

**DRAFT 07/06/12**

## **Princeton Transition Task Force**

### **MEDIA RELATIONS POLICY\***

#### **OBJECTIVE**

The Transition Task Force (TTF) seeks to inform and communicate with the citizens of Princeton Borough and Princeton Township, members of the business and higher education communities and the public at large by engaging in proactive communications activities.

To that end, the Task Force makes its activities public through an extensive Web site, <http://www.cgr.org/princeton/transition>, hosted by the Center for Governmental Research (CGR) of Rochester, New York.

But the Task Force also recognizes that one of the most effective ways to communicate its policies and activities to these audiences is by working in partnership with the news media.

#### **POLICY**

Inquiries from the news media are given a high priority by the TTF 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 Chair of the TTF, Mark Freda, serves as the group's chief spokesperson and is ultimately responsible for the TTF's media relations. All TTF members should refer media inquiries to Mr. Freda (with the exception of the authorized spokespersons listed below). Because the media often works on tight deadlines, it is important that the TTF responds as soon as possible to media requests. Specific guidelines for responding to requests follow.

#### **TTF SPOKESPERSONS**

In addition to the Task Force chair, the TTF's authorized spokespersons are the respective chairs of the group's various subcommittees. In this capacity, the chairs should focus their comments on the operations and recommendations of their respective subcommittees and eschew personal views and speculation.

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\* This media policy is adapted from the media policy of the City of Chula Vista, California, which is available online at [http://www.ci.chula-vista.ca.us/City\\_Services/Administrative\\_Services/City\\_Admin\\_Manager/Communications/media.asp](http://www.ci.chula-vista.ca.us/City_Services/Administrative_Services/City_Admin_Manager/Communications/media.asp). The Web site Media-Policy.org highlights Chula Vista's policy as a model governmental plan. Media-Policy.org indicates that its mission is to provide "basic online guidance for anyone engaged in the task of writing a first media policy or modifying an existing policy." See <http://www.media-policy.org> for more information.

The chairs of the following subcommittees are authorized to speak to the media:

- Communications and Outreach (Linda Mather)
- Boards, Commissions and Committees (Hendricks Davis)
- Facilities and Other Assets (Scott Sillars)
- Information Technology (Gary Patteson)
- Joint Finance (Scott Sillars)
- Personnel (Thea Berkhout)
- Public Safety (Mark Freda)
- Infrastructure and Operations (Brad Middlekauff)

Authorized spokespersons on this list may choose, however, not to respond to a media request if they do not feel they have the appropriate information or expertise; in those cases, however, they must be responsive to the reporter and refer him or her to the task force chair or to another subcommittee chair who may be knowledgeable about the issue at hand. If a subcommittee member has greater expertise on a particular issue, the subcommittee chair may designate him or her as spokesperson on that issue on a case-by-case basis.

A list of spokespersons and their contact information is attached to this policy.

## **MEDIA INQUIRIES**

Any media inquiries received by other members of the TTF should be referred to the TTF chair or the chair of the appropriate subcommittee. An appropriate response to the media would be, "It would be better if you spoke with the TTF chair (or appropriate subcommittee chair) about that particular issue." If the appropriate spokesperson is not physically present, please refer the reporter to the contact list attached to this policy. If possible, please obtain the reporter's name, phone number and/or cell number, topic of story and deadline, to facilitate follow up.

## **SENSITIVE OR CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES**

All media inquiries regarding sensitive or controversial issues should always be referred immediately to the TTF chair. (If you have any question whether an issue is controversial or sensitive, use that as a guide to refer it to the TTF chair.)

## **SPECULATION & HYPOTHETICALS**

TTF spokespersons should avoid speculation or responding to hypothetical

questions. Refer instead to concrete discussions of the TTF's recommendations, objectives and the processes being used to achieve them. An appropriate response might be: "I'm sorry, I just can't speculate on that issue. We're still discussing it and there have been no decisions yet. I can only tell you what the discussion has centered on" (if it has been discussed in public).

## **PERSONAL POINTS OF VIEW**

Obviously, all members of the TTF have the right to their personal points of view — regarding any issue. However, personal points of view about task force deliberations may ultimately conflict with the TTF's final recommendations. TTF members who write letters to the editor of any newspaper or Web site, or send e-mails to reporters or media outlets must include language that indicates the views set forth in their communication do not represent the views of the TTF, but are, rather, the member's personal opinions. Similar disclaimers must be given if a TTF member addresses a public meeting, participates in a radio talk show, or is interviewed for a radio or television program, etc., unless the member is officially representing the TTF. If members are officially representing the TTF, they should identify themselves as official spokespersons for the group.

## **GENERAL OR ROUTINE ISSUES**

Local print and Web media: Calls from local print media and local Web news sites regarding most TTF issues may be handled by an authorized spokesperson — or his/her designee. The TTF chair should be informed of these media requests — including the reporter and topic — by phone, e-mail or text either before or immediately following these interviews.

Broadcast media: Requests from broadcast media (TV, radio and streaming Web) should always be referred immediately to the TTF chair or the pertinent subcommittee chair or chairs. Do not grant any interviews before receiving permission from the TTF chair or pertinent subcommittee chairs.

## **TTF-INITIATED INFORMATION**

Proactive media contact is initiated through the TTF chair, or through a subcommittee chair in coordination with the task force chair. This includes issuing press releases and media advisories, and personal contacts with reporters and editors for coverage. As noted below, the TTF has not been using social media, e.g., Facebook, Twitter, etc. However, the TTF chair or the relevant subcommittee chair (who will inform the TTF chair) may use social media on a case-by-case basis to promote specific events and/or make the public aware of other targeted issues.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

At this juncture, the TTF□has decided generally not to communicate through social media, e.g., Facebook or Twitter. (See the exception above for TTF-initiated social media.)

TTF members who personally communicate through Facebook, Twitter, blogs or other means ofInternet-based social media should be judicious regarding the release of any posts on their personal accounts related to TTF activities. When it comes to social media or blogs, members should at minimum follow the guidelines above regarding personal points of view.

## **NOTE**

This media relations policy is a dynamic, living document and is subject to amendment and revision as needed.

**A list of contact names and numbers is to be attached.**