



The **FRIENDLY CITY**
Ellsworth
Maine

City of Ellsworth, Maine
1 City Hall Plaza, Ellsworth, ME 04605

August 2026

Working Together to Tell Ellsworth's Story: A guide to how the Communications Office supports Team Ellsworth

Why This Matters

Every day, City employees make hundreds of decisions, answer countless questions, solve problems, and improve the lives of the people we serve. Those stories deserve to be told. The Communications Office exists to help connect residents with the work happening across the City. Whether responding to a media inquiry, publishing a website story, writing a press release, creating social media content, or preparing a department head for an interview, the goal is always the same:

To provide accurate, timely, transparent, and understandable information that builds trust with our community.

Communication is not about promoting City Hall. It's about helping residents understand what their City is doing and why it matters.

What the Communications Office Does

The Communications Office supports every department in telling Ellsworth's story.

Responsibilities include (but not limited to):

- Managing the City's website (with support from our awesome partners in IT and REACH Maine)
- Managing official social media channels
- Writing and distributing press releases
- Responding to media inquiries
- Coordinating television, radio, newspaper, and online interviews
- Writing presentations and talking points
- Producing the Ellsworth Insider monthly staff newsletter
- Publishing stories on Medium - <https://stories.ellsworthmaine.gov/>

This is an online storytelling platform where people and organizations share articles that go beyond the

headline. It allows the City of Ellsworth to provide deeper context, explain the "why" behind projects and decisions, and tell the stories that help residents better understand their community.

- Supporting crisis communications
- Managing the City's updated visual brand and messaging
- Promoting City events, initiatives, and community projects
- Helping departments communicate clearly with residents

Some days involve writing a Facebook post. Other days it's coordinating interviews with multiple news outlets on a developing issue. No two days are alike.

When the Media Calls

Reporters often work under very tight deadlines. Sometimes they have a day. Sometimes they have only an hour. You're not expected to answer questions on the spot or speak on behalf of the City. Please refer to our companion resource, **When Media Contacts the City: A Quick Guide for City Staff**, for instructions on what information to collect and who to contact. Your manager has received a copy of this guide to share with your team, and it will also be available as an employee resource on our Team Ellsworth SharePoint site.

When a reporter contacts the City, the Communications Office begins gathering information immediately so we can provide an accurate and timely response. That often means reaching out to staff by email, Teams, or phone because the reporter's deadline may be approaching quickly.

Whenever possible, I'll let you know:

- what the reporter is asking,
- when the deadline is,
- what information I need,
- and whether the request is urgent or can wait.



Clear communication goes both ways. If you're unavailable, in a meeting, or unable to respond before the deadline, simply let me know. That helps me plan the next step.

Why You're the Best Person to Tell the Story

One of the most common misconceptions about communications is that the Communications Director should speak on behalf of every City department, and on every topic.

In reality, the strongest and most credible spokesperson is often the person closest to the work. Residents want to hear from the people who live the topic every day.

For example:

- Planning questions are best answered by Planning.

- Budget questions are best answered by Finance.
- Road or water projects are best explained by Public Works.
- Personnel matters are addressed by Human Resources.
- Public safety issues are discussed by Police or Fire leadership.

The Communications Office helps prepare those conversations but **doesn't replace the expertise** behind them. When subject matter experts share information directly, it builds credibility, trust, and transparency.



How I'll Help You

If you're asked to speak with the media, you're never on your own.

Before an interview, I will:

- Explain what the story is about, to the best of my ability.
- Share the reporter's questions whenever possible.
- Draft talking points for you to review. You then inform me of any needed edits to these talking points, as you know the details more than I.
- Help simplify technical information into language residents can easily understand.
- Coordinate logistics with the reporter; the time, date, location types of details.
- Attend interviews when possible and appropriate.
- Support you before, during, and after the interview.

You're the expert. My role is to help you feel prepared and confident.

What I Need from You

Successful communication is always a partnership.

When I reach out, here's what helps most:

- Let me know if you've received my request.
- Tell me if you're unavailable.
- Review talking points carefully.
- Correct anything that isn't technically accurate within those talking points.
- Share additional context I may not know.
- Be honest if you don't know an answer—we'll figure it out together.

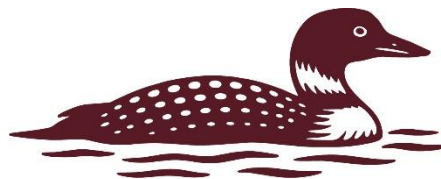
You don't need to be a communications expert. That's my job. **You just need to be an expert in your field.**

Understanding Urgency

Not every request is urgent. To help everyone understand expectations, I'll begin identifying requests using this simple guide.

Green — Routine

No immediate deadline. A response within the next day or two is perfectly fine.



Yellow — Time Sensitive

A response today is needed. A reporter's deadline may be approaching tomorrow.

Red — Urgent

A reporter is on deadline today. If you're available, a response as soon as possible is extremely helpful.

Communications is a Team Sport

Every department has important work to do. Every employee contributes to Ellsworth's success. The Communications Office helps tell those stories. When we work together, we help residents better understand their local government, strengthen public trust, and showcase the incredible work happening across Team Ellsworth every day.

Thank you for partnering with me to tell Ellsworth's story with accuracy, professionalism, and heart.

One last thing...



I truly believe every department has stories worth telling. If your team has completed a project, reached a milestone, welcomed a new employee, received a grant, hosted an event, or simply has something you'd like our community to know about, please reach out.

Some of the City's best stories have come from employees who simply said, *"Hey Amy...have you heard about this?"* My door is always open.