POLICY & PROCEDURE

STURGEON BAY POLICE DEPARTMENT

SUBJECT: **PUBLIC INFORMATION**

SCOPE: All Department Personnel
DISTRIBUTION: Policy & Procedures Manual

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PURPOSE: The purpose of this Policy & Procedure to establish a public information procedure. Police Department operations are generally matters of public record and often public interest. As such, the Sturgeon Bay Police Department has the responsibility to provide citizens with information about those matters. The vehicle through which the public receives information is frequently the news media.

This Policy & Procedure consists of the following numbered sections:

I. POLICY

II. MEDIA RELATIONS PROCEDURES

III. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

I. POLICY

A. It is the policy of the Sturgeon Bay Police Department to cooperate fully and impartially with the news media in fulfilling its responsibility of informing the public of events within the public domain that are handled by or involve the Department, to the extent permitted by law.

II. MEDIA RELATIONS PROCEDURES

A. The Assistant Chief of Police or designee shall act as the public information officer (PIO). The public information officer is the Department's official liaison with the news media.

The responsibilities of the PIO are:

1. Assisting media representatives in covering newsworthy activities of the Department.

2. Being available for on-call responses to the media.

3. Preparing and disseminating Department news releases.

4. Arranging for and assisting at news conferences.

5. Assisting in crisis situations within the Department.

6. Coordinating and authorizing the release of information regarding victims, witnesses, and suspects.

7. Coordinating and authorizing the release of information regarding confidential agency investigations and operations.

8. Developing and authorizing the release of information when other public service agencies are involved in a mutual effort.

B. In the absence of the PIO, the PIO's duties shall be assumed at the direction of the Chief or designee.

C. The Department recognizes valid news personnel, and shall provide them with information when appropriate and allowable.

D. A formal news release may be drafted for events of a significant nature. The news release shall adhere to guidelines for information release contained in this Policy & Procedure.

1. A copy of the release shall be sent to media representatives, and shall be made available to all news media at the same time.

2. The Chief or designee may authorize any Department member to develop and release a news release.

   a) The person releasing the news release must see that a copy is directed to the PIO advising them it has been released.

3. The news release may be done at any time; however it is encouraged to be released as soon as possible after the initial incident takes place.

E. Personal interviews of **ANY** Department employee other than the PIO must be approved by the PIO or by the Chief, designee, or employee's supervisor. Release of information during an interview shall follow the guidelines established in this Policy & Procedure.

F. The PIO may contact the local media representatives to arrange a news conference

in the case of a major event.

G. The media may be allowed access at the scene of major events such as fires, natural disasters, or other catastrophic events, within the limitations of crime scene integrity, public safety, and civil rights restrictions. The media will **NOT** be allowed access inside the perimeter of a crime scene. During such situations, a single designated area will be established at which media representatives will be provided information. All inquiring media representatives will be directed to that location. The Incident Commander shall make all decisions regarding media mobility.

1. Media requests for information shall be directed to the PIO. In the absence of the PIO, the Incident Commander shall assign the person responsible for handling matters related to the media and media requests.

2. All decisions governing media mobility at the scene of an incident or event, rest with the judgment of the officer in command. Every effort should be made to accommodate the news media's needs, but tempered with due regard for safety and the mission of the Department.

3. News media personnel will be allowed to freely photograph, film, or videotape an incident so long as their activity does not significantly interfere with the investigation. The police will assist the media so long as the investigation or its prosecution is neither compromised nor jeopardized. Officers may take protective measures, such as shielding a dead body in order to prevent photographing or televising if such actions are deemed necessary by the officer-in-charge.

4. Suspects or persons in custody will not be deliberately posed for photographs, telecasts, or interviews. Neither will department members pose themselves with a suspect or accused, nor enter into any agreement to have a suspect or person in custody at a prearranged time and place to be photographed, televised, or interviewed. No action will be directed against the news media to prevent or impede a lawful right to photograph such persons at incident scenes or in other public places.

H. Communications (or Dispatch) or other civilian personnel are not authorized to release information to the media without prior approval. All media calls for information should be directed to the Department's PIO or in the event the PIO is not available to the Commanding Officer.

I. When weather conditions, traffic accidents, road conditions, or any other event that causes motor vehicle travel problems occur, the news media may be notified and requested to assist with broadcast information to the public.

J. Should a citizen request that information on an incident not be released or reported to the media, officers will explain that the request will be noted in the incident report. The decision to publish unrestricted information about the event will be left to the media.

K. Restrictions on the Release of Information. The following information will not be released:

1. Observations about the arrested person's character, criminal or arrest record, or speculations of guilt.

2. Statements concerning the credibility of witness testimony.

3. Statements concerning evidence, regardless of whether such evidence may tend to implicate or exonerate a suspect.

4. Any comments regarding confessions or professed alibis or any other statement that may tend to implicate or exonerate a suspect.

5. Specific victim injuries known only to the victim and police.

6. The name of the victim of a sexual assault.

7. The names of parties who are merely suspects.

8. The telephone number or address of a member of the department.

9. Any comment as to the use of specific police equipment, procedures, or investigative techniques, especially comments relative to the wearing of protective equipment or body armor by officers.

10. Any "Off the Record" remarks.

L. Investigative Information Subject to Release - The following information regarding an ongoing investigation can be released by the Public Information Officer, supervisor, or otherwise designated department member:

1. Only the basic facts (nature, location, time) surrounding the crime or incident, using statutory elements as a guide.

2. Whether a person was arrested and, if so, for what charge. As a general rule, the name of the arrested person should not be released until after that person has been formally charged in court.

3. The time and place of arrest.

4. The names of victims may be released unless such information will endanger their safety, hamper future investigation, is contrary to law, or the person is the victim of a sexual assault.

5. If the victim is deceased, the name can be released only after the next of kin have been notified.

III. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A. The Department is committed to being involved in the community and the sharing of information. This can be accomplished through community meetings and events, other programs offered to the public, website and other social media postings, and/or newsletters.

B. The Assistant Chief or designee will be the Community Relations Coordinator with the following responsibilities:

1. Addressing requests from members of the community to assist in identifying areas of concern and working to resolve these areas.

2. Work with community groups, Department members, and other interested parties to solve problems and build positive relationships between the community and the Department.

3. Develop plans to ensure that Officers can participate in community activities.

C. The Department may conduct a survey to assess the areas of concern of the public.

D. The Department may establish a committee of volunteers to identify any needs, recommend solutions, or any other input.

Clinton Henry
Chief of Police

This Policy & Procedure cancels and supersedes any and all written directives relative to the subject matter contained herein.

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