

2012 Mayor and City Council Media Expectations

As an elected official and representative of the City of Dunwoody you have numerous important responsibilities to residents, businesses and visitors. And as representatives of Dunwoody, part of your charge is to not only act with the City's best interests at hand but to communicate with key audiences in an honest, transparent and informative manner.

Inquiries from news media are given top priority by the City of Dunwoody and should be responded to as quickly and as efficiently as possible. With a goal of efficient and timely response in mind, the Marketing and Public Relations staff has assembled the following guidelines to assist the City Council and Mayor in their efforts to create and sustain positive media experiences for the City of Dunwoody.

- **Exercise respect of the audience, the topic/issue and the reporter**

Know who you're speaking to and understand your audience and the outlet/medium you're working with to properly shape your message. Know what the reporter's goals and deadlines are and what the general story is about. Be punctual, courteous and flexible by letting the reporter know you're available for follow-up and provide contact information, especially the City's PR contacts. Even if the interview is contentious, thank the reporter for the interview and the opportunity to speak/be heard.

- **Remain calm and practice civility, professionalism and restraint**

Maintain composure, even if you feel like a reporter is attacking you or being unfair. Difficult questions, tough challenges, and criticism of ideas and information are legitimate elements of a free democracy in action. Remain calm and be yourself during the interview so you will come across as confident and knowledgeable, but not so relaxed that you say something you'll regret later.

- **Be an honest and forthright representative of the community**

Always tell the truth and put forth honest and respectful responses. It will help maintain your credibility, which is almost impossible to regain. If you don't know the answer, it's okay to say "I don't know." But be sure to offer to find out the information and get back to the reporter in a timely manner. Your opinion is seen as the opinion of the City, regardless of whether you are speaking on your behalf or that of your constituents.

- **Stay on point/message, keep to what you know and stick to openly discussed topics**

Decide on the 2-3 main points you want to make in the interview and stick to short sound bites (about 25-40 seconds). Be sure you are the right spokesperson to speak on a given subject as it may be more appropriate for another person to comment. Research the topic as well as your listeners and their expectations beforehand. Give the answer you have rehearsed and researched, ensure it supports the direction of the Council and that the topic is already before the public.

- **Remain cognizant of constant public presence and scrutiny**

The statements, actions, and language of the Council are constantly monitored and observed by community and the media. During any type of media engagement always assume you are on the air even if you are told otherwise. Never go "off the record" as everything you say is for publication or broadcast. Refrain from saying "no comment." Even if you can't comment due to a proprietary situation, ongoing investigation, or litigation you should explain what you can. As an elected official any publicly recorded statement, whether in print, online, television, or radio will have a reflection (positive or negative) on the City you serve, fellow Council members, and staff.