

RESOLUTION 2020-60

(12/01/20)

RESOLUTION BY THE ADMINISTRATION, PERSONNEL, POLICY, AND LEGAL COMMITTEE ADOPTING A COMMUNICATIONS POLICY FOR VILLAGE OF STURTEVANT

WHEREAS, the Village Board authorized the adoption of a Communication Policy per Resolution 2020-60; and

WHEREAS, the Administration, Personnel, Policy, and Legal Committee has been working on developing a policy to ensure a uniform message is communicated across the board by both staff and the Village Board; and

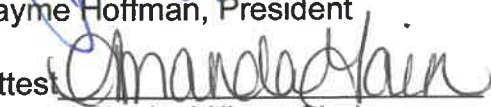
WHEREAS, the Village Board would like to move forward with adopting the policy.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Village of Sturtevant Board of Trustees hereby adopts the Village of Sturtevant Communications Policy.

Adopted by the Village Board of the Village of Sturtevant, Racine County, Wisconsin, this 1st day of December 2020.

Village of Sturtevant

By 
Jayme Hoffman, President

Attest 
Amanda Ingle, Village Clerk

Amanda Gain, Deputy Clerk



Sturtevant Communications Policy

INTRODUCTION

I. Policy Purpose

The Village of Sturtevant (Village) recognizes the importance of a strategic, overarching Communications Policy (Policy). With the proliferation of communication modes, as well as a heightened sense of urgency for accurate responses to inquiries, the purpose of this comprehensive Policy is as follows:

1. Identify the major forms of Village communication and develop policies to guide staff's use of those forms;
2. Provide instruction and expectations for Village staff, elected officials, and the community at-large;
3. Enhance open, two-way communication externally and internally; and
4. Guide and ensure the continuity of the Village's official brand identity.

Village staff will regularly evaluate the purpose and objectives of this Policy. Staff, elected officials, and community feedback will be used to determine the effectiveness of each objective.

II. Key Communication Methods

A. Internal Communication

For the purposes of this Policy, "internal communication" is defined as information strictly communicated between elected officials, appointed officials, and/or staff. Information that is intended be shared "organization-wide" (i.e., to all staff, elected officials, and/or appointed officials) can only be authorized with consent of Department Heads and/or the Village Administrator.

B. External Communication

For the purposes of this Policy, "external communication" is defined as information shared with the public at-large or targeted groups (and may also include Village staff and officials). External communication must receive prior authorization from Department Head and/or the Village Administrator.

DEFINITIONS

The following list contains specific forms of Village communications. Each form has a specific policy, instructions, and/or guidelines for use.

- A. **Village Website:** all webpages owned, maintained, and controlled by the Village used to share public information.
- B. **Emergency Mass Notification:** used to distribute messages to specified businesses/residents or Village-wide in the event of emergencies (e.g., boil order).
 - 1. **Emergency Alert Systems:** a system used to disseminate information in the event of an emergency.
 - 2. **Emergency Sirens**
- C. **E-Mail:** Electronic messages sent through Village owned email systems and accounts, and which are the primary form of internal and external correspondence.
- D. **Newsletters**
 - 1. **E-Newsletter:** generated by the Village Administrator's Office and distributed on a regular basis. Contains more timely information for the community at-large.
 - 2. **Sturtevant Newsletter:** content generated by Village departments and distributed on a regular basis. Elected officials input is welcomed, but must be balanced between all officials. Reserved for information and updates regarding Village-wide, department-specific, and government partner information.
- E. **Press Releases & Interviews:** written or recorded communications directed at members of the news media for the purpose of announcing something ostensibly newsworthy.
- F. **Water Bill Bulletins:** mass communication to residents and customers billed for Village utility services via monthly water bills.
- G. **Electronic Message Board:** in front of Fire Station on 90th Street, communicate topics such as special events, and community wide notices.
- H. **Social Media:** Any Village owned/administered electronic communication that promotes and maintains community connections and engagement with business and/or social contacts. May include a variety of web-based groups, technology, or applications for the purpose of engaging in Social Networking activities including advertisement of Village-sponsored events.

- I. **Administrator's Notes:** weekly internal document distributed from the Village Administrator's Office providing information on current Village projects and distributed to Village Staff, Board of Trustees, and all relevant third parties (i.e., Zoning Board and Plan Commission members, Engineering, etc.)
- J. **Branding:** Consists of creative graphics and concepts considered imperative to the Village's "brand." All communications must be branded with either the Village's logo or must clearly state it originated from the Village.
- K. **Village Employees:** full-time, part-time, seasonal, temporary, and volunteer personnel working for or on behalf of the Village or any of its subsidiary bodies including elected and appointed officials and volunteers serving on various committees.

STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINES

I. **Designated Spokespersons**

The Village Administrator will serve as the spokesperson for all Village matters including but not limited to programs, non police village employees, and special events. The Village Administrator may elect to assign another spokesperson in his/her absence. Department Heads and other supervisory personnel may also communicate with the public or media on matters germane to their department.

The President of the Village Board, or his/her designee, is also an authorized spokesperson to the media and the general public for the Village of Sturtevant on items acted upon by the Board or within the Board's authority. The Village Administrator may issue prepared releases regarding specific topics of consideration at Village Board Meetings. All information released to the media must reflect the Village of Sturtevant's administrative interpretation and not personal views of the employee.

This communications policy, and any changes thereto, must ultimately be reviewed, approved, and adopted by the Village Board, upon the recommendation of the APPL Committee.

II. APPL Committee

This policy also provides direction for the Village's Administration, Personnel, Policy and Legal Committee (the "Committee"). The Committee is responsible for the following:

1. Reviewing and updating this policy on a regular basis, or as requested by the Village Administrator or his/her designee;
2. Researching, reporting, and implementing good/best practices for various types of communication; and
3. Modifying this policy based on recommendations from the Village Administrator or his/her designee to advance the Village's standing as a proactive and responsive organization.

III. Village Website and Electronic Communications

The Village's website (www.sturtevant-wi.gov) is managed by the Village Administrator's Office. The website is and will remain the primary internet communication tool for the Village. Other communication tools should strive to direct the public towards the website and its content.

The Village has developed these guidelines to apply to both Village website and social media account communications.

A. Compliance with Applicable Laws and Policies

Village employees authorized to use the Village Website and Social Media accounts are responsible for complying with applicable ordinances, regulations and policies, including but not limited to adherence to established laws and policies regarding copyright or plagiarism, Wisconsin's public records, open meetings, and record retention laws and privacy and information security policies and protocols established by the Village.

B. Inappropriate Content

The Village reserves the right to restrict or remove any content, including private comments made by viewers, which is hosted on the Village social media pages and website, that is obscene, defamatory, or threatening in nature, and law enforcement agencies may be notified.

Village employees are prohibited from posting inappropriate content on the Village website, or other communications outlets. Such inappropriate content may include, but is not limited to:

1. That which directly or indirectly endorses any person or organization not directly associated with the Village;
2. Community or personal opinions;
3. Photographs, music, video, graphics or other content unless the posting individual has first obtained permission of the copyright holder or proof of the item being non-copyrighted and royalty free;
4. Content that supports or opposes political campaigns or ballot measures;
5. Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, public assistance status, national origin, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, or any other protected characteristic;
6. Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public, public systems, or public services;
7. Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party (e.g., copyrights);
8. Information related to legal matters, litigation, or any parties with whom the Village may be in litigation;
9. Content that violates any applicable law or encourages the violation of any applicable law;
10. Personal attacks, insults, or threatening language;
11. Private or personal material published without consent; and
12. Profane language or obscene content.

C. Confidential Information

The sharing of confidential information, including private or personal information of Village employees, businesses, residents or account holders with the Village, including but not limited to email addresses, phone numbers, and account numbers is strictly prohibited.

D. Information Quality

All content will be reviewed for quality, consistency, and accuracy by the appropriate designees, as determined by the Village Administrator or Department Head.

IV. Village Webpages

A. Content Standards

The Village has a responsibility to provide quality, consistent, and user-friendly communication. The following content standards serve as a guide to acceptable content for the Village webpages:

1. Content should provide information of general interest to the public and reflect the Village's programs, services, initiatives, or areas of responsibility.
2. Content is considered a public resource and deemed relevant to community stakeholders (e.g., residents, businesses, not-for-profit organizations, and government partners).
3. Links to outside agencies and organizations through the Village website must be authorized by the Village Administrator or a designee of the Village Administrator. Links to an organization related to the Village may be considered, provided the organization satisfies the following criteria:
 - a. Proof of not-for-profit status issued by the State of Wisconsin or Federal Government;
 - b. Considered an organization sponsored/funded/recognized by the Village;
 - c. Provides civic services to Sturtevant residents;
 - d. Is a taxing body serving the Sturtevant community;
 - e. Is a government organization;
 - f. Is a sponsoring agency for a Village event; or
 - g. Is conducting contracted services for the Village in accordance with Village policies.
4. Village webpages will incorporate all elements necessary to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
5. Comments posted by the public or on public discussion boards are not permitted on the website.
6. Copyright compliance must be met for all photographs, music, video, or graphics posted to the Village website. Materials must either be owned, properly licensed, or open-source for Village use.
7. Content shall be reviewed by Village staff quarterly to ensure its relevance, timeliness, and consistency with other website content.

V. Social Media Activities

Social media pages provide a means for various forms of discussion and information-sharing, and include features such as social networks, blogs, video sharing, podcasts, Wikis, message boards, news media comments, sharing, and blogging. No social media pages and/or accounts are permitted without approval from the Village Administrator or Department Head.

A. Social Media Account Development

1. Prior to creating and maintaining a Village-owned social media page, Village employees must request and receive approval from the appropriate Department Head or the approval from the Village Administrator.
2. All social media pages must be established in the Village's name, and the log-in, password for access, and list of approved Village employees having access to the account, must be submitted to the Department Head or the Village Administrator.

B. Social Media Content Development

1. Prior to beginning their role in social media activities on behalf of or related to the Village, employees must request and obtain prior approval by the Village Administrator or his/her designee in consultation with the respective Department Head.
2. All social media activity from various departments shall be transmitted on a single (or subsequent page(s) such as Police Department) Village-owned social media page
3. The Village Administrator's office shall be responsible for training employees on quality, consistent social media communication across departments. Social media communication shall strive to have a unified "voice" such that end users should not be able to discern difference in who posted particular content.
4. The Village may, with the approval of the Village Administrator, engage in social networking activities, which may include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Sending text, SMS, or MMS messages to mobile devices; or
 - b. Posting content on websites or social media pages not hosted or operated by the Village.
5. The Village will not utilize its selected social networks as a chat tool. Inbox messages shall be utilized and responded to in a reasonably attentive manor by the appropriate staff person(s).

C. Social Media Content Standards

1. Content specific to individual Village Departments shall be posted at the discretion of the Department Head or his/her designee for quality and accuracy assurance.
2. Department Heads or their designee must approve content before it is published.
3. The Village Administrator reserves the right to request review of social media content, or may allow a designee to post content without his/her review.
4. Village employees representing the Village via the website, social media pages, and social networking activities must conduct themselves as professional representatives of the Village. Employees who fail to conduct themselves in a professional manner, and/or are found in noncompliance with any Village policies, administrative protocols, or department rules and/or regulations will be subject to the corrective action procedures found in the Employee Handbook.
5. When possible, links for more information on social media pages and content should bring users back to the Village's official website for more information, forms, documents, or necessary services to conduct business with the Village.
6. Village employees should only publish or post information under the Village's official user name and profile.
7. Chat features must be disabled at all times.

VI. Mass Notification Systems (Optional)

The Village's mass notification system allows staff to create and rapidly disseminate time-sensitive messages to selected persons using phone numbers, email addresses, and SMS numbers stored in the Village's notification database.

The Village will use this system on an as-needed basis should staff require communication to the mass public for urgent or emergency situations that may threaten public safety. The Police Chief and Village Administrator must be notified, and approval must be obtained, prior to the message being distributed.

VII. Press Releases & Interviews

Press releases are written or recorded communications directed at members of the news media for the purpose of announcing something ostensibly newsworthy. Typically, they are e-mailed to assignment editors and journalists at newspapers, magazines, radio stations, or television networks.

All Village-issued press releases are to be distributed from the Village Administrator's Office or the individual department regarding specific issues. The release must be approved by the Village Administrator or Department Head prior to being sent to the press. Information provided to the media should at all times reflect Sturtevant's management interpretation and administration of the Village of Sturtevant and not the personal view of the employee.

Communication designees of the Village Administrator shall keep supervisors notified of media inquiries. In the event of a declared emergency, disaster, or crisis, communications will come directly from the Village President through the Police Chief's Office.

VIII. Electronic Message Board

The Village Administrator will designate one person to manage and keep the electronic message board in front of the fire station up to date and timely.

IX. Exceptions and Amendments

The Village recognizes special cases may arise from time to time based on specific circumstances. As technology advances and new communication methods become available, this policy must be amended to accommodate new methods and to expand definitions. The Village Administrator or his/her designee is empowered to make all decisions regarding new methods of communication and relevant matters not specifically addressed by this policy until such time as it can be amended.