

**CITY OF PITTSBURGH  
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS**

**MEDIA POLICY & GUIDELINES**



**CITY OF PITTSBURGH**

***Commission on Human Relations***

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# **MEDIA POLICY & GUIDELINES**

## **PART I: PURPOSE**

This policy exists to assure that information disclosed by the Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations is timely, accurate, comprehensive, authoritative and relevant to all aspects of the duties and responsibilities of the Commission. Adherence to this policy is intended to provide an effective and efficient framework to facilitate the dissemination of information.

It is vital that a good working relationship is established with the media and members of the Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations. All members and staff within the PCHR has a significant part to play in establishing good working relationships with the media, both in terms of reacting to press enquiries and to maintaining a proactive stance in identifying positive media stories, which assists the Commission on sharing information with the public.

## **PART II: SCOPE**

This media policy applies to all Commissioners and Commission staff. This policy covers all external news media including broadcast, electronic and print. It is important to develop a mechanism for channeling possible public relations stories through one person. All media enquiries must be referred to the Commission Chairperson and/ or Executive Director. Media includes newspapers, television, radio and journalists, bloggers, etc. The designated representative will comprehensively respond to media queries.

## **PART III: DESIGNATION OF PITTSBURGH COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS SPOKESPERSON**

The Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations (*PCHR*) Chairperson/and or Executive Director is designated as media contact and Commission spokesperson. The designated spokesperson weighs each media inquiry to determine the best way to provide information in relationship with other information that is not yet public. The Chairperson will convey the official Commission position on issues of significance or situations that are particularly controversial or sensitive in nature. Among the Chairperson communication responsibilities:

- Increase public awareness and understanding of *PCHR*, the services that we provide our communities.
- Promote a positive public image of the Commission and the work we do to the public.

## **PART IV: GUIDELINES FOR TALKING WITH THE MEDIA**

A reporter, producer or other news media may contact you for a number of reasons, for example:

- To get information about the Commission work.
- To get information about a recent unexpected events such complaints, federal, state or local regulatory actions; etc.
- To get information or comment about an action or event that could impact the work of the Commission, such as problems between Commissioners as it relates to their work on the Commission.
- Refer all media calls to the Commission Chairperson and or Executive Director. Please do not say you are not allowed to talk to a reporter or have to get permission to do so. Instead, tell the reporter: “the Commission’s policy is to refer all media inquiries to the Chairperson and or Executive Director. Provide them with the appropriate contact information.
- Whenever taking a call from the media, the same courtesy and professionalism in which we approach in our professional and personal lives should be displayed toward the media. Please act quickly when approached by the media to ensure that the reporter’s deadline is met. This is important because the way this call is handled may be the reporter’s first impression of the Commission and that first impression may end up in the story published or the news segment broadcast. In order to promote our public image, it is important to respond quickly, courteously and professionally to all media calls.
- Please remember to contact the Commission Chairperson if and when you have been approached by the media. Even though you have referred the media. The Chairperson may need information from you to prepare a response. Do not let a reporter compel you to answer questions on the spot.
- Be courteous and friendly, but also remember that no matter how congenial or affirming the reporter, photographer or camera crew are, everything you say and do may be observed and reported by the media representative.

Depending on the situation a Commissioner may be asked to be a spokesperson on a particular issue due to their knowledge, experience and expertise. The Commission will work with that designated spokesperson to prepare them for the media interview as needed.

## **PART V: GUIDELINES MEDIA COVERAGE**

The Executive Director will monitor the media for coverage; however, all Commissioners should make the Chairperson aware of radio, newspaper and television coverage relevant to the activities of the Commission.

## **PART VI: PROCEDURE - INCOMING REQUESTS**

- It is important to develop a mechanism for channeling possible public relations stories through one person. All media enquiries must be referred to the Commission Chairperson and/ or Executive Director. Media includes newspapers, television, radio and journalists, bloggers, etc.
- The designated representative will comprehensively respond to media queries.
- Interviews will only be given by the Chairman and/or Executive Director or a person designated by Chairman.
- In case of doubt as to how to handle an issue or the interpretation of this policy, the Chairperson should be consulted.
- Upon receipt of a Media enquiry, Commissioners and staff should answer courteously and inform the caller that it is our policy to route all media enquiries to the Commission Chairperson/and or Executive Director.
- The public should be dealt with in the same way as the press. Commissioners and Staff should be aware that the Press might approach in the guise of the public.
- The Press should only have access to those designated to speak directly to the Press in regard to Commission business.

## **PART VII: MEDIA COVERAGE – OUT GOING**

- A regular outflow of news releases on key activities and achievements will be maintained and disseminated by the Commission Chairperson and/or Executive Director.
- Regular face-to-face briefings with the media will be arranged by the Commission Chairperson/and or Executive Director.
- The Chairperson/Executive Director shall respond to any erroneous or exaggerated statements made by the media or by third parties in the media.
- All reactive press statements, should, as far as possible, be in writing to avoid any misinterpretation of the facts.

In circumstances in which you believe you have a news story to share with the public, contact the Chairperson who is the only person authorized to distribute Commission news releases,

pitch coverage of particular events or hold news conferences. Do not call a reporter directly without first consulting the Commission Chairperson.

## **PART VIII: INFORMATION SHARING**

Copy of meeting minutes, circulars, policy documents, amendments in procedures/regulations and monthly summary reports must be reviewed by entire Commission and shared with media by designated person.

Submitted by Ethics and Bylaws Committee:

Gwendolyn Young, Chairperson

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Adelaide Smith

Beth Pittinger

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**Approved on June 6, 2016**