



## **POLICY 2026-02 (VILLAGE MEDIA POLICY)**

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**PURPOSE:** The purpose is to manage media communication with its residents, businesses and visitors by creating a Media Policy and to identify employees who are empowered to speak for the Village on significant communications in order to ensure the accurate dissemination of information. It is intended to reduce the likelihood of conflicting, unauthorized information from being released which may be inaccurate and misrepresentative.

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### **A. INTENT**

It is the intent of the Village of Hobart ("the Village") to foster and encourage an atmosphere of openness in dealing with the media. Accordingly, the Village is committed to providing accurate and timely information to the public and media outlets in conformity with this policy.

### **B. POLICY**

1. **AUTHORITY.** The Village Administrator is the final authority for the Village's media communications, with the exception of issues related to the Hobart-Lawrence Police Department. All Village employees should notify the Village Administrator as soon as practicable about any media inquiry.

#### 2. **RESPONSIVENESS.**

(a) The Village, including all departments, staff, and employees subject to this policy, should respond as soon as possible to media requests, subject to Wis. Stat. § 19.35.

(b) Requests for information should be responded to as effectively as possible. Every effort should be made to ensure that all information released is accurate. Designated Village staff should also assist the media to meet their deadlines.

#### 3. **ROUTINE MEDIA INQUIRIES:**

(a) Any media inquiries received by other Village personnel should be referred immediately to the Department Head or Designee.

(b) After sending the media inquiry to the Department Head or Designee, employees who had originally received a media inquiry are directed to respond to the requester that the inquiry has been forwarded to the responsible official who will respond as soon as that individual is able.

(c) Before responding to a media inquiry, the Department Head or Designee should check with colleagues and the Village Administrator to determine if any similar inquiries have been made to, check with colleagues to see if they have received a similar call to coordinate your answer and provide the most accurate information.

#### 4. SENSITIVE OR CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES.

(a) All television, radio, newspaper or other media inquiries regarding sensitive or controversial issues, including but not limited to those issues identified in Section 4(b), should always be referred immediately to the employee's Department Head or Designee. Department Heads or Designees who are notified of media inquiries for sensitive or controversial issues must contact the Village Administrator and coordinate a response. The Village Administrator and/or Department Head will designate a single spokesperson.

(b) The following are examples of potential sensitive issues, which should be reported immediately to the Village Administrator or Department Head:

(1) Controversial statements, accusations or debates occurring in meetings or advisory boards, committees, or commissions.

(2) Disruptions in Village services such as broken water mains, water distribution problems, power outages, transit system service delays, garbage collection, sewer system back-ups or lift station outages.

(3) Personnel issues such as misconduct, suspensions, employee work stoppages, or terminations.

(4) Emergencies such as fires, explosions or accidents that result in damage to Village or private property, or injury or death to Village personnel.

(5) Industrial accidents that involve injury or death to contractor's employees or vendors doing business with the Village.

(6) Accidents on Village property resulting in injury or death to citizens, i.e. a fall in a Village building, or drowning at a park or riverfront.

(7) Pending or resolved litigation

(8) Incidents involving Village personnel and injury or death, such as a police chase accident, work vehicle traffic accident, police shooting or allegations of a criminal nature

#### 5. LITIGATION, PERSONNEL AND ELECTION ISSUES:

(a) Generally, the business conducted by the Village is public and therefore is public information. Inquiries regarding pending litigation, matters involving significant exposure to litigation and certain personnel related information are exceptions and any requests for such information should be sent to the Department Head or Designee and the Village Administrator.

(b) Inquiries regarding pending litigation or exposure to litigation should be referred to the Village Attorney and the Village Administrator.

(c) Inquiries regarding personnel-related information should be referred to the Village Administrator or Village Clerk.

(d) Inquiries regarding election and campaign issues should be referred to the Village Clerk or Deputy Village Clerk. The Village Clerk will contact the Village Administrator or Village Attorney as appropriate.

(e) If it appears that other Village staff is likely to be interviewed as part of the same story, a post-interview briefing may be in order. Allow other staff members to be informed of what was covered in order to avoid conflicting statements.

(f) Any questions regarding public records, restricted records, litigation, or legal issues should be directed to the Village Attorney and Village Administrator.

### **C. PERSONAL POINTS OF VIEW**

1. It is recognized that all employees have the right to their personal point of view regarding any issue. However, personal points of view may conflict with official Village policy.

2. Any employee that chooses to share their personal or private opinions with the media solely does so in their private capacity and may not imply, suggest, or otherwise speak for the Village or use the Village stationary or Village Logo. If an employee chooses to identify himself or herself as a Village employee in any private or personal communication with media, he or she must include a statement that the views set forth in the letter do not represent the view of the Village. The letter must clearly explain that it contains the employee's personally held opinion(s).

3. 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 Village under direction of the Village Board or the Village Administrator.

4. Employees who are representing the Village in any of the above formats must identify themselves as an Official Spokesperson for the Village. No employee shall speak as an Official Representative of a different Village Department than their own without the prior approval of that Department or Village Administrator.

5. Village employees posting to social media sites must follow the same guidance and give the same disclaimers.

### **D. VILLAGE INITIATED INFORMATION**

1. Village staff is encouraged to think of new and creative ways of engaging the news media, including proactively suggesting positive news coverage.

2. Proactive media contact is initiated through the Village Administrator and Department Heads. This includes issuing press releases and media advisories, and personal contacts with reporters and editors for non-routine news coverage.

3. Departments seeking publicity for events or activities should bring the issue to the Village Administrator as soon as practical to ensure the best media coverage of their activities. Departments should not initiate non-routine news media contacts before notifying the Village Administrator.

4. Construction or repair projects that require barricades, rerouting of traffic, detours and/or any other service interruptions should be discussed with the Department Head and passed on to the Village Administrator with enough lead time to get the message out and avoid any embarrassment to the Village or undue disruptions for the public.

**E. ELECTED OFFICIALS**

Elected officials hold unique positions within the Village whereby they may engage in both policy decisions and political discussion. Elected officials are encouraged to comply with the terms of this policy. The Village Board shall have the authority and discretion to administer this policy as it relates to Village Board Members within the confines of the law.

**E. LIMITATION ON SCOPE OF THIS POLICY**

No employee or Local Public Official may release or otherwise disclose information or records discussed in closed session established pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 19.85 until such time that such restricted information can be released by law.

**F. EFFECTIVE DATE**

This policy shall take effect immediately and supersedes all previous policies relating to media relations.

This policy has been approved by the Board of Trustees of the Village of Hobart, Brown County, Wisconsin, at a regular meeting of the Board, held on January 20, 2026.



Richard Heidel, President, Hobart Village Board

Attest:



Lisa Vanden Heuvel, Village Clerk



Aaron Kramer, Village Administrator

