of the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act, which grants access to public documents, subject to limitations set forth by state law;

- 1 8. Encourage and support greater use of video as a storytelling medium in the
- 2 city's outbound communications, especially on social media sites;
- 3 9. Provide more accessible data and statistical information to the public through
- 4 the new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software package;
- 5 10. Adopt the attached policies and guidelines to encourage and ensure
- 6 responsiveness and transparency in the city's communications;
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8 Signed, sealed and dated this 22nd day of January 2019.

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13 BRENDA BETHUNE, MAYOR

14 ATTEST:

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17 JENNIFER STANFORD, CITY CLERK

City of Myrtle Beach Public Information Strategy and Statement

The City of Myrtle Beach's Public Information Office operates much like a newsroom. We listen for and find newsworthy ideas, stories and topics about the City of Myrtle Beach, its people, its actions and its activities, and share them with our various audiences. Our job is to tell the city's story factually and interestingly in such a way as to demonstrate proof-of-performance by the city and achieve a favorable impression by the public.

The role of the Public Information Office is to make the city look good when it is good and to be upfront and honest about any shortcomings, missteps or unmet needs. Our job is to put City Council and staff in the best light by showing the positive things that you and they do and by acknowledging those areas that need improvement. We do this through many outlets and mediums, from traditional news sources (the big three: print, radio and television), to new social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and others). We also do it through the way in which we interact daily with city staff, residents, reporters, business people, visitors and the public at large. Those interactions send a message, too.

What do we communicate, and when do we communicate it? The "what" is everything, big and little, that the city does that will be of interest to one or more of our audiences. The "when" is all the time, through every channel available, although we are careful not to overwhelm. Our goal is a constant stream of outbound information that is useful and interesting, reliable and trustworthy. We are consciously thoughtful, judicious and positive in our approach to telling the city's story.

Message + Audience = Communication. Successful communication is the delivery of a particular message to a desired audience. We tell the public what the City of Myrtle Beach does. We also practice "proof of performance," where we show that the city did what it said it would. Actions send messages, and our words and actions as staff members and City Council members send the messages (we hope) that the City of Myrtle Beach is competent, concerned, productive, responsive, responsible, interested, available, proactive, prepared and even fun.

Many of the city's topics, from budgeting to policy-making, are complex. As part of being a constant and reliable source of information about the city, the Public Information Office seeks to explain complicated issues in easy-to-understand terms. We condense long meetings and discussions into a logical sentence or two, making the information more approachable and the message more direct. Putting the city's decisions and information in context helps explain the "why," the "how" and the "when," along with the occasional "how much."

Everyone is a communicator. While the Public Information Office handles much of the city's external communications, both traditional and social, everyone communicates with multiple audiences every day. Such audiences include city staff, residents, non-residents, businesses, reporters and visitors; even City Council is an audience. The list is almost endless. The goal of good communication is to deliver the right message to the right audience at the right time. Messages can be verbal or non-verbal. For example, even the speed with which you reply to a question sends a message. We want our actions to be consistent with our stated objectives.

Unlike some other public jurisdictions, we have no requirement that reporters must go through the city's Public Information Office. Reporters are welcome to approach city staff members directly for information, and sometimes do, although they usually begin with the Public Information staff. We understand the media's needs and deadlines and can speed up the process of getting the information they seek.

Some media questions we keep; others we farm out. If we think we can do a better job of explaining a subject – of delivering the message – we will keep the question. We also farm out a number of requests to staff who have more familiarity or expertise in a particular area. More voices are good for communication.

Multiple voices send the message that we, as a staff, are competent, approachable, knowledgeable, responsive and friendly. We plan to encourage a few more staff members to step up and welcome media interviews on behalf of the city, and plan to offer training to facilitate that process. That said, not everyone can do it well; for most people, it is an acquired skill, and we can help those who want to learn how to do it better. Key positions occasionally need to be able and willing to interact with the news media, but not everyone on city staff needs or wants to speak with a reporter.

Communication is the sharing of messages with a particular audience. It helps to think of information as a commodity: the more information you share, the greater everyone's knowledge is about the subject at hand. More information is better than less information. As an organization, the city does a good job of sharing information with its staff and its various outside audiences. That's not to say that there aren't occasional omissions or dropouts in the information flow, but – overall – we are good communicators both internally and externally.

For examples of our communications, look at the Friday Fax, the website, the multiple forms of social media, Next Door, the positive relationships with the news media, the quarterly newsletters, the weekly radio shows, the Events list, the expanded City Council agenda, the weekly staff memo, MBTV and the many other ways in which the city reaches out and responds to its staff, residents, businesses and visitors. We communicate well as an organization.

Can we improve communication among staff? Yes, and we are working on ideas for better internal communications. Everyone is a communicator; the responsibility for good communication is not solely that of the Public Information staff. Two big challenges exist. First, we are a large, decentralized organization that operates 24 hours a day from multiple locations across the city. Second, not every staff member has access to email, and those who do may not have the time to read all of the messages that are sent. Good communication requires a two-way flow of information; the message has to be received in order for it to be effective.

Government is an inclusive process, not an exclusive one. The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) exists to make government documents available to the public. Further, government – especially at the local level – is a participatory process. The city actively invites input, participation and ideas to build consensus and accomplish goals for the community's benefit.

Myrtle Beach is a dynamic, growing community. The city changes daily through the construction of new neighborhoods, the arrival of new residents, the opening of new businesses and the attraction of new visitors who are discovering Myrtle Beach for the first time on their own terms. Keeping pace with this change, keeping each of these new audiences informed, is a big challenge. Myrtle Beach is not the same city that it was 10, 20 or 30 years ago, and it will continue to change as we successfully attract more of these new audiences.

The Public Information Department is committed to sharing information about the City of Myrtle Beach and its accomplishments in traditional and non-traditional ways. Every bit of help we receive to further that objective will be greatly appreciated.

City of Myrtle Beach Public Information Department Mission Statement

The Public Information Department strives...

- To help the elected City Council define and communicate its collective vision for the City of Myrtle Beach.
- To tell the city's story – and the story of its staff – through all available means of communication, including both traditional and new media methods.
- To be thoughtful, judicious and positive in communicating the city's story to our various audiences, especially via social media.
- To set a city-wide example for effective, personable communication among our various audiences.
- To project positivity and confidence, both internally and externally, on the city's behalf.
- To find and promote examples that illustrate “proof of performance” by the City of Myrtle Beach and its staff.
- To encourage and equip the city staff for success and growth, both professionally and personally.
- To welcome new ideas and learning, to expect quality performance, to celebrate successes publicly and to provide correction privately.
- To uphold the public's trust and be good stewards of the public's money.

City of Myrtle Beach Crisis Communications Plan

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

The City of Myrtle Beach Crisis Communications Plan outlines the roles, responsibilities and protocols that will guide the city in promptly sharing information with all of Myrtle Beach's audiences during an emergency or crisis. This plan is part of the Emergency Management Plan, administered by the Emergency Management Director.

For the purposes of this plan, a crisis is defined as an event that prompts significant, often sustained, news coverage and public scrutiny and has the potential to harm members of the public and/or damage the city's reputation, image or financial stability. A crisis could be precipitated by an emergency or a controversy.

An emergency includes a fire, hurricane, crime or other event that presents a threat and typically involves a response from police, fire or emergency medical personnel. A controversy better describes events such as a case of employee misconduct or a viral social media event, whether the underlying information is factual or simply perceived.

1.2 Scope

The audiences for this plan include City Council, city staff, residents, businesses, visitors, neighbors, news media, affiliated organizations, other Grand Strand governments and groups and state and federal officials. The goal is to align messages and operations, promoting effective communications across the entire Myrtle Beach community. Outbound messaging will address the safety and security of the public, as well as the factual nature of the emergency, crisis or controversy and the city's response to it.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN

Our guiding principle is to communicate facts as quickly as possible, updating information regularly as circumstances change, to ensure the safety of the Myrtle Beach community and the continued operation of essential city services.

We will use multiple mediums to reach as many people and audiences as possible with accurate, timely information. This is especially important in the first hours and days of an emergency, crisis or controversy. Our goal is to provide open, accountable and accessible information to all audiences, with a focus on those most affected by the crisis situation.

Honesty and speed are the most effective means to avoid lasting damage and to curtail widespread second-guessing by the public, which expects immediate access to accurate information. (A good offense is the best defense.) However, it is equally imperative to speak with accuracy about what we know and not to speculate about details we do not know.

Our efforts to be both accurate and quick may mean that some communications are incomplete at a given time. We accept this, knowing that how quickly and how well we communicate in an emergency or a crisis will affect the public's perceptions of the city and of the situation itself.

3. PROCEDURES

3.1 Crisis Communications Team

The Crisis Communications Team will convene when an emergency or crisis occurs or when threat of a crisis or controversy exists, such as through negative social media content. Given the urgency of rapid communications, the Public Information Director or his/her designee has the authority to begin taking action immediately, upon consultation with the City Manager, until a broader decision can be made about how the city should proceed.

Alternatively, the Public Information Director may identify a potential crisis or controversy that is not an immediate emergency and assemble the Crisis Communications Team to prepare a future communications strategy as part of a coordinated city response. See the attached *Crisis Response Checklist* and the *Protocol for Viral Media Events*.

3.2 Crisis Communications Team Representatives

- Public Information Director
- Public Information staff
- Police Department Public Information Staff (if applicable)
- Fire Department Public Information Staff (if applicable)
- Emergency Management Director
- Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce (if the matter appears to threaten the city's brand or harm the economy)
- Others as needed

The Public Information Director or his/her designee will contact each member by phone and/or email to convene immediately. The Public Information Director or his/her designee may add other team members, as appropriate under the circumstances.

3.3 Location

The initial communication headquarters for most events will be the second-floor conference room at City Hall, 937 Broadway Street, unless another location is designated. Upon activation of the Emergency Operations Center, the communications focus will relocate to the EOC. The communications center may move due to a number of circumstances, including technical limitations or a need to be in close proximity to the news media.

A Joint Information Center (JIC) may be established with other agencies and governments if the emergency is wide-spread. The city will participate in such a Joint Information Center and will coordinate message content and media releases with the JIC.

4. RESPONSE

4.1 Implementation

The Crisis Communications Team will implement some, or all, of the steps outlined below based on circumstances, coordinating with the City Manager and the Emergency Management Director, the Police Chief, the Fire Chief, the Mayor or other authorities, as needed.

Throughout the period, the team will meet frequently to review changing facts, assess whether key messages are reaching audiences and determine whether strategies need to change. The success of this plan rests on open and frequent communications among the city's Crisis Communications Team, the City Manager and the departments responding to the event. Contact information for city staff is available online and in hardcopy.

4.2 Immediate Response

The Crisis Communications Team will carry out these initial tasks immediately:

- Convene the Crisis Communications Team
- Use all available means to advise staff and the public about immediate threats to safety (hurricane, tornado, gunman, etc.).
- Notify the news media and post emergency message and notification on city website (www.cityofmyrtlebeach.com) and on main social media channels.
- Advise and inform news media of scheduled updates and key messages.
- Send City Council information as appropriate.
- Provide updated information on website and social media outlets as additional details become available.
- Create incident-specific pages or messages to convey information directly to affected audiences.
- If necessary, convene other staff for emergency call center or other needs.
- Activate the 843-918-INFO line, if needed.

4.3 Secondary Response

Upon convening, the Crisis Communication Team will:

- **Review and write down known facts** – those that can and cannot be released to the public – and determine whether a response is needed for some or all of the city's key audiences. These details will be used to create news releases, fact sheets, emails, social media posts, website content and other messages.

- **Develop one or more key messages** that will be included in all communications. For instance, a key message may be what the city is doing to ensure the safety of residents or staff. Another may be forward-looking, to address what the city is doing to prevent the situation from happening again. Messaging will evolve as circumstances change, but should always aim to provide and restore confidence and calm, balancing action with safety and concern. In a controversy, the key message may be an explanation or appraisal of the facts, in order to set the record straight or provide a full picture of the circumstances.
- **Determine who will act as spokesperson.** Written and published communications may come from the Public Information Director or his/her designees. Initial media interviews and updates may come from a member of the Crisis Communications Team, but either the Mayor or City Manager may be required for the capstone interview or news conference. Rule of thumb: The bigger the crisis, the bigger the spokesperson.

The nature of the event will determine whether the Mayor, Manager or another individual should be the face and voice of the city. The Public Information Office can run briefings and handle media questions between formal news conferences or events. Designate one or more members of the Crisis Communications Team to communicate key messages and emerging facts to those spokespeople and provide any last-minute media training.

In a crisis, it is critical that the most senior leader acts as the key spokesperson; it illustrates that the response is serious and that all efforts are being made to address the situation. However, as the crisis evolves, the key spokesperson may change.

- **Assign responsibilities to the Crisis Communications Team** to communicate the facts of the situation and respond to key audiences through designated mediums. Key audiences may include residents/businesses in affected areas, city staff, the news media and visitors. The Crisis Communications Team, depending on circumstances, may identify other audiences (specific social media sites or posters) and assign responsibility for them.
- **Provide brief talking points** for non-communications staff members who answer telephone calls from the public. Assign additional personnel, as needed, to handle phone calls, using a script developed from the key messages and facts the Crisis Communications Team has developed. Activate the 843-918-INFO line if needed.
- **Keep a log of media requests.** Our policy is to be as responsive as possible to the news media. Media outlets can reach a much larger audience with key messages. Respond to interview requests in a timely manner. It is a missed opportunity if members of the media don't know our key messages and facts as we understand them.

- **Develop communications from the Mayor or City Manager**, as appropriate. It may be necessary for the Mayor or Manager to communicate to the staff or public about the emergency, crisis or controversy. The Public Information Director or his/her designees will be responsible for generating and reviewing talking points, speeches, email messages, videos and other correspondence, in consultation with the members of the Crisis Communications Team.
- **Open a media center** if needed and determine whether a news conference (or series of news conferences) should be held. If a media center is required, equipping it with tables, chairs, computer ports, copier, podium, etc., will be a high priority. When choosing the location, consider available parking, electricity, Wi-Fi service, restrooms and security access. If necessary, a security officer should be assigned to the location. Plan for satellite trucks and “go live” locations for the news media.
- **Monitor media and online coverage** to verify success and anticipate any problems in messaging and information flow to the news media and social media outlets. Observing how the city is portrayed in early and ongoing coverage will help adjust the communications response, correct errors, limit rumors and maintain confidence in the city and its response to the situation.
- **Determine how to report on the situation for internal audiences.** What information does city staff need, and what’s the best way to deliver it, especially after hours? Activate the 843-918-1999 line for updates. Alert department heads about specific messages or staffing needs.
- **Evaluate how to help our community recover**, return to normal and, if needed, regain faith in the city and its operations after the crisis trigger event is over. This may include town hall meetings, letters from the mayor expressing sympathy, detailed plans to prevent another such crisis, etc.

4.4 Approvals of outgoing information

Typically, the Public Information staff proofreads each other’s material and may require approval before distribution or publication of content, including social media posts and news releases. Seconds matter in a crisis, and we will be judged by how quickly we share information with key audiences; a formal approval process may not be possible in an emergency situation. The Public Information staff is committed to meeting expectations and recognizes the need for crisp decision-making during a crisis to enable rapid, accurate communication in coordination with the city’s broader management structure.

4.4 Staffing

In emergency circumstances, the Public Information Director or other senior management may enlist the help of other departmental staff for communications-related assistance. These staff will be assigned as needed for set periods during the crisis response.

4.5 The End of the Crisis

The Public Information Director, in consultation with the City Manager and senior staff, will determine when an emergency has ended and routine communications can resume. The decision to declare the emergency over will trigger a review of how the crisis was handled and how communications can improve.

Within 10 days of the event's end, assess how the communications plan functioned, address any needed updates and additional resources and recognize the work of partners whose help was invaluable.

5. EDUCATION AND PLAN MAINTENANCE

5.1 Education and Testing

The Public Information Director and Emergency Management Director will take the lead in educating city staff and the greater Myrtle Beach community about how and when members will get messages from the city in an emergency. The crisis communications plan will be tested annually with participation by members of the Crisis Communications Team and Emergency Management staff.

The Public Information Office will provide and schedule media training sessions for senior staff members or their designees who wish to acquire better communication skills. A list of media interview tips is available.

5.2 Updates

Staff members' names and contact information will be updated regularly. Media lists, email address lists and other emergency information will be maintained and updated regularly.

City of Myrtle Beach Crisis Response Checklist

Steps to take when a crisis occurs or is anticipated.

- 1. Verify situation. Determine the magnitude of the event as quickly as possible.**
 - Get the facts.
 - What was the source of the information?
 - How credible is the information source?
 - Was information obtained from additional sources to put event into perspective?
 - Is the information consistent with other sources?
 - Is the characterization of the event plausible?
 - If necessary, was the information clarified through a subject information expert?

- 2. Conduct notifications. Have the following been notified and briefed?**
 - Your core team, senior management group, Chamber of Commerce?
 - Elected officials at all levels?
 - Appropriate local and county agencies?
 - Appropriate state agencies?
 - Appropriate federal agencies?
 - Other relevant groups (residents, visitors, etc.)?

- 3. Assess the degree and intensity of the event to determine the communication response.**
 - Has a crisis level been identified that corresponds to the event characteristics?
 - Have the hours of operation for the communication team been established?
 - Has jurisdiction over information been established?
 - Have specific audience concerns been addressed?
 - Who will release/update information?

- 4. Organize assignments. Activate the Emergency Communications Plan.**
 - Do all personnel understand their role and their immediate tasks?
 - Were specific assignments given to each team member?
 - Have all experts/spokespeople been well-informed?
 - Have all staff been briefed and prepared, in case they are approached by the media?

City of Myrtle Beach Protocol for Possible Viral Media Events

- 1. Be alert.** If any staff member hears of an event that has the potential to become viral or is going viral, notify the Public Information group (City, Police and Fire) immediately. See contact names and numbers below. Notification means direct verbal communication, either in person or via telephone.

Mark Kruea – 843-450-1695 or 843-918-1014
Thomas Vest – 843-457-0577 or 843-918-1808
Bryan Murphy – 843-450-6300 or 843-918-1802
Jonathan Evans – 843-450-1699 or 843-918-1221
Kaycey Vrettos – 843-231-0692 or 843-918-1017
Chasity Pendergrass – 843-274-7113 or 843-918-1011

- Public Information group (City, Police and Fire) regularly monitor social media.
 - Police Department Crime Analyst regularly monitors social media.
- 2. Meet and talk.** Once notified of a possible viral event, the Public Information group will communicate to assess the situation and determine whether/when a response is required.
 - The Public Information group members will notify their leadership of the circumstances.
 - Notification will include all means necessary to assure positive, immediate awareness of the situation.
 - 3. Be informed and prepared.** Gather facts of the viral event and project a response timeline. Understand the narrative – real and perceived – and the actions leading to the viral event.
 - Immediately come together as a team to assess the facts of the situation and the nature of the viral event.
 - Provide a recommendation about when and how to make a timely response and establish a communication schedule.
 - 4. Craft a message.** Determine the audience to be reached, develop the message to be delivered (what do you want the audience to hear?) and identify the delivery media.
 - Craft a message that answers the relevant questions raised by the viral event and speaks to the city's actions and reactions related to the underlying event.
 - Choose a spokesperson. Rule of thumb: The bigger the message, the bigger the spokesperson.
 - 5. Be quick!** Once the viral event has been confirmed and the facts and message have been established, prepared and deliver a response as soon as possible. Get the message out now.
 - Be aware of media deadlines and news cycles to deliver the message promptly.

- b. Provide accurate information about the event and factual rebuttal information as needed, in a format that suits the message to be delivered, given the nature of the viral event. (The response to an airplane crash at MYR will be different than a viral police video, for example.)
 - c. Determine a continuing response schedule, if needed, to keep the public updated on the situation. (This will depend on the nature of the viral event.)
 - d. Provide a scripted response message for office personnel who are likely to field phone calls related to the viral event
- 6. Gauge and adjust.** Assess the effectiveness of the response message for the target audience(s), and repeat or adjust the message and frequency accordingly.
- a. Determine whether an ongoing response is needed.
 - b. Provide regular updates, as needed; set and communicate a schedule for updates.
 - c. Host a news conference or series of news conferences, as needed.
 - d. Assign continuing staff for extended operations.
 - e. Continue to monitor viral event and adjust message/media accordingly.

City of Myrtle Beach Initial Message Template for Physical Emergencies

The initial notification template below, with refinements for specific events, may be used in the first stage of a physical crisis or emergency until more information is available. When more details are known, additional messages can be added about what is happening, the specific emergency, actions people should take to protect themselves and others and where to go for more information.

1. Please pay close attention. This is an urgent/important message from the City of Myrtle Beach.
2. Officials (police, fire, mayor, etc.) believe there has been a serious incident (describe time and location).
3. At this time, we do not know the cause or other details about the incident.
4. Officials are on the scene (or investigating) and will work with city staff to provide updated information as soon as possible.
5. Stay informed and follow the instructions of safety officials so you can protect yourself, your family and your community.
6. The next update will occur at (give specific time and place) or as soon as additional information is available.

City of Myrtle Beach

30 Tips for Effective Media Interviews

1. Be accessible to the news media. If they can't get you, they can't tell your story or give your point of view. Promptly return all phone calls, emails and texts from reporters. Take all questions seriously.
2. Respond to interview requests in a timely manner. Keep the reporter's deadline in mind. It doesn't matter how crucial your message is if it doesn't make it into the story.
3. Practice making your points in 20 to 30 seconds. That's the length of the typical sound bite for TV or Radio. It's a good length for print, too. Don't ramble; reach a stopping point. Your words should come to a logical conclusion.
4. If you have bad news, be as quick to report it as the good news. Bad news will get out; by being the first to mention it, you can frame it to the best advantage. Go for the fast bleed, not the slow hemorrhage.
5. Be honest. Tell the truth. Your credibility is paramount (and irreplaceable).
6. Never say, "No comment." Instead, explain why an answer is not available, or offer to provide information as soon as it's known. "We are still investigating the circumstances and don't have that information at this point." Or, "I don't know, but I'll be glad to find out and get back to you."
7. Don't say anything within range of a microphone, TV camera or reporter that you wouldn't want your mother or the public to hear. Be aware of where the cameras are pointing and who is listening to your conversation. Step away from in front of the lens and disconnect your microphone before carrying on a casual conversation with the reporter. Just because the interview is over, that doesn't mean the camera has stopped.
8. Be aware of your surroundings, including the background, when giving an interview. Know what is behind you and whether it will help or hurt the message you are delivering.
9. When fielding pointed or negative questions, re-frame the question aloud (so that it addresses your intended message) and answer that reframed question. "If the question is..." Or, answer a different question than the one that is asked if it conveys the information that the reporter needs to know.
10. Before an interview, take a few minutes to anticipate what questions will be asked and what answers you will provide. Determine the most important points you wish to make, and then be sure to make them during the interview. If it's a telephone interview request, tell the reporter you'll call back in a few minutes – and do call back – once you've had a chance to run through the possible questions and answers in your head.
11. The news media are not the enemy. Make friends with reporters before you need their assistance. An adversarial relationship will lead to adversarial coverage.
12. Don't play favorites with reporters or media outlets; they are in competition with each other. Treat them equally.

13. If the subject is complex, ask for a few minutes to bring the reporter up-to-speed on the topic before beginning the actual interview. Providing background on a difficult subject will help focus the reporter's questions on the correct topics.
14. Don't offer anything "off the record." It doesn't exist. "Off the record" information can and will color the reporter's story. If you can't say it on the record, don't say it. Background information is different than "off the record" information; it provides context or information the reporter may need to understand the points you will make.
15. Ask the reporter what sort of questions he/she wants to ask. It's okay to interview the reporter about the subject of the story, but be pleasant about it.
16. Never get angry. Never lose your cool. Be patient with reporters and stick to your message.
17. Use plain language, not technical terms. Remember that you are talking to people in their living rooms.
18. The bigger the message, the bigger the spokesperson. If it's really big news, either good or bad, then the most senior person should address it.
19. Be prepared, be honest and be brief.
20. Look at the reporter, not the camera. The exception is if you have an important point to stress that involves the public; a direct look into the camera while making that point is acceptable.
21. Dress the part. You are representing the organization, so dress for the occasion. Remember not to wear small patterns (they will create a moiré pattern on TV) or large blocks of color. You don't want to look like Big Bird. White shirts are acceptable with new camera equipment, especially indoors, but may be too bright in direct sunlight.
22. If you don't think the reporter is grasping the key information in your response, re-cover the territory. Offer to provide a summary of the important points.
23. Remember that TV reporters usually edit video from back to front. The last thing you said on camera is likely to be the first thing they look at and the easiest for them to use. If necessary, repeat the main points you wish to communicate at the end of the interview.
24. Ask the reporter if anything was unclear or if more explanation is needed on any points.
25. If you promise to send additional information after the interview, remember to send it in a timely manner.
26. If offered makeup for an in-studio interview, say "yes." This is especially true for men.
27. Be aware of your body language! It sends an unspoken, but very clear message. Don't cross your arms. Don't steeple your fingers. Don't touch your face or cover your mouth. Face the reporter head-on. Sit or stand straight up, or even lean in slightly. Look the reporter in the eye when answering questions. Be aware of your facial expressions, too!

28. Never wear sunglasses during an interview. If you normally wear glasses, invest in anti-glare lenses. Don't wear self-darkening lenses, as they will automatically darken in camera lights or if the interview is outdoors. The reporter, and the people at home, need to see your eyes in order to make a determination about your truthfulness.
29. Don't try to memorize information. Instead, be familiar enough with the details by practicing key points or statements aloud. That way, your answer won't sound rehearsed and you won't struggle to remember it word-for-word.
30. If the interview is live, ask in advance how much time is allotted. Most television interviews or live shots are extremely short – two minutes or less – so make your answers brief to allow time for dialog. The interview will be more interesting, and you'll deliver more information.

City of Myrtle Beach Media Email List

sneditors@thesunnews.com
ashain@postandcourier.com
Katie.powell@myhorrynews.com
Charles.perry@myhorrynews.com
feedback@wpde.com
hgale@wpde.com
mnmercerc@sbgvtv.com
vspechko@wpde.com
news@wmbfnews.com
rblomquist@wmbfnews.com
atalley@wmbfnews.com
News13tips@wbtw.com
ewalters@wbtw.com
Sedota@wezv.com
diane@stagesvideo.com
jody@grandstrandmag.com
cjohnson@postandcourier.com
lcallaway@dbcradio.com
dpriest@dbcradio.com
night.train@cumulus.com
jmcomocean@gmail.com
janet.morgan@myhorrynews.com
Viraj.naik@myhorrynews.com
mbeachpost@gmail.com
John@Theartsgrandstrand.org
apcolumbia@ap.org

Diana.Greene@VisitMyrtleBeach.com
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Jimmy.gray@visitmyrtlebeach.com
Jeffrey.wisniewski@mbhospitality.org
Stephen.Greene@mbhospitality.org
Karen.riordan@visitmyrtlebeach.com

denisr@horrycounty.org
smithsh@horrycounty.org
broskyk@horrycounty.org
moore.kelly@horrycounty.org
pcdowling@nmb.us
lbourcier@horrycountyschools.net
holdenb@horrycounty.org

City of Myrtle Beach Compliance with SC FOIA Requests Chapter 4, Title 30, South Carolina Code of Laws

The City of Myrtle Beach is committed to transparency of government action and operation, along with open access to public documents, as provided for in the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). As a result, the city strives to grant access to public documents and records quickly and, in most cases, at no cost as part of our “first in service” philosophy.

Written requests may be delivered via letter, facsimile, e-mail or other transmission means and should be precise and as specific as possible regarding details (names, dates, topics, etc.) to ensure an accurate response. An **FOIA Request Form** is provided for the public’s convenience, but use of the form is not required to make a written request under the FOIA. Submit written requests to the Public Information Office at: P. O. Box 2468, Myrtle Beach, SC 29577, info@cityofmyrtlebeach.com or 843-918-1028 (fax).

In general, the FOIA gives public bodies 10 working days, excluding weekends and legal holidays, to reply to written requests and make a determination about the release of documents and records. For documents and records that are more than 24 months old, the public body has 20 days to make an initial reply and determination about the records. If the request is granted, the information must be made available no later than 30 days from the date the determination was made or, in the case of documents older than 24 months, no later than 35 days from the date of the determination.

The FOIA, available at <http://www.cityofmyrtlebeach.com/government/foia.php>, grants access to the information in the most convenient and practical manner for the requestor, if that also is most convenient for the public body. It does not require public bodies to make copies of documents or to create new records summarizing public records. The city may impose reasonable rules concerning time and place of access.

FOIA requests which are particularly voluminous or time-consuming may result in charges to the requestor to recover the cost of public resources spent in fulfilling the request. Such charges shall not exceed the actual cost of searching for and/or providing access to or copies of the requested documents. An estimate of the cost will be provided on request, and a deposit may be required, in keeping with limitations contained within the FOIA.

Schedule of FOIA charges:

- Search and retrieval of records... actual per hour dollar cost of staff time
- Black-and-white photocopies (8.5 x 11)... 10 cents per page
- Color photocopies (8.5 x 11)... 20 cents per page
- CD or DVD copy... \$5
- Large city map (3 x 10 feet, approximately)... \$20
- Small city map (1.5 x 5 feet, approximately)... \$10
- If oversized documents or large quantities are sent to a third party for copying, the requestor will be charged the actual dollar amount of the invoice for the work.

Certain public records do not require a written request to access them. These include:

- Minutes of meetings of public bodies for the past six months.
- All reports related to the nature, location and substance of a crime committed in the last 14 days.
- Documents identifying individuals confined to any jail or detention center in the past three months (excluding restricted juvenile records).

FOIA Policy for City Staff

The Public Information Office supervises and is responsible for compliance with the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), engaging the City Attorney as needed. SC Code 30-4-30 (c) requires a response to FOIA requests within certain time frames, depending on the age of the information. See <http://www.cityofmyrtlebeach.com/government/foia.php> for the full text.

FOIA requests are logged in upon receipt and distributed to appropriate departments, with responses tracked via the attached form to ensure compliance with deadlines and requirements. Each department appoints an FOIA liaison who is responsible for receiving, assigning and responding to FOIA requests related to that department in a timely manner.

Departmental FOIA liaisons immediately alert the Public Information Office to all requests and may seek advice and assistance, as needed. Liaisons also advise in advance if the response to a request will be especially voluminous or time-consuming, so that public expenses can be recovered. The Police Department FOIA liaison alerts and engages the City Attorney directly for review.

The Public Information Office offers annual training with departmental FOIA liaisons to keep staff current on any change in state law or city policy. An “FOIA Request Form” has been created for the public’s convenience, but its use is not required to submit a valid written request under the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act.



FOIA Request Form City of Myrtle Beach

Date of request: _____

Requestor's name: _____

Requestor's mailing address: _____

Requestor's telephone: _____ E-mail: _____

Description of records requested (be as specific as possible): _____

Return by mail to: Public Information Office
 P. O. Box 2468
 Myrtle Beach, SC 29578

Return in person to: Myrtle Beach City Hall
 937 Broadway Street
 Myrtle Beach, SC 29577

Return electronically to: info@cityofmyrtlebeach.com or 843-918-1028 (facsimile)

*For questions and additional information, contact Mark Kruea, Public Information Officer,
City of Myrtle Beach, at 843-918-1014 or info@cityofmyrtlebeach.com.*

For city use only:

Date request received by City of Myrtle Beach: _____

Request assigned to: _____

Due date: _____ Date of response: _____

Any charges or notes: _____

City of Myrtle Beach Social Media Commenting Policy

We welcome your comments on the City of Myrtle Beach's social media pages, including Facebook and Twitter. These pages are intended to present matters of public interest related to the City of Myrtle Beach and our residents, businesses and visitors. Our goal is to provide information about the city, City Council and the staff, along with our operations, projects, activities and events.

We seek to promote effective communication and maintain a respectful dialogue on the Myrtle Beach's social media sites. With that in mind, the rules for posting external comments on our social media sites are designed to maintain a productive and open forum, with respect for a range of opinions and points of view. Your comments and feedback are welcome within the guidelines outlined below.

Anyone using or posting to one of the city's social media sites will, by doing so, accept, agree and understand that the city has no legal liability as a result of any posting or comment on a social media site and that all persons using the social media sites agree to hold the city harmless for any content, posting, comment or interpretation of the like on sites administered by the City of Myrtle Beach.

All posted information and comments on the city's social media sites must comply with the following rules and regulations:

- Comments and posted content must be civil and may not contain slanderous, libelous, malicious, offensive, threatening, profane or insulting language.
- Comments or posted content that promotes, fosters or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation are not permitted.
- Comments or posted content that reference the personality of individuals, personal attacks or potentially libelous statements are not permitted.
- Advertising or non-city promotional announcements are not permitted.
- Comments and posted content must be within the scope of the topic under discussion.
- Comments and posted content cannot include personally identifiable information, such as an address, phone number, social security number or other sensitive information.
- Comments or posted content of a sexual nature or links to sexual content are not permitted.
- Comments and posted content cannot represent a person other than the one posting the comment.
- Comments or posted content containing links to other web sites or pages must be relevant to the topic.
- Comments and posted content cannot serve electoral campaign purposes. Political messages will not be published except for announcements of city elections or voter encouragement campaigns.
- Comments or posted content encouraging illegal activity are not permitted.

- Solicitations of commerce are not permitted.
- Participants are responsible for what they post. Comments and posted content must not breach any law, confidentiality, trademark or copyright.
- The administrator/moderator may hide any postings and comments which violate these guidelines at the administrator/moderator's sole discretion.

The city reserves the right to hide submissions that violate these policy guidelines. Users who violate these policies may be blocked and/or reported to the applicable owner of the social media site. Any opinion, view or content posted to the social media sites by an external or third party may not claim to represent or demonstrate the position, policy or opinion of the city.

The city respects the intellectual property of others, and we ask users of our social media sites to do the same. In accordance with the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) and other applicable law, the city may, in its sole discretion, limit access to the city's social media sites and/or block users who infringe upon the intellectual property rights of others.

If you believe that any material on a social media site infringes upon any copyright which you own or control, or that any link on a social media site directs users to another website that contains material that infringes upon any copyright which you own or control, you may file a notification of such infringement with our designated agent as set forth below.

The City's designated agent may be reached as follows:

City of Myrtle Beach
Attention: Public Information Director
P. O. Box 2468
Myrtle Beach, SC 29578

City of Myrtle Beach Social Media Policy *(Draft)*

Section I

This policy sets forth guidelines for the establishment and use by the City of Myrtle Beach of social media sites as a means of conveying city and city-related information to residents, businesses, visitors and others. The City of Myrtle Beach has an overriding interest and expectation in deciding what is said and presented on behalf of the city on city-sponsored or city-affiliated social media sites.

For purposes of this policy, “social media” is understood to be content created by individuals, using current and future publishing technologies, through and on the Internet. Examples of social media include, but are not limited to, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter, Next Door, YouTube and Vimeo. For purposes of this policy, “posts” and “comments” include information, articles, pictures, videos or any other form of communicative content posted on a City of Myrtle Beach social media site.

Section II

1. As a public entity, the City of Myrtle Beach abides by certain standards to serve its constituents in a civil and unbiased manner.
2. The intended purpose behind establishing City of Myrtle Beach social media sites is to disseminate information from the city, about the city and its activities or areas of interest, to residents, businesses, visitors and others.
3. The establishment and use by any city department of any social media sites is subject to approval by the City Manager and or his/her designees. Once approved, City of Myrtle Beach social media sites may be administered by departmental staff, subject to this Social Media Policy.
4. All city social media sites shall make clear that they are products of the City of Myrtle Beach and are maintained by city staff.
5. Wherever possible, city social media sites shall link back to the official City of Myrtle Beach or other city-approved website for forms, documents, online services and other information necessary to conduct business with the City of Myrtle Beach.
6. The departments themselves, along with the Public Information Department, will monitor content on city social media sites to ensure adherence to both the Social Media Policy and the interest and goals of the City of Myrtle Beach.
7. The city reserves the right to restrict or remove any content in violation of this Social Media Policy or any applicable law. Any content removed based on these guidelines must be retained in accordance with the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act and

appropriate records retention schedules, including the time, date and identity of the poster, when available.

8. These guidelines will be made available to city staff.
9. The city will approach the use of social media communication as consistently as possible, across the organization.
10. The City of Myrtle Beach website at www.cityofmyrtlebeach.com will remain the city's primary and predominant internet presence.
11. All city social media sites shall adhere to applicable federal, state and local laws, regulations and policies.
12. City social media sites are subject to the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act. Any content on a city-maintained social media site may be subject to disclosure as a public record under the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act and shall be retained pursuant to records retention schedules.
13. Employees representing the city government via city social media sites must conduct themselves at all times as a representative of the city and in accordance with all city policies.
14. This Social Media Policy may be revised at any time.