

Charlotte Firefighters' Retirement System Communications Policy

Adopted **Month Day, 2021**

The Charlotte Firefighters' Retirement System (the "System") was established pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 926 of the 1947 Sessions Laws (the "Act" or "Plan"), as amended from time to time, to provide retirement, disability, and survivor benefits for the uniformed employees of the Charlotte Fire Department (aka "Members") as defined in the Act.

This Policy applies to all Authorized Persons who may be in a position to provide comment on any and or all aspects of the System's Business.

In addition, although the Board shall utilize this Policy concerning communications as established, it shall reserve the right to enforce the policy as deemed necessary to protect the interest of the System and its Members.

I. Definitions

- a) "Authorized Persons" – include the System's Staff (including temporary help), Board Trustees, and individuals specifically approved by the Board of Trustees from time to time for specific kinds of communications on behalf of the System.
- b) "System's Business" – includes its objectives, practices, services, systems, actions, policies, legislation, and operations.
- c) "Confidential Information" – includes anything subject to North Carolina Public Records law.
- d) Media – includes newspapers, magazines, broadcast news (radio, television), and the internet (social media, blogs).
- e) "Communication Channels" – include System's website, letters, facsimile, email correspondence, System newsletter, press releases, Station Visits, and Committee and Board meetings.

II. Purpose

The System's Board of Trustees has established the Communications Policy to ensure clear, factual communications with the public and protect the interests of the System, its staff, trustees, and Members (active and retired).

The Policy applies to

- Authorized Persons
- Direct communications with the media (traditional or new) or through Communication Channels regarding the System's Business or Authorized Persons
- Quality of communication
- Favored communications

The System is committed to the dissemination of timely, accurate and quality information of and to its Members and Authorized Persons.

All internal and external communications should be aimed towards the achievement of the System's vision and mission. Only Authorized Persons are permitted to undertake official System's internal and external communication in accordance with the System's Guiding Principles.

III. Guiding Principals

The System recognizes that timely communication with the Members and Authorized Persons as well as the general public are imperative. In order to reach the overall goals for communication, the following guiding principles should always be adhered to by all Authorized Persons:

- (a) Communication between and amongst the Members and Authorized Persons must be professional at all times.
- (b) All communication disseminated regarding the System's Business must be approved by the Chair of the Investment Committee, Benefits Committee, or Board, as applicable to the System's Business being communicated.
- (c) All information disseminated shall be accurate, transparent, and open as possible, while considering the need to protect any Confidential Information.
- (d) All communication must be consistent, clear, concise, and intentional based on Committee and Board actions. Communications will not contain opinions of actions taken by the Board or other Authorized Persons.
- (e) Communication should also promote overall knowledge and awareness of the System.
- (f) All presentation/materials for external use must be reviewed and approved by the Chair of the Benefits Committee, Investment Committee or Board, as applicable to the System's Business being communicated, prior to exposing these documents to the Members, media, general public, or other Authorized Persons, to ensure compliance and accuracy of information. This includes presentations at meetings, seminars, conferences, etc. to be uploaded to the System's website.
- (g) Only a designated Authorized Person selected by the Board shall be permitted to have formal engagements with tv, radio or newspaper/magazine media and press releases.
 - Communication with tv, radio or newspaper/magazines is to be handled with the highest level of sensitivity and professionalism.
- (h) In specific circumstances the following exceptions may be made:
 - The Administrator or designee may communicate with requestors about administrative matters related to requests.

IV. Public Statements of Personal Opinion

All Authorized Persons shall refrain from making public statements of personal opinion regarding the System as factual. Such public statements may include quotes given to media or through Communication Channels.

V. Commenting on Closed Sessions

Any Authorized Person receiving inquiries concerning any matter relating to Closed Session discussions shall consult with the System's legal counsel. Comments provided at will on closed session matters are disfavored and create a sense of mistrust amongst Authorized Persons and Members as well as a failure to one's fiduciary responsibility.

- Any recommendation by the Board to change the Act pertaining to the employer and/or member contribution rate or benefits must be approved by the City. Original requests should be directed to the City Manager for inclusion in the City's review process.

VI. Public Comments at Conferences, Hearings, or other Public Meetings

Any Authorized Persons invited to make speeches or presentations about the System to Members, professional groups, legislative leadership, conferences, or public meetings must receive prior approval of the Board Chair. The content of presentations that are repeated and on-going do not require new approval unless a substantive change in content has taken place. The Chair and the Administrator must be made aware of presentation content, dates, locations, and the audience/groups.

Prior to accepting an invitation to speak about the System's Business, Authorized Persons will disclose presentation content, dates, locations, and audience/groups to the System's Board of Trustees.

When presenting to the general public or Members, any presentation should only include information within the area of responsibility of the presenter or already in the public domain. All speeches and presentations must comply with brand standards and other applicable System Rules and Regulations.

VII. Endorsements/Statements of Support

The System does not endorse or approve individuals by name or elected, appointed, or hired positions. Use of products and/or services by the System does not imply endorsement.