



# TOWN OF HAVERHILL *New Hampshire*

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## **Public Relations Policy**

This policy is intended to provide guidance to Town of Haverhill employees and volunteers with regards to news media, social media, and instances where a public statements, verbal or written, may need to be made. This policy applies to all Haverhill employees and volunteers and outlines proper processes to be followed.

### **DEFINITIONS**

- Town Leadership: Select Board
- Town Administration: Town Manager, Assistant Town Manager, or designee.
- The Town: Collectively the Town Leadership & Town Administration.

### **NEWS MEDIA**

Members of the news media frequently contact the town for commentary, insight, and expertise on a variety of town related subjects that result in press quotes throughout the year. The Town's interaction with the media adds an objective perspective and authority to news stories and is seen as a reflection of the Town's views and thoughts.

#### **A. Interviews:**

Town Administration shall accept interviews only if they have time available, and the Select Board are aware and in support of the interview. Town Administration may need to decline interview opportunities if demand on their time prevents them from being prepared for the interview or if the Select Board does not support Town Administration accepting the interview opportunity. When Town Administration accepts an interview, any comments must remain factual, be void of opinion, and be consistent with the Town's mission and vision as well as leadership's known position on the subject. At no time should Town Administration speculate as to what action Town Leadership might take, or decisions they might make.

Town employees and volunteers should only accept an interview with the media, or respond to requests for comment by the media, when given express authority to do so by Town Administration. Additionally, any comments shall focus only upon the employee's area of expertise. Comments must remain factual, be void of opinion, and be consistent with the Town's mission and vision as well as leadership's known position on the subject.

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If a reporter asks about topics that are not in the employee's area of expertise, they should take the journalist's contact information and forward it to Town Administration or provide the journalist with the contact details for Town Administration. Town Administration will help the journalist further.

B. Sharing Information:

Journalists often contact the Town requesting information. The Town is required, in accordance with NH RSA 91-a, to supply the public, including journalists, with any document identified as an unprotected public record.

**PUBLIC STATEMENTS & PRESS RELEASES**

There are many instances when Town Administration, employees, and volunteers encounter situations where they are asked to provide a statement, offer an opinion, or issue a press release regarding Town business.

- A. To ensure factual information, void of opinion, consistent with the Town's mission, vision and leadership's known position on the subject is offered, an official public statement shall be developed by Town Administration and shared with leadership for their input prior to distribution (verbal or written).
- B. Under no circumstance shall any employee share the Town's position; perceived, implied, or known until and unless an official statement has been publicly made by Town Administration and/or Town Leadership.
- C. The public, including members of the media, should be encouraged to attend regularly scheduled meetings to ask questions of Town Leadership.

**SENSITIVE ISSUES**

Understanding that some subjects are sensitive and can become controversial, it is important for all employees and volunteers of the Town, including Town Administration and Town Leadership to be cautious. The following provisions should be followed to ensure the Town responds appropriately and as soon as possible to sensitive and/or controversial issues.

- A. Town Administration shall communicate with Town Leadership, as soon as possible, any issue that appears to be sensitive and/or controversial, for Leadership's awareness.
- B. Town Leadership shall communicate with Town Administration, as soon as possible, whenever they become aware of an issue that appears to be sensitive and/or controversial so Town Administration can develop an appropriate strategy for mitigating the issue.
- C. Town employees and volunteers shall immediately report any issue that may appear sensitive or controversial to their supervisor. The supervisor will in turn assess the issue and if needed, report the issue to Town Administration for further consideration.

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- D. Perceived, speculated, or known issues pertaining to internal Town operations should be immediately forwarded to Town Administration so that they can investigate. At no time should internal issues be discussed with the media, in public, or elsewhere, until and unless, an issue is founded and only when not deemed confidential in nature.

This Public Relations Policy is intended to help protect the public’s trust and confidence in Town Leadership’s ability to lead and Town Administration’s ability to manage the Town of Haverhill’s affairs.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, members of the Select Board of Haverhill New Hampshire adopt this policy on this day \_\_\_\_\_ of September 2022.

SIGNATURES:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fred Garofalo, Select Board Chair

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Steve Robbins, Select Board Vice Chair

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Michael Graham, Select Board

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Katie Williams, Select Board

\_\_\_\_\_  
Kevin Knapp, Select Board

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