



CITY OF Boca Raton

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Ordinance No. 5795

DATE: September 1, 2026
TO: Mayor and City Council
FROM: Mark Sohaney, City Manager
SUBJECT: Reorganizational Alignment: Public Affairs Division Transition to Department

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt the proposed ordinance formally establishing the Public Affairs Department within the City's organizational structure.

BACKGROUND:

Over the past year, the City has undertaken a comprehensive evaluation of its organizational structure with the goal of improving efficiency, strengthening collaboration, reducing duplication, and better aligning services and responsibilities across the organization.

This effort has focused on placing functions within the areas best positioned to support their purpose, personnel, and service to the community. Several significant organizational changes have resulted from this evaluation, including:

- **Recreation Services** has been realigned to allow greater focus on its core parks and recreation mission.
- **Ocean Rescue** transitioned from Recreation Services to Fire Rescue Services, providing stronger operational alignment with the City's emergency response functions.
- **Emergency Management** transitioned from the City Manager's Office to Fire Rescue Services, bringing emergency planning, preparedness, response, and recovery functions together.
- **Park Rangers** transitioned from Recreation Services to Police Services, strengthening coordination and enforcement within City parks.
- **Beautification** transitioned to Public Works and Engineering, better aligning those responsibilities with the City's maintenance, right of way, and infrastructure operations.
- **Communications and other public-facing functions** previously located throughout the organization have been consolidated and aligned within Public Affairs, creating a more coordinated structure for communications, community engagement, public information, executive and Council support, arts and culture, community resources, and related functions.

The proposed establishment of the Public Affairs Department is the next step in this broader Citywide organizational realignment.

What began as a four person Communications and Marketing team has evolved considerably as the City's communication needs, organizational responsibilities, and community expectations have grown. Functions that previously operated in different areas of the organization have been brought together to create a more comprehensive and coordinated Public Affairs operation.

Under the current organizational structure, Public Affairs includes **Mayor and Council legislative support, City Manager executive staff, communications and digital media, video production, community relations, Arts & Culture, Community Resources, and public information support for public safety**. The department also provides coordination for the City's state and federal governmental affairs activities.

This structure recognizes that effective public affairs extends beyond traditional communications and marketing. It includes how the City communicates with residents, supports its elected officials and executive leadership, engages the community, coordinates public information during emergencies and significant events, supports arts and cultural programming, assists residents with community resource needs, and communicates the City's priorities with other levels of government.

The realignment also establishes clearer accountability for functions that routinely cross departmental boundaries. Rather than maintaining separate or fragmented public-facing operations throughout the organization, the Public Affairs Department provides a centralized structure that can support the City Manager, Mayor and City Council, City departments, and the community.

As the City undertakes increasingly complex initiatives, residents expect timely, accurate, and accessible information and meaningful opportunities to participate in decisions affecting their community. A centralized Public Affairs Department strengthens the City's ability to meet those expectations while improving coordination across departments and communication platforms.

The department will also play an important role during emergencies and significant events. Public Affairs coordinates closely with Police Services, Fire Rescue Services, Emergency Management, and other departments to ensure residents receive timely and accurate information. The organizational structure provides dedicated public information support for public safety while maintaining coordination with the City's broader communications operation.

Community engagement is equally important. The department brings together community relations and community resource functions, including the City's homelessness outreach coordination and Quality of Life Working Group, providing stronger alignment between communication, outreach, and direct engagement with residents.

Arts and cultural functions, including the Mizner Park Amphitheater, have also been aligned within Public Affairs, recognizing their significant role in community engagement, City events, Downtown activity, and the City's overall connection with residents and visitors.

Collectively, these changes create a department with Citywide responsibilities that supports virtually every department and many of the City's interactions with the public.

The organizational realignment of Public Affairs personnel and functions has already occurred administratively. The proposed ordinance does not initiate that consolidation or create a new City service. Rather, it formally recognizes the existing organizational structure by transitioning Public Affairs from a division to a department.

The ordinance establishes the Public Affairs Department within the City Code and defines its responsibilities consistent with the organizational structure already implemented. Adoption will also authorize the associated administrative and financial account realignments necessary to complete the transition.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The proposed ordinance creates one additional position. Existing personnel, operating budgets, and responsibilities have been realigned within the Public Affairs structure as part of the City's broader organizational realignment.

Associated personnel and compensation adjustments necessary to align positions with their responsibilities and the new organizational structure are incorporated within the City's personnel and operating budgets.

Adoption of the ordinance will formally establish the department within the City Code and complete the associated administrative and financial account realignments.

STRATEGIC IMPACT:

Establishment of the Public Affairs Department supports the Strategic Focus Area of **World Class Services** by improving organizational alignment, strengthening communication and community engagement, and providing a coordinated approach to public information, executive and Council support, community relations, arts and cultural programming, and community resources.

The department will strengthen transparency, accessibility, responsiveness, and coordination while providing residents with meaningful opportunities to engage with their City government and supporting continued public trust.

Document originated by: Mark Sohaney, City Manager



ORDINANCE

5795

1
2 AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BOCA RATON, FLORIDA,
3 CREATING A PUBLIC AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT; AMENDING
4 CHAPTER 2, "ADMINISTRATION," ARTICLE IV,
5 "DEPARTMENTS"; DIVISION 1, SECTION 2-288,
6 "DEPARTMENTS ESTABLISHED," CODE OF ORDINANCES,
7 TO INCLUDE THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT;
8 CREATING CHAPTER 2, ARTICLE IV, DIVISION 10, "PUBLIC
9 AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT"; PROVIDING FOR THE
10 COMPOSITION OF THE DEPARTMENT AND THE POWERS,
11 DUTIES, AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PUBLIC
12 AFFAIRS DIRECTOR; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY;
13 PROVIDING FOR REPEALER; PROVIDING FOR
14 CODIFICATION; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE

15
16 WHEREAS, effective local government depends upon clear, accurate, timely, and
17 accessible communication between the City and the residents, businesses, visitors, stakeholders,
18 and community partners it serves; and

19 WHEREAS, the City Council finds that public expectations regarding governmental
20 communication, transparency, accessibility, responsiveness, and civic engagement have evolved

1 significantly in recent years, requiring municipalities to communicate across an increasingly
2 diverse array of digital, social, video, electronic, and traditional communication platforms; and

3 WHEREAS, the City further finds that residents increasingly seek opportunities not only
4 to receive information from their local government, but also to engage with governmental decision-
5 making processes, participate in public discussions, provide meaningful input regarding
6 community issues, and remain informed regarding matters affecting the City and its future; and

7 WHEREAS, the City currently conducts a wide range of communications, public
8 information, community engagement, marketing, media relations, legislative affairs coordination,
9 digital outreach, video production, and related public-facing activities through various personnel,
10 programs, and organizational units operating throughout the municipal government; and

11 WHEREAS, the City Council finds that the consolidation and coordination of such
12 functions within a single department will promote greater efficiency, consistency, accountability,
13 collaboration, and operational effectiveness while preserving the City's ability to communicate
14 with the public through multiple platforms and methods; and

15 WHEREAS, the City Council further finds that the increasing importance of digital
16 communications, social media, website communications, public engagement initiatives,
17 livestreaming technologies, video-based information sharing, emergency communications, and
18 other modern communications tools warrants recognition of such functions as a distinct municipal
19 responsibility deserving of departmental-level leadership and oversight; and

20 WHEREAS, the City Council recognizes that effective public communication is no
21 longer limited to the dissemination of information, but also includes facilitating community
22 engagement, fostering productive relationships with residents and stakeholders, improving public
23 access to governmental information, and enhancing opportunities for meaningful civic
24 participation; and

25 WHEREAS, the City Council further finds that centralized coordination of
26 communications activities among City departments, divisions, boards, officials, employees,

1 legislative representatives, community partners, and governmental stakeholders will improve the
2 City's ability to deliver accurate, timely, and consistent information while supporting the efficient
3 administration of municipal services; and

4 WHEREAS, the City Council additionally finds that the creation of a Public Affairs
5 Department will provide an organizational framework through which the City may more effectively
6 coordinate public information, community engagement, communications, media relations,
7 legislative affairs coordination, emergency communications, marketing, digital communications,
8 and related activities throughout the municipal government; and

9 WHEREAS, the City Council finds that the creation of a Public Affairs Department is in
10 the best interests of the City and will enhance the City's ability to communicate with, engage,
11 inform, and serve the public while supporting the efficient and effective operation of municipal
12 government; now therefore

13
14 THE CITY OF BOCA RATON HEREBY ORDAINS:
15

16 Section 1. Chapter 2, "Administration," Article IV, "Departments," Division 1,
17 "Generally," Section 2-288, "Departments Established," Code Of Ordinances, is hereby amended
18 as follows:

19 Sec. 2-288. - Departments established.

20 The following departments are established:

- 21 (a) City manager's department;
- 22 (b) Legal department;
- 23 (c) Financial services department;
- 24 (d) Police services department;
- 25 (e) Fire-rescue services department;
- 26 (f) Recreation services department;

- (g) Utility services department;
- (h) Public works and engineering department;
- (i) Development services department;
- (j) Public affairs department.

Section 2. Chapter 2, "Administration," Article IV, "Departments," Division 10, "Public Affairs Department," Code Of Ordinances, is hereby created as follows:

DIVISION 10. – PUBLIC AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

Sec. 2-466. – Composition.

The public affairs department shall consist of the department head, who is the public affairs director, and such other employees as shall be necessary and provided for in the budget.

Sec. 2-467. – Powers and duties of public affairs director.

The public affairs director shall have the powers, duties and responsibilities to:

- (a) Establish and administer citywide programs for public affairs, public information, communications, marketing, media relations, community engagement, and public outreach.
- (b) Develop, coordinate, and disseminate information concerning city programs, services, projects, initiatives, operations, governmental activities, and matters affecting the city.
- (c) Establish and administer programs relating to public outreach, stakeholder engagement, community partnerships, public meetings, public participation opportunities, and other community engagement activities.
- (d) Coordinate communications among city departments, divisions, boards, committees, officials, and employees.
- (e) Establish and administer programs relating to social media, digital media, website content, text alert systems, and other public communications platforms.
- (f) Coordinate communications with representatives of the news media and other public information outlets.

1 (g) Serve as the city's public information officer.

2 (h) Establish and administer programs relating to emergency communications, crisis
3 communications, disaster communications, and related public information activities, and
4 coordinate the dissemination of public information during emergencies, disasters, crises, and
5 other significant events.

6 (i) Coordinate legislative affairs communications with governmental relations
7 consultants, legislative representatives, governmental agencies, and other entities concerning
8 legislative initiatives, appropriations, grants, funding opportunities, and matters affecting the city.

9 (j) Establish and administer programs relating to video production, audiovisual
10 communications, meeting broadcasts, livestreaming, and related public information technologies.

11 (k) Provide and coordinate administrative support services for the city manager's office,
12 executive leadership, and city council members.

13 (l) Provide communications, public affairs, public information, media relations,
14 marketing, and community engagement support services to the city manager, city council, city
15 departments, divisions, boards, committees, officials, and employees.

16 (m) Perform such other duties, powers and responsibilities as may be assigned by the
17 city manager or by ordinance.

18 Secs. 2-468—2-485. - Reserved.

19 Section 2. If any section, subsection, clause or provision of this ordinance is held
20 invalid, the remainder shall not be affected by such invalidity.

21 Section 3. All ordinances and resolutions or parts of ordinances and resolutions and
22 all sections and parts of sections in conflict herewith shall be and hereby are repealed.

23 Section 4. Codification of this ordinance in the Code of Ordinances is hereby
24 authorized and directed.

25 Section 5. This ordinance shall take effect immediately upon adoption.

1 PASSED AND ADOPTED by the City Council of the City of Boca Raton this ____ day
2 of _____, 2026.

3 CITY OF BOCA RATON, FLORIDA

4
5 ATTEST:

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8 _____
9 Andy Thomson, Mayor

10 _____
11 Mary Siddons, City Clerk

12 Approved as to form:

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14 

15 _____
16 Joshua Pariente Koehler
17 City Attorney
18
19
20

21

COUNCIL MEMBER	YES	NO	ABSTAINED
MAYOR ANDY THOMSON			
DEPUTY MAYOR MICHELLE GRAU			
COUNCIL MEMBER YVETTE DRUCKER			
COUNCIL MEMBER JON PEARLMAN			
COUNCIL MEMBER STACY L. STIPPLE			