

RESOLUTION NO. 666

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF GRANITE SHOALS, TEXAS, ESTABLISHING THE COMMUNICATIONS, MEDIA RELATIONS, AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY FOR THE CITY OF GRANITE SHOALS.

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Granite Shoals, Texas (“Council”) seeks to provide for the health, safety, and welfare of its citizens; and

WHEREAS, Section 3.06 of the Granite Shoals City Charter provides that the Council shall determine all matters of City policy; and

WHEREAS, the welfare of the citizens is enhanced when the citizens have access to accurate and timely information from the City offices; and

WHEREAS, the City Council wishes to establish that responsibility for speaking to the Media, or disseminating information from the city offices, resides with the City Manager and/or the City Manager’s designee;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF GRANITE SHOALS, TEXAS, THAT:

The Council hereby establishes this *Communications, Media Relations, and Social Media Policy*, as attached as Exhibit ‘A’ to this Resolution.

EFFECTIVE DATE. This RESOLUTION shall be in full force and effect from and after its date of approval.


APPROVED: this 13th day of April, 2021.

APPROVED:



Will Skinner, Mayor

ATTEST:



Elaine Simpson, City Secretary



Resolution #666 Exhibit 'A' COMMUNICATIONS, MEDIA RELATIONS, and SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY of the City of Granite Shoals, Texas

MEDIA RELATIONS:

GOAL:

The City of Granite Shoals, Texas (the "City") seeks to inform its residents, businesses, and visitors by engaging in a pro-active and timely communications program. The program recognizes that one of the most effective and quickest ways to communicate City policies and activities to citizens is by working in partnership with the news media, which will encourage accurate media coverage of City programs, events and decisions that could be of interest and impact a significant segment of the community. The program also recognizes the growth in popularity of social media, and the usefulness of social media accounts for local governmental entities to quickly disseminate important information that is of public interest to the citizens of the City.

POLICY:

Inquiries from the news media are given a high priority by the City of Granite Shoals and should be responded to as quickly and efficiently as possible. Every effort should be made to meet media deadlines and to ensure that all information released is accurate.

The City Manager designates a Public Information Officer (PIO) to serve as the Communications / Media Relations Officer and is responsible for the City's media relations, with the exception of some public safety issues. All City employees should notify the City Manager about media inquiries. The majority of City media requests are initiated when the media contact the City Manager or PIO. Because the media often work on tight deadlines, it is important that all departments respond as soon as possible when the City Manager or PIO requests department information or a spokesperson for the media. Specific guidelines for responding to media requests follow.

The City Manager will be responsible for coordinating media interviews with the Mayor and City Council. The City Manager will also work with the Council to promote City programs, events, and policies and to coordinate their participation in City activities.

CITY SPOKESPERSONS:

Unless otherwise authorized, the City's spokespersons are:

- Mayor and City Council members
- City Manager / Assistant City Manager
- Police Department and Fire Department Public Information Officers
- Public Information Officer
- City Attorney
- Department Heads and Assistant Department Heads
- Exceptions regarding departmental spokespersons may be made at the discretion of the Department Head.

MEDIA INQUIRIES:

Any media inquiries received by other City staff should be referred immediately to the City Manager and their Department Head/Assistant Department Head. An appropriate response to the media would be, “I’m sorry I don’t have the full information regarding that issue. I will give your request to my Department Director (or the City Manager) who will respond to you as soon as he/she is available.” Please obtain the reporter’s name, phone number (cell too if “in the field”), topic of story, and deadline.

Employees are expected to abide by the City of Granite Shoals Personnel Manual regarding all communications with the public or the news media. They are to refer members of the public or the news media to the Department Head or the City Manager if a question is “non-routine, controversial, or outside the scope of the employee’s normal duties.”

SENSITIVE OR CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES:

All television, radio, newspaper or other media inquiries regarding sensitive or controversial issues should always be referred immediately to the City Manager and the employee’s Department Head or Assistant Department Head. The City Manager’s Office will coordinate a response including designating a spokesperson.

LITIGATION, PERSONNEL, AND ELECTION ISSUES:

Generally, the business conducted by the City of Granite Shoals is public, and therefore is public information. Inquiries regarding pending litigation, matters involving a significant exposure to litigation, and certain personnel-related information are exceptions.

Inquiries regarding pending litigation or exposure to litigation should be referred to the City Manager’s office. Inquiries regarding personnel-related information should be referred to the Human Resources Department.

Inquiries regarding election and campaign issues should be referred to the City Secretary. The City Secretary will contact the City Manager’s office and City Attorney’s office as appropriate.

PERSONAL POINTS OF VIEW:

It is recognized that all employees have the right to their personal points of view regarding any issue. However, personal points of view may conflict with the City's official policy. Therefore, City employees who write letters to the editor of any newspaper may not use official City stationery. If an employee chooses to identify himself or herself as a City employee in any personal letter or email to the editor, he or she must include language that states the views set forth in the letter do not represent the views of the City, but rather, are the employee's personally held opinions. Similar disclaimers must be given if an employee addresses a public meeting, participates in a radio talk show, or is interviewed for a radio or television program unless the employee is officially representing the City. Employees who are representing the City in any of the above formats must identify themselves as an official spokesperson for the City.

Employees are required to abide by the City of Granite Shoals Personnel Manual regulations regarding Political Activities. City resources cannot be used to promote or to oppose a candidate, ballot measure, or proposition.

GENERAL OR ROUTINE ISSUES:

Broadcast media: Calls from broadcast media (TV and radio) should always be referred immediately to the City Manager and the employee's Department Head or Assistant Department Head. The City Manager's Office will coordinate a response including designating a spokesperson.

Local print media: Calls from local print media regarding most departmental issues and programs may be handled by each department's Director or by the City Manager. On occasion, the Director may designate an employee in the department to respond to specific questions from print media. The City Manager should be informed of these media requests – including the reporter and topic – either before or immediately following these interviews.

All employees who handle media requests must be familiar with the Public Information Act (formerly the Open Records Act) and its ramifications. For your review, you may find the act at https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open/publications_og.shtml.

Any requests for Public Information must be forwarded immediately to the City Secretary to be processed.

CITY-INITIATED MEDIA CONTACT:

Most proactive media contact is initiated through the City Manager or PIO. This includes issuing press releases, placing legal ads and media advisories, and personal contacts with reporters and editors for coverage. Departments seeking publicity for events or activities should notify the PIO and City Manager as soon as possible to ensure the best media coverage of their activities.

Departments should not initiate news media contacts before notifying the City Manager.

CORRECTING INACCURATE INFORMATION:

The City should clarify or correct any information released by the print or broadcast media that contains inaccuracies regarding a city-related issue:

- a. **Factual Discrepancies.** It is the responsibility of the Department Head to immediately contact the City Manager when a story has been published or aired containing a factual error that significantly impacts the public's perception of the issue being discussed. Depending on the nature of the error, the request for correction will be made by written letter or an informational telephone call.

The Department Head will ask the City Manager's office for direction if they feel an official City rebuttal or response is needed.

If there are repeated problems with City officials being misquoted by a certain reporter or outlet, officials will be directed by the City Manager to respond to that reporter or outlet in writing.

- b. **Letters to the Editor.** When appropriately presented, letters to the editors of newspapers and electronic media can be effective tools in clarifying a misconception of City policy or programs or correcting inaccurate information that has been widely reported by the press.

Those Department Heads who believe, as public officials, that a City rebuttal is warranted should discuss their concerns with the City Manager. The City Manager will determine if a response is appropriate as well as who should prepare and sign the letter. **The City Manager must authorize and review all letters sent to the editor that identify the author as a City employee/official acting in an official capacity.**

PUBLIC SAFETY ISSUES:

Because the Police and Fire Departments operate 24/7 and their work generates a high volume of media calls, those departments have designated sworn personnel as media spokespersons and follow specific guidelines when releasing information. Any media calls to other City staff regarding a Police or Fire issue should be referred immediately to the Police Department or Fire Department, as appropriate. All information released to the media by the Police and Fire Departments should be provided immediately to the City Manager's Office. When appropriate, the City Manager should be contacted at the time of major incidents.

CRISIS OR EMERGENCY ISSUES:

During a crisis or emergency situation, the City of Granite Shoals has an Emergency Management Policy in place. The Emergency Management Officer will act as or designate a main point of contact for the media during a crisis or emergency. The designated point of contact will be assisted by alternates

including the Police and Fire Public Information Officers who prepare and disseminate emergency public information.

PROFESSIONAL PUBLICATIONS

The City encourages all employees to contribute articles to professional publications and journals, both as a means of enhancing personal development and highlighting City achievements.

- a. **Professional Articles.** Managers are encouraged to submit articles promoting City services/programs to the appropriate professional journals.

Copies of all articles identifying the author in that person's official capacity or prepared on-duty shall be forwarded to the Department Head and City Manager's Office for review and comment prior to submittal for publication. The name of the publication and the tentative publications date shall be noted.

- b. **Reviews and Edits.** The City Manager is available to review and edit articles scheduled for publications in professional journals when a request is made within a reasonable time frame.

WEBSITE

All departments are encouraged to provide information for a department presence on the City's website, which is maintained by the City Secretary or PIO. Information can include each department's services, projects, events and policies. Information to be posted should be submitted to the City Secretary or PIO. All press releases distributed through the City Manager or PIO will be considered for the News page on the website.

BULLETIN BOARDS

The City maintains an inside bulletin board and a six-panel Park Information/outside notice bulletin board at the City Hall at 2221 N. Phillips Ranch Road, Granite Shoals, TX. These bulletin boards are used for posting information related to city business, or information related to non-profit or community organizations, as governed by Granite Shoals City Council Resolution # 457 adopted in September of 2014.

CITY NEWSLETTER

The City Manager and the City Council from time to time may issue a newsletter from the City to the residents and customers. This newsletter may also be posted on the City's website and social media accounts.

OFFICIAL CITY NEWSPAPER

The City Council has designated an Official City Newspaper for legal notices. Currently this is the *Highlander News*. Election information, Public Hearing Notices, ordinance captions, budget/tax rate information, bid openings, and employment ads are regularly placed in the official newspaper.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Given the multitude of concerns (legal, political, technical, and ethical) raised by social networking (Facebook, Nextdoor, Twitter, etc.) this policy establishes the policy of the City of Granite Shoals, Texas for officials' and employees' use of the internet regarding social media in both their professional and personal capacities.

City personnel shall follow these guidelines in their use of social media, on and off duty. Under this policy, the City disavows, and is not responsible for, any sites, posts, opinions, or content not coordinated through the City Manager and posted in accordance with the procedures of the City Manager's office. The City is not responsible for content posted by City personnel either in their personal capacity, or content posted purporting to be on behalf of the City but reflects personal opinion and therefore is not authorized by this policy. Such content is not to be construed as reflecting the views or opinions of the Mayor, City Council or City management. **City personnel who post unauthorized content purporting to be on behalf of the City on a social media platform shall be subject to discipline, up to and including termination.**

The absence of explicit reference to a particular site does not limit the extent of the application of this policy.

Specific guidelines for establishment and maintenance of Social Media sites/presence on the internet must be followed exactly.

1. Any City-sanctioned social media sites may be used to disseminate information and updates that are of public interest to the citizens of the City. The City recognizes that social media is an effective, instantaneous way of communicating important information to the public, particularly in emergency situations.
 - a. Unique stories, calendar events, and information may be placed on the website. Information from the City website will also be posted to the city-sanctioned Social Media sites.
 - b. Information that is date-sensitive that is posted on social media – for example, information related to emergency management, water notices, or emergency called meetings – will be saved according to the appropriate records management schedule.

2. There will be a limited number of official ‘coordinators’ for maintenance of and posting on the City’s official social media accounts. The City Manager will assign designees with access to the social media administration.
 - a) Official coordinators may post responses on the City’s official social media accounts to questions from members of the public. Official coordinators should provide only factual information that provides meaningful public information to the citizens of the City, not argument or opinion.
 - b) The City website will remain the official **online** means of citizens’ reporting an issue to the City staff. Citizens may continue to report issues to City staff by “offline” means, including, but not limited to, in person, by telephone, by email, or in writing. The City Council will neither post, nor have the ability to comment, on City issues on official City social media platforms.
 - c) Elected officials shall abide by all the sunshine laws of the State, as well as policies of the City, when discussing City business on any internet forum.
 - d) All personnel that engage in social media activities on the City’s behalf and all City-sanctioned social media sites shall adhere to applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and policies, including the Texas Public Information Act, copyright laws, and the City’s records retention schedule.
 - e) City sanctioned social media sites must be operated according to the specific platform’s user agreement. All content must be managed, stored, and retrieved to comply with the user agreement.
 - f) Administrators shall use an abundance of caution when working on-line. Passwords should be strong, and any evidence found of ‘hacking’ attempts should be reported to the City Manager.
 - g) City employees, officials, and elected officials should remember that they are bound to processes and procedures that govern the use of sensitive, confidential, proprietary, and medical information that may come into their custody in the course of conducting City business. There is a risk of personal liability if information is released via personal social media activities.
 - h) While on duty, the use of City equipment or internet service by personnel must be limited to work related tasks. City employees have no expectation of privacy while utilizing City networks, equipment, or devices. All personnel who engage in social media activities on the City’s behalf will adhere strictly to the City of Granite Shoals Employee Personnel Manual and Ord. 635, as codified, the *City Electronics Use Policy*.
3. The Public Safety departments of the City (*i.e.*, Police and Fire) may continue to administer social media pages via procedures as established by the City Manager. The Department Head(s) of each respective department shall be responsible for assuring conformity of the Department’s social media presence according to the City Manager’s directive.

4. Requests to establish new Social Media sites shall be presented to the City Manager, and approval shall be secured before new sites are created.
5. Advertising displayed on or near any city sanctioned social media site by the social media company is not controlled by the City of Granite Shoals. The City has no ownership, responsibility or control over said advertising.