

# **TOWN OF BELLEAIR COMMUNICATIONS POLICY**

## **SCOPE**

This policy establishes standards, best practices, expectations, and performance measures for Town communications, and defines the enforceability and scope for such activities.

## **OBJECTIVES**

1. To formalize the Town's communications strategy and to institute guidelines therein
2. To establish the creation of a Town-wide Communications Plan and create accountability surrounding its upkeep and adherence via a designated Communications Team
3. To set up guidelines for creating and updating web content

## **PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

1. An annual Communications Summary Report shall be completed and submitted to the Town Manager and the Commission from the Communications Team each March. This report shall include details regarding communications frequency, platform concentration, content quality and effectiveness from the past calendar year, and shall outline goals and areas for improvement for the coming year
2. Quarterly reviews of web content shall be required by all departments in order to ensure that accurate and up-to-date information is available on the Town's website
3. Quarterly reviews of social media content (regarding post frequency, likes, shares, impressions, and overall reception) shall be required to be completed by the Communications Team in order to assess areas for improvement and brainstorm ideas for future campaigns

## **DEFINITION OF TERMS**

**Communication** - Any written, visual, or verbal piece of information that is shared or communicated from the Town of Belleair and/or one of its employees.

**Communications Team** - A group of employees, as designated by the Town Manager, that is responsible for serving as an advisory group to the Town regarding its communications and other public outreach and marketing efforts.

## **POLICY GUIDELINES**

### **Best Practices**

1. Communications shall be treated with great care and importance. Town employees shall make effective and timely communications (both internally and externally) a priority.
2. When creating written communications of any kind on behalf of the Town, employees shall be courteous, professional, and thorough. This thoroughness includes using proper grammar and syntax and always proofreading communications to ensure clear and error-free communications. It is recommended that all external communications are reviewed by at least three (3) employees before being sent out to the public.
3. When at all possible, information from any communications platform (flyers, letters, pamphlets, social media posts, e-blasts, etc.) shall be reinforced by information on the Town's website.
4. When participating in verbal communications of any kind on the behalf of the Town, employees shall listen carefully and be available to help all individuals and/or groups in any way possible. Employees shall do their best to work with individuals and groups to meet their needs and requests, and shall always treat others with the highest duty of care and respect.
5. Under no circumstance shall any written or verbal communications or actions be vulgar, profane, derogatory, discriminative, disrespectful or distasteful in any way.
6. When publishing content, employees shall be aware of the lasting effect of communications and be careful to distribute/post only professional and well thought-out materials.
7. If the Town wishes to source content from another entity, written consent or licensing shall first be required from the original owner unless that owner's content is public domain. When sourcing content, the Town shall always give credit to the original entity.

### **General Communications**

1. When referring to Belleair, the municipality shall always be referred to as a town (not a city).
2. When referring to individuals publicly, formal titles shall always be used (Mr./Ms./Mrs./Commissioner/Mayor + last name).
3. Official Town letterhead shall only be used for official purposes, or as approved by the Town Manager, or designee. These purposes typically include the emergency and informational communications tiers. Only letterhead whose design is explicitly approved by the Town Manager shall be used for Town purposes.

4. All Town employees shall abide by the Town's public records policies and procedures (sections 9.1 through 9.5 in Belleair's policies and procedures manual) when faced with any kind of public records request. Employees may see the Town Clerk (or a departmental records liaison) with any specific questions. Public records retention laws shall be followed at all times.

### **Responding to Communications**

1. Phone calls or voicemails left for Town employees that require a response shall be addressed and returned to the sender within one (1) business day. Responding to phone calls and voicemails shall take precedence over responding to emails, chats, or other electronic or written communications.
2. Emails, chats, or other electronic or written communications sent to Town employees that require a response shall be addressed and responded to within two (2) to three (3) business days. This timeline excludes communications carved out in the Town's SeeClickFix Policy (#---) and the Town's Social Media Policy (#---).
3. All Town employees that are assigned a Town computer shall maintain their Google Calendar with respect to meetings, time off, and other out-of-office events. These employees shall also create "vacation responders" via Gmail and voicemail boxes while out of town so that appropriate messages may be delivered to correspondents while the said employee is on vacation.

### **Communications Plan and Team**

1. The Communications Plan, as approved by the Town Manager, shall serve as a binding document regarding the direction and goals of the Town's internal and external communications. All employees are expected to abide by the plan, this policy, and any subsequent procedures, guides, or regulations set forth by those documents.
2. To oversee these documents and the Town's adherence of them, a Communications Team of employees shall be established and adjusted by the Town Manager (or designee) on an annual basis. This team shall be responsible for reviewing the Communications Plan annually, as well as updating communications procedures, tracking communications success, and serving as a leadership group regarding the Town's communications tasks as needed.
3. The Communications Team shall be required to complete advanced communications, marketing, writing, and/or web trainings (as designated by the Town Manager) in order to be elected to and serve on the team.

### **Branding**

1. When communicating, employees shall use Commission-approved logos and departmental variants. No other logo(s) shall be acceptable.
2. The Town's Style Guide shall reinforce Commission-approved branding and regulate specific standards for Town communications. This guide shall be reviewed annually by the Communications Team and updated as needed.

### **Web Content and Social Media**

1. Each department shall require at least one (1) employee to receive relevant website training in order to serve as their department's website liaison. These liaisons shall review and update their department's web content on a quarterly basis.
2. All Town-wide or departmental social media accounts or handles require creation approval from the Town Manager, or designee.
3. When operating Belleair's social media accounts, employees shall respond to and engage with the public via these portals in a responsible and respectful manner. Any question or request submitted via social media shall be acknowledged by the employee(s) responsible within one (1) business day and addressed/closed as soon as possible.
4. The Town may not delete negative or inappropriate comments on social media posts; however, comments which are vulgar, profane, derogatory, discriminative, disrespectful or distasteful (or otherwise unsuitable for wide audiences) may be hidden from public view if deemed necessary.
5. The Town shall stay away from endorsing any politicians, laws, ordinances, policies, or political views in any way. Regarding these issues, employees may present facts and information, but shall not aim to influence the public's voting or opinion.
6. For more specific policies regarding social media, see the Town's Social Media Policy (#--).