10/16/17
Adopted.

TOWN OF DUDLEY

COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

OCTOBER 16, 2017

Communications Policy Objective:

The Town of Dudley believes that the key to the successful operations of a municipal organization is communication, both internal and external. The objective of this Communications Policy is to provide the organization with a guide to fulfilling the Town's mission through the proper dissemination of information. If you have questions that this guide does not cover, please contact the Town Administrator's Office at (508) 949-8030.

The Communications Policy includes the following:

- Media Policy
- Social Media Policy
- External Link Policy

Internal Communications:
Departments are in charge of communications within their departments. However, please utilize The Town's logo on all documents and please ensure that the document is written in a professional manner. The Town Administrator's Office will review any document upon request.

External Communications:

Official Spokesperson:

The Chairman of the Board of Selectmen, or designated Member of The Board of Selectmen, is always the official government spokesperson for the Town of Dudley.

The Town Administrator is designated and empowered by the Board of Selectmen as the Chief Public Information Officer (PIO) and daily spokesperson for the Town of Dudley.

Under the direction of the Board of Selectmen, the Town Administrator will designate an official spokesperson for each town department.

For daily public safety operations, at the direction of the Town Administrator, the following designated spokespersons are assigned:

Fire Department:	Fire Chief (PIO) or senior ranking officer as designated by Fire Chief.
Police Department:	Police Chief (PIO) or senior ranking officer as designated by Police Chief.
Highway Department:	Highway Superintendent or Highway Commissioner (Selectmen)

When the Police or Fire Chief designate a spokesperson, it will be the responsibility of the Chief Officer to brief the spokesperson relative to this policy, and encourage attendance at any related training to this policy.

The Town Administrator and independently elected Town Treasurer/Collector and Town Clerk will serve as the official spokesperson(s) for their respective offices.

Cultural Identity:
All departments will identify themselves as the Town of Dudley. Exceptions will be made for specific purposes, such as to meet grant funding requirements. This includes advertisements, fliers, press releases, newsletters, etc. If your department has a specific need for utilizing the department's name for branding, please consult with the Town Administrator.

"This meeting is sponsored by the Dudley Recreational Committee" should be "This meeting is sponsored by the Town of Dudley" This applies to all departments.

Press Releases and Press Statements:

- Emergency releases will be addressed here under **Emergency Notifications**.
- Public Safety releases are also addressed here under **Public Safety**.

The Town of Dudley will utilize press releases to announce Town programs, services, events, etc. The Town will also utilize releases as a way to inform the public of a certain topic. Designated Public Information Officers (PIO) will prepare, for review and distribution, all press releases to local, regional and national media.

All routine press releases must be reviewed by the Town Administrator, or designee, prior to distribution or release. A record of the review will be maintained, and can easily be accomplished by using town email to send draft and reply with approval.

The Town of Dudley will utilize press statements to add clarity to a particular issue, topic or media story. Press statements will be issued by designated Public Information Officers under the guidance of the Town Administrator, Board of Selectmen and/or the Town Attorney. The Town Attorney will act in an advisory capacity and will not have any authority to approve or reject.

When requesting a press release, please email the designated department PIO, or Town Administrator's Office, and submit the information to be released in detail. Please allow for an adequate amount of time prior to the need for the release; at least one week prior to the distribution date.

Media Inquiries/Interviews:

All media requests for interviews for departments and staff will be handled through the Town Administrator's Office. Department directors are encouraged to give interviews regarding their departments or areas of expertise in a timely and courteous manner. If your department is contacted by a member of the press on a routine topic for your department, please contact your supervisor or department head for a protocol to respond and afterwards, follow up with the Town Administrator's Office.

On non-routine topics, please refer the reporter to the Town Administrator's Office and we will work with your department on a response. Departments should consult with the Town Administrator's Office if they have questions regarding the release of sensitive or controversial information. In instances regarding the legality of releasing information, the department and the Town Administrator's Office will consult with the Town Attorney. For additional guidance, please refer to the Town's Media Policy.

The Board of Selectmen will receive notification of press release distribution no less than one hour prior to the distribution. The exception will be emergency notifications when time is of the essence regarding the release of vital information to the community. After emergency notification is made, the Board of Selectmen shall be informed as soon as possible, but within one hour of the emergency notification, either by the department PIO or the Town Administrator.

The Town Administrator will ensure that the media has current contact information and is aware of the Town's media policy. In addition, the Town Administrator will facilitate media

training sessions and provide tips on interviewing when requested.

Editorial Board Meetings and Op-Ed Columns:
At any time, Town of Dudley officials may meet with an editorial board of a publication to provide additional insight into a topic directly involving the Town. The Town Administrator's Office will assist with the logistics of setting up such a meeting. Town staff that are approached or who desire to write an editorial or opinion piece as a representative of Town Hall shall receive approval from the Town Administrator and work with the Town Administrator's Office. This ensures that the message stays consistent with the Town's views and mission. This policy does not extend to independently-elected officials.

Emergency Notifications:

Fire and Police responses to emergencies in the community will be reported directly to the media by a designated department spokesperson (PIO) with the approval of the Fire or Police Chief.

Reports relative to an incident will be limited to activities that fall within the scope of the reporting Chief.

Police Department releases concerning traffic advisories, investigations and other routine community relations activities may also be reported directly to the media. Any releases deemed to be of concern to the community will also be sent to the Town Administrator (PIO), including the Board of Selectmen.

Emergency Management releases concerning local hazard mitigation, evacuations, recovery operations and disaster planning will be reported directly to the media by a designated department spokesperson (PIO) with the approval of the Fire Chief/EMD. Any releases deemed to be of concern to the community will be shared with the Police and Highway and Town Administrator (PIO), including the Board of Selectmen.

Web site:
The Town of Dudley web site will serve as a resource for residents, visitors and businesses. The site will convey the Town's message while providing current and vital information. The web site will be managed by the Web Administrator. However, each department will be responsible for ensuring that the information on their web page is current and accurate. Each department should review their web content on a regular basis. A calendar of events and meetings of community interest will be maintained on the site. All departments are required to provide the Town Administrator with meeting schedules, calendars, event notifications and community outreach and interest programs for publication on the site.

Presentations/Publications:

The Town creates and distributes a variety of communication documents including, but not limited to, press releases, media advisories, brochures, PowerPoint presentations, annual reports, staff reports, newsletters, advertisements, posters, postcards, flyers, etc.

All presentations, publications and items purchased with Town funds should bear the Town of Dudley logo and web site address. Externally distributed publications must be reviewed by the Town Administrator or designee to guarantee that all publications representing the Town reflect a consistent message and image and to ensure that branding guidelines have been met.

Internally distributed publications must also bear the Town of Dudley logo and should be reviewed by the department director, or their designee, prior to distribution.

Use of Town Logo:

The Town of Dudley logo shall be used on all Town publications, external communications, fliers, invitations, programs, posters, paraphernalia and any item requiring a symbol of identity. When designing a publication or an item with the logo, please consult with the Town Administrator's Office.

Internal requests for camera-ready copies of the logo or the symbol should be made through the Town Administrator's Office. Scanned or modified copies of the logo or the symbol are prohibited. External organizations requesting the Town logo should be referred to the Town Administrator's Office. The Town does not output the logo to external organizations but will work with those who have an established partnership with the Town or are hosting an event in which the Town serves as a sponsor.

Use of the Town logo from non-partner organizations and copying images from the Town's web site for personal or commercial use is strictly prohibited. If you see the Town's logo displayed in such a manner, please notify the Town Administrator's Office.

Citizen Inquiries:

Departments should respond to citizen inquiries in a courteous and timely manner. This includes inquiries received by e-mail, telephone, web or U.S. mail. Please notify the Town Administrator and your department director of inquiries of a sensitive nature.

Public Records Requests:

All requests for public records should be forwarded to both the Town Clerk and Town Administrator's Office for an official response. Records requests for the Police Department shall be forwarded to the Chief of Police.

Advertising:

The Town Administrator, or their designee, will approve in advance all paid advertising (print, broadcast, Internet, billboard, radio, etc.). This does not include paid advertising utilized for hiring purposes or advertising that meets a state statute. The Town will only advertise Town programs, services or events in which the Town serves as a partner or a sponsor of. This does not include non-profit, charitable events as approved by a vote of the Board of Selectmen, local recreational or sporting activities or where a local academic or non-profit civic club or organization is involved, or sporting events where cheering for a state, regional or national team may be a source of local pride and comradery.

Photo Usage:
The Town does not provide photo credit in its publications or postings. The Town will not post photos for which there is a noted copyright. If no copyright is noted, none will be assumed.

Media Policy

Objective:
Effective communications with the media are critical to the Town of Dudley's ability to provide accurate and consistent messaging. Effective media relations best serve the Town by:

- promoting news, services, activities and events of significance
- expanding the general visibility of the Town
- ensuring that accurate information is conveyed to the public regarding incidents and issues of a controversial and/or sensitive nature

General Procedures for Dealing with the Media:
The Chairman of the Board of Selectmen, or other designated Member of The Board of Selectmen, is the official government spokesperson for the Town of Dudley. When speaking on behalf of the town, the town's position will represent the voted-upon and/or agreed-upon *consensus* position of all board members.

Where there is no clear majority consensus, the official position of the town is that the matter remains "under consideration" or "deliberation" until a decision or consensus is reached and/or an official vote has been taken.

The final position of the Board of Selectmen is to be considered the final position of the Town of Dudley and therefore the official position communicated on behalf of the Town of Dudley by its spokesperson. No statement, media post, press release made directly, or indirectly by any department PIO that falls under executive authority of the Board of Selectmen should conflict with, contradict or harm the position of the Town. When in doubt, department heads and PIOs will refer to the guidance "*Media Inquiries/Interviews*" found on page 3 of this policy.

A prepared statement that makes clear the position of the Board of Selectmen should be considered whenever a message or response to a controversial, litigious, or complicated issue needs to be relayed to the press. A prepared, official position statement also serves as guidance for all town departments to remain in compliance with this policy. As such, an official position statement will be distributed to all town departments when released to the press.

When the Chairman of the Board or designated Member of the Board is preparing to deliver a message to the media, the Town Administrator (PIO) will manage all communications among members of the board to avoid unintentional Open Meeting Law violations.

The Town Administrator is designated by the Board of Selectmen as the Chief Public Information officer (PIO) of the Town of Dudley and daily spokesperson for the Board of Selectmen.

- All inquiries from the media should be referred to the department PIO.
- Depending on the topic, the Town Administrator or the department PIO may designate a department director to serve as spokesperson on a particular issue.
- In cases of critical significance to the Town, the Town Administrator will work with Town officials to develop a fact sheet to detail the situation and summarize the Town's

position.

- In the event of a crisis or emergency situation, the Town Administrator or designated department PIO's will handle all contacts with the media and will coordinate the information flow from the Town to the public. In such situations, all departments should refer calls from the media to the Town Administrator's Office.
- Board of Selectmen members respond to media inquiries at their own discretion and unless designated herein or by vote of the Board of Selectmen, speak on their own behalf as members of the Dudley Board of Selectmen. Board members are asked to notify the Town Administrator when they have had contact with the media and are encouraged to work with the Town Administrator's Office when they receive advance notification of a media inquiry.

Since positive media solicitation is an integral element of the Town's communications program, any ideas for articles or pieces that would positively portray the Town should also be directed to the Town Administrator's Office. In a similar manner, the Town Administrator should be notified about negative occurrences that are likely to rise to the level of a news story.

Guidelines for communicating with the media when the issue is non-controversial and limited to the director's area of expertise:

- Obtain the name of the person calling, the media organization and, if available, the anticipated time of release of information in print or broadcast. This information should be included in the notification to the department PIO.

- Do not offer speculation or gossip. Do not answer a reporter's question with "no comment" instead, refer them to the Town Administrator's Office. Personal opinions should not be communicated. Please know that nothing is ever "off the record" and declaring that statement is not supported by any law.

- Issues that should <u>not</u> be discussed with reporters are 1) legal issues, 2) personnel issues, 3) a crisis or emergency. Refer all such inquiries to the Town Administrator.

Written Communication with the Media:

Press Releases:
Unless otherwise noted in this policy, press releases shall be prepared by the department PIO and reviewed by the Town Administrator or designee prior to release.

- Staff liaisons to boards, commissions or committees may prepare news releases publicizing specific Town events (date, time, place, etc.) after being reviewed by their respective departments. The releases will be forwarded to the Town Administrator for distribution.
- All press releases containing controversial or sensitive materials and/or matters relating to general public safety will be prepared by the department PIO and distributed to the Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator and Town Attorney and the respective department director prior to release to the media.
- All written communications will be done in Associated Press (AP) Style, which is the accepted style of the media.

Public Safety:
Fire and Police responses to emergencies in the community may be reported directly to the media by a designated department PIO with the approval of the Fire or Police Chief. Police Department releases concerning traffic advisories, investigations and other routine community relations activities may also be reported directly to the media.

Any releases deemed to be of concern to the community should also be copied to the Town Administrator or designee and the Board of Selectmen.

If an arrest, investigation or criminal charge is brought against any employee of the Town of Dudley, or where it is reasonable to conclude that there may be litigation suffered by the Town resulting from any actions taken by any employee, elected or appointed official or volunteer of the Town, there is an absolute requirement that the Town PIO (Town Administrator) serve as the PIO for the incident and remain involved in review of all information released to the media.

Where an injury is suffered by any employee, elected or appointed official or volunteer while serving in an official capacity for The Town of Dudley, or while at work or on duty, specific information about the identity of the employee and the nature of the injury will not be released without the consent of the head of the employee's department and the Town Administrator (PIO).

Editorials/Op-Eds:
Town staff that are approached or who desire to write an editorial or opinion piece as a representative of Town Hall shall receive approval from the Town Administrator. This ensures that the message stays consistent with the Town's views and mission.

News or Press Release Distribution Process:
A department may request that the PIO issue a news or press release on its behalf, after providing them with all relevant information. The release will be sent to the requesting department for review and approval before distribution. Once approved, the department PIO will be responsible for distribution to the news media. The initiating department is responsible for sending copies to their personnel.

Media Distribution List:
News releases shall be sent automatically in electronic, PDF format to a list maintained by the Town Administrator's Office comprised of all interested, press-credentialed media.
To be included in the Town of Dudley's media distribution list, please email a request to administrator@dudleyma.gov.

Other Publications:
All published reports, brochures, fact sheets, or any other printed material, should be sent to the both the Town Administrator's Office to be posted to the web site and to the Town Clerk's office to be archived. It is the intent of this policy to maintain a robust, content-rich internet presence to the benefit of the public.

Calendar Announcements:
All Town meetings and Town-sponsored or partnered events should be reported to the Web Administrator or department designee (Selectmen's Executive Secretary), if applicable, for inclusion in the Town's calendar, which is shared with local media and citizen groups and is made available on the Town's web site. Public information is a requirement of all departments, divisions, commissions and boards.

Online Community Forums:
Town employees shall not represent the Town or its departments on any online community forum. Members of the Board of Selectmen, Boards, Commissions or Committees who participate in an online forum shall do so under their name and not anonymously or through a pseudonym when the discussion may have impact on any Town operations.

Social Media Policy:

Objective:
To provide guidance and establish standards for utilizing social media sites to conduct Town business.

Responsibility:
- It is the responsibility of the Town Administrator's Office, in conjunction with the Web Administrator, to maintain the Town's official Internet presence via social media and networking sites.
- It is the responsibility of any Town department who wishes to engage in social media to coordinate their request with the Town Administrator's Office.

Definitions and Scope:
This policy covers social media tools including, but not limited to the following:
- Social media sites: social media sites focus on creating and fostering online social communities. These sites offer various ways to interact including instant messaging, blogging and commenting, online forums, status update, sharing of pictures and video, etc. Example: Facebook
- Blog: a web site where a blog author posts information on specific topics. Readers can respond to the article by posting comments online. Example: Wordpress
- Microblogging: a form of blogging that allows registered users to post short updates (140 characters or less). Example: Twitter
- Discussion Forums: an online bulletin board that may also be referred to as a discussion group or board, a message board or an online forum. On a forum, a registered user can post a message and receive responses to the message on the site. Town of Dudley employees are prohibited from participating in such forums as representatives or spokespersons for the Town of Dudley.
- Photo and Video Sharing Web Sites: sites that gives users a method and location to store their digital images and videos and share them with others. Example: YouTube, Flickr
- Wiki: is a web site that allows visitors to add, remove, edit and change content with or without the need for registration depending on the settings. A wiki also allows for posting links to other web pages.

Policies and Procedures:
All official Town of Dudley social media platforms will be administered by the Town Administrator under the supervision authority of the Board of Selectmen. These platforms shall be used for the sole purpose of informing the public about business of the Town including news, programs, services and events. In the absence of the Town Administrator, the department PIO, the Web Administrator, the Chairman of the Board of Selectmen, or designee (by default, the Executive Secretary to the Board), will administer all official social media sites.

Individual departments may not have or maintain independent pages/sites without submitting a request to the Town Administrator's Office. The Public Information Office will review the request to determine if a separate site should be created, if the determination is that it should not, the request will be forwarded to the Town Administrator for review.

As of the adoption of this policy, the following departments have been approved to maintain independent social media pages/sites, pending the receipt of all passwords associated with the site(s) being received by the Town Administrator's Office, the addition of the Town Seal to the banner of the site and having met all criteria specified in this policy:

Town of Dudley Police Department

Any department with a social media account will have all passwords associated with the site on file with the Town Administrator's Office.

Individual departments wishing to add content to official Town social media sites may submit a request to the Town Administrator. The Town Administrator's Office will determine if the post meets the policy guidelines, if not, the request will be forwarded to the Town Administrator for review.

For the Police and Fire Department, content that falls within the scope of public safety or emergency releases as described in this policy will not require review, nor will any other content that has received approval for distribution to the media/press.

The Town of Dudley web site will remain the official location for content regarding the Town. Whenever possible, links within social media outlets should direct users back to the Town's web site.

Direct messages and mentions requiring follow up communication will be treated as general correspondence and kept in accordance to retention schedules as determined by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Each social media platform used by the Town of Dudley shall include the Town's mission statement and/or an introductory statement that clearly specifies the purpose of the site and provides the user with a link back to the Town's web site. Branding should include, but not be limited to the Town's official logo and colors. The name and contact information posted should not contain a specific employee's name but should be general to the Town of Dudley.

Posting/Commenting Guidelines
All postings made by the Town of Dudley on social media platforms will contain information and content that has already been published or broadcast in an official manner. The Town will not comment on other social media member's sites. All official social media postings by the Town will be done solely on the Town's social media sites or in response to postings made on the Town's social media sites.

Postings made on the Town of Dudley social media platforms will use a plural voice as you are representing the organization and not yourself. Refer all postings to the Town's web site for additional information and not to a third-party site.

Confidential Town business shall not be disclosed on either the Town's social media sites or the personal social media site of a Town employee. In addition, all use of social media sites by elected and appointed officials shall be in compliance with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts *open meeting laws.*

The Town of Dudley reserves the right to remove any comments or postings that are in violation of this policy. Any participant of the Town's social media sites who violates this policy may be permanently blocked from the site. The Town may remove comments or materials when they are:

- Potentially libelous
- Factually inaccurate
- Politically biased
- Obscene or sexually explicit
- Hateful or mean spirited
- Personal attacks, insults, profane, name calling or threatening

- Confidential information that is posted without consent
- Unsolicited promotions or spam

The Town does not provide photo credit in its publications or postings.

The Town does not participate in chat functions nor does it comment in online forums.

Additional Procedures:
YouTube (or similar web site): Video content must first be approved by the Web Administrator or the PIO and may only be placed on YouTube by the aforementioned individuals. YouTube may be used for job recruitment, economic development, communication, community interest, public safety and marketing purposes.

Facebook (or similar web site): Approved content will be posted to the Town's Facebook site by the Public Information Office or a department designee for a departmental Facebook page. Information will be static and refer back to the Town's web site. At limited times discussions may be used to garner input from residents. Those discussions will be facilitated by the Public Information Office.

Request for New Social Media Site Usage:
All requests for new social media sites and services to promote Town business, services or events must be submitted to the Town Administrator for review. Requests should be accompanied by an explanation of:

- the purpose of the social media site or service;
- primary audience served;
- the reason internal or existing resources will not meet these needs; and
- a date range for the project (i.e. when will it launch, how long will it be in effect).

All content posted on Town of Dudley social media sites must comply with the Town's Social Media Policy, unless otherwise agreed upon between the requesting departments, the Town Administrator's Office and the Town Administrator's Office. Employee or Town confidentiality will be maintained in accordance with all applicable laws and Town policies. If a question arises regarding the use or posting of confidential information on a social media site, the matter shall be referred to the Town Attorney for review. The information in question shall not be posted, or if already posted, shall be removed until an opinion is rendered by the Town Attorney.

Notwithstanding the opinion of the Town Attorney, the Town Administrator's Office and Board of Selectmen reserve the right to restrict or remove any Town information from any official Town social media site if the Town Administrator believes that the information does not serve the best interests of the Town.

All social media-based services to be developed, designed, managed by or purchased from any third-party source for use requires appropriate budget authority and approval from the Town Administrator in conjunction with the Information Technology Administrator. The requesting department will be responsible for all costs related to the purchase, maintenance and support of third-party products.

Town Administrator's Office Procedures:
If a department does not agree with the determination of the Town Administrator's Office, they may make an appeal to the Town Administrator. The decision of the Town Administrator will be final. In addition to the administrators provided by this policy, the Town Administrator's Office may also determine/approve additional employee access to social media sites from Town computing equipment.

Responsibilities:

- It is the responsibility of employees, and appointed and elected officials to understand the procedures as outlined in this policy.
- Designated administrators for Town social media sites will be trained regarding the terms of this policy, including their responsibilities to review content submitted for posting to ensure compliance with the policy.
- The Town Administrator will chair a Social Media Committee consisting of members of the Police Department, Fire Department, Administration Department, and Information Technology Department. The committee will meet at least every six months to update and review policies and make recommendations to the Town Administrator regarding current trends and potential impacts on technology services infrastructure.

External Link Policy:

Objective: To provide guidance for the posting of external links to the Town of Dudley web site. Please use this policy as a reference when responding to requests from external organizations.

Dudleyma.gov is the Town of Dudley's Internet communication vehicle. The web site is a resource for the public and provides information about Town programs, events, and governance. The web site is maintained by the Web Administrator.

1. The Town web site may contain links to web sites that are not administered by the Town of Dudley. These external web sites are provided to further the mission of the Town through partnerships. The Town is not responsible for the content of these web sites or for any internal links the web sites may contain. The placement of these links on the Town's web site does not mean that the Town endorses, warrants, or accepts responsibility for the content or uses of the external web site.
2. The Town conducts regular reviews of the external links on its site to confirm that the link still meets the original goal of furthering the Town's mission through partnerships.
3. The Town may refuse a request for including a link or delete a posted link at any time and without notice in accordance with this policy.
4. All external links featured on the Town's web site must be consistent with the Town's web site purpose, as stated herein. The external links must be authorized by the Town Administrator's Office. If a requestor does not agree with the determination of the Town Administrator, they may appeal the determination to the Board of Selectmen. The decision of the Board of Selectmen will be final.
    a. Links to commercial vendors/businesses, media, public interest groups, private organizations, nonprofit organizations and private individual sites are prohibited with the exception of those stated in section b.
    b. Links to the following types of web sites may be authorized if the web sites are consistent with the purpose of the Town of Dudley:
        i. Government sites, including Federal, state and local governments
        ii. Quasi-government organization sites that serve the Town of Dudley.
        iii. Official sites of Town-sponsored or Town-partnered events or functions. (Sponsor means the Town has approved funding or support with either authorization from the Board of Selectmen or Town Administrator.)
        iv. Sites that are required for a vendor to provide services in performing its contractual obligations to the Town of Dudley.
        v. Sites that provide software plug-ins necessary for the user to access files

on the connection (e.g. Adobe's Acrobat).

vi. Links to research or data that supports a Town of Dudley program or activity.

Vii. Charitable foundations or organizations that have been approved by the Town Administrator or Board of Selectmen and serve a local segment of the population, or have provided support or a to the Town of Dudley in the form of a donation of goods, service or cash. Disclaimers will be used when necessary or advisable.

Request Procedures

1. A written request for a link must be submitted to the Town Administrator's Office for consideration.
2. The request must include a specific description of the web site link requested and provide justification for the external link.
3. The Town Administrator's Office will review the request and provide a response to the requestor within three (3) business days of receiving the request.
4. The Web Administrator will review links on a periodic basis and will remove any links that no longer comply with this policy within 10 business days of the review.

Authority

This policy has been voted and approved by:

The Dudley Board of Selectmen on October 16, 2017