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MEDIA RELATIONS POLICY

PURPOSE

A strategic approach to media relations to ensure professionalism and consistency; foster strong working relationship with the media; increase positive news coverage; increase public awareness and education regarding Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) events, issues, initiatives, projects, bylaws and policies; limit the possibility of miscommunication; provide accurate information; and protect FVRD's reputation.

SCOPE

Media Relations are managed by the Communications Department under the Corporate Services Division and is responsible for ensuring information provided to the media is factual, consistent, and timely. Information provided to the media, including speaking notes for spokespeople is to be approved by the appropriate Senior Leadership Director or their designate, and Chief Administrative Officer or the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer. This policy applies to all FVRD staff and Board members.

DEFINITIONS

FVRD Spokesperson: A FVRD official who has the authority to make statements to the media on behalf of the FVRD. Unless otherwise authorized by the Chair of the Board in collaboration with the Chief Administrative Officer, the FVRD spokespeople are:

- » The Chair of the Board (or Vice-Chair in the absence of the Chair of the Board)
- » Board of Directors (as delegated by the Chair of the Board on a case by case basis)
- » Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) and Deputy Chief Administrative Officer (Deputy CAO) (as delegated)
- » Senior Leadership Directors (as delegated by the CAO or Deputy CAO)
- » Manager of Communications (or delegate)
- » Public Information Officer (within the duties of an Emergency Operation Centre)

Media: A public means of mass communication that includes traditional news sources (print, radio, and television), online, digital, social media, and other sites where content is generated by users.

Plain Language: Effective communication that is clear, concise, relevant and easy to understand.

Media Release: A factual written summary of information issued to the Media from the FVRD for the purpose of making a statement, announcement, or replying to questions from the Media.

THE SPOKESPERSON ROLE

- » Unless another FVRD spokesperson as defined in this Policy is delegated, the Chair of the Board is the spokesperson for the FVRD as to issues before the Board or decisions made by the Board.
- » The CAO and Deputy CAO may communicate on behalf of departments as delegated by the Chair of the Board. The CAO or Deputy CAO may also delegate to other staff listed in this Policy.
- » Manager of Communications may communicate on behalf of the FVRD while coordinating media relations for the FVRD.
- » Employees and Board members cannot communicate matters that are confidential in nature, including items discussed in-camera, employee related issues, or other confidential matters.

NON-SPOKESPEOPLE

- » FVRD employees who are not authorized to act as a FVRD Spokesperson must refer all media inquiries to the Communications Department under the Corporate Services Division.
- » FVRD employees who are not authorized to act as a FVRD Spokesperson are not authorized to make statements to the media on behalf of the FVRD.
- » FVRD employees who are not authorized to act as a FVRD Spokesperson and who are contacted by the media shall:
 - › Act in a professional manner and interact with the reporter as a client;
 - › Explain that they are not a FVRD Spokesperson and respectfully refer the inquiry to the Communications Department under the Corporate Services Division; and
 - › If the employee cannot extricate themselves from the call, it is acceptable to request a list of questions the reporter wishes to ask and give the questions to the Manager of Communications.

COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT DUTIES

- » Communications staff are designated contacts for media activity. Communications staff will:
 - › Respond to all media in a timely manner;

- › Respond to and coordinate media responses for FVRD Spokespeople; and
- › Provide guidance and assistance to those who are involved in media interviews.

PROCEDURE

- » The Chair of the Board is the Spokesperson for the FVRD as to issues before the Board or decisions made by the Board. All effort should be taken to:
 - › Direct Media requests for interviews, comments, or quotes to the Chair;
 - › Provide the Chair of the Board with background information (summary in order that they may make informed comment);
 - › Where the matter arising has a basis in an Electoral Area, the Director for the Area is to be included in the communication.
 - › If the Chair of the Board or Vice-Chair is unavailable, the matter may be referred to the Chair of the Electoral Area Services Committee or the Electoral Area Director as directed by the CAO.
 - › The Chair of the Electoral Area Services Committee is the spokesperson on broad matters pertaining specifically to Electoral Areas and they must advise the Chair of the Board, CAO, and Manager of Communications of the media opportunity and in advance of any media activity.
- » Media calls received at reception are to be forwarded to the Manager of Communications; if unavailable, the call is to be forwarded to the CAO or designate.
- » The Manager of Communications or designate, will obtain the research from the Senior Leadership Director on the issue and provide the CAO with background information to the inquiry, which the CAO will forward on to the Chair and the appropriate elected official.
- » If the media requests corporate documents, other than items on a public agenda, etc., these requests will be referred to either the Director of Legislative Services or the CAO.
- » During an active Emergency Operation Centre, a designated Public Information Officer is the main point of contact for the media as part of their Emergency Operations Centre duties.
- » In a crisis, coordinated communication must be used to maintain or restore public confidence. Departments must advise the CAO and Manager of Communications as soon as they identify an event or situation occurring in or affecting their department's responsibilities that may attract widespread interest to the Media. The Manager of Communications, or their designate, will contact the CAO and coordinate a response including a response from a FVRD Spokesperson.

COMPLAINTS/CONCERNS ABOUT MEDIA

Staff concerns or complaints about incorrect media content should be forwarded to the Communications Department under the Corporate Services Division.

The FVRD will seek corrections and provide factual information where reporting (print, broadcast, radio, online and social media) is believed to be factually incorrect.

MEDIA RELEASES

- » The Communications Department under the Corporate Services Division will use plain language in external communications when possible.
- » News Stories and Press Releases will be posted on the FVRD website and when possible, shared on FVRD social media channels by the Communications Department.
- » News Story and Press Release quotes by the Chair of the Board or their delegated elected official, should be approved by the person with the quote included in the entire document and prior to its release.
- » FVRD departments are to provide two-weeks advance notice, or as soon as possible, to the Communications Department prior to an event or public engagement activity to allow sufficient time to format information for various media platforms, promote the event, and to allow for advance notice to media outlets for their scheduling purposes.

Previous Amendments

N/A	
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