



When Media Contacts the City: A Quick Guide for City Staff

The City of Ellsworth is committed to being open, transparent, and responsive to the media. Reporters help keep our community informed, and we want to ensure they receive accurate, timely information.

If a reporter contacts you, you don't need to answer their questions on the spot or speak on behalf of the City.

Your role is to gather the information below and connect the reporter with the appropriate City staff member.

Following these simple steps helps ensure reporters receive complete, accurate information from the right subject matter expert.

 **Remember:** It is perfectly acceptable to say, *I don't have that information right now, but I'll make sure the appropriate person gets your request.*

If a Reporter Calls: Please collect the following information:

- Date and time of the call
- Reporter's name
- Media outlet
- Phone number
- Email address (if available)
- Topic or questions they are working on (so we can connect them with the appropriate subject matter expert)
- Their deadline



Then say: *Thank you for calling. We want to make sure we provide you with accurate information. I'll pass your request along, and someone will be back in touch with you as soon as possible.*

Immediately email the information to:

- Amy Kenney
- Charlie Pearce
- Sara Devlin

If a Reporter Emails You: There is no need to respond to the reporter; simply forward the email to: Amy, Charlie, and Sara and we'll take it from there.

If a Reporter Arrives at City Hall:

- Ask the reporter to wait in the lobby.
- Check whether Amy is available.
- If Amy is unavailable, check for Charlie.
- If Charlie is unavailable, check for Sara.

If none are available, collect:

- Date and time the reporter arrived on site
- Reporter's name, phone number, and media outlet
- Topic of the story
- Deadline



Then say: *Thank you for stopping by. The appropriate staff member isn't available at the moment, but we'd like to help with your story. I'll make sure your information is passed along, and someone will contact you as soon as possible.* Email the information to Amy, Charlie, and Sara immediately.

It's Okay to Say...

- I don't have that information right now, but we'll get it for you.
 - We'd like to gather the correct information before responding.
 - Can you tell me about the story you're working on ...so we get the correct subject matter expert for you.
 - When is your deadline?
 - We'll make sure the appropriate person gets back to you.
 - I want to make sure we provide accurate information rather than an incomplete or rushed answer.
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Ask About Their Deadline: Knowing their deadline (reporters often work under tight deadlines) helps us prioritize requests while ensuring the information we provide is accurate. If they say: "ASAP" ... it's okay to gently ask: *I understand. And the person you're looking for may need some time to gather the information. Would later today, or tomorrow if needed, still work for your story?*

Our Goal: We want to provide the media with accurate information in a timely and professional manner. We don't want a story to say: *City Hall declined to comment.* We don't need to have every answer immediately, but we do need to acknowledge the request, understand the deadline, and make sure it gets to the right person. We want reporters to know: The City is gathering the correct information and will provide an update as soon as possible. Accuracy is always more important than speed.

Remember ... every employee plays an important role in helping the City communicate effectively. You are not expected to have all the answers. By gathering the right information and connecting reporters with the appropriate staff, you help ensure the City provides accurate, timely, and consistent information to the public.

Thank you for helping us tell Ellsworth's story.

