



COMMUNICATION

Approved at WLCA Board Meeting, August 22, 2022

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1 Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to provide guidelines for Waterford Lakes Community Association (WLCA) communications to the community and beyond. The same guidelines may be used by outside individuals and organizations when appropriate.

The objective of this Policy is the responsible dissemination of timely information.

2 General

- All information disseminated must serve the primary purpose of providing information about activities, local events, and alerts relevant to members of the WLCA community.
- Reporting must be factual and not based on opinions. The distinction between facts and opinions is further explained in Attachment A.
- WLCA communications will not be used to promote political agendas, religious philosophies and non-WLCA business interests.
- Requests by a non-WLCA group or agency to disseminate information that is germane, but not specific to WLCA, must be reviewed and approved by the General Manager or designated representative.

- WLCA information should first be distributed through WLCA's methods of communication.
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3 Communication Outlets

3.1 Summary Chart

MEDIA	RESPONSIBILITY			BOARD NOTIFICATION
	CONTENT	APPROVAL	DISTRIBUTION	
E-Alerts	General Manager	General Manager	General Manager	No
Email & Texting	Board, Committees, Staff	n/a	Internal	No
E-Newsletter	Newsletter Editor	General Manager	General Manager	No
Flyers	Social Committee Chair	General Manager	Social Committee Chair	No
Website	General Manager	General Manager	General Manager	No
Social Media	Social Committee Chair	General Manager	Social Committee Chair	No
Press Interview	General Manager (spokesperson)	n/a	n/a	Yes (after interview)
Bulletin Boards	WLCA staff, committees and board Neighborhood property managers, board, committees WLCA residents, homeowners	General Manager	WLCA staff	No

3.2 E-Alerts

The General Manager is the staff member responsible for content and distribution.

Alerts are time-sensitive community service announcements sent by WLCA that impact the convenience or inconvenience of WLCA residents and homeowners. The database of recipients is maintained by the WLCA staff and will be kept private.

3.3 Email, Texting, Posting, and Mass Mailing

Any board, committee, or staff member who sends communication is responsible for its content.

Email is an important part of what we all do and that we must make sure we are always professional while using it. Email is discoverable by the courts and can be requested by owners. Keep the discussion professional and do not add things that are not relevant. Personal emails from board, committee, and staff members are also discoverable by courts. Work emails may be discoverable if an active board or committee member or employed staff member sends emails about association business through a company's server. Text messages internet postings, and other media may also be discoverable.

As the decision-making body for WLCA is the BOD, only the BOD, collectively, can speak for WLCA. Management or the board President may speak for the board but only with authorization from the BOD. When board members are addressed collectively by email, do not "reply to all" because doing so may give readers the impression that all replies are BOD decisions. Board members may discuss issues by email among themselves and with management, but they should not include other parties. Any decision made by the BOD by email must be ratified at a public meeting.

Disagreement is healthy for productive boards and committees, but differences should only be publicly articulated during open meetings when proponents and opponents can confront each other. WLCA board, committee, and staff members shall not post anything relating to WLCA on email, social media, or other physical or electronic media that contains personal information, editorial content, opinions, slurs, demeaning or inflammatory statements, spam, abusive or discriminatory language, personal attacks, or obscenity.

3.4 E-Newsletter

The General Manager through the Newsletter Editor is the staff member responsible for content.

WLCA members may request to have information included in the Newsletter.

3.5 Flyers

The General Manager through the Social Committee Chair is the responsible staff member. Each flyer must indicate the club, organization, or other source of distribution.

3.6 Website

The General Manager is the responsible staff member.

3.7 Social Media

The General Manager through the Social Committee Chair is the responsible staff member.

The term “social media” refers to WLCA-managed electronic outreach media such as the WLCA Facebook page and Evite. Both personal and WLCA Facebook posts and Messenger activity can be discoverable by the courts and can be requested by owners.

Individuals, staff, volunteers, and neighborhoods are encouraged to share WLCA information on social media.

3.8 Press Interviews

The General Manager is the responsible staff member, in consultation with board members if possible.

3.8.1 Spokesperson and Alternate

The WLCA General Manager shall be the point of contact for all communications with the media including, but not limited to, television, newspaper, magazines, radio and the Internet. In situations where the subject matter may create the potential of litigation involving WLCA, the General Manager shall have the authority in his/her discretion to refer the media inquiry to the legal counsel for WLCA.

The WLCA General Manager shall appoint an alternate spokesperson who, in the absence of the General Manager, shall be the point of contact with the media.

3.8.2 Referrals to the Spokesperson

All contacts with the Press, whether written or oral, must be referred to the General Manager.

In the event a committee chair, committee member, or board member is approached or contacted and questioned by a news reporter regarding matters in which WLCA is involved, that individual should immediately refer the reporter to the General Manager.

The committee chair or board member should promptly notify the General Manager of the reporter’s inquiry, the name of the reporter, the issue in question and any other relevant information. The General Manager will then contact the reporter directly.

The General Manager will notify the board in a timely manner in writing via email regarding any events happening in the community that the General Manager considers newsworthy, and/or when any WLCA volunteer or member of the staff is interviewed by the news media regarding a topic involving WLCA. Internet postings, including Facebook, will not replace this reporting requirement.

“Talking to the Press” (Attachment B) and “Tips for Talking to the Media” (Attachment C) have useful guidance for contacts with the news media.

3.9 Bulletin Boards

The General Manager is the responsible staff member.

Announcements and other communications from not-for-profit groups or from the general public can be accepted, at the sole discretion of the General Manager, as long as they are not be diametrically opposed to the “Purposes and Powers of the Association” (copied in Attachment D), subject to the following restrictions:

1. A Waterford Lakes resident with a valid WLCA identification card must submit each posting.
2. Postings must be for the benefit of WLCA residents and/or homeowners.
3. Space on WLCA bulletin board(s) is allocated with WLCA postings having first priority, followed by neighborhood association postings and, then, postings by residents.
4. Postings must fit within the available clear space on the bulletin board(s) without obscuring other postings.

5. Multiple copies of the same posting are prohibited.
6. Postings will be removed one week after its subject event or up to 30 days after posting.
7. Postings must not contain offensive language or verbal or graphical profanity.
8. Postings must not contain personal attacks.
9. Postings must not contain advertising or other materials relating to for-profit persons or organizations.
10. Postings must not contain political advertising or other political materials other than administrative notices related to elections.

4 Agreement and Acceptance

This Communication Policy is agreed to and accepted by the undersigned:

 Signature Printed Name
 Date: _____

5 Effective Dates and Change Control

Date of Change	Date of Board Approval of Change	Change(s) Made
	5/24/16	Original approved version
3/26/18	3/26/18	Added BOD email policy and record of effective dates and change control
8/22/22	8/22/22	Changed 3.3 "Email and Texting" to "Email, Texting, Posting, and Mass Mailing" and added more guidance.

6 References

- "How Do You Separate Fact from Opinion?" <http://www.auburn.edu/~murraba/fact.html>.
- Amended and Restated Articles of Incorporation of Huckleberry Community Association, Inc. N/K/A/ Waterford Lakes Community Association, Inc., Article IV, "Purposes and Powers of the Association."
- Hugus, Eleanor, N. N. Jaesche Inc., printed in Association Times, March 2006.
- Schwartz, C. A., "Can You Believe It?!" *Evaluating Web Source Information* (CASchwartz © 2002) (<http://www.classroomtech.org/credibility/Fact.Opinion.PDF>).

7 Attachment A – Separating Fact from Opinion

The content below is extracted from "How Do You Separate Fact from Opinion?" <http://www.auburn.edu/~murraba/fact.html>.

How Do You Separate Fact from Opinion?

According to Webster's Dictionary a fact is "anything that is done or happens; anything actually existent; any statement strictly true; truth; reality."

Three examples of facts that are concrete and that could be documented include:

- The house was painted on November 18, 1999.
- Today is Saturday.
- My son had a temperature of one hundred and two degrees this morning.

Whereas an opinion is defined as "indicating a belief, view, sentiment, conception."

Obvious indicators of opinion are when sentences include words such as:

"Generally, it is thought" , "I believe that", "It is a sad day when."

For example, how the three facts above can be changed to opinions would be to add a belief or view. For example:

- The house was painted recently on November 18, 1999, so it looks as good as new.
- Today is Saturday and Mark always sleeps in on Saturdays, so that is why he is late for the game.
- There was no way for me to go to school because my son had a temperature of one hundred and two degrees this morning.

Sometimes it is challenging to tell the facts and opinions apart. For example, is the following a fact or an opinion?

"Abraham Lincoln was the most eloquent writer of all the U.S. Presidents."

This is an opinion, but you have to know that *eloquent* is a descriptive word in order for this to become clear. Descriptive words are subjective, or state someone's opinion. It can become unclear how to separate fact and opinion when many people hold the same opinion. This is when it becomes important to understand what the word bias means.

A bias is an opinion or an attitude we have for or against something. A bias usually stems from our feelings rather than from rational thought. What is very important to realize is that ALL of us are biased. We are biased for or against certain people, activities, and ideas. We become biased because certain people, activities, or ideas do not appeal to us at some level. Of equal importance to realize is that we have "good biases" as well, that is we favor certain people, activities, or ideas. In these cases, our biases are still irrational, just like our negative ones.

8 Attachment B – Talking to the Press

By Eleanor Hugus, N. N. Jaesche Inc., printed in *Association Times*, March 2006

More and more, homeowner association issues are being reported in the news media. Almost every television station has a troubleshooter who is always looking for a juicy story. Often, these stories give only the homeowner's point of view, while the viewpoint of the board, management company or developer may not even be represented. It is up to us to see that those sides of the story are reported too.

Unfortunately, for some community association professionals, talking to the news media can be like speaking in tongues. When a reporter calls, normally confident pros can feel distrust, fear, and suspicion. It's also normal to become defensive. However, whether you're facing an interview with a "60 Minutes" camera crew or a part-time staffer with a small, local newspaper, the rules for responding to the news media are the same.

Be honest.

Reporters have a good sense of when someone is lying. Eventually, the press will find out if you are inaccurate or deceptive, so tell the truth. Also, don't play the "off the record" game. Assume that every word in your conversation might appear in the story. Besides, continuously going off record makes you look evasive and is often unnecessary.

Take the call.

Don't duck the phone call. Never say "No comment" to the press. Those words create antagonism amongst reporters who are only trying to do their jobs. Plus, a "no comment" response implies an admission of guilt. Stonewalling seldom keeps the news from being reported.

Return the call.

Remember, the press is always on deadline and it's a reporter's job to get a story. If they don't get the information from you, they'll get it from outsiders who might not know the whole truth or may even be holding a grudge against your association or management company. When you don't return calls, you run the risk of seeing incomplete journalism and disinformation in print. In addition, statements like "The board member does not want to talk with you" can't help but plant a seed of doubt in the reporter's mind about the association's integrity.

Act quickly.

If the news is bad, get it out fast and tell the whole truth (or as much of it as you know at the time). Don't try to hide or conceal, or your credibility will quickly vanish. If the information comes out piece-meal, the damage can accumulate.

Tell the whole truth.

Perhaps the biggest communications *faux pas* at Three Mile Island was a utility executive at an impromptu press conference failing to admit about small off-site radiation releases. He later justified his deceptive behavior by saying, "the press did not ask about it." His failure to tell the whole truth gave reporters heightened skepticism and misgivings about any information provided by the utility company. If you're up front with bad news, you'll be trusted on other occasions with good news.

Choose a spokesperson.

Appoint a company spokesperson or specific board member to handle the news media. Make sure everyone knows, and is reminded occasionally, of the identity of the spokesperson. Remember, if you don't appoint a spokesperson, the news media will appoint one for you by finding someone to interview. Think about it: whose quotes do you want in the newspaper – a management company president or an envious competitor?

Pave the way.

Make friends with the press now. Offer to give advice when they have stories that pertain to homeowner associations. Help them understand how associations work and the documents and laws that govern them. Working with the press can make a vast difference in the way things are perceived and reported. Mishandling the press can seriously damage your reputation.

Most associations are governed by reasonable members of the community, but we need to make a concentrated effort to promote positive stories about how associations work for the good of the members. Speaking the truth and speaking out can make a huge difference.

9 Attachment C - Tips for Talking to the Media

<http://cchealth.org/groups/chronic_disease/pdf/appendix_t.pdf>

Be Prepared: Develop three to five main points you want to get across in an interview. Role-play with others to practice answering questions. Compile a list of the most difficult questions you could face and how you would respond.

Create Sound Bites: Use short, punchy statements to make your point quickly and ensure that it gets quoted. Examples, comparisons or analogies may be useful. Avoid jargon.

Get Right to the Point: Keep your main objective in mind, and state your conclusion up front. Provide examples to support your assertion. Don't wait for the perfect question; seize any opportunity to state your message.

Project Confidence: Make eye contact with the interviewer and smile to project confidence and credibility. Don't smile if the subject is truly grave, but otherwise, smile as he or she asks questions, and also, when appropriate, during your response and when you finish.

Relax and Take Your Time: Speak in a concise but conversational style that conveys your expertise. Pause when needed to gather your thoughts. Let the interviewer finish each question before responding.

Avoid Saying, "No Comment:" It suggests guilt or concealment. Even a few words are better than none, if only to explain why you can't discuss the subject. Don't be afraid to say, "I don't know" and offer to seek out the answer.

Stick to Your Subject: No matter what you are asked, don't let the interviewer derail you. When necessary, respond first, then make a transition back to your main message.

Don't Speculate: Steer clear of hypotheticals or possible scenarios unless they truly emphasize a positive message that you are trying to convey. Don't feel obligated to answer a question that should more correctly be asked of someone else. At the same time, correct a false premise or incorrect information, especially if it undermines your main message.

Don't Be Contentious or Hostile: Journalists have the last word when it comes to editing the interview, so it is best not to get into an angry debate. Better to simply reaffirm your main message no matter what is asked or said.

Provide Visuals for TV: Television dominates the news. Prepare or suggest visuals for television interviews. Reporters usually need help with pictures as much as they need your words. Choose visuals carefully for maximum impact.

10 Attachment D – WLCA Purpose and Functions

10.1 Purposes and Powers of the Association

The text below is taken from Article IV, "Purposes and Powers of the Association," in the Amended and Restated Articles of Incorporation of Huckleberry Community Association, Inc. N/K/A/ Waterford Lakes Community Association, Inc.

"...The specific purposes for which the Association was formed are to (i) provide for the ownership, operation, maintenance and preservation of the common areas dedicated, deeded or leased to the Association for the use and enjoyment of owners of lots within the development known as Waterford Lakes (the "Development") located in Orange County, Florida as more particularly described in the Declaration..., (ii) provide for the maintenance and improvement of any easements granted to the Association within the development and (iii) promote the health, safety, and welfare of the residents within the Development and any additions thereto as may hereafter be brought within the jurisdiction of this Association..."

10.2 Functions of the Association

The text below is taken from Article IV of the Amended and Restated Declaration of Master Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions of Waterford Lakes.

Section 1. Area of Common Responsibility. The Association, subject to the rights of the Owners set forth in this Declaration, shall be responsible for the exclusive management and control of the Area of Common Responsibility and all improvements thereon (including, without limitation, furnishings and equipment related thereto and common landscaped areas), and shall keep the Area of Common Responsibility in good, clean, attractive, and sanitary condition, order, and repair, pursuant to the terms and conditions hereof and any agreement with another association or governmental agency and consistent with the Community-Wide Standard.

Section 3. Services. The Association shall have the following powers: (*See actual Declaration for full text*)

- A. Maintenance of Areas of Common Responsibility, Parks, Lakes, Open Space...
- B. Maintenance of any real property located within Waterford Lakes...
- C. Maintenance of beaches, lakes, and canals...
- D. Insect, pest and aquatic control...
- E. Taking...actions necessary to enforce all covenants, conditions and restrictions...
- F. Conducting business of the Association...
- G. Establishing and operating the Architectural Review Committee...
- H. Adopting, publishing and enforcing ... Rules and regulations...
- I. Lighting of roads, sidewalks, walking and bike paths...
- J. ...conducting recreation, sport, craft, and cultural programs...
- K. Constructing improvements on Common Property...
- L. Employment of guards, maintenance and control centers...
- M. ...each Neighborhood shall be responsible for paying, through Neighborhood Assessments, costs of maintenance of Exclusive Common Areas...

- N. ...exterior maintenance upon any Unit... because such Unit... is inconsistent with the Community-Wide Standard...
- O. Establish use fees and promulgate rules and regulations respecting the use of Common Property...
- P. Engage in any activities... to remove from the Areas of Common Responsibility... any pollutants, hazardous waste or toxic materials...