

Town of Bedford
Official Media Policy

Section 1: Town Employees

A. Policy Statement

Under RSA 98-E, all Town of Bedford Employees “shall have a full right to publicly discuss and give opinions as an individual on all matters concerning any government entity and its policies.” However, these rights do not extend to the disclosure of confidential information obtained during the course of employment with the Town, nor do they allow Employees to make statements to the public or press *on behalf of the Town*.

B. Points for Consideration

1. Only the Town Manager, or Department Head or Employee designated by the Town Manager, is authorized to provide an official statement on behalf of the Town of Bedford, subject to the exceptions in ¶2, below. Employees shall direct requests from the media about the Town’s position on any matter to the Town Manager or Department Head.
2. Department Heads or their designees may provide public comment or information without Town Manager approval under the following circumstances:
 - a) Town Manager approval is not required prior to the release of information by authorized Police or Fire Department personnel relating to police or fire investigations. Requests from the media regarding a police or fire investigation shall be directed to the Police or Fire Chief or their designees.
 - b) Town Manager approval is not required prior to the release of public education, information, or notices related to a Department function, program or special event (e.g., PSAs or other public education on fire prevention, public safety, road conditions, etc.).
 - c) Town Manager approval is not required prior to the confirmation or release of factual information or documentation generally available for public inspection under RSA 91-A (e.g., budget impact of a winter storm or natural disaster; amount or status of tax bills; status of applications before a Town board or commission; application deadlines or dates of public events, etc.).
3. Employees who communicate on behalf of the Town should attempt to be clear and precise, avoid speculation and conjecture, and address only topics within the authorized scope. Employees shall refer the public to other sources if questions relate to topics beyond the Employee’s area of knowledge or responsibility. Personal opinions should not be provided while speaking on behalf of the Town.
4. Employees speaking publicly on Town matters without authorization must make it clear that they are doing so as individuals and not as official representatives of the Town.
5. Employees who become aware of potentially newsworthy events or activities should promptly inform the Town Manager or Department Head.

6. This Media Policy replaces the Media Policy contained in the Town of Bedford Personnel Policies Manual. However, any disciplinary action resulting from violations of this policy will follow the Disciplinary Process outlined in the Personnel Policies Manual.
7. This section shall not apply to elected officials.

Section 2: Members of Boards and Commissions

The Chairperson of a Town Board or Commission, along with the Town Manager or designee, shall be the primary interface to provide all information to the public on behalf of the Board or Commission (i.e., represent the Board or Commission in stating Board or Commission positions). Each Board or Commission member shall recognize that it is the responsibility of the Town Manager and/or the Board or Commission Chairperson to speak for and on behalf of the Board or Commission. Any Board or Commission member may speak on behalf of the Board or Commission on a specific subject as long as he/she receives permission from the Board or Commission Chairperson. That being said, each Board or Commission member has the right to speak for/on his/her own behalf as long as s/he clearly identifies that is the case in any communications that are intended to be released to the public.

Section 3: Town Council

The Town Council Chairperson, along with the Town Manager, shall be the primary interface to provide all information to the public on behalf of the Town, i.e. represent the Town in stating Town positions to the press, etc. Each Town Council member shall recognize that it is the responsibility of the Town Manager and/or the Council Chairperson to speak for and on behalf of the Town. Any Council member may speak on behalf of the Town on a specific subject as long as he/she receives permission from the Town Council Chairperson. That being said, each Council member has the right to speak for/on his/her own behalf as long as s/he clearly identifies that is the case in any communications that are intended to be released to the public.

This section incorporates by reference the media policies contained in the Town Council Rules of Procedure and any amendments thereto, and the Town’s Social Media Policy; and in the event of any inconsistencies with this section, the Town Council Rules of Procedure shall control.

Adopted:	December 7, 2005
Town Council Amended:	April 30, 2008
Town Council Reaffirmed:	March 25, 2009
Town Council Reaffirmed:	March 24, 2010
Town Council Amended:	April 13, 2011
Town Council Reaffirmed:	March 28, 2012
Town Council Amended:	April 10, 2013
Town Council Reaffirmed:	March 26, 2014
Town Council Reaffirmed:	April 8, 2015
Town Council Reaffirmed:	March 14, 2016
Town Council Amended:	April 19, 2017
Town Council Reaffirmed:	April 4, 2018
Town Council Reaffirmed:	April 3, 2019
Town Council Reaffirmed:	April 28, 2021