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WORKING WITH THE NEWS MEDIA: A GUIDE FOR TENNESSEE MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS

JACQUELINE KERSH



Compiled by
MUNICIPAL TECHNICAL ADVISORY SERVICE
of The University of Tennessee
in cooperation with The Tennessee Municipal League

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TENNESSEE MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS

By

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MUNICIPAL TECHNICAL ADVISORY SERVICE

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

In cooperation with the

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Build a Better Tennessee

Municipal Technical Advisory Service

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April 30, 1985

Dear City Official:

One of the most important relationships that municipal officials develop is those with the news media. Positive media relations can be a strong aid in obtaining public support for municipal policies and programs. The lack of good relations with the media can sometimes spell disaster for valid ideas.

This new MTAS publication, Working With The Media: A Guide For Tennessee Municipal Officials, will provide you with a variety of approaches to the establishment of an open and meaningful avenue of communications with the media, electronic and print, in your community. We hope that the suggestions offered in this publication will be helpful, thought-provoking, and useful as you strive for effective relationships with the media in your town or city.

I would like to acknowledge the work of Ms. Jacqueline Kersh in the development of this manual. Her expertise in the field of public information is available to municipal officials on request.

As always, we solicit your suggestions, comments, and constructive criticism regarding this manual.

Sincerely,

C. L. Overman
Executive Director

CLO:dkl

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SECTION 1 - LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND THE MEDIA

To a large extent, public attitudes toward a local government are formed by information, misinformation, or the absence of information about its actions in the news media. Few things are more powerful in influencing what citizens think about their government leaders than the news media -- newspapers, television, and radio.

Democratic government rests on the consent of the governed. In a free society such as ours, those who seek to govern must accept the fact that only through public understanding of the necessity for certain actions by government will consent be obtained. The news media are perhaps the most important channel of information regarding proposed programs or actions of government.

Local officials do not have the option of deciding whether or not to become involved with the media. The role the media play in our society was decided by the drafters of the First Amendment to the Constitution, which mandates a relationship between representatives of news organizations and government at all levels.

Quality of Relationship Determined by Government

What local officials **can** have an effect on is the **quality** of the relationship. Will it be an adversarial one, with those in authority always on the defensive? Public opinion polls have indicated that attitudes of animosity toward government are representative of the general public and opinion holders in the country today. But are the media really dominated by reports with a fundamental bias against government? Many officials believe that, since the Watergate experience, the antagonistic and deeply entrenched prejudice against those who govern is not a subjective assessment but fact.

Many officials are wary of reporters. They are concerned that reporters will, accidentally or deliberately, misquote them and/or use words out of context. They would prefer to say nothing and hope for the best. Recognizing

the news media's importance as a major channel of information regarding proposed programs or activities requiring public consent, can any official dare choose the silent route?

There is an alternative. Local officials can recognize that what local government does is news and thus of concern to the media. They can use this real interest on the part of the media to communicate to the public information needed for informed decisions.

What is the responsibility of the media in a free society? In Press Relations for Local Officials, James McDonald wrote:

> "In part that responsibility of the press is (1) to report, explain, and make understandable to the people their government whenever possible; (2) to protect the general public against shenanigans either by special interest groups or by public officials; (3) to support, by explanation and news coverage, such officials, programs, and causes as -- in the best judgment of the reporter and his editors -- are necessary for the general public; and (4) to give the citizen the information he needs to decide if his government is working satisfactorily, on the theory that our type of government is best for the individual.
>
> "But in a more basic sense, that responsibility is two-fold: (1) to help government officials make a public accounting of their administration, and (2) to make certain that government at all levels operates in the public eye."

Media representatives and local officials never will agree on how much information should be made public, and when. Those responsible for administering local government argue that the media seek out the sensational and the controversial and that reporting is superficial and inaccurate. The media representatives, on the other hand, accuse officials of withholding information to which the public is entitled -- and claim that the media should be the final judge of what the public should and should not know.

At one extreme is the admonition of a city editor to a green reporter: "Look, I have one piece of advice for you. Never trust city hall!" At the

other are local officials who say, "How dare you question our decision?" Arriving at a middle ground of mutual understanding of the role of each party is the goal of good media relations.

"It is not the job of the press to be loved," British Publisher Cecil King once said when speaking on press-government relations. "We are determined to give the voters, the taxpayers, the information that they should have to participate intelligently in our democracy." King and many other news media representatives feel there is an essential link between all branches of government and news reporting and "when this is broken or strained, things go wrong with government."

Why is it so important for municipal officials to have good relations with news media representatives? Here are a few reasons:

(1) The news media can provide local government with information on the effects of its policies so mistakes can be corrected and needed city government improvements supported.

(2) The media, especially through aggressive editorials, can help citizens express their views to those in public office and influence the course of events in important areas such as bond issues, street improvements, and tax levies.

(3) The realistic local official knows city government cannot govern without some criticism, and it is important to have news media representatives who are dedicated, at all times, to truthful news presentation.

(4) Any newspaper, even a poor one, inevitably is cast by its readers, including local officials, in the role of community conscience, guardian, and guide. The good newspaper eagerly, tirelessly, and aggressively acts the part; it becomes deeply emersed in the main currents of its community.

It is not uncommon to hear about specific encounters, large and small, occurring between government officials and news media representatives. The results usually include disappointment, annoyance, and bitterness on one side or both.

Common complaints of local officials, who do not like the way they got into the news, often run like this: "You can't trust reporters." "I didn't say that at all." "They didn't put in all I told them." "They never get things right." And, "Our reporters are inexperienced and lazy."

News media reporters' complaints against local officials can be equally extreme -- and equally wrong.

The simple fact is that much of the misunderstanding arises because many officials don't know how news media representatives operate, how to work with them, or the importance of good media-government relations.

Reporters, like local officials, are human. There are good and bad ones; competent and careless ones; responsible and irresponsible ones; and bold and bashful ones. And most of them carry a set of rules and ethics around in their heads.

Eight Guidelines for Effective Media Relations

(1) **Assume**, until you learn differently, **that every reporter or editor is a responsible person**; that he/she will not betray confidences and can be trusted with advance information.

(2) **Remember that reporters will usually get things right** if those responsible tell them the facts.

(3) **Be helpful to reporters and try to anticipate their needs.** Give them as much background on a story as possible.

(4) **Give all reporters the same break.** Don't favor one reporter over another. Reporters do not expect favors; they only want equal treatment.

(5) **Remember the deadlines** faced by reporters and try to assist them in meeting schedules.

(6) **Know the difference between publicity and legitimate news** and do not urge publication of an article which is obviously a "puff."

(7) **Continually strive to improve** media relations throughout all departments.

(8) **Remember that the news media are in a position to tell people what kind of job the city is doing.** Most newspapers will support good government and condemn poor administration.

The relationship between local government and the media is not a simple or one-dimension one, with each side playing a consistent, well-defined role. It is a very complex, and ever-changing, relationship. One day the media are aggressive, seeking information government officials prefer not to release. The next day, those in government are approaching the media to inform the community of an issue. As government become more involved in marketing services, the relationship may become a business one with officials valued clients of advertising departments. Given these complexities, what do local officials need to know about working with the media? How can they function in this relationship and develop a meaningful public information program for local government?

Active vs. Reactive

Remember the military concept that "the best defense is offense"? That works with media relations, too. In seeking to develop a two-way relationship with the media, local government must play an active role, not the reactive one of only responding to inquiries. An active stance is necessary if local government is to encourage real communication and the sharing of information about all facets of the major issues facing today's communities.

The active stance is especially important in disseminating factual, non-controversial information about services, events, public hearings, and the many other things about which government wants its citizens to be informed. Obtaining media coverage of controversial issues is simple. Getting space or air time for something as unexciting as a refuse collection program can be a real problem.

What Constitutes News?

The fact that local government does something or is planning an event does not necessarily mean it is material for news coverage. Sometimes activities may offer good potential for coverage and go unnoticed. Here are some ideas for obtaining media attention:

(1) **Use your imagination** to find new approaches to publicize annual or routine projects.

(2) **Try for human interest angles**...everyone likes stories (so do the media) about the warmth, humor, or unusual events of other human lives...especially if it involves children, pets, or deserving people.

(3) **Look for the "hook" in your stories** -- what could make your news story different from all others. Examples: unusual participation or involvement of people; a one-time-only event never done before; something that affects a majority of your public.

(4) **Look for positive features in your story** -- something people would appreciate knowing about...stories can be built around these informative items.

(5) **Try a flair for the dramatic** -- the story may be dull, but its history, background, environment, application, or potential may make it exciting news.

(6) **Think about the media** (and the public) -- each medium has particular needs and interests. Think of visual possibilities which may be useful to television or make picture possibilities for newspapers. Put yourself in the place of the news editor and decide how your story could be most interestingly presented.

(7) **Note significant support for elements of prime importance** in your community or state, such as pollution control, youth activities, crime prevention, health and educational activities, urban development, or self-help or locally originated programs for community betterment.

(8) **Awards** received or presented.

(9) Speeches or interviews by well-known spokespersons or authorities.

(10) **Reaching milestones** -- as they affect local citizens.

(11) **If you have a newsletter**, put the local media on your mailing list -- they may find a story you missed.

Some Things to Remember

A few generalities that lead to improved media relations:

(1) One of the best ways to make sure a reporter calls you when your interests are at stake is to make sure that all telephone calls from reporters get prompt, honest, and serious attention.

(2) A reporter's proper function is to ask questions, including, on occasion, some which seem embarrassing, rude, and impertinent. You have a right to refuse to answer; he or she has an equal right to report your refusal.

(3) Don't seriously worry if your grammar is not perfect. Most reporters and newspapers know how to make complete sentences out of what news sources tell them. But forget the profanity. When taping, treat radio and television reporters to the best grammar possible.

(4) If you refuse to tell your story, the likelihood is that someone else eventually will -- but it may be his or her way and not yours.

Improving media-government relations is a two-way street. There is much to be done by both parties. But only by working at making the system function properly can that most important group -- the public -- understand and give consent to the actions taken by local government of their behalf.

SECTION 2 - DEVELOPING A MEDIA RELATIONS PROGRAM

In planning and organizing a media relations program, factors to be considered are the same as for any other local government program. As goals and objectives are developed, look at the particular needs of your community. Available staff and financial resources must be considered so that the most important projects receive priority.

Assigning Responsibility

One of the first things to consider: Who will be responsible for developing and implementing the program? Can the local government afford to employ a professionally trained public information officer? If not, can the manager, chief administrative officer, or administrative assistant handle this job in addition to other duties? Someone must have primary responsibility for media relations if the local government is to take an active stance in dealing with the media. Something that is everybody's job soon becomes nobody's.

If the budget permits, seriously consider a full-time public relations professional. The communications function is time consuming; it is difficult to try to perform it on top of dozens of other duties. Having someone in this position does not reduce the responsibilities of other elected or appointed officials. The public information officer is a source of expert help and assistance to these officials.

The information officer does not have to have an extensive journalistic background, but he or she does need the expertise to recognize a public relations opportunity or problem when it comes along. The officer should be familiar with the tools of the trade, capable of developing a relationship of mutual respect with the media, and able to develop and implement a complete public relations program for the community.

The information officer often can save the city money by freeing other administrative officials of routine tasks such as preparing news releases. By anticipating reactions to policies or programs, the PIO can assure a flow of information that can avert a crisis and, perhaps, make possible the implementation of a controversial decision. (See Appendix A, Page 57 for a sample job description.)

Setting Goals and Objectives

Once the responsibility for media relations is assigned, goals and objectives of the program must be determined. Media coverage is a means to an end, not the sole purpose. Long-term goals could include:

(1) Developing an informed citizenry able to participate constructively in the local government decision-making process and effectively use local government services.

(2) Improving the perception of the local government and the community.

(3) Strengthening community identity.

Determining Desired Results

Effective use of the news media can play a major role in realizing these objectives. Taking the time to plan an information campaign, instead of just reacting to media queries, is not a luxury. It is time well spent. (See Appendix B, Page 59, for an example of a complete campaign.)

One of the first steps in planning a compaign is to decide what the results should be. Does the city want to:

(1) Inform the public in general about all sides of the issue?

(2) Persuade a particular neighborhood to support a specific project?

(3) Convince the voters of the need for a bond issue?

(4) Help taxpayers understand the need for a tax increase?

(5) Increase the number of fee-paying users of a municipal facility?

(6) Enroll participants in a program such as Neighborhood Watch?

At this point, the concern is not about the means to obtain these objectives: coverage in all local newspapers, placement of officials on television "talk shows," securing editorial endorsement. Until it is known what the desired end result is, it is impossible to pinpoint the most effective ways to reach that end.

Once objectives are determined, planning can begin as to how best to reach them. The messages and outlets to be used will vary, depending on whether the object is to persuade, inform, or promote. Editorial support is desirable for controversial action, but a simple announcement will do for the opening of a new swimming pool. Consider whether major news coverage of a neighborhood problem may not lend it more importance than it should have.

Providing The Basics

Don't let the idea of a public information program be a frightening one. You aren't trying to imitate General Motors. No matter how limited the local government staff, officials can be accessible to the media. And there are some simple, inexpensive activities that will assist the media in covering local government activities.

A **calendar of government events** is basic. It alerts editors and reporters to the dates, times, and locations of public hearings, board and commission meetings, voter registration deadlines, special events, and sign-up times for recreation programs. Although less informative than a news release, a calendar provides the news media with a great deal of information with a minimal expenditure of staff time. Reporters can ask for more detail about any items that interest them. (See Appendix C, Page 65, for an example.)

A step about the calendar is a **"tip sheet"** with a brief description of upcoming projects, changes in regular services, etc. Again, the reporter is alerted to what is going on and can request more information. (See Appendix D, Page 66, for example.)

Another basic service to the media is sending out **agendas in advance** of council or commission meetings. This gives editors a chance to decide whether or not the meetings should be covered and reporters an opportunity to get background briefings on specific items. With the agenda should go any supporting material that would make items more understandable. One caution: Make sure governing body members receive their agendas and have time to review them before the media do. No board member likes to have a call from a reporter about an item he or she hasn't seen yet.

Telephone calls to reporters about breaking news are much appreciated, especially by the broadcast media. Local governments without a public information officer may find this difficult, but the person responsible for media relations can soon learn when a call is justified. (See Appendix E, Page 73.)

Accessibility is an important word in media relations. Reporters need to be able to contact elected officials and top staff people for additional information and statements. They also may need direct quotes or a voice on tape.

Know and be sensitive to deadlines. Always return telephone calls as promptly as possible. Remember that old news is no news. Reporters have a job to do. They can do it better and present a more accurate picture if timely information is provided.

Working With The Media

Those in local government who work with the media must learn the rules. First, be honest. In this era of skepticism, one of the most difficult tasks is telling the truth. Truth can be embarrassing, and no one wants to be embarrassed.

How much should an official tell? Within reasonable limits, as much as the reporter wants to know. If a question cannot be answered because the information is of a personal or private nature, avoid saying, "No comment." Just respond directly, without excuses, "I'm sorry, I consider that information private," or "Due to the sensitive nature of the issue and pending ligitation, I cannot answer that question."

There's nothing wrong with saying, "I don't know," but it's best to add a qualifier such as, "I'll find out for you," or "I'll put you in touch with someone who can answer that." The worst thing an official can do is to try to "wing it" and later be caught in an inaccuracy. "We just want people to tell us what they know, or say they can't release the information -- to be honest," one editor said.

Take the time to learn about differing requirements of the media and the mechanics of how news is presented. Don't alienate a reporter unnecessarily by blaming him or her for a misleading headline that was written by a desk person.

Get to know reporters, managing editors, and news directors. It is important to understand the editorial policy and news interests of the different media. This can be particularly helpful in preparing for an interview (questions will be asked from the reporter's perspective) and in placing articles.

Remember that newspapers have just so much space, and radio and TV stations only a certain amount of time that can be devoted to local government affairs. Don't over-react to the failure of a paper to use a news release or a station to cover a special event.

In Effective Public Relations, Cutlip and Center write, "Good relationships can best be achieved by the practice of a few basic principles: (1) shoot squarely, (2) give service, (3) don't beg or carp, (4) don't ask for kills, (5) don't flood the media, and, (6) keep updated lists." The authors add several other helpful hints:

- Don't favor one news outlet at the expense of others.
- Be on call around the clock.
- Don't complain about the treatment of a story.
- Don't ask editors to serve as clipping bureaus by requesting tear sheets.
- Don't try to "pressure publicity into news columns and newscasts by using advertising as a wedge."
- Definitely avoid playing favorites. Giving preferential treatment to one medium representative over others, either by accessibility or providing records and/or information, can lead to an adversary relationship with other reporters.
- Have a positive attitude; don't be arrogant or meek. Your attitude toward reporters should communicate confidence in your competence and in your knowledge of the subject.
- Always be prepared. Never enter a meeting with news media representatives with the idea of improvising. Anticipating questions, researching facts, gathering data, and developing effective answers will pay off in more accurate and informative news stories.
- Be brief. Provide enough information to adequately answer questions, but don't say too much. Being concise leaves little opportunity for reporters to speculate on the meaning of unnecessary words.

Some Do's and Don'ts For Improving Media Relations

The job of local media is to report and interpret the news as they find it, not as the public official authorizes and projects it. News must be attention grabbing, as well as important, or it is useless.

DO:

* Learn as much as possible about the working practices and problems of local media so that you can make use of this available communications link to the public.

DON'T:

* Expect the media to see things from your viewpoint or publish the news exactly as you would like to see it.
* Blame the media for your problems--it just doesn't get you anywhere.

Organizing For Media Relations

Apply your planning and administrative abilities to organizing an effective news program rather than simply reacting to the media.

DO:

* Find out what your organization does that irritates people and stop doing it or try to put a different face on it.
* Designate a staff information officer to assist in a positive information program and provide him/her with the training, time, and information to do it well.
* Locate your information officer nearby and involve him/her in decision making.
* Produce a written information policy to make subordinates more secure in giving news.

DON'T:

* Make your information officer a spokesperson for the administration.
* Close your door to newspeople when they want first-hand answers.

What's News

News is an event or condition of reasonable, current interest to the public. It is not what the public should be interested in. The reporter's job is to know the difference. An effective information program involves the locating of positive news and presenting it in a way that will be of public interest.

DO:

* Learn to recognize a story and spot the angle that makes news.

* Educate the entire organization, by pointing out examples, to recognize potential news and funnel suggestions to the information officer or responsible person.

* Plan on personal dissatisfaction with the way news of your administration is handled and remember that yours is a highly subjective view.

DON'T:

* Attempt to communicate with professional or personal associates through the mass media. The public doesn't want to know that much about it.

* Grumble that media use only bad news. Find ways to make good news about your administration of interest to the public.

The News Business

News is a commercial business dependent on reader, viewer, and listener interest and the advertising revenue that follows an assured audience. News is perishable and must be delivered fresh. Space, air time, and interest limit the amount of news published, and your story is always in direct competition with other events.

DO:

* Know media deadlines and act accordingly. Many good stories are lost because officials fail to consider time factors.

* Understand reporters are in hard competition with each other and design policies to avoid being caught in the middle.

* Learn to spot the "follow-up" angle for the reporter who didn't get the first break on a story and to revive the story crowded out by more important news.

DON'T:

* Assume that when one reporter has the story the rest will have it, too.

How News Is Handled

Newspapers, television, and radio have different problems in handling news. The local official who understands these can make the best use of all three.

DO:

* Suggest stories to each that fill their special needs.
* Remember the wire services are an important "repeater" link in news dissemination.

DON'T:

* Go around your regular reporter to the newspaper editors or station managers with a news story. It causes confusion and resentment.

Rules and Roles of the News Game

The public has a right to know, and the public official has an absolute obligation to communicate, whether the media are cooperative or not. Understanding the rules and roles of the news "game" makes it a lot easier.

DO:

* Assist factual accuracy by having complete names and addresses ready with all announcements and preparing accurate rosters of employees and positions.
* Step down off your dignity in favor of effective communications.
* Play fair with the reporter who deserves the "break" and remember to pass the news around.

* Take time to train your beat reporter in government and your administration.

DON'T:

* Make unilateral decisions about what news will interest the public.

DON'T:

* Hold up news until everything is completed. There is always a leak and the story will get away from you.
* Assume you know what kind of person your reporter is. You may be surprised.
* Try to answer questions if you're not sure of the facts.

Any News Today?

Planning assures orderly community development. It also can be used to assure orderly--and accurate--news coverage.

DO:

* See individual reporters in private as often as possible.
* Produce releases--heavy on facts and light on propaganda--for all major news announcements.
* Remember radio is the fastest medium for emergency announcements and corrections. Volunteer occasional short comments for television.

DON'T:

* Schedule regular press conferences. You may have nothing to say.
* Violate the exclusive commitment always implied in a feature story.
* Insist on setting up photographic cliches.
* Ask to check a story before it is published.

Media Relations In The Small Community

Even in a small community, the official should work with available media to keep people advised of the positive aspects of government. The special problems involved with local coverage make it especially important to understand the working practices of the media.

DO:

* Inventory local media to determine where the community gets the news it believes.
* Plan to give your local weekly occasional special treatment on a big community story to assure good coverage.
* Get to know the local "stringer" of the daily covering the area and give him/her a share of the news.
* Look constantly for unusual features to draw attention to your community.

DON'T:

* Agree that local media have exclusive rights to news breaks.
* Undertake to write a newspaper column or do a radio or television broadcast on a regular basis.

When The Public Official Goes Public

Friendly relations with the media are helpful, but what the public official needs most is media respect for being honest, competent, and human.

DO:

* Have frequent "background" talks with reporters in private.
* Visit the media and get to know the working reporters you never see.
* Learn the art of saying nothing once you have decided not to comment.
* Write letters to the editor to make your viewpoint known.

* Call in reporters and announce errors and problems before they get the word through other channels.

DON'T:

* Tell reporters things that can never be made public.
* Make "off the record" remarks without getting prior agreement of the reporters.
* Ask for unnecessary media corrections.
* Use trial balloons; they destroy your credibility.
* Over-react to editorials.

What About "Off The Record"?

A good general rule to follow: If you don't want it repeated, don't say it. If something must be given to a reporter "off the record," be sure that both you and the reporter understand what that means and state the conditions at the beginning of the interview. This gives a reporter a chance to refuse the interview and seek the information elsewhere. Cutlip and Center define the various briefing terms this way:

(1) **Indirect quotation** - remarks that may be used for substance (not verbatim) and attributed to a specific source. Few interviews are done on this basis.

(2) **Background** - information that can be used but attributed only to a non-specific source, with the form of attribution determined in advance.

(3) **Not for attribution** - information that may be used but not attributed to any source.

(4) **Off the record** - information to be used in confidence and not released in any form. This information is given only to the most trusted reporter with the understanding that if more than one reporter is involved, they will not even discuss it among themselves.

SECTION 3 - MEETING DIFFERING NEEDS OF THE MEDIA

Once the objectives of a public information program have been established and the end results determined, the next step, deciding what types of media will help you to best reach those results, should be easy. But is it? To use media effectively, it is first necessary to understand the differences between each form, and how these differences affect the message you wish to send. What are the general requirements of each medium? How do deadlines differ? What about the form for the message?

Newspapers

Consider first the medium with which most people think they are most familiar -- newspapers. Local newspapers still are the best medium for making news, especially for detailed stories. Newspapers are the press -- they depend on the written word and therefore can treat information in more depth.

But not all newspapers are alike. They differ in: (1) frequency of publication (weeklies, semiweeklies, dailies); (2) variety of departments (local news, features, sports, business, education); (3) deadlines (by department, type of paper); and, (4) staffing (one person to departmental). These differences affect the way you will work with newspapers.

The larger the paper, the more editors it will have. Stories involving local government may be of interest to several of them, if they are made aware of the possible "angles." For example, the business or financial editor would want to know about a change in bond ratings for the city. The city (or metro) editor needs to know the impact of bonds on the tax rate, if any. Each editor serves a different reader "constituency" and is interested in events impacting those readers. Many papers feature columnists who specialize in specific subject areas -- human interest, economics, etc. Some reporters cover specific "beats," such as city hall, the county commission, schools, state government. Know who does what.

When a story has an angle that could interest several editors, take it to all of them. But make sure they all are aware of the duplication. On larger papers, editors do not always communicate with each other about what they are working on. If the story shows up twice in the same edition, your name will be mud with that paper.

The most frequent contact, however, will be with the local news section. The person in charge is usually called a "news editor." On larger papers, there may be editors for each of several jurisdictions, all reporting to a news, or metropolitan, editor. Depending upon the size of the community, contacts with a reporter for a daily paper may range from frequent meetings with several reporters covering different aspects of local government to infrequent sessions with one reporter assigned to a larger geographic area.

Some dailies publish zoned sections, usually weekly, to provide space for more local news. This section often has it own editor and reporters, with requirements similar to those employed by weekly papers.

On smaller papers, where one or more editors wear the same hat, knowing who to see about your story is easier. The staff organization of larger weekly papers is similar to the daily, with editors for news, lifestyle, sports, and, sometimes, business. At the other end of the scale, the paper may have only one editor, and one or two reporters responsible for all news areas. But don't sell smaller papers short. The weekly paper is very well read, and its editor often has a greater impact on public opinion than does his or her big-city counterpart.

Why should you bother with learning newspaper staffing? So you can reach the right person with the right message -- this is called targeting. If there is only one editor, you need to send just one news release. The object is to keep your story out of the wastebasket.

WORKING WITH EDITORS

Here are some things to remember about establishing a good relationship with the press:

(1) Never send a story to an editor unless it is newsworthy.

(2) Use common sense and good taste in your news stories and relationships with news media representatives.

(3) Get to know your editors and reporters personally.

(4) In your initial dealings with the press, arrange a convenient time with the editor and hand deliver your news releases. After the first meeting, don't waste the editor's time.

(5) Don't play favorites. If there are many media outlets in your area, make sure each receives the same news.

(6) If an editor uses your story, it's because it contained newsworthy material. There is no need for thanks.

(7) Never ask an editor to run a story as a favor to you.

(8) If you have promised an exclusive story to an editor, don't also provide or "leak" the story to other editors.

(9) Treat the press fairly; if you promised an editor a story by a certain time, have it ready by then.

(10) If an editor calls you after receiving your release, answer any questions quickly and completely so the story can be completed.

(11) Don't be overly dismayed or call the editor to complain if your story isn't used in its entirety or at all--sometimes space, time limitations, or reshuffled feature schedules can cause this.

(12) If an error appears in your story, call the appropriate editor right away and a correction will usually be made.

The first step in obtaining newspaper coverage, then, is developing contacts. Obtaining a list of newspaper editors should be one of your first duties. Remember that, for a large paper, this list may include several contacts with special interest editors. In general, routine news is channeled through the city editor.

Make a personal call on each editor. Try to determine in advance, with a phone call, what would be the least busy time. Keep your get-acquainted visit brief. Go well prepared with facts about your department or local government in general. Be sure each person you talk with knows how to contact you.

The second step is learning deadlines -- the time after which your material cannot be accepted. Don't ask that deadlines be stretched to suit your convenience. You show your lack of knowledge of the production side of a newspaper when you make such a request.

Deadlines may vary. Inside sections are put together much earlier than the first section. The front page is the last to be printed before the paper is "put to bed." It helps to keep a list of deadlines for each section close at hand.

Deadlines play an important part in how much "play" (space) a story is given. Don't adopt your budget at 11:00 p.m. and then try to explain it to a reporter who has an 11:30 deadline. It won't endear you to the press and what is worse, it won't do justice to your action on the budget and the importance of explaining it to the public through the newspaper. If you know some major action is going to take place just before the deadline, consider an earlier briefing so the story, when written, will be informative and brief.

WRITING THE NEWS RELEASE

(1) When writing a news release, this drawing of an inverted pyramid is helpful in remembering the correct "flow" of news content:

who, what, where,
why and when
---
important details
---
misc. info

(2) Five points should be remembered when determining the priority of information in a news release. These elements should be included in the first paragraph (lead), if possible. They are: who, what, where, when, why (sometimes), and how (a possible sixth point).

(3) The first paragraph of a news release is designed to capture and hold the attention of the reader (and editor). Each additional paragraph should be written in the order of declining importance, as illustrated by the shape of the inverted pyramid.

(4) There are other methods of writing a news release, but generally, most do adhere to this method. News release content should be stated as succinctly and to-the-point as possible.

(5) Include, in the first reference to a person, his/her first name, middle initial, and last name, or the first and last name, or the first two initials and the last name. Follow the preference of the person(s) involved in the story.

(6) Type your story on 8½" x 11" white bond, double spaced, using one side of the paper. If your story takes more than one page, end the first with a complete paragraph and write "MORE" at the bottom of the page. Indicate the end of the story by writing "# # #."

(7) Type your name, address, and telephone number at the upper left-hand corner of the page. If the editor wants more information, he/she will know how to reach you.

Getting coverage of what you want in the paper usually starts with the press release. It's a device to give the editor the gist of a story. It is rarely printed the way you wrote it, so don't expect to see your deathless prose in print. If the editor is interested, he or she will give the release to a reporter to develop the story. The reporter may call you for additional information. The more facts and figures you can provide, the better the chance of a factual, objective story emerging.

On the other hand, the editor may discard the release, or give it to a reporter to condense or rewrite. What happens often depends on how much enthusiasm you demonstrate for the story. Taking the release to the editor is best--observing deadlines, of course. Calling the editor to discuss the story and then mailing the release is also effective. Simply mailing the release without any effort to let the editor know how you feel about it seldom produces results--unless you have a very strong working relationship with the editor.

When preparing a news release, use the most helpful form. Perhaps a readable outline presenting highlights will be best. A good news story contains the element of consequence--what will be the effect on the individual citizen?

Don't be afraid to write a news release. (See Appendix F, Page 75, for a sample release.) Formal training isn't needed--just practice. Remember to put the most important elements--who, what, when, where, how, and why--in the first paragraph, the lead. Each following paragraph amplifies the lead, with important details coming next, and then miscellaneous information. The lead should be able to stand alone as a complete, although bare bones, story. The first and second paragraphs should answer these question:

(1) Who did it or said it?
(2) Who did he or she say or do it to?
(3) When did he or she say or do it?
(4) Where did it happen?
(5) Why did it happen?

The advantages of this format can be easily seen. The reporter has a formula for organizing a story. The headline writer can glance through the lead and get the point of the article. The makeup editor can cut from the bottom, if necessary, and not harm the basic story. And, the reader can decide early whether or not he or she is interested in the subject.

There are certain advantages to you, too. The reporter can get the gist of the story in the first few paragraphs and decide whether to use the story or cover the event. If the release is used, but must be shortened, the makeup editor probably will cut information you feel is of least importance.

TIPS FOR BETTER WRITING

These reminders can make your written communications clearly understandable to your reader:

(1) **Know What Is To Be Communicated:** Know precisely that you want to say about a subject. Question the pertinence of other ideas, topics, and material, and make deletions if necessary.

(2) **Think About Your Language:** Serious subjects merit serious language. Manners and literary style should be appropriate to the occasion. Know and maintain the tone of the communication.

(3) **Be Conservative:** Avoid adjectives and adverbs that do not contribute to the communication of exact meaning. Avoid over-worded intensives such as colossal, wonderful, fantastic.

(4) **Get To The Point:** Don't be pretenious about your subject. If background information is necessary, keep it at a minimum and introduce it after your reader knows why you are providing it.

(5) **Use Proper Diction:** Choose the most effective or appropriate words possible to carry out the communication. Vocabulary usage is a very important element in obtaining a clear understanding of the communication.

(6) **Be Natural:** Use phrases, sentence patterns, and vocabulary that seem natural to you, the subject, and any other people involved in the communication.

(7) **Be Readable:** Keep your sentences short and use simple, straightforward words as much as possible. Keep your paragraphs brief, and maintain an easy-to-follow flow of thought in them.

Don't be a slave to formula, however; you must determine what makes the story "news." Why is it timely? What is its significance? Use the aspects of the story which will capture the reader's interest and attention.

"Keep it short" is a good guideline to follow. Try to keep the release to one page. Avoid making a story longer than it logically should be. If it is too long, the article generally will be cut or not used at all. Keep

sentences short. They're easier to read and have more effect. Under 20 words is a good rule of thumb. Try to limit paragraphs to no more than 50 words. Remember newspaper columns are narrow; five lines in copy make a 50-word paragraph.

Again, any rule can be broken. Suppose you're writing about the annual budget. Reporters will appreciate detail. They will use the release as the skeleton for their story. And, you have the advantage of getting important facts and figures on paper, lessening the chance of an error in the final story.

RADIO

Radio has three characteristics you should remember: it is a verbal, spoken medium; it is immediate; and it is diverse. The first characteristic dictates that news stories on radio are brief and concise. You probably will have to prepare two releases on one story--one for printed media and one for broadcast. (See Appendix G, Page 75, for a sample release and announcement.) Most articles will, at best, get 20-to-40 seconds on the air, so make your point without much supporting detail. Be prepared to provide "actualities," over-the-phone taping of comments by the chief executive officer or appropriate staff person.

The immediacy of radio often means an absence of deadlines. Call the station if you have an important story. And return phone calls from the station promptly.

The diversity of radio requires you to know each station's audience and format. Select those stations that can appeal to the persons you need to reach. Specific stations may be rock, classical, country, "good" music, all-news, etc. By learning the difference, you can direct your message to a particular age or interest group within the community.

Contacts with all-news stations, or those devoting a considerable amount of time to news and public affairs, will be more extensive than contacts with specialty stations. Staffing on the former usually will include a news director, reporters assigned to specific beats, a public affairs director who handles interviews and talk shows, and perhaps a public service director.

Smaller stations depend heavily on wire (Associated Press, etc.) copy. They have no reporters to cover events but will use well-written news releases.

Vary your approach to a station according to its format. An all-news station, or one with a news department, should be on the list to receive all news releases and will be called about breaking news. Other stations can develop stories through telephone interviews but seldom send a reporter to cover an event. Some stations provide no news coverage; contact with them would be unnecessary, except in emergencies.

Don't sell radio short, however. It holds a captive audience in the car. Some isolated communities can be reached only by radio (although the number without access to TV is getting smaller).

By establishing an active and continuous relationship with radio stations, you will boost the needed flow of correct information to the public. Much can be done through radio.

GUIDELINES IN WRITING NEWS RELEASES FOR RADIO

1. Make It Simple

When preparing a news story, don't ignore the word "sparkle." A good news presentation must have plenty of sparkle. If dull, a listener may turn to another station. Each item in a newscast should be short. This permits more items, making possible the variety that listeners like. A news story should not contain too many ideas.

2. The Simpler The Sentence Construction The Better

When writing for the ear, it is essential to remember that the mind of the average listener is on things other than the news. The newscast may get only 10 per cent of the listener's attention. The simplest construction for the ear to take is: Subject, Verb, Object. Example: "The boy hit the dog." When the sentence begins with the subject, the ear subconsciously listens for the verb (The boy did WHAT). When the verb comes, the ear and mind are ready for the object (The boy hit WHOM). After the object has been given, a secondary fact can be added (...after his mother told him not to). If the adverbial phrase is put first, as sometimes happens in writing for the eye, it becomes difficult for the ear and mind to follow the thought. (Although his mother told him not to, the boy hit the dog).

3. Short But Not Choppy

Treat words as if they cost $10 each. Sentences, as a general rule, should be kept short. However, balance with some medium and long sentences. All short sentences can be annoying.

4. Pronouns Are Dynamite

Avoid pronouns; they are dangerous. Repeat the name or the title of the person as often as necessary. There is always somebody just tuning in who has no idea whom you mean by "he" or "she." When writing for the eye, it would be acceptable to say, "'After I finish this address, I am taking a plane for Texas,' the President announced at his news conference.'" This would be bad broadcast-writing. Always put who said it before the quotation, "At today's news conference, the President announced...."

The best use of broadcasting is spot announcements, which are repeated at intervals over a period of time, reaching the broadest possible audience. The most commonly used lengths are 10-second station breaks (20-25 words), 30 seconds (70-80 words), and 60 seconds (145-160 words). When writing spots,

get the listener's attention--give him or her a message of one idea which will prompt action. Remember to clearly identify your local government as the sponsor of the public service announcement. Release spots on a weekly or monthly basis. This procedure provides a flow of fresh material.

Radio interviews are usually ad-libbed because they receive greater audience acceptance than scripted ones. They require the participants to have a thorough knowledge of the subject under discussion. Many programs of this type are pre-recorded and may be edited before they are broadcast. You may suggest to the interviewer questions which draw the kind of information you want to get over to the listener. Be sure the participants have pleasant voices and speak distinctly and with ease. Remember that, in radio, the sound of the voice is the only clue the listener has to the personality of the speaker.

Radio talk shows present good opportunities to give your side of the story on a thorny issue, or to explain the whys and wherefores of something like a rate increase. The call-in variety gets the most listeners. The early Sunday morning kind attract the smallest audiences.

Call-in shows can be very intimidating for even the most experienced spokesperson. Those who call aren't always the most rational people in the community. Prepare well for these programs, and use all your skills in turning aside unreasonable or argumentative questions.

Obtaining air time is usually not too difficult. Although radio stations are not required to dedicate a specific amount of time to public service programming, many stations do aim for a certain percentage of public service time, which includes news and public affairs programs. Such programming helps the station build up its listening audience and is an asset when a station is applying for its license renewal with the Federal Communications Commission.

Some local stations may be willing to air the local government's own radio programs. The simplest format is a short spot taped over the telephone for a single station on a regular basis, probably weekly or daily. These spots can be used to provide timely information about public hearings, local services, special events, a wrap-up of council or commission action, etc.

Local governments can be more ambitious and produce interview shows, perhaps 10 or 15 minutes long, on community issues. These shows can be taped and distributed to stations that agree to broadcast them. Obviously, programs of this type require careful planning, and time for scheduling and working with guests before taping.

TELEVISION

There is one major difference between television and other mass media--it is a visual medium. It is not the medium for telling details; it's a medium of impressions. It shrinks stories to a few minutes at most, sometimes glosses over the facts. TV is not the place to convince the public of the need for a tax increase or explain a complicated budget transfer, unless you can make these stories visually exciting and entertaining. But never forget that most people say they get their news from television, so you can't ignore it.

The key to good television coverage is giving the editor advance notice and plenty of visual possibilities. Think ahead about how the story can be told effectively and positively through pictures.

A through knowledge of your local station's affiliations and methods of operation is essential. This will enable you to keep your requests within the realm of the possible, thus enhancing your standing with the media people. Keep in mind, the station's major purpose is to make a profit.

Everything that goes on the air must be considered in the light of its effect on the viewer. Put yourself in the place of the station program director and then evaluate your proposals and potential material in terms of the effect on the station's established audience. Here's a good basic rule to follow:

> Know your stations and their programs. Listen to or watch local shows first so you'll know what you're talking about--then call on the program director.

The organization of a television station is similar to that of a radio station that stresses news and public service programming. At nearly all stations, you'll find news and public affairs or public service directors. In addition, the news staff includes assignment editors, responsible for reporters and camera crews. Your most frequent contact will be with these reporters or the assignment editor.

Some of the suggestions for working with newspapers and radio also apply to TV, especially getting to know people, but the visual quality of TV creates special restraints on scheduling camera crews. All film must be processed in time for local newscasts, usually at 6:00 or 6:30 p.m. and 11:00 p.m.

Evening meetings, such as council sessions, are difficult for TV. Not only is there little time to prepare the story for the 11:00 p.m. telecast, but many stations have fewer crews available in the evenings. (See Appendix H, Page 77, for a sample TV announcement and some guidelines for coverage.)

Local stations also provide opportunities for public service announcements and public affairs programming. (See Appendix I, Page 80, for tips on preparation.) Radio spots can be adapted for TV use by adding a visual aid such as art work or slides. Or the announcer may appear on camera. Some public service directors will work with you to prepare film for public service announcements.

Local public affairs programs and talk shows provide opportunities for getting your message to the public. Before making suggestions, be familiar with the different formats, types of issues and activities covered, and on-the-air personalities and station producers.

When requesting time on a particular program--such as an interview--remember that each show has a distinct character and special interest. Choose your talent well. Be sure the person is bright, articulate, and thoroughly informed on the subject discussed. A series of small cards with pertinent data offers a form of mental insurance against momentary memory lapses. (Section 6 discusses "on-camera" appearances in detail.)

Unlike radio, television likes soft, or human interest, news. As a rule, let the editor know at least a week in advance that a good feature is coming up. Call and discuss the story. Send or take a brief write up describing the activity, and single out some interesting possibilities. Always call to remind the editor again before the event takes place.

Don't overlook TV as a means of informing residents of an emergency situation. Television news updates are reported throughout the day, and important messages can be superimposed over a regular show if the editor thinks the information should get out over the air immediately.

OTHER MEDIA

Cable and educational TV should not be neglected as news media. Generally, it is easier to obtain time on cable or educational TV for public service announcements or to get appearances on local talk shows. Don't underestimate the audience for either of these mediums.

Cable television's peak viewership is during prime access time. This is the time immediately preceding and after the nightly news. Aim the quality of your PSA's for this time because only the best will be used.

Program directors for local talk shows are always looking for new discussion topics. The best way to get on such a program is to call the program director and discuss your idea. Generally, if the idea is good, it will pass on its own merit.

Here are two ways cable television might be used in your community:

The most basic use of cable is to provide printed messages to subscribers 24 hours a day by means of a character generator--an automated machine, similar to a typewriter, which produces printed messages on the screen. This video bulletin board will ensure your citizens a direct link with their local government. A few minutes of viewing each day makes residents aware of such important local information as holiday trash pick-up schedules, council agendas, street closings, recreational programs, and snow emergencies.

Many cable television companies offer free channels for government access programs or provide municipal programs on their community channels. Either option offers the city an additional possibility for communication. A variety of program formats may be presented, including live and taped coverage of government proceedings, talk programs, live call-in programs, documentaries, instructional tapes, and conferences. Programs can include gavel-to-gavel coverage of public meetings, election coverage, library or recreational programs, city services, and discussions about public safety.

Special access channels for local governments offer a wealth of programming opportunities. But that's a publication in itself.

Educational TV's peak viewership time is considered to be 7:00 and 10:00 p.m. However, this varies according to the programming. To get a PSA aired on public TV, send it to the program director. The quality of the PSA and your follow-up determine when it is aired. Criteria for quality may vary from station to station, but most prefer film or video tape. Spots on special programming can be obtained by contacting the public affairs director. Discuss your idea and if he/she accepts it, set up a time for taping.

SECTION 4 - PLACING STORIES AND OBTAINING COVERAGE

Being able to communicate well is only half the challenge in media relations. Selecting the most appropriate way to get your message across to an intended audience is of major importance. It can mean the difference between being heard and understood, and being misunderstood or even ignored.

You face the challenge of trying to put your message across to an audience that is busy, selective, and accustomed to clever, innovative, and entertaining approaches. So how do you get the attention for your message you feel it deserves?

It may not be as great a task as you may think. Local government is inherently able to command attention because of its direct and continuing effect on everyone in the community. Although the public may appear apathetic, residents do pay attention to messages from and about their government, even though they may not actively respond.

You have a wide range of media to choose from in determining the best way to get your message to the people who should hear it. You have to be familiar enough with the media to make informed decisions about the most appropriate one for each message. If you use your imagination and the resources available to you, you often can communicate well with a great many people at little or no cost.

Careful planning is the key to effective publicity. Research helps, and so does using your common sense. Too often, local governmental efforts lack all these things. Plan so that your message fits the medium and will reach the part of the public needing to receive it.

Selecting And Timing Releases

Always remember what news is. Journalism textbooks give many different definitions, but news is whatever a given editor says it is on a given day. If an item doesn't appeal to an editor, it doesn't get into print or on the air, and it doesn't become news.

So what appeals to editors? Usually a story is considered newsworthy if it:

- Is local
- Is timely
- Is unique or unusual
- Affects or involves people
- Provokes human emotion

Still, meeting all these criteria is no guarantee a story will make news. An editor may not read your release, or may not read enough of it to see the relevance of the story. Or the editor who gets the release may not be the right person.

This is where timing and targeting comes in--knowing who is the right person to give the story to and when. And this is why it is so important to have a personal relationship with the media.

TIPS FOR GETTING YOUR STORY USED

Many stories distributed to the press, radio, and television end up in the wastebasket. The good ones get used as received, or they may be rewritten by the editor...but they do appear.

These are some tips to help get your story used. Make sure:

(1) That your story contains something of interest to local citizens.

(2) That there is enough substantial material to make it newsworthy.

(3) That it is timely.

(4) That the media do not have a policy against publishing articles of this nature (example: stories of "routine" personnel appointments; religious or political opinions, unless from a well-known newsmaker; routine organizational achievements; solicitation of funds.)

(5) That it is not disguised advertising.

(6) That the story is not a fake or dishonest in its statements.

(7) That the story contains no factual inaccuracies.

(8) That it does not duplicate an earlier release.

(9) That you or a responsible individual are available to provide other key story facts after the editor has received the article.

(10) That your story reaches the appropriate editor at a particular news medium.

There are some specific techniques that will help you in securing print space and air time. Although you will develop your own methods, these suggestions may be useful:

* Tie news stories to today's interests. To do this, you must be well informed on current issues, social trends, and social changes at both the local and national levels.

* Show that a local program is a new way of dealing with an old problem. Some examples: programs about crimes committed by youths, drunken drivers, housing programs for the elderly, ways local government is dealing with federal cutbacks.

* Look for human interest or an unusual angle. People are interested in such material for its own sake, regardless of its effect on them. Children, old people, and animals do still make news. The police officer and a canine "partner" is an example.

* Give reporters copies of complex documents such as budgets, with accompanying news releases or fact sheets, as far in advance as possible. Be available to answer questions or assist with filming of visuals.

* Follow up on major news releases. This isn't nagging, just making sure the reporter got the information.

* Keep media lists up-to-date and address releases to editors or reporters by name when possible. If you can't get names or keep them current, send the release to the proper editor by title--public service announcements to the public service director, for instance.

* Send releases only to the appropriate place. If the real estate editor gets an article about the newest recreational program, you know what will happen. A long, in-depth story about the budget will get short shift at a radio station.

* Don't take the first no as final. If the news editor rejects the story, try a more specialized editor on the same paper. A turn down by a broadcast reporter doesn't prohibit you from calling the news director.

* Time requests for coverage to correspond with slow periods. Good days to try to place "soft news" stories are Saturdays, Sundays, and Mondays for daily papers. Holidays are usually another slow time when story ideas are welcomed.

* Keep a list of possible feature stories handy to offer reporters when they ask, "What's going on today?"

* Develop new angles for old stories. The media always note the beginning of hot weather, 4th of July, etc. Think of some fresh ideas, photographs, articles, or broadcast coverage that feature local government programs or facilities.

* Create new approaches for routine events. Ground breakings need not be the same old thing--what about an official on a backhoe instead of that line of smiles and shovels? An open house can be much more than refreshment and flowers. Use your imagination.

News Conferences and Briefings

The most important thing to know about a news conference is when not to have one. That's most of the time. Reserve the impact of a news conference for an important event. Remember that news people have many demands on their time; they will not attend a conference if the information could have been presented through standard release techniques--a written story, a phone call, etc.

In their discussion of when a news conference is justified, Cutlip and Center say, "The best practical answer is, 'seldom.' Generally, important, controversial matters such as labor-management disputes, political announcements, and major policy changes suggest a conference, because a discussion, rather than a one-sided statement, is in order....Simple matters that constitute no public issues or are not complex in nature can usually be handled without one."

It may be appropriate to consider a news conference when announcing a major economic development such as an industrial plant location, to discuss labor-management disputes, to bring the media up-to-date during a crisis situation, or to provide information on some complex subject. But consider carefully whether some other form of release might not be more effective.

One alternative to the news conference is a news briefing. It is low key, informal, and allows you to provide needed information without all the fanfare of a news conference. Reporters can be given a news release and background material in advance and advised if they need more information, there will be a briefing at a specific time and place.

Another alternative is to provide the release and background material and notify reporters that the chief executive officer or other prime source will be available at a certain time to take inquiries from the media.

If you reserve the news conference for appropriate topics, you can be reasonably sure it will be well attended.

PLANNING A NEWS CONFERENCE

1. **Topic**

   Be sure that what you or your city official is announcing is worth the media's time.

2. **Invitations**

   Should be extended to all the news media, giving as much advance notice as possible.

3. **Timing**

   A. Pick a day of the week that is free of "competing" news events.

   B. Select a time of day that takes into consideration the various deadlines and technical problems of the media invited to attend.

4. **Location**

   A. Select a place that has electrical hook-ups available.

B. Select a location that is free of other visual and sound distractions.

C. Have telephone(s) readily available.

5. Follow-Up

The individual holding the news conference should:

A. Expect to be available for group questions/answers and then individual interviews after making the announcement.

B. Have copies of statement, etc., available for distribution to the news media.

C. Have graphic material (i.e., charts, graphs, etc.) to aid in explaining information, if such visual aids are appropriate.

Assuming that you feel a news conference is warranted, plan for it carefully. Select a spokesperson who is thoroughly familiar with the topic and allow time to fully brief everyone involved. Try to anticipate what questions will be asked, gather supporting material, and define local government positions. If the issue is controversial, let the spokesperson practice, if possible, with staff members playing reporters. This will help clarify the local government's position and could reveal gaps in available information before policy statements are developed or inquiries have been fielded.

Time the news conference to give all media sources the best possible competitive break. Consider deadlines for both print and broadcast media. If weeklies cover your community more consistently than dailies or broadcast media, take their special problems into consideration. Determine whether other events already scheduled might compete with the news conference.

Notify media representatives of the conference day and time as early as possible. Even if you send a written notice, follow up with a phone call as a reminder and as a means of determining who will be attending.

Choose a room large enough to accommodate the media representatives and their equipment. Camera crews take up space. But when in doubt, think small. Better to bring a few extra chairs than to have a few people in a cavernous hall. Make provisions for microphones and lights.

Put together a media packet. Depending upon the subject, the news release may be supplemented with background information, black and white photographs, artist's renderings, maps, color slides for TV, etc. Let the spokespeson review the packet material in advance so he/she is thoroughly familiar with it. You can also send packets to news people who do not attend the conference.

Try to provide visual interest at the conference, especially if television reporters are expected. Charts, graphs, models, diagrams, and still photographs are important. Be sure the material is easily readible.

Allow time after the conference for individual or taped interviews with the spokesperson.

SECTION 5 - LEGAL ISSUES AND MEDIA RELATIONS

In working with the news media, local government officials must be aware of the provisions of two state laws which bear on specific aspects of media relations. This section is not intended as an in-depth analysis of these laws, but merely to call them to your attention for further examination with your attorney.

The State Open Record Law (T.C.A. 10-7-503--508) and Confidential Records

State, county, and municipal records, with certain exceptions, are open at all times, during regular business hours, for inspection by any citizen of the state. Those in charge of these records may not refuse access to them unless such access is prohibited or limited by state law or regulations. Note that any citizen includes the news media. Records which are excluded from examination include:

(1) Medical records of patients in state hospitals and medical facilities;

(2) Records, documents, and papers in the possession of the military department which involve the security of the United States and/or the State of Tennessee, including National Guard personnel records, staff studies, and investigations;

(3) All investigative records of the Tennessee Bureau of Criminal Investigation. This has been interpreted to include local government police records because raw data often collected but unsubstantiated during an investigation can embarrass a person or group of persons; however, a Shelby County Chancery Court ruled early this year (1985) that investigative records of the Memphis Police Department are open to public inspection (Memphis Publishing Co., v. John D. Hoet, et. al.) The case has been appealed.

(4) Records of students in public education institutions (these include records relating to academic performance; financial status of the student, parent, or guardian; medical or psychological treatment; and testing); note that statistical information not identified with a particular student may be released; and

(5) Case records of the Department of Human Services (this prohibition is based on a law never tested in court).

Public records are defined by law to mean "all documents, papers, letters, maps, books, photographs, microfilm, electronic data processing files and output, films and recordings, or other material regardless of physical form ... made or receiving pursuant to law or ordinance or in connection with a transaction of official business by any governmental agency." There are conflicting interpretations as to whether or not "working papers" are included.

Any citizen has the right not only to examine but to make copies of the records which are considered "open." However, the legal custodian of these records may adopt and enforce "reasonable" rules governing the making of extracts, copies, or photocopies.

Personnel records of state and local government employees are open to the public. The State Supreme Court also has ruled that this applies to the job applications of public employees. Federal employee records, including those employed under federal programs, are not covered by the state law. Tennessee law does prohibit the release of Social Security numbers.

It is very rare for medical records of welfare participants to be the subject of news coverage. Should they be, the law clearly provides that a reporter may demand to see fiscal records, but not how much is spent on an individual.

Records are a very sensitive area. Be aware of what you can and cannot refuse to provide to the media. "Stonewalling" can give you a very bad image, and provisions of the law have been overruled in only a very few cases. Accept the realities of the law and make a determined effort to comply for the sake of good media relations. (See Appendix J, Page 85, for text of law).

Public Meeting Law (T.C.A. 8-44-101--106) (Sunshine Law)

Better known as the Sunshine Law, the Tennessee Public Meeting Law is recognized as one of the most comprehensive in the nation. It provides that "all meetings of any governing body are declared to be public meetings open to the public at all times, except as provided in the Tennessee Constitution." The reference to the state constitution affects only the legislature, and is of no concern to local officials. The important words are meetings and governing body. (See Appendix K, Page 91, for text of law.)

The act defines a meeting as "... the convening of a governing body of a public body for which a quorum is required in order to make a decision or to deliberate toward a decision on any matter. Meeting does not include any on-site inspection of any project or program." The governing body means "... the members of any public body which consists of two or more members, with the authority to make decisions for or recommendations to a public body on policy or administration."

Much of the confusion stemming from this act concerns the meaning of "public body" or "governing body." State Assistant Attorney General Robert H. Roberts indicated, in an April 10, 1974, letter, that only the "governing body" of the city, county, and state are covered, thereby eliminating "housing authorities, sanitary districts" and similar public agencies. However, wisdom dictates that the act be interpreted to include all public or governing bodies having the authority to make recommendations or decisions on policy or administration, including beer boards, planning commissions, civil service commissions, auditorium commissions, airport authorities, etc.

The spirit of the law, set out in section 101, is that "...the formation of public policy and decisions is public business and should not be conducted in secret." The intent clearly is to allow informal meetings and exchanges only so long as they are not intended as a means of making decisions or deliberating on public affairs.

For example, a telephone poll to line up votes on an issue apparently would not be a violation of the law as no "convening" of a governing body had occurred and no "quorum" was required. A meeting or conference for the purpose of informing the members or of hearing reports and results of studies doesn't appear to be prohibited. Remember that the law refers only to "meetings" for which a "quorum" is required.

Section 8-44-102 of the law provides that "nothing in this section shall be construed as to require a chance meeting of two or more members of a public body to be considered a public meeting. No such chance meetings, and informal assemblages, or electronic communications shall be used to decide or deliberate public business and circumvent the spirit or requirements of this part."

The law contains very few exceptions, and no provision for executive sessions. However, in 1984 the Tennessee Supreme Court opened one "crack" in the law. In Smith County Education Association v. Joe K. Anderson, Superintendent of Schools for Smith County et. al, the court held that the law did not apply to meetings of public bodies with their attorneys to discuss pending litigation in which the public body is a named party. The exception is a very narrow one and applies only to those situations in which the public body is a named party in a lawsuit. MTAS attorney Don Ownby, writing in the Tennessee Municipal Attorneys Newsletter, notes that "clients may provide counsel with facts and information regarding the lawsuit and counsel may advise them about the legal ramifications of those facts and the information given to him. However, once any discussion, whatsoever, begins among members of the public body regarding what action to take based upon advice from counsel, whether it be settlement or otherwise, such discussion shall be open to the public and failure to do so shall constitution a clear violation" of the act.

Section 103 requires that "any such governmental body which holds a meeting previously scheduled by stature, ordinance, or resolution, shall give adequate public notice to such meeting." Adequate notice is generally accepted as including:

(1) The public and continuous posting of the dates, times, and places at the principal office of the governing body, or if no such office exists, at the building where meetings are usually conducted, at least seven days before the first regular meeting of the year.

(2) Publishing the schedule in a newspaper of general circulation in the territorial limitations of the governing body at least seven days before the first regular meeting of the year.

(3) Mailing copies of the schedule to all local news media at least seven days before the first meeting of the year; and advising the media that notices of special and reconvened meetings will be mailed upon request.

(4) Making copies of the schedule available to the public at the regular meeting place at least 24 hours prior to each meeting.

(5) Repeating the procedure above if the regular meeting is changed.

For special meetings, the law provides that "any such governmental body which holds a meeting not previously scheduled by statute, ordinance, or resolution, or for which notice is not already provided by law, shall give adequate notice of such meeting." To meet this requirement, it is generally acceptable to:

(1) Post notice of date, hour, purpose, and place of meeting at the principal office of the governing body or at the building where meetings are held, at least seven days before the meeting.

(2) Publish the notice in a general circulation newspaper at least seven days before the meeting.

(3) Mail the notice, as requested, to the news media at least seven days before the meeting.

(4) Make copies available to the public at the meeting place at least 24 hours before the meeting.

For reconvened meetings:

(1) Follow the same procedure as for special meetings except with 24-hour notice unless the meeting is to be held within 24 hours of adjournment and no new questions are to be considered.

(2) Announce the time and place at the meeting from which it was adjourned.

The State Attorney General has suggested that 10 days would be reasonable notice. Do consult with your local attorney as to any special charter provisions or requirements in special acts which dictate a different notice.

To be on the safe side, committee meetings should be subject to the law, especially when a quorum is required by local law or regulation.

Section 104 requires that "the minutes of a meeting of any governmental body shall be promptly and fully recorded, shall be open to public inspection, and shall include but not be limited to a record of persons present, all motions, proposals and resolutions offered, the results of any votes taken, and a record of individual votes in event of roll call."

The above language would indicate a policy that all persons attending the meeting must be listed and such lists maintained as part of the public record. Leading attorneys interpret this position more narrowly to include only the members of the governing body and those person appearing before that body. All motions, proposals, or resolutions offered should be recorded, together with the vote of each individual when a roll call is taken. Section 105 of the law provides that "any action taken at a meeting in violation of this part should be void and no effect, providing that this nullification of actions taken at such meetings shall not apply to any commitment, otherwise legal, effecting the public debt of the entity concerned." Most attorneys believe that if the notice provisions previously outlined are followed, the courts would uphold an informal meeting or executive session wherein decisions are actually made or deliberations toward decisions take place.

Note that Section 201 specifically deals with labor negotiations and provides that "not withstanding any other provisions of Tennessee law to the contrary, labor negotiations between representatives and public employee unions or associations and representatives of a state or local governmental entity shall be open to the public whether or not the negotiations by the state or local government entity are under the direction of the legislative, executive or judicial branch of government. Nothing contained in this section

shall be construed to require that planning or strategy sessions of either the union committee or the governmental entity committee, meeting separately, be open to the public." This section also provides that "both sides shall decide jointly and announce in advance of any such labor negotiations where such meeting shall be held." (See Appendix L, Page 94, for a detailed discussion of this law).

The Sunshine Law can be the basis for a good working relationship with the news media if you:

(1) Meet with representatives of the media serving your city and establish a workable method of implementing the "adequate notice" provisions of the law.

(2) Establish some continuing means of keeping citizens informed of when various arms of local government will meet and what will be discussed (some cities are using lobby bulletin boards and/or making advance copies of the agenda available at stated locations, but don't depend on the news media to always get out the word).

(3) Make sure your various advisory boards and commissions advise you of their meeting dates and agendas so this information also can be relayed to the media and the public.

SECTION 6 - HOW TO SURVIVE ON CAMERA

We live in what is often call the Communication Era. Many local TV stations have the capacility of conducting on-the-spot interviews, and no community is too remote to forever escape the mobile TV unit. Talk shows have a continuing need to fill air time with interesting people.

All this adds up to one thing: you, as a municipal government official, have an unprecendented opportunity to present your views to a large segment of the viewing public in your community. But how well prepared are you to do so effectively?

Have you watched yourself on television? Were you satisfied with the way you and your ideas came across? If you can answer "yes," you're in a minority, and you've probably had some special training. A "good" interview doesn't happen. Getting your point across on television, and projecting your true image via the tube, requires learned skills and plenty of practice.

Keep one idea foremost: time on television is an absolute. Because of the compelling need of television for short, concise items, perhaps only one sentence of a carefully prepared presentation actually gets on the air. And what is that sentence likely to be? Sensational, attention-catching, and often not the point you really want to get across.

So how do you cope with the "givens" of television and still say what you want to say in the way you want to say it while appearing to your audience as you really are? The answer is practice, practice, practice. President Reagan practices regularly before news conferences and other on-camera appearances -- and he's a professional actor. You shouldn't be hesitant to follow suit.

Unless you prepare well, you can look ridiculous, and you won't get your story across. Preparation is the cornerstone of a successful on-camera interview. Being prepared helps you go into the interview in a positive frame of mind, and that will go a long way toward insuring that your message will be presented the way you intended it to be.

Never forget that TV is a visual medium, and most people believe what they see (or think they see). But the TV screen cannot reflect the whole person; it shows only one aspect, and that may not be what you want it to show. So start with yourself as you think you really are (self image). Now, how do other people see you (peer image)? How do you think people perceive you? That's three different views of one person; is it hard to understand why the TV image may not always reflect you as you are, why it is a little distorted?

The object is to identify your most attractive quality and to build on that. You aren't trying to be an actor or actress or to be other than yourself. ou are trying to decide how YOU want to come across; you are refusing to let TV control you and the presentation of your message.

Getting Started

It's easy to say practice, but how do you start? It's really not so difficult. Do you own or have access to a video tape recorder and video camera? If you or the city doesn't own one, what about the nearest school or college or the cable TV operation? In many larger cities, there are companies that rent this type of equipment.

Once you have the equipment, use it, preferably with a friend or family member who will give you an honest opinion. What on-camera gestures or actions detract or enhance your message? Do glasses help or hurt? What about your hair style or makeup or jewelry, if you're a woman? Is your delivery too fast or too slow (a person who speaks at between 150 and 165 words per minute is perceived as more intelligent than one who speaks more slowly; the mind can process up to 500 words per minute). Look and listen carefully. Is the image you're projecting the one you want? If it's not, it can prevent you from getting on with the real job of communicating a message.

Preparing For The Interview

If you know in advance that you are to be interviewed on camera (much of this applies for impromptu interviews also), here are a few things you can do to make your appearance more effective:

(1) **Preview the interviewer.** Watch the show several times and note the interviewer's style. Does he or she often seem hostile or aggressive toward guests or just try to draw information out and let the guest do the rest? Does the interviewer seem well informed? What is his or her personal style?

(2) **Take a few minutes to organize your thoughts.** List the things about your city that make you uncomfortable. Now list the good things. What questions would you ask if you were the reporter? Anticipate the toughest questions. Try a dry run with a colleague asking you questions. By the very nature of the TV news business, the interviewer often is not well prepared for an exchange with you. If YOU are prepared, you will be able to make the most of the interview.

(3) **Dress properly for the interview.** Men should wear a soft-colored, conservatively-styled suit, a light blue shirt, and a simple matching tie. Women should avoid loud colors, wild prints or plaids, and dangling or shiny jewelry. Nothing should distract the viewer's attention from what you're saying.

(4) **Provide the interviewer with a list of questions in advance.** The questions may not be used, but they will give the interviewer an idea of what you think is important.

(5) **Use visuals to help you tell your story.** If you can bring slides, video tapes, charts, architectural models or artist's renderings, let the interviewer know this and find out how early you need to have them at the studio.

(6) **Know how your interview is to be used.** Will it be part of a series on a particular issue?

(7) **Find out the format for the interview.** Will you have just one segment or the full time period? Are you the only guest or will there be a group? Will there be a live audience? Will phone calls be taken from viewers? You need to adapt your presentation to the circumstances.

(8) **A good introduction always helps.** Provide the interviewer with a short, concise one to demonstrate how you would like to be introduced.

(9) **Time your arrival carefully.** Never be late, but don't come too early and have to sit around the studio and worry.

(10) **Don't cancel an interview** unless there is real emergency, and then give the station as much advance notice as possible. You don't want a reputation for being unreliable.

Surviving The Interview

You've practiced, you've prepared, and now you're ready to go on stage. If you have the time, try to get acquainted with the interviewer during the setting up period. Even a few words can tell you a great deal about how prepared he or she is. You can tell the interviewer where you stand on the issues and what some of your facts are. Don't be afraid to inform the interviewer what areas of the subject you don't know very much about; most TV people will appreciate the help. A talk like this can provide a focus for the interview that can make it more helpful to the public -- and to you.

When you see the little red light come on and you're on the air, what do you do? Watch your body language -- especially the way you sit. If you're ramrod straight and on the edge of your seat, you won't convey an impression of competence. Try crossing your legs at the knees and fold one hand over the other in your lap, free for natural gesturing. Think of the interview as a conversation in a familiar place with a good friend. Look at the interviewer, not at the camera, but never forget it is the viewers to whom you really are talking. Strive for an informal, conversational tone (you don't need to use the interviewer's first name with every sentence). Avoid professional jargon.

One very big don't: DON'T try to answer every question as soon as it is asked. Try to find out what the reporter really wants to know before you respond. And remember that you don't have to give any answer, although you should state a reason for not doing so. DO keep your answers short and simple. They are the only kind people can understand on TV and that most TV news editors will allow on the air.

What questions can you expect and how do you handle them? Here are four common types:

(1) **Focus** - Allows you to state your important point and give details or illustrations. Example: "What is the city planning to offset the loss of federal funds?" Technique: What is the most important point you want to make? State it right away, then elaborate. Don't be tempted to outline a 30-page plan; just give the major thrust. You want people to know that you are aware of the problem and that you will take steps to deal with it.

(2) **Avoidance** - You'd rather not answer. What is the toughest question you could be asked? Example: "How high are you going to hike taxes to make up for that lost federal money? Technique: Don't say "no comment." Try to stay friendly and assured and either give the true answer or explain why you can't respond "at this time" -- you're waiting for further reports before any decision is made, for example. Try a technique called "bridging": answer the question the best you can and then build a bridge back to your important original point. Think of an avoidance question as an opportunity to make your positive point but by an indirect route.

(3) **Control** - Sounds like it includes a misinterpretation of fact and offers you an opportunity to take over. Example: Taxes already are too high in this town, aren't they?" Technique: Confidently state, "That's not true," and then give the facts. Give the viewers the right information.

(4) **Must** - Demands "just the facts" and no side trips. Example: "How much will the city lose in federal revenues?" Technique: Answer with the requested facts, but relate them to the needs of your viewers; tell them how they will be affected.

The Antagonistic Reporter

Don't assume that every interviewer is out to "get you." This assumption can do more damage to your appearance on TV than any other single thing. Just because a reporter asks a difficult question doesn't mean he or she personally holds a position antagonistic to yours. Hard questions make good interviews. Remember, too, that in the rush of covering many stories, most reporters don't have enough background or detailed information to "get you."

You will, however, occasionally run across a reporter who either doesn't like you and/or your administration or wants to come across as a second Mike Wallace. What do you do when this happens?

DON'T assume you have no control over the interview. With a little forethought, you can avoid being at the reporter's mercy. Remember, reporters have constraints on them, too. If a reporter constantly draws complaints of unfairness or bias from people interviewed or from viewers, he or she may soon be out of a job.

DO remember you often can confuse an antagonistic reporter with a simple "yes" or "no". These answers are death to any television interview. This is a particularly helpful technique with reporters who habitually ask leading questions that begin: "Don't you feel that...?" "No." Silence.

DON'T answer a needling question. Repeat it in your own, presumably softer language. You can turn this type of question around: "Your question does not correctly address the issue. The city's position is such and such." This puts your answer in a positive framework and gets you out of a defensive posture. Direct your response to the audience, not the reporter.

DON'T answer a question you don't fully understand. Ask for a repeat or clarification. This gives you a few seconds to formulate an answer to an unexpected question.

DON'T try to answer a hypothetical, "what if," question. Take control by just saying, "That's a hypothetical question," and stopping. If you add anything, the reporter can pick it up and go on; if you don't, the reporter isn't stupid and will drop the whole thing.

DON'T respond too quickly to multiple questions asked as one question. The temptation is to answer the last query you hear and that can be fatal: "What are you going to do about the budget deficit? How many people are you going to lay off? Are they all in the Public Works Department?" If you respond, "No, we aren't going to lay off anybody in Public Works," you imply there will be layoffs elsewhere or that you have a deficit when you don't. Either choose the question you want to answer or force the reporter to rephrase by asking, "What do you mean? I don't understand the question."

If you are asked an argumentative question, throw it back at the reporter: "I don't think I understand what you're asking." You don't have to answer a question. If you do, a reporter can keep expanding it until the words change from white to black. Once a reporter "gets you going," he or she is in control of the interview, not you.

Some General Do's and Don'ts

DON'T ever say "no comment." It makes you look guilty. There is always a better way to phrase it. Say you can't address that particular issue "at this time" because of legal or other restraints.

DON'T lie. Newspeople accept the fact that you aren't telling them everything, and won't hold it against you. But if you lie to them, they will be your enemies for life.

DON'T bluff. If you don't know the answer, say so, and volunteer to get the information later. Don't try to bluff your way out of a tough question; the reporter may be holding a better hand.

DO set the guidelines for the interview. You cannot expect to be told the particular question the reporter will ask, but you reasonably can expect to learn what areas the interview will cover.

DO keep your cool. Two pictures always make the news programs -- someone weeping and someone angry. By losing your cool, you give reporters one of their rare opportunities to "get you."

DO correct any part of a question that may be misleading. Make the correction before going on with the answer to the main query.

DON'T assume any particular answer will be aired in full. No one likes to be edited, but it is a fact of life if you appear on TV. Know that the editor listens for key phrases such as "the most important thing," "in the final analysis," "it all boils down to." Use these to lead into the point you want aired.

DON'T be misled by a reporter's manner. Easy questions can be asked in an antagonistic tone. A softer tone and a smile can accompany a real zinger.

DON'T ever go off the record. These days, there is practically no such thing. When you use this device, you are putting yourself at the reporter's mercy.

DO use humor, but always turn it back on yourself, not on others. Don't give the impression you aren't taking things seriously, however.

DON'T allude to the interviewer's motives. There is rarely a gain -- and usually a loss -- in communication when you do this. Have some faith in the audience (even those against you) to recognize unfair interviewing tactics.

DO edit yourself as you speak. Be brief. Overdone answers almost always wind up answering other questions. This is hard to do; everyone is afraid of leaving something out.

APPENDIX A

SAMPLE PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER JOB DESCRIPTION

The Public Information Officer is responsible to the Chief Executive Officer for preparing and disseminating to the public and all news media reliable information on services and functions performed by the city.

(1) The Public Information Officer, as the chief news source of the city, acquires an intimate knowledge of all city departments and their activities, all community projects under way and proposed for the future, and promotes citizen participation in city government. Additional duties to be performed include:

(a) Advising the Mayor, Governing Body, and department heads on matters pertaining to relations with the public.

(b) Acting as liaison between the city and the chamber of commerce and such other service and civic organizations as involve the general good of the community.

(c) Preparing regular news releases on city-promoted projects, governmental activities, and matters of general interest to residents.

(d) Developing, promoting, and maintaining contact with all news media, including newspapers, magazines, radio, and television.

(e) Assisting the Governing Body, Committees, and Commissions with the promotion of specific projects.

(f) Conducting City Hall tours for, and encouraging the dissemination of city government information to, all classrooms within the city.

(g) Preparing talks on city government for delivery by the Mayor or other chief executive officer when acting in an official capacity for the city.

(h) Preparing materials for special observances and proclamations covering community-wide events and activities.

(i) Writing and distributing the city's annual report.

(j) Maintaining files of news clippings taken from newspapers, etc. Each item must be separated and filed to subject matter. This develops into a library of background material, of vital importance in preparing stories, releases, etc.

(k) Writing and editing the city newsletter.

(l) Preparing brochures, as needed, on each department for open houses, ground breakings, bond drives, annexations, etc.

(m) Establishing a speakers' bureau and training speakers.

(n) Planning and implementing programs for open houses, ground breakings, dedications, etc.

(o) Responding to requests for information; handling telephone inquiries.

OTHER DUTIES

Seminars: Conduct public relations seminars during regular monthly staff meetings of department heads. Recommend policies, methods, and programs for improving public relations between city offices and the general public; promote interdepartment communications; discuss development of proposed PR programs. When necessary, work directly with individual departments on problems.

Orientation: Create an orientation program for all employees.

Citizen Relations: Work with individuals, groups, businesses, and industries on problems relating to city services, in cooperation with department heads.

Guest Relations: Arrange receptions, tours, media coverage, and social activities for special guests.

Photography: Build and maintain a photo file of all individual members of Governing Body, administration, department heads, and appointed Commissions and Boards. Build photo file on city at large: parks, public buildings, special events, etc.

Performs additional duties as required.

APPENDIX B

PLANNING A PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN

Now that you are familiar with the various tools of communication, you are ready to begin planning the publicity campaign for your organization. By following the step-by-step outline below, you should be able to conduct a successful campaign and have a significant effect on people's attitudes toward your programs, activities or services.

Bear in mind that your publicity campaign is not like a political campaign that ends with the November election. Communication is a continuous process.

Step I: If you are going to communicate with people, you must have a message to communicate to them. Your first step will be to know your organization and the problems associated with it. Then determine what the message is you want to communicate, and to whom.

Step II: Pinpoint your target publics. This is a very important step because your communication efforts should be geared primarily toward those persons who are most likely to be receptive and responsive. In some cases, there will be a spillover effect: you will also reach other publics who may respond favorably to your message.

Step III: Once you have a message to communicate and know to whom you want to communicate it, decide how to communicate it. What tools and techniques of communication are best suited to your campaign?

Step IV: Develop a plan of action composed of a series of goals and objectives which are based on the size and scope of your campaign and the resources available to you. Bear in mind that using a broad goal, like "changing public attitudes," is not sufficient. You will need to develop a series of narrower, shorter-range objectives which are designed to lead your

campaign to accomplishment of the overall goal. These objectives will serve the dual purposes of providing you with a specific direction while giving you checkpoints which will assist in gauging the effectiveness of your campaign.

Step V: To put the plan into action, you will probably need people to help you. Again, depending on the size of your campaign and the resources available, decide whether your staff will be all-volunteer, paid and volunteer, or all paid. Set up an organizational plan which will provide the personnel necessary to reach your goals.

Step VI: Evaluate the program. This should be done, not only at the end of the campaign, but at various intervals during the campaign. One method of keeping up with your progress is to keep a card file with a card for each newspaper, radio station, TV station, and public speaker, and their channels of communication. Record each attempt to use a channel with a notation as to success or failure. In addition to helping you chart your progress and decide what will be your next move, this will also show you which channels are most receptive.

A PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN

Following is a hypothetical publicity campaign to illustrate how the steps work. Although your organization's goals and objectives will be different, the procedures used by the Metropolitan Zoo in obtaining public support may be useful.

The Metropolitan Zoo

Background

When the Metropolitan Zoo was founded in 1934, it had only a few animals, but the Zoo has since expanded into a thriving recreational facility. Today is occupies more than 50 acres and has more than 10,000 animals.

Problem

The Zoo is partially funded by the City of Hainesville but relies heavily on private donations from citizens and the business community. During the past few years, public support and donations dropped significantly. In order for the Zoo to survive, these important contributions must be re-established.

Goals and Objectives

The organizational objective of the Metropolitan Zoo is to make money, while the functional objectives include education, conservation, research, and recreation.

The main goal of the publicity campaign is to educate people about the work the Zoo does in the areas of research and conservation through use of various communication tools in order to increase financial support. More specific objectives are:

(1) To develop weekly contacts with the local media and distribute to them news releases, PSA's, and other information about the Zoo's activities and its work in conservation and research.

(2) To create better employee relations by starting an employee newspaper.

(3) To foster better relations with businesses by establishing a speakers' bureau.

(4) To sponsor a series of special events and attractions which would cause more people to visit the Zoo.

(5) To educate school children and adult groups about the Zoo by providing speakers, slide presentations, and brochures.

IDENTIFICATION OF PUBLICS

Internal Publics	Media Tools To Reach Publics
1. Zookeepers, maintenance, and other workers.	1. Newsletters, bulletin boards, and personal contact.

2.	Board of Directors, Zoological Societies.	2.	Newsletters, bulletin boards, and personal contact.
	External Publics		Media Tools To Reach Publics
1.	Media.	1.	News releases, PSA's, photo features, and personal contacts.
2.	Contributors.	2.	Newsletters, thank you letters, and telephone contacts.
3.	Business community and city officials.	3.	Newsletters, personal and telephone contacts.
4.	Taxpayers.	4.	Local media and fliers in Bell Notes.
5.	University students.	5.	Newsletters, brochures, and posters placed in heavy traffic areas.
6.	Hospital patients.	6.	Newsletters, slide shows, and personal contacts.
7.	Libraries.	7.	Newsletters and brochures.
8.	Tourists' Bureau.	8.	Newsletters, brochures, and personal contacts.
9.	Environmental clubs and other civic organizations.	9.	Newsletters, brochures, slide presentations, speakers, and telephone contacts.
10.	Area artists.	10.	Newsletters, brochures, and local media.
11.	Big Brothers and Sisters; other human service groups.	11.	Newsletters, brochures, slide presentations, and speakers.
12.	Humane Society.	12.	Newsletters and brochures.

Comprehensive Publicity Campaign For The Zoo

In order to effectively reach the Zoo's publics, a multi-media publicity campaign was implemented. Each week, a news release and PSA's were sent to the local media telling about new animal births and/or conservation and research projects at the Zoo. Through the media, it is hoped that this information reached all the Zoo's publics.

A newsletter and employee paper were used to reach all members of the internal public, including employees, the Board of Directors, the Southeastern and Metropolitan Zoological Societies, and the Holston Valley P & J Park. These were supplemented by personal contacts. A newsletter, sent to potential supporters and past contributors, explained the Zoo's continuing efforts in conservation and research.

Slide shows and speakers were made available to local schools, clubs, associations, fraternal organizations, etc. Also, a brochure on the Zoo was distributed to various groups who sponsored field trips to the Zoo. Space in the local tourist bureau's publication was obtained to reach the tourists who travel in and through the area. A flier, which discusses the Zoo's participation in research and conservation, was included with local utility bills.

A "Travelling Zoo" was established for use on television shows and/or to be taken around to schools or civic clubs. People dressed like animals visited the hospitals and gave the patients special Zoo gift packets.

At various intervals during the year, special attractions and staged events were held at the Zoo. For example, during the local Peach Blossom Festival, area artists held exhibits and musicians presented concerts at the Zoo. Staged events included a "Name the Baby (animal) Contest," egg hunts, "Treat Dad, Help the Zoo" Day, and several other events.

A continuing source of fund raising is the sponsoring of an annual family membership drive in cooperation with the local schools' PTA's.

Results of the Campaign

The campaign produced more than 4,500 column inches of newspaper stories and several hours of radio and television time.

Attendance at the Zoo was increased by 25 per cent in less than six months. Contributions from local businesses and individuals more than doubled what they were before the campaign.

Because employees are informed about the Zoo's activities and goals, they serve as one of the best means of advertising to the general public.

APPENDIX C

SAMPLE CALENDAR OF EVENTS

(From Hillsborough County, FL, Public School System)

Monday, April 21 -- School Book Depository (1731 Green St.) opens its doors daily 8:30-4:30 Monday thru Friday for parents of school children to come select about-to-be-disposed-of textbooks. FREE.

Tuesday, April 22 -- 9:30 a.m. - County PTA Exec. Board meets in chapel of Div. of Youth Services Treatment Center (formerly known as Lake Magdalene Juvenile Home.)

-- NOTE: NO SCHOOL BOARD MEETING TONIGHT. CANCELLED.

7:00 p.m. Dinner in the Jefferson High Mall, honoring the visiting team representing Southern Assoc. of Colleges & Schools ... THIS IS THE LAUNCHING OF THE 3-DAY SURVEY BY THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE ONCE-EVER-10-YEARS ACCREDITATION OF JEFFERSON HIGH ... The 30-member team is headed by Calvin Craig, USF College of Education Professor ... There is special news significance here: The "old" Jefferson High ceased to exist in 1967 when it failed to get accreditation renewal from Southern Assn., and School Board phased it out. (It was housed in present Geo. Washington Jr. High bldg., & facilities were too limited for high school, etc.)
THIS IS THE FIRST ACCREDITATION SURVEY SINCE THE "NEW" JEFFERSON CAME INTO EXISTENCE. (It is now in 4th year --2 years housed as p.m. session at Leto, and 2 years in its new building.)

-- Wednesday -- 12:45-2:00 p.m., at Dunbar Elem, 1730 Union Street, annual colorful Jr. Olympics. Starts with costumed Olympic parade, banners depicting student nations of Sparta, Troy, Ithica, etc... Event winners get awards in traditional Olympics fashion on 3-tiered victory stand.

Wednesday, April 23 -- PTAs from all over state observe "PTA Day at the Legislature" today and Thursday. Hillsborough Co. PTA delegation will be a strong one. Co. PTA Legis. Chairman: Mrs. Charlotte Barres, ph. 834-8984.

Thursday, April 24 -- 1:45 p.m., Board has bill-paying session. Rm. 8.

2:00 p.m., Board leaves Courthouse to tour several proposed "School 'F'" sites south & southwest of Brandon, with Area Dir. Bud Nifong & Keith Waller of Planning Commission, et. al.

8:00 p.m. at Council Meeting Room of Tampa City Hall, regular monthly meeting of the Council of Govts. of Hillsborough County. Hosting it are School Board Members Mrs. Cecile Essrig and Dr. Roland Lewis.

Friday, April 25 -- 1:30 p.m., in Jefferson High Auditorium, Southern Assn. team gives oral report of its accreditation survey findings.

APPENDIX D

MEDIA TIPSHEET

City of New Land

For Further Information Contact:
Jack Jones
Phone: 434-3568.

Week Of: _____

1. Sealed bids to be opened this Monday on cleaning of small section of Tiger Creek before spring rains start. Purpose is flood control. Completion planned within two weeks after award.

2. City has restarted disconnection of water service for non-payment of bills in effort to make service self-supporting. To be handled through Finance Department.

3. New fire station nearing completion. Should enhance fire protection for south side of the city. Facility also equipped with maintenance garage for routine servicing and repair of all department equipment.

4. Annual spring cleaning enforcement program to begin next week. Targets are junk autos, obstruction at street intersections, sidewalks needing repair, and vacant lots overgrown with weeds and brush. Sanitation Department in charge. Property owners receive notices this week.

5. Three brush clippers ordered for use by brush crew. Cost is $5,000 each, but cost of brush collection should be reduced substantially.

APPENDIX E

HOW TO TALK TO THE MEDIA

There is only one rule in talking to the media: never say anything you wouldn't want to see in the paper or on the evening news. This rule is in effect at all times, whether talking to journalists professionally or socially.

Media relations professionals accept the fact that reports are reporters 24 hours a day. They chose their words and actions wisely around reporters and editors. Anything said to a reporter at any time is fair game.

For the most part, you will be talking to reporters and editors when briefing them on a story, or when they contact you about some news item. It's best to avoid discussing business subjects when socializing with journalists.

Here are some hints to guide you in talking to the media when you call them, and when they call you.

When You Call Them

* Keep the discussion brief and to the point. Whether in person or over the phone, skip the amenities and get right into the summary of the news item or story idea. Don't get into non-related pleasantires, unless the reporter or editor does first, no matter how well you know each other. There are good times and bad for chit-chat, but they are not for you to choose.

* Try to sense the level of interest. If there appears to be none, just sign off, or leave the release and invite the editor or reporter to call you. If the lack of interest seems to be due to a lack of knowledge, quickly explain the nature, newsworthiness, and importance of the story, and offer to provide additional information. If you do sense interest, by

all means respond as fully as you can. But, remember, at this point the conversation becomes an interview, and what you say is likely to become a direct quote.

When They Call You

* When a reporter or editor calls, be sure you know who it is, what news organization is being represented, and precisely what he or she wants to know. Only answer the questions asked until you are sure of what the journalist is digging for. Then decide if you want to provide more information that might make the story more positive from your standpoint.

* If you are unable to answer the question immediately, find out when the reporter needs the information and arrange a call-back. Ask, "What time are your writing for?" That's an indication that you know about deadlines and will attempt to work toward them in responding, but that you will not be pressured to rush into an answer until you get your facts straight. Radio reporters can frustrate you. Don't let them. There will always be another newscast, so don't accede to demands to give a statement right away. The fact that the reporter is two minutes to deadline is not your problem. A quick way to get in trouble as a spokesperson is trying to answer a question you're not equipped to answer.

* Don't avoid answering a question that a reporter knows you're equipped to answer. That's another quick way to get in trouble. The reporter will suspect your motives and your honesty. If the information is available to a reporter from another source, you might as well give it out, even if it is embarrassing.

* Don't say, "No comment." That will only make the reporter suspicious and lead to innuendos or negative references in the resulting story. If the reporter asks for information you can't give out, say so and say why. It may be a matter that involves court litigation. Do not go "off the record." That's journalism shorthand for, "Don't use this, but don't quote me if you do." Speak openly about information that has been cleared and say nothing about information that hasn't.

* Don't answer questions that don't involve the organization directly. Reporters may ask your opinion on the electric utility's rate case, or the union leadership election. Tell the reporter to ask the electric company or the union.

* Decide who is the best person to answer a question. You are not expected to be the expert on everything going on in the organization, and reporters know you're not. Don't pretend to be always acting as spokesperson. Doing so wears out your credibility. Gear the response to the situation. If you can answer the question quickly and accurately, do so. If you can't because the question involves complexities, invite the reporter in to talk to an expert. Or, offer to furnish a written response to the question. Don't offer to get someone else on the line, unless that someone else knows in advance and is experienced in answering reporters' questions. Don't try to explain a highly complex issue over the phone in a few minutes, especially to a reporter who is unfamiliar with the subject. You'll only risk a story with errors and misquotes.

* Be nice. This means not taking nasty questions or abusive rejoiners personally. Some reporters do this as a technique to get you to debate them and say things you otherwise wouldn't. It's rare, but don't let it throw you if it happens. Don't get angry or emotional. And, remember, you have rights. Should a reporter become obnoxious seeking information, say something like, "Do you want a story or a fight?" If he or she persists, end the interview.

* Don't be flip or cute in answering questions. Your humorous response may appear old and cynical in print.

* Don't talk jargon. Use uncomplicated language, and try to explain what you mean in more than one way. Ask the reporter if you are making yourself understood in complex matters.

* Never forget, an interview with a reporter or editor is not a conversation. It is a highly structured situation where your role is to communicate as much information as possible. To guide you in interviews, here are 10 tips to keep in mind:

(1) Have in mind one or two key points about the subject that you want to get across in the finished story. Get your points in early, even if you have to redirect some of the reporter's questions.

(2) Refer to the interviewer by name, early and often. You'll appear more cooperative.

(3) Remember that although you're answering a reporter's questions, you are ultimately talking to consumers and opinion leaders. Phrase your questions with them in mind.

(4) Be positive, not defensive. Reporters will often ask questions in a negative vein, such as, "You don't have many black executives, do you?" Answering with something like, "We're making a lot of progress in developing and promoting black men and women to high management positions, and today such and such percent..."

(5) Short answers are better than long ones. You're talking to the public, not a staff meeting. You can highlight.

(6) Use colorful language, not acronyms and jargon. If an answer must be technical, be accurate. Try to illustrate verbally through analogies and anecdotes.

(7) Use personal pronouns - "I think..., we are going to..." Not "the administration is..., the city will..." That's cold and impersonal.

(8) Don't let an interviewer put words in your mouth. If you don't like the way a question is worded, deny it. Don't repeat it in your response. By repeating information you don't agree with, you may appear to be verifying it. It's better to respond in a positive way, using your own words, not the reporter's. Reporter: "Then, you're saying the city needs higher taxes?" Wrong response: "Yes, you could say that. However..." Tomorrow's headline: "Mayor Admits to Wanting Higher Taxes." Correct response: "No, what we're talking about here is a need to assure residents they will continue to receive the present level of service." Don't be misdirected by the reporter's questions. They don't get printed; your answers do.

(9) Control the interview. If the reporter interrupts and doesn't let you make your point, say so. Don't wait for the reporter to ask the right questions, direct the interview. "That's an interesting question, John, but the real guts of this situation is..."

(10) Take your time. Remember, an interview doesn't take place in "real time." You don't have to answer spontaneously! Take a few moments and think through exactly what you're going to say before answering a sticky question. Check a reference, or call someone for information.

About Photographers and TV Crews

* Don't let photographers and TV camera crews contrive a situation. They want the most dramatic picture. They don't care whether the pose violates safety standards or city policy. But you should care. Don't let them control your actions.

About Bad News

* The sooner and in detail you let the media in on bad news, the better. It's better for reporters to hear bad news from you, because then they get your side of the story first. In bad news situations, don't work alone. Have others concerned work with you to develop a statement. In brief, simple language you should describe the situation and what the city intends to do.

* Even if you don't have all the facts and answers, let the media know what you know before they find out from other sources. This demonstrates that you are not afraid to handle bad news and adds to your credibility. Anybody can promote good news for an organization.

* The media will appreciate your need to get the story out. They'll allow you to be brief if you tell them you have other calls to make, and that you'll get back to them as soon as you have more information. It is the truly professional media contact manager who operates evenhandedly in unfavorable and favorable situations.

In summary, it's worth repeating that the job you do (or don't do) in dealing with the news media can have a great deal of influence on what people think about your city. Yet, the media contact job is not all that difficult to do. And, it gets easier the more you do it.

The secret to success in media relations can be told rather simply with the five be's:

He is a member of The American Society for Public Administration, American Society of Planning Officials, National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials, and Virginia Citizens Planning Association.

Yates said he plans to being work on March 14.

# # #

APPENDIX G-1

NEWS RELEASE FOR A RADIO STATION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Smithville - August 20 - Dedication ceremonies will be held September 2nd for the John R. Jones Library Center at Smithville College. This first phase of construction, when complete, will consolidate into one area the College literary center.

Attending the occasion, which begins at 2 P.M. will be Mrs. John R. Jones, widow of John R. Jones, for whom the library center is to be named.

Also participating will be W.L. Franklin, Assistant State Librarian; College President Frank Brown; Vice President J.J. Johnson; and William X. Dawson, Chief Librarian of the College.

Cost of the library center will be $8,000,000. It provides 50,000 square feet of space.

A total of 10 persons will be employed at the center when it is completed in about nine months.

(Additional information can be obtained from Press Information Office at Smithville College, phone 264-6514)

APPENDIX G-2

SAMPLE RADIO PUBLIC SERVICE SPOT

FOR FUTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:
Mary Smith
Publicity Chairman
Lonsdale Community Club
P.O. Box 465
Knoxville, Tennessee 37914
(615) 525-5678

FOR USE: Oct. 20 - Nov. 2, 1985
TIME: 30 Seconds WORDS: 83

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU HAD SOME REAL "SOUL FOOD"? IF IT'S BEEN A WHILE, OR IF YOU'VE NEVER HAD "SOUL FOOD," COME TO THE LONSDALE COMMUNITY'S "SOUL FOOD DINNER" ON NOVEMBER 2ND AT 6:30 PM AT THE SENIOR CITIZENS BUILDING ON WINONA STREET. FOR $2.00, YOU CAN HAVE SOUTHERN FRIED CHICKEN, BARBECUED PORK RIBS, COLLARD GREENS, PINTO BEANS, CRACKLIN' BREAD AND SWEET TATER PIE. TICKETS WILL BE SOLD AT THE DOOR WITH PROCEEDS GOING TO PURCHASE FOOD FOR CHRISTMAS BASKETS FOR NEEDY LONSDALE FAMILIES.

# # #

Write like you talk -- "let's" and "don't" rather than "let us" and "do not." Use short, simple sentence structure. Avoid pronouns. Use adjectives and adverbs sparingly.

APPENDIX H-1

SAMPLE ANNOUNCEMENT FOR TELEVISION

FROM:
Frank W. Jones
Publicity Chairman
Woonsocket Teachers Association
Randolph Mason High School
Woonsocket, Tennessee
A.C. (615) #589-8600

AMERICAN EDUCATION WEEK IN TENNESSEE

February 21 - February 28

TIME: 30 seconds

WORDS: 63

VIDEO	AUDIO
Slide No... (School with many students walking alongside it)	ANNCR: Our nation's schools are home to millions of children for 17 years of their lives.
Slide No... (Lincoln Memorial with two children looking at statue)	America looks to these future citizens for the maintenance of the free world, and these students look to the great men of the world for guidance to keep it free.
(Slide No... (American Education Week. Visit your schools).	During American Education Week, visit your local school. Tennessee teachers urge you to participate in this observance.

(NOTE: The blank following "Slide #" is for the station to insert its own identifying number of your slide.")

APPENDIX H-2

IF YOU WANT AIR TIME: DO'S AND DON'TS FOR TV

DO

- Submit all copy to the program director as far in advance as possible. Two weeks would not be too soon.

- Get news releases to the news director as early as you can...a week in advance, if possible.

- Type all copy double spaced on 8½ x 11 inch paper, using one side only.

- Start a third-way down the first page. Leave ample margins.

- Use a clean ribbon for legible copy. Provide extra copies as requested.

- Put the name of your organization, and your own name, address, and telephone number at the top of each item.

- Give all facts...the what, when, where, who, and why of your event. Be sure to give specific starting and ending dates, such as "Use between July 4 and July 7," not "Monday through Thursday."

- Write all copy for the voice -- a bit more informal in style than copy written only for the eye. If you normally use "don't" in oral conversation, write in that way in your script. A good rule: Be informal, but don't be breezy.

- Provide a biographical sketch of any person to be interviewed, along with six or eight points to be covered. If the name is difficult to pronounce, give the phonetic spelling.

- Check with the program or news director on slides, films, and photographs which can be used to "demonstrate" your message.

- Make sure copy written to accompany such visual aids "fits" with the slide, film, or photo shown.

- Time your copy. Standard announcements for television run 10 seconds (about 12 words), 20 seconds (35 words), 30 seconds (60 words), and 60 seconds (120 words).

- Keep in mind that slides are preferable, in most cases, to photographs.

- Request return of your visual material if you want to preserve it. Otherwise, it may be thrown away.

DON'T

- Ask for public service time to publicize or promote bingo parties or lotteries.

- Try to use free air time to extol the advantages of any commercial product.

- Threaten or pull rank in an attempt to get time. A good presentation in the public interest will stand on its own merits.

- Submit copy scribbled on scratch paper or on a postcard. Writing in long hand invites errors.

- Omit essential information. Check over your copy to be sure it tells the who, what, why, when, and where, and includes your name, address, and phone number.

- Get carried away by trivialities, superlatives, and overenthusiasm. Omit adjectives and avoid nicknames.

- Use onion skin paper for on-the-air copy. It rattles!

APPENDIX I-1

HOW TO PRODUCE YOUR OWN SLIDES FOR PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS ON TV

It is most impractial for TV stations to handle public service artwork. The stations should be provided 35mm slides, mounted in glass and bound with tape.

Start with an 11" x 14" art card in a 3" x 4" proportion. Lightly mark off the limits of the "SAFE AREA" - 7 x 9 inches. All printing, paste-up, or actual artwork must be within this 7 x 9 inch area.

Shoot a picture of the finished artwork with a 35mm camera, keeping the outer edges of the "SAFE AREA"; it will NOT show on home TV sets.

ART CARD - 11 x 14 inches. Dotted line is the "SAFE AREA" (mark lightly and keep all copy, art, etc., within this area).

APPENDIX I-2

10 COMMANDMENTS OF PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Often, PSA's alienate the audience by instilling guilt or confusion, or leaving a ho-hum impression, but this need not happen if you observe these do's and don'ts.

Radio and television public service announcements (PSAs) all too often are the product of a local station's good will and eager personnel from professional service agencies.

Service agency personnel responsible for PSAs usually lack media experience and understanding. Often, organizational tunnel vision has created messages that are important only to that organization and are not interesting, persuasive, or informative.

PSAs with ineffective messages violate what I call the Ten Commandments of Public Service Announcements. While Federal Communications Commission regulations guarantee access to the media, they do not guarantee access to an audience. The moral worth of a message will not compensate for a poor or confusing presentation.

An informal, anecdotal survey of PSAs aired in one large media market revealed that they all violated at least two, if not more, of the following Ten Commandments.

(1) **Thou Shalt Not Bore Thine Audience.** Most of the PSA viewed lacked any dramatic presence, contrary to viewer's normal media expectations. They used the old bust-shot, look-straight-into-the-camera, and blurt-out-your message technique. In many cases, viewers have a negative reaction to this poor presentation. Blandness creates a PSA that blends with all other poor PSAs -- dull, indistinguishable, and unimportant to the viewer.

(2) **Thou Shalt Not Instill Guilt.** The not-so-subtle slam technique, well developed by some, is a terrific burden for your audience, intended or not. The message is simple: your lack of support will cause a catastrophe. The guilt isn't even implied; it's right up front and glaring. Let the audience try and sleep with that!

(3) **Thou Shalt Not Be Neglectful.** Neglect is a sin that results in a poor presentation, inadequate on-camera talent, or insufficient organization -- leading to poor quality PSAs that distract and annoy the audience. These PSAs also neglect the intended service population. The concept, ideas, message, and their presentation are the responsibility of the agency that wanted the air time in the first place.

(4) **Thou Shalt Not Cause Motion Sickness.** Motion sickness in PSAs is a disease characterized by jumping from point to point, with no rationale or connection, creating a piece that is impossible to understand or follow. Motion sickness reflects poor thought processes by its creators, and leaves the viewer bobbing like an untethered buoy.

(5) **Thou Shalt Not Stuff Thy PSA.** Stuffing is the sin of presenting too much, too fast. The thought is that you only have one shot at it, so get it all in -- even if it amounts to the contents of a very long book. A 350-page book cannot be compressed into a 30 or 60 second spot.

Several years ago the 30-second spot constituted 84 per cent of all telecast spots. The figure is probably higher today due to the rising cost of TV time. The 10-second spot is also coming back for the same reason. In these short spots the message must be clear and to the point.

(6) **Thou Shalt Not Deliver A Counterproductive Message.** A counter-productive message is delivered when an example is used that is far from the norm. The example, while true, sets up a false and misleading set of expectations for the audience because the example is not representative. A recent public service print campaign for the employment of the handicapped cited a blind man who has been elected as a justice of a state supreme court. Should all blind citizens be measured by that example? Why not ask blind people what message they want delivered? Here you see the effects of tunnel vision and professional issues that are not directly relevant to the audience, and in this example possibly not even relevant to those served.

(7) **Thou Shalt Not Omit Important Information.** This sin is just the opposite of the Fifth Commandment. People get caught up in the excitement of being at a TV or radio station. In the mystification of the media and the excitement at the station, they omit portions of their message. Sometimes it is as little as where to go or call if you are interested in the problem. Often it is that final detail that will enable an interested viewer to act. Without that detail, any action is eliminated.

Worse yet, there are some PSAs that leave off the tag line and the audience never finds out what is expected of them.

(8) **Thou Shalt Not Distort Thy Message.** Distortion is the roadsign to irrelevancy. It is usually the product of tunnel vision or professional concerns, neither of which is of interest or importance to the viewer. The distortion is traceable to the private priorities of the sponsoring organization. One PSA stressed the need for court reform, but the content of the PSA dealt with internal administrative matters, paper traffic, court clerks, and other areas of little interest and possibly of little consequence to the public. The spot never tied any of these issues into a major public interest -- the courts as an effective vehicle to serve in the administration of justice and the punishment of the guilty.

(9) **Thou Shalt Not Cloud Thy Message.** Clouded messages almost leave the impression, lacking any other clean-out message, that your hat is in your hand and the non-explicit message is fund raising. Fund raising, in our opinion, is probably the poorest use of a PSA. People are not going to give to something that they don't see as important to them.

What was your message? Did you really want to solicit funds? Is this the best way? If fund raising was not your message, it's time to start over.

(10) **Thou Shalt Not Be Constipated.** Constipation in PSAs is a sin characterized by no discernable message. The audience is left saying, "What was that all about?" Worse yet, they may say, "So what?" If there was anything there, it didn't come across. Was there anything there?

These Ten Commandments represent simple guideposts that identify problem PSAs. The problems represented in all 10 have a common foundation -- they never took the audience into consideration.

This common basis for problem PSAs is aggravated by poor thought processes. Usually, staff members are assigned to develop a PSA in addition

to their regular duties. They are satisfied with a PSA when they see themselves, their executive director, or chairman on TV. For many, the PSA is an end in itself.

Does this mean that a successful PSA must use computer animation, high-cost graphics, exotic visuals, and specially composed jingles?

The answer is no. Effective PSAs are possible using limited resources.

To be effective a PSA should be short, relevant to the audience, interesting or entertaining, and have a goal that can be summarized in one declarative sentence. The relevant message must be actionable by the intended audience. By actionable, we mean that the desired response from the audience must be reasonable and within their means.

To create a successful PSA, you must make a commitment to the time necessary for the entire process; have the creative staff with the talent and training necessary to develop a PSA; identify your intended audience; tailor your message; rehearse for a final product that is smooth, organized, and complete; and be graceful, gentle, persuasive, and interesting in your execution.

Remember the audience will judge your message by the same critical standards they apply to commercial advertising. In short, your message must be professional.

To get an idea of how successful your PSA is, find a representative group from the intended audience and screen the PSA for them. Can they tell you what your message is? If so, that's success.

(The preceding material was exerpted from an article by John Paul Kowal, vice president of Educational Communications/Systems, Boston. It appeared in the January 1980 issue of Public Relations Journal, a publication of the Public Relations Society of America.

APPENDIX J

THE OPEN RECORDS LAW -- TENNESSEE CODE ANNOTATED 10-7-503--508
(as amended 1984)

10-7-503. Records open to public inspection -- Exceptions (Effective July 1, 1985). All state, county and municipal records and all records maintained by the Tennessee performing arts center management corporation shall at all times, during business hours, be open for personal inspection by any citizen of Tennessee, and those in charge of such records shall not refuse such right of inspection to any citizen, unless otherwise provided by state statutes. Provided, however, that the head of a governmental entity may promulgate rules in accordance with the Uniform Administrative Procedures Act, compiled in title 4, chapter 5, to maintain the confidentiality of records concerning adoption proceedings or records required to be kept confidential by federal statute or regulation as a condition for the receipt of federal funds or for participation in a federally funded program. (Acts 1957, ch. 285, § 1; T.C.A., § 15-304; Acts 1981, ch. 376, § 1; 1984, ch. 929, §§ 1,3.)

10-7-504. Confidential records (Effective January 1, 1985). (a) The medical records of patients in state hospitals and medical facilities, and the medical records of persons receiving medical treatment, in whole or in part, at the expense of the state, shall be treated as confidential and shall not be open for inspection by members of the public. Additionally, all investigative records of the Tennessee bureau of investigation shall be treated as confidential and shall not be open to inspection by members of the public. The information contained in such records shall be disclosed to the public only in compliance with a subpoena or an order of a court of record, however, such investigative records of the Tennessee bureau of investigation shall be open to inspection by elected members of the general assembly if such inspection is directed by a duly adopted resolution of either house or of a standing or joint committee of either house. Records shall not be available to any member of the executive branch except those directly involved in the investigation in the Tennessee bureau of investigation itself and the governor himself. The records, documents and papers in the possession of the military department which involve the security of the United States and/or the state of Tennessee, including but not restricted to national guard personnel records, staff studies and investigations, shall be treated as confidential and shall not be open for inspection by members of the public.

(b) The records of students in public educational institutions shall be treated as confidential. Information in such records relating to academic performance, financial status of a student or his parent or guardian, medical or psychological treatment or testing shall not be made available to unauthorized personnel of the institution or to the public or any agency, except those agencies authorized by the educational institution to conduct specific research or otherwise authorized by the governing board of the institution, without the consent of the student involved or the parent or guardian of a minor student attending any institution of elementary or secondary education, except as otherwise provided by law or regulation pursuant thereto and except in consequence of due legal process or in cases when the safety of persons or property is involved. The governing board of the institution, the state department of education, and the Tennessee higher education commission shall have access on a confidential basis to such records as are required to fulfill their lawful functions. Statistical information not identified with a particular student may be released to any person, agency, or the public, and information relating only to an individual student's name, age, address, dates of attendance, grade levels completed, class placement and academic degrees awarded may likewise be disclosed.

(c) Any record designated "confidential" shall be so treated by agencies in the maintenance, storage and disposition of such confidential records. These records shall be destroyed in such a manner that they cannot be read, interpreted, or reconstructed. The destruction shall be in accordance with an approved records disposition authorization from the public records commission.

(d)(1) The following books, records and other materials in the possession of the office of the attorney general and reporter which relate to any pending or contemplated legal or administrative proceeding in which the office of the attorney general and reporter may be involved shall not be open for public inspection:

(A) Books, records or other materials which are confidential or privileged by state law;

(B) Books, records or other materials relating to investigations conducted by federal law enforcement or federal regulatory agencies, which are confidential or privileged under federal law;

(C) The work product of the attorney general and reporter or any attorney working under his supervision and control;

(D) Communications made to or by the attorney general and reporter or any attorney working under his supervision and control in the context of the attorney-client relationship; or

(E) Books, records and other materials in the possession of other departments and agencies which are available for public inspection and copying pursuant to §§ 10-7-503 and 10-7-506. It is the intent of this section to leave subject to public inspection and copying pursuant to §§ 10-7-503 and 10-7-506 such books, records and other materials in the possession of other departments even though copies of the same books, records and other materials which are also in the possession of the attorney general's office are not subject to inspection or copying in the office of the attorney general, provided such records, books and materials are available for copying and inspection in such other departments.

(2) Books, records and other materials made confidential by this subsection which are in the possession of the office of the attorney general and reporter shall be open to inspection by the elected members of the general assembly if such inspection is directed by a duly adopted resolution of either house or of a standing or joint committee of either house and is required for the conduct of legislative business.

(3) Except for the provisions of subdivision (2) hereof, the books, records, and materials made confidential or privileged by this subdivision shall be disclosed to the public only in the discharge of the duties of the office of the attorney general.

(e) State agency records containing opinions of value of real and personal property intended to be acquired for a public purpose shall not be open for public inspection until the acquisition thereof has been finalized. This shall not prohibit any party to a condemnation action from making discovery relative to values pursuant to the Rules of Civil Procedure as prescribed by law.

(f) Notwithstanding any provision of the law to the contrary, any confidential public record in existence more than seventy (70) years shall be open for public inspection by any person unless disclosure of the record is specifically prohibited or restricted by federal law or unless the record is a record of services for a person for mental illness or mental retardation. Provided, however, the provisions of this section shall not apply to a record concerning an adoption or a record maintained by the department of health and environment's office of vital records or by the Tennessee bureau of investigation. For the purpose of providing an orderly schedule of availability for access to such confidential public records for public inspection, all records created and designated as confidential prior to January 1, 1901, shall be open for public inspection on January 1, 1985. All other public records created and designated as confidential after January 1, 1901, and which are seventy (70) years old on January 1, 1985, shall be open for public inspection on January 1, 1986; thereafter all such records shall be open for public inspection pursuant to this part after seventy (70) years of the creation date

of such records. (Acts 1957, ch. 285, § 2; 1970, (Adj. S.), ch. 531, §§ 1,2; 1973, ch. 99, § 1; 1975, ch. 127, § 1; 1976 (Adj. S.), ch. 552, § 1; 1976 (Adj. S.), ch. 777, § 1; 1977, ch. 152, § 3; 1978 (Adj. S.), ch. 544, § 1; 1978 (Adj. S.), ch. 890, § 2; T.C.A., § 15-305; Acts 1983, ch. 211, § 1; 1984, ch. 947, § 2.)

10-7-505. Denial of access -- Procedures of obtaining access -- Court orders -- Injunctions -- Appeals -- Liability for nondisclosure. (a) Any citizen of Tennessee who shall request the right of personal inspection of any state, county or municipal record as provided in § 10-7-503, and whose request has been in whole or in part denied by the official and/or designee of the official or through any act or regulation of any official or designee of any official shall be entitled to petition for access to any such record and to obtain judicial review of the actions taken to deny the access.

(b) Such petition shall be made to the chancery court for the county in which the county or municipal records sought are situated or to any other court of that county having equity jurisdiction. In the case of records in the custody and control of any state department, agency or instrumentality, such petition shall be filed in the Chancery Court of Davidson County. Upon filing of the petition, the court shall, upon request of the petitioning party, issue an order requiring the defendant or respondent party or parties to immediately appear and show cause, if any they have, why the petition should not be granted. A formal written response to the petition shall not be required, and the generally applicable periods of filing such response shall not apply in the interest of expeditious hearings. The court may direct that the records being sought be submitted under the seal for review by the court and no other party. The decision of the court on the petition shall constitute a final judgment on the merits.

(c) The burden of proof for justification of nondisclosure of records sought shall be upon the official and/or designee of the official of those records and the justification for the nondisclosure must be shown by a preponderance of the evidence.

(d) The court, in ruling upon the petition of any party proceeding hereunder, shall render written findings of fact and conclusions of law and shall be empowered to exercise full injunctive remedies and relief to secure the purposes and intentions of this section and this section shall be broadly construed so as to give the fullest possible public access to public records.

(e) Upon a judgment in favor of the petitioner, the court shall order that the records be made available to the petitioner unless:

(1) There is a timely filing of notice of appeal; and

(2) The court certifies that there exists a substantial legal issue with respect to the disclosure of the documents which ought to be resolved by the appellate courts.

(f) Any public official required to produce records pursuant to this part shall not be found criminally or civilly liable for the release of such records nor shall a public official required to release records in his custody or under his control be found responsible for any damages caused, directly or indirectly, by the release of such information. (Acts 1957, ch. 285, § 3; 1975, ch. 127, § 2; 1977, ch. 152, § 4; T.C.A., § 15-306; Acts 1984, ch. 929, §§ 2,4.)

10-7-506. Right to make copies of public records. In all cases where any person has the right to inspect any such public records, such person shall have the right to take extracts or makes copies thereof, and to make photographs or photostats of the same while such records are in the possession, custody and control of the lawful custodian thereof, or his authorized deputy; provided, however, the lawful custodian of such records shall have the right to adopt and enforce reasonable rules governing the making of such extracts, copies, photographs or photostats. (Acts 1957, ch. 285,, § 4; T.C.A., § 15-307.)

10-7-507. records of convictions of traffic and other violations -- Availability. Any public official having charge or custody of or control over any public records of convictions of traffic violations or any other state, county or municipal public offenses shall make available to any citizen, upon request, during regular office hours, a copy or copies of any such record requested by such citizens, upon the payment of a reasonable charge or fee therefor. Such official is authorized to fix a charge or fee per copy that would reasonably defray the cost of producing and delivering such copy or copies. (Acts 1974 (Adj. S.), ch. 581, § 1; T.C.A., § 15-308.)

10-7-508. Access to records -- Records of archival value -- Retention or disposal of records (Effective January 1, 1985.) (a) The director of the records management division, the state librarian and archivist, and the comptroller of the treasury or his designated representative for purposes of audit, shall be accorded access to and may examine and receive any public records or writings, whether or not they are subject to public inspection. They shall maintain involate any privileged or confidential information so acquired and any record writing so defined by law.

(b) The state librarian and archivist or an archivist designated by the state librarian and archivist and the director of records management or a records analyst designated by the director of records management shall be accorded access to and may examine any confidential public records for the purpose of determining, in consultation with the agency head or a representative of the agency which has title to the records, whether such records are records of archival value or whether such records are properly filed or designated as confidential. If the state librarian and archivist or such representative, the director of records management or such representative and the agency head or such representative should determine that certain administrative or otherwise open public records have been inappropriately filed and designated as confidential public records, then such records shall be removed from the designation of confidential and filed within the appropriate level of access designation. Such access to appraise the archival value of such confidential records shall be provided for in the scheduling of retention periods through appropriate records disposition authorizations which are reviewed and approved by the public records commission.

(c) Records determined to be of archival value shall be retained as provided in rules and regulations for records management of records of archival value of the public records commission and those confidential records determined not to be of archival value shall be disposed of by authorized means and in accordance with approved records disposition authorizations. (Acts 1978 (Adj. S.), ch. 544, § 2; T.C.A., § 15-309; Acts 1984, ch. 947, § 3.)

APPENDIX K

THE TENNESSEE PUBLIC MEETINGS LAW -- TENNESSEE CODE ANNOTATED 8-44-101--201

(as amended 1984)

8-44-101. Policy -- Construction. (a) The general assembly hereby declares it to be the policy of this state that the formation of public policy and decisions is public business and shall not be conducted in secret.

(b) This part shall not be construed to limit any of the rights and privileges contained in Article I, § 19, of the constitution of the state of Tennessee. (Acts 1974 (Adj. S.), ch. 442, §§ 1,8; T.C.A., § 8-4401.)

8-44-102. Open meetings -- "Governing body" defined - "Meeting" defined. (a) All meetings of any governing body are declared to be public meetings open to the public at all times, except as provided by the Tennessee Constitution.

(b) "Governing body" means the members of any public body which consists of two (2) or more members, with the authority to make decisions for or recommendations to a public body on policy or administration and also means a community action agency which administers community action programs under the provisions of 42 U.S.C. § 2790. Any governing body so defined by this section shall remain so defined, notwithstanding the fact that such governing body may have designated itself as a negotiation committee for collective bargaining purposes, and strategy sessions of a governing body under such circumstances shall be open to the public at all times.

(c) "Meeting" means the convening of a governing body of a public body for which a quorum is required in order to make a decision or to deliberate toward a decision on any matter. Meeting does not include any on-site inspection of any project or program.

(d) Nothing in this section shall be construed as to require a chance meeting of two (2) or more members of a public body to be considered a public meeting. No such change meetings, informal assemblages, or electronic communication shall be used to decide or deliberate public business in circumvention of the spirit or requirements of this part. (Acts 1974 (Adj. S.), ch. 442, § 2; 1979, ch. 411, §§ 1,2; T.C.A., § 8-4402.)

8-44-103. Notice of public meetings. (a) Notice of Regular Meetings. Any such governmental body which holds a meeting previously scheduled by statute, ordinance, or resolution, shall give adequate public notice of such meeting.

(b) Notice of Special Meetings. Any such governmental body which holds a meeting not previously scheduled by statute, ordinance, or resolution, or for which notice is not already provided by law, shall give adequate public notice of such meeting.

8-44-104. Minutes recorded and open to public -- Secret votes prohibited. (a) The minutes of a meeting of any such governmental body shall be promptly and fully recorded, shall be open to public inspection, and shall include but not be limited to a record of persons present, all motions, proposals and resolutions offered, the result of any votes taken, and a record of individual votes in the event of roll call.

(b) All votes of any such governmental body shall be by public vote or public ballot or public roll call. No secret votes, or secret ballots, or secret roll calls shall be allowed. As used in this chapter, "public vote" shall mean a vote in which the "aye" faction vocally expresses its will in unison and in which the "nay" faction, subsequently, vocally expresses its will in unison. (Acts 1974 (Adj. S.), ch. 442, § 4; T.C.A., § 8-4404; Acts 1980 (Adj. S.), ch. 800, § 1.)

8-44-105. Action nullified -- Exception. Any action taken at a meeting in violation of this part shall be void and of no effect, provided that this nullification of actions taken at such meetings shall not apply to any commitment, otherwise legal, affecting the public debt of the entity concerned. (Acts 1974, (Adj. S.), ch. 442, § 5; T.C.A., § 8-4405.)

8-44-106. Enforcement -- Jurisdiction. (a) The circuit courts, chancery courts, and other courts which have equity jurisdiction, shall have jurisdiction to issue injunctions, impose penalties, and otherwise enforce the purposes of this part upon application of any citizen of this state.

(b) In each suit brought under this part, the court shall file written findings of fact and conclusions of law and final judgments, which shall also be recorded in the minutes of the body involved.

(c) The court shall permanently enjoin any person adjudged by it in violation of this part from further violation of this part. Each separate occurrence of such meetings not held in accordance with this part shall constitute a separate violation.

(d) The final judgment or decree in each suit shall state that the court retains jurisdiction over the parties and subject matter for a period of one (1) year from date of entry and the court shall order the defendants to report in writing semiannually to the court of their compliance with this part. (Acts 1974 (Adj. S.), ch. 442, § 6; T.C.A., § 8-4406.)

8-44-107. Board of directors of performing arts center management corporation. The board of directors of the Tennessee performing arts center management corporation shall be subject to, and shall in all respects comply with, all of the provisions made applicable to governing bodies by this chapter. (Acts 1981, ch. 375, § 1.)

8-44-201. Labor negotiations between public employee union and state or local government. (a) Notwithstanding any other provision of Tennessee law to the contrary, labor negotiations between representatives of public employee unions or associations and representatives of a state or local governmental entity shall be open to the public whether or not the negotiations by the state or local governmental entity are under the direction of the legislative, executive or judicial branch of government.

(b) Nothing contained in this section shall be construed to require that planning or strategy sessions either the union committee or the governmental entity committee, meeting separately, be open to the public.

(c) Nothing contained in this section shall be construed to grant recognition rights of any sort.

(d) Both sides shall decide jointly and announce in advance of any such labor negotiations where such meetings shall be held. (Acts 1979, ch. 41, § 1; T.C.A., § 8-4421.)

APPENDIX L

SUNSHINE LAW VERY EXPLICIT

By Ogden Stokes & Susan Emery McGannon
Tennessee Town & City - February 14, and March 28, 1983

The Tennessee Open Meetings Law, T.C.A. § 8-44-101, et seq. has been a fundamental fact of municipal life and law since its 1974 adoption. Its importance results from the severe penalties imposed on those who fail to obey it. These include the voiding of all governmental acts taken at meetings which are held in violation of its terms, unless those acts affect the public debt. This extreme sanction has not been frequently imposed, but its mere existence has had a significant impact on Tennessee governments. Commonly known as the "Sunshine Law," it has, metaphorically speaking, caused many municipal lawyers to alternate between looking for "sunglasses" to protect them from its glare and "artificial lights" to enlighten them as to its meaning. In this article we will attempt to highlight a few of the problems experienced in interpreting the law in accordance with its purpose.

The act has been judicially classified as a remedial law which should be interpreted liberally; it is to be construed in the way most favorable to the public. Dorrier v. Dark, 537 S.W.2d 888 (1976); Selfe v. Bellah, 6 TAM 20-10, Ct. App. E.S., 3/11/81. The remedial policy of the act is that "the formation of public policy and decisions is public business and shall not be conducted in secret." T.C.A. § 8-44-101(a). To accomplish this, the act proclaims that all "meetings" of a "governing body" must be open and that "adequate public notice" must be given of such meetings. Unfortunately, these key phrases are not explicitly defined.

The act was first interpreted in a case claiming that it was unconstitutional because "adequate public notice" was so vague and ambiguous a phrase that reasonable persons would have to guess at its meaning. Memphis Publishing Co. V. City of Memphis, 513 S.W.2d 511 (1976). The act's terms - "governing body," "public body," and "to deliberate toward a decision" - were also attacked as being unconstitutionally vague in the 1976 case of Dorrier v. Dark, 537 S.W. 2d 888. The Dorrier v. Dark court also considered, and rejected, arguments that the act was invalid because it was broader than its caption; that it was unconstitutional as an infringement on the right of free

EXAMPLE OF A NOTICE OF A SPECIAL MEETING

The Board of Mayor and Aldermen of the City of XX will hold a special meeting on February 17, 1983, beginning at 7:00 p.m., local time, at the Board Room in City Hall, XX, Tennessee, to consider final reading of Ordinance 82-3 which provides for the comprehensive regulation of vehicular traffic and parking in the City of XX and all business which may properly come before the Board at that time, including, but not necessarily limited to, the final reading. The agenda for the meeting will be available at the Office of the City Recorder and will be posted at _____ and _____ 48 hours in advance of the meeting, if reasonably possible. The meeting is open to the public.

- -

If a meeting is adjourned or recessed, the time and place of resumption of the meeting, if known, should be announced to those present. The fact, time, and place for reconvening the meeting should certainly be posted and the news media informed. If the adjournment is for several days, and the schedule of a local newspaper permits, the publication of a new notice should be considered.

If a meeting is adjourned or recessed, the time and place of resumption of the meeting, if known, should be announced to those present. The fact, time, and place for reconvening the meeting should certainly be posted and the news media informed. If the adjournment is for several days, and the schedule of a local newspaper permits, the publication of a new notice should be considered.

If a scheduled meeting for which notice has been given cannot be held because of the absence of a quorum, the amount of notice required for the rescheduled meeting may vary with the amount of time involved. At a minimum, an announcement of the new time and date should be posted by the original meeting notice and news media informed. If the rescheduled meeting is sufficiently advanced in time, publication and posting would appear.

Finally, it should be remembered that these notice requirements are not limited to the chief legislative body of a city, but are also mandatory for those public boards and commissions which are subject to the act.

It should be noted that in a case involving a committee of private citizens established by a school board to intervew applicants for the job of superintendent (Board of Ed., etc. v. Memphis Pub. Co., 585 S.W.2d 629), and one involving an adhoc committee established by Memphis State University to investigate allegations of NCAA violations (Memphis Publishing Co. v. Memphis State University, 6 TAM 4-7, Ct. App. S.W. 1980), adverse decisions at the trial level as to whether the body was "public" and subject to the law were not appealed and therefore were not subjected to appellate court reconsideration.

One possible criteria for defining governing bodies of public bodies does not appear to have been the subject of judicial comment to date. The definition of a meeting, T.C.A, § 8-44-102(c), implied that the act is applicable only if there is a quorum requirement for deliberation or decision making. If the entity, e.g., a special committee, has no quorum requirement, one might contend that it is not the governing body of a public body.

ENFORCEMENT

Should an enforcement action be brought against your client, you may be able to defend based on an important statutory prerequisite -- the requirement that the plaintiff be a "citizen" of the state, T.C.A. § 8-44-106. This apparently minor point was held to be fundamental and jurisdictional in the Chattanooga case; the absence of proof that the individual plaintiff (the president of the employee's organization) was a "citizen" resulted in a reversal of the judgment and injunction rendered at trial in favor of the organization against the Chattanooga Board of Education.

MEETINGS

If the members of a governing body "meet" without the giving of adequate notice, or without the meeting being held in public, all results of the gathering may be null and void. However, onsite inspections, chance meetings, informal assemblages, and electronic communications may not be "meetings" -- if there is no violation of the spirit of the act. The parameters of this exclusion are not clear.

The issue was presented in the Selfe v. Bellas case decided by the Eastern Section of the Court of Appeals on March 11, 1981, 6 TAM 20-10. The matter involved both a telephone conversation and pre-meeting casual gathering between councilmen. The court opined that the court must "look to the

substance of the meeting, rather than its form, keeping in mind that the statute is to be construed so as to frustrate all evasive devices." The court examined the conversations to see if they constituted deliberations toward a decision and held that they did not because the parties had not "weighed and considered the reasons for and against the matter with a view to making a choice or determination." Again, the finding of compliance or violation appears dependent on the facts; there are no fixed absolutes. See also, Tyler v. Henry County Nursing Home, 8 TAM 6-12 Ct. App. W.S. 1/24/83. We know that there have been trial court decisions on this issue which have held certain information gatherings to have complied with or violated the act.

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