



## MECKLENBURG COUNTY

### County Manager's Office

# Administrative Policy & Procedures Governing Board Member Special Events, Special Projects, & Written Remarks

## I. Purpose

To establish the policy and procedures for County staff in scheduling, executing, or in any way providing support to County Commissioners for Special Events, Special Projects and Written Remarks. Special Events are defined as any district or community meeting that is initiated, hosted, or organized by a member of the County Commission. Special Events are not events sponsored by the full Board. Special Projects include promotional materials, presentations, and/or research requested by a member of the County Commission. Written remarks/talking points are created by the Public Information Department (PID) when representation by the Board has been requested and/or needed at a County sponsored community event. These remarks/talking points are written for the Chair, Vice Chair, and/or a Commissioner speaking at an event on behalf of the County.

This policy replaces the 2019 Town Hall Policy.

## II. Special Events

### A. Intake & Planning Procedures

County staff will support Commissioners with Special Events according to the procedures listed below:

1. A Commissioner must contact a Board Support Assistant at least 60-days in advance of the desired meeting date (to allow for ample planning and resource management) and identify the objective(s) of the meeting.
2. The Board Support Assistant will notify the Community Relations Manager of the request **within one business day**. The appropriate staff will be identified to provide services to the Commissioner (based on the roles/responsibilities below).
3. Beginning the day after Election Day until the beginning of the next filing period is considered the **"non-election year."** To ensure service quality and manage capacity, each Commissioner is limited to one (1) event per quarter during the **"non-election year."**
4. No political campaign materials (signs, literature, etc.) may be present or distributed.



# MECKLENBURG COUNTY

## County Manager's Office

5. County staff responsibilities and tactics for events will include the following:

County Manager's Office	PI – Community Relations	PI – Social Media/Marketing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Board Support Assistant is the point of contact for the County Manager's Office.</li> <li>Notify the Community Relations Manager of the request <b>within one business day</b>.</li> <li><b>Attend in-take meeting between PID-Community Relations and the requesting Commissioner.</b></li> <li>Make necessary reservations including but not necessarily limited to meeting space, food (if desired and at the Commissioner's predetermined budget).</li> <li>Set-up meeting space and a/v (enlist support from ITS if necessary).</li> <li>Print and distribute any meeting materials (agendas, meeting materials, etc.).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Content support for the meeting (coordinate speakers, SME's, etc.)</li> <li><b>Collaborate with departments supplying information for presentations and/or presenting themselves.</b></li> <li>Publish the meeting on the public calendar on MeckNC.gov.</li> <li>Distribute a media advisory. **</li> <li>Create an agenda and supporting materials based on the meeting's objective(s).</li> <li>Only materials vetted by the County will be included.</li> <li><b>A member of the PID-Community Relations staff will be on-site for the duration of the event.</b></li> <li><b>A PID Public Information Officer will be on-site for the duration of the event.</b></li> <li><b>PID-Community Relations will notify the Clerk to the Board if attendance by Commissioners may necessitate noticing the event.</b></li> <li>Ensure attendees will have the opportunity to stay connected (i.e., post-event poll, handout, etc.).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Design marketing collateral if requested by the Commissioner (i.e., hard copy materials such as flyers, email postcards, etc.).</li> <li>Design graphic for marketing on social media channels if requested by the Commissioner.</li> <li>Note: Anything supported by staff must adhere to County brand standards.</li> <li><b>Promote the event multiple times on multiple social media channels prior to the event occurring.</b></li> <li>Use all appropriate non-social media marketing strategies to promote the event.</li> <li><b>Promote the event via press release, media advisory, web story, Board Bulletin and/or Community Relations Newsletter as appropriate based on the objective of the event and target audience.</b></li> </ul>

### B. Best Practices for Attendance & Participation

- Finalize the date, time and meeting location at least 30-days in advance to allow ample time to raise awareness of the meeting.
- The time, location, and format of the meeting should consider the public's interests and needs to make the experience as convenient and meaningful as possible. **Physical and language accommodations should be taken into consideration and reasonable accommodations provided.**
- Commissioners should use their personal social media networks or other contacts to increase awareness and participation.
- Commissioners should distribute flyers/meeting announcements to area residents directly and during other meetings they attend and/or other places where people often congregate in the area where the meetings will be held.



## MECKLENBURG COUNTY

### County Manager's Office

#### C. Election Year Procedures

During election cycles staff supported Special Events are reduced to no more than two per Commissioner. No political campaign materials (signs, literature, etc.) may be present or distributed. From the beginning of the candidate filing period for election to the Board of County Commission or other public office through the **first day of early voting**, unless otherwise noted. Some consideration may be made for Commissioners who are not running for re-election or adjusted to fit expectations after the Primary Election.

1. These two staff supported Special Events must occur between candidate filing and 30-days prior to the **first day of early voting**. **The 30-day period prior to the first day of early voting is considered a "black out" period in which there will be no staff-supported events.**
2. A Commissioner who would like to use a County facility (i.e., meeting space at a recreation center, etc.) during the "black out" period will be responsible for paying any associated reservation fees. County staff will not be involved in the planning/execution of an event during this period.
3. Should a Special Event be considered questionable, the County Manager is the authority on whether County staff will provide support.

#### D. Political Activities

1. Staff will never provide support for Special Events or any other event where political contributions are being solicited. Additionally, County staff and resources will never be used in conjunction with activities that are or may be perceived to be related to a political campaign.
2. If a Commissioner requests that staff provide information pertinent to County business for a district/community meeting held during the time between the date that the candidate filing period for Board of County Commissioners begins and **first day of early voting**, staff will provide the information to the incumbent Commissioner and will make the same information available to the entire Board.
3. If Commissioners run for offices other than the Board of County Commissioner in non-election years, staff will not support those meetings.
4. The County Manager and staff will refer to the Hatch Act as a guide for decisions on what is/is not supported by staff.
5. The Hatch Act - The Hatch Act is federal legislation that restricts the political activity of certain government employees. It was enacted to ensure that the influence of partisan politics in government institutions was limited and to protect public servants from perceived pressure from political parties to work on political campaigns or give political contributions.
6. The provisions of the Hatch Act attempt to ensure that the government institutions' impartiality and integrity are not compromised. While the Hatch Act is a federal law, it applies not only to individuals employed by an agency in the federal executive branch but also to individuals principally employed by state, county or municipal executive agencies in connection with programs financed in whole or in part by loans or grants made by the United States or a federal



## MECKLENBURG COUNTY

### County Manager's Office

agency.

7. Are County employees subject to the Hatch Act? Yes, if a municipal employee performs duties in connection with an activity financed in whole or in part by a federal loan or grant, it will not matter that he or she receives his or her salary from non-federal monies; that he or she has no authority or discretion on how those federal funds are spent; or that the federal monies fund only a small portion of the program; he or she will be subject to the Hatch Act.
8. What activities are prohibited? The Hatch Act prohibits those municipal officials subject to its provisions from:
  - Using their official authority or influence for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the result of an election or nomination for office.
  - Directly or indirectly coercing, attempting to coerce, commanding or advising a state or local employee to pay, lend or contribute anything of value to a party, committee, organization, agency, or person for political purposes.
  - Running as a candidate for public office in a partisan election, that it, in an election in which any candidate represents, for example the Democratic or Republican party.
9. Section 1 of Mecklenburg County Human Resources Policy & Procedures states the following related to political activities (see insert).

#### **POLITICAL ACTIVITIES**

Every employee of the County has a civic responsibility to support good government by every available means and in every appropriate manner. Each employee may join or affiliate with civic organizations of a political nature and support the principles or policies of a civic or political organization in accordance with the Constitution and laws of the State of North Carolina and in accordance with the Constitution and laws of the United States of America.

However, no employees shall:

1. Engage in any political activity while on duty or within any period of time during which they are expected to render services for which they receive compensation from the County;
2. Be required, as a duty of their office or employment, or as a condition for employment, promotion or tenure of office, to contribute funds for political or partisan purposes;
3. Solicit, or act as custodian of, funds for political or partisan purposes while on duty as an employee of the County;
4. Coerce or compel contributions for political or partisan purposes by any other employee of the governmental unit;
5. Use County funds, supplies, or equipment of the governmental unit for partisan or political purposes; or
6. Use their official authority or influence for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the result of an election or nomination for political office.

#### **HATCH ACT**

Those agencies that are funded by federal monies are subject to the Hatch Act which prohibits certain political activity by County employees in those agencies.



## MECKLENBURG COUNTY

### County Manager's Office

### **III. Special Projects**

Administrative support for Special Projects includes the creation of promotional materials (i.e., flyers, social media posts, etc.), presentations, and/or research requested by a member of the County Commission. **Note: these are not projects associated with a Special Event.** To manage service quality and capacity, it is necessary for Board members to adhere to the parameters listed below. Special Projects do not have a "black out" period.

1. A Commissioner will contact a Board Support Assistant with the request.
2. **The Board Support Assistant will notify the appropriate Department Director.**
3. **Expectations for completion include five business days for presentations and/or research. Staff will provide the information to the requesting Commissioner and will make the same information available to the entire Board. Staff will also copy the Executive Team and Director of Public Information.**
4. If the request is for promotional materials (i.e. flyers, social media post, etc.) a request should be made at least 2-weeks in advance of the event being promoted.
5. If a Commissioner requests a Facebook "Live" project, a step-by-step guide explaining how to conduct such a project will be given (including recommended equipment). The Commissioner's Facebook page (not the County's) will host the experience. The Commissioner will have to provide the person to monitor the feed, answer questions, etc. as County staff will not be involved in conducting the experience. The County's social media accounts will promote it but will not in any way be responsible for execution.

### **IV. Written Remarks**

PID will provide remarks/talking points when representation by the Board has been requested and/or needed at a County sponsored community event. These remarks/talking points are written for the Chair, Vice Chair, and/or a Commissioner speaking at an event on behalf of the County. This typically takes place when a County department has reached out to PID with a specific request for County Commissioner representation.

In this instance, the Commissioner(s) requested will be contacted by PID and provided the necessary information and talking points prior to the event. These instances may include greenway openings, ribbon cuttings, holiday observances and engagements where the County is supporting the event. PID should not be utilized and will not provide remarks for neighborhood meetings or other engagement efforts that are personal in nature and not "County" sponsored events.

### **V. Future Revisions**

The County Manager will monitor the performance of this policy and procedures and if deemed necessary will suggest alterations/revisions to ensure the public's interest is being served.



# MECKLENBURG COUNTY

## County Manager's Office

*\*Food and mailings – confirm which department is responsible to pay*

*\*\*Media advisories are distributed to all major Charlotte and Mecklenburg County news media outlets and other people who subscribe at the County's website to receive media advisories.*

References:

- Mecklenburg County Human Resources Policy & Procedure
- Kim, Sung Mo. "Applicability of the Hatch Act to Municipal Officers and Employees." *Municipal Lawyer*, vol. 20, no. 4, 2006, pp. 15–17.