

## **League Communication/ Public Relations Guidelines**

The needs of our city and its neighborhoods are fluid and ever-changing. This fact necessitates guidelines on how we can better communicate information and gather opinion on issues and concerns facing our neighborhoods in a “real-time” environment. One purpose of the League is to promote, protect and preserve the free flow of information between the city of Fort Worth and its residents; to maintain the free exchange of opinion and ideas within the city of Ft. Worth, with the League acting as a conduit.

Therefore, as the “guardians” of free flow and exchange, it may become necessary at times for the League to enter the debate on a current issue facing our member associations. To this end, we have adopted the following guidelines in regards to communication both within and outside of the League.

### **Opinion Polling**

From time to time, the need for immediate information for opinion precludes the Board of Directors (BOD) from being able to call a special meeting. Therefore, the President may conduct a “poll” of membership or of the BOD to gather opinion on a certain subject or issue.

A poll may be solicited via email, fax, phone or other suitable communication means. All members should be given at least 48 hours to respond to the poll. All polls must reflect the total number polled, the total number of responses and the total number of non-responses. For purposes of gathering opinion, a poll shall be merited with at least a 50% response rate from those polled (based on a simple majority.)

The results of a poll will be reported to the BOD during its monthly meeting and recorded in the official minutes of that meeting for member record. However, these polls may not be used to change or amend organizational structure or governance of the League, such as its bylaws.

### **Positions**

From time to time it becomes necessary for the BOD to pronounce an official position on a topic or issue facing our city and its neighborhoods. This position, once established, can become the single communication document to the League membership and the general public on a given matter. All League BOD members should support and follow the position once adopted by the BOD, with no public comments to members or the general public in opposition of the position. This position must be discussed and voted on in person by the BOD as per the bylaws, and not through an opinion poll.

All position communications to parties outside of the League must be approved by the League President and the VP of public relations.

Positions must be stated in writing and must be reported at the monthly meeting of the BOD and recorded in the official minutes of that meeting for member record.

While it is not necessary to have full membership vote on a position, a position should usually not be taken by the BOD until an adequate poll of the League members has been conducted. This poll must follow the guidelines listed for conducting an opinion poll. A position can only be adopted with a 2/3 majority vote of the BOD.

Positions can be communicated via email, newsletter, general member meeting, city council meetings, or via the local media such as the newspaper, radio or television.

### **Dealing with the Media and Press**

It is a best practice to use a “general and neutral” position when talking to the press.

Unless an official position has been approved, the President of the League (and its board members) must remain neutral and should refrain from giving public personal opinions while holding this office. By staying general and neutral, it allows the League Board and its members time to study the issues and to discover when, where and if the need to poll neighborhoods is appropriate. This guideline also applies to all members of the League Board.

Keeping a strong partnership and working relationship with the city council is very important. Therefore, positions on issues usually should not be taken or made public by the League prior to the issue being presented to the city council members at a council meeting.

Although the media may want an immediate response to their questions and putting them off could result in reduced contact if the League is perceived as too cumbersome or bureaucratic to deal with, there will be times that the League will have to ask the media to wait.

However, there will be situations that occur, of a time sensitive nature, which preclude the ability to conduct a thorough poll prior to speaking with the media. Therefore, the President of the League will be responsible for making this judgment call when necessary.

The League President is the official League spokesperson unless a situation arises where the President appoints a designate.