



Public Information Policy and Procedure



Policy

The Westchester County Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation's (PRC) Marketing and Public Relations Division (Marketing Division) has a seamless approach to ensure the media and public are informed of PRC events, programs and offerings.

Headed by the Director of Marketing and Public Relations (Marketing Director), the Marketing Division is responsible for all public information, marketing activities and public relations for PRC. Staffed by a team of full-time and hourly employees, this division has the sole responsibility of providing public information and maintaining community relations, and develops and operates under a comprehensive marketing plan and community relations plan that is reviewed and updated yearly. Staff meetings take place on an as needed basis to brainstorm new ideas, review/set goals and projects, develop new marketing and promotional strategic campaigns and information sharing in general.

There are also two facilities that are included under this office and have special target audiences with specific marketing needs: Westchester County Center and Playland Park. These, too, operate under the auspices of the Marketing Office and share in the same general goals and objectives, and each has their own individual website.

Goals and Objectives

These are formulated by the Marketing Director and staff yearly and updated as needed. The primary goal is to increase awareness of our parks, facilities and offerings, and have residents not only use our facilities passively but to register for programs and activities offered.

The Marketing Division is committed to providing quality information to residents, visitors, other community organizations, and the media about parks, recreation and conservation news, which maintains customer relations and fosters trust with the community.

Responsibility and Methods

The Marketing Director oversees the process of dissemination of information to the public, including the media and elected officials. PRC uses a variety of communication and marketing tools, including but not limited to social media, seasonal program guides (calendar of events), PRC website, press releases, flyers, brochures, banners, newspaper/magazine advertising, and electronic newsletters. Media inquiries are routed through the Marketing Director as the first point of contact with responsibility for coordination and handling of all inquiries.

There are many ways the media and residents of the County can access information about PRC including the following:

- Press Releases and Media Events • E-Marketing o websites <https://parks.westchestergov.com/> o E-blasts/Email Blasts o Social media
- By phone
- Print Marketing
- Cross Promotion
- Freedom of Information Law (FOIL)

Press Releases and Media Events

The Marketing Director oversees the process and timing of dissemination of information to the public, including the media as well as provides a unified, professional response with both the media and the public and, as such, is the sole spokesperson for the department. This Division is responsible for issuing all press releases, answers directly to the First Deputy Commissioner, and works closely with the Westchester County Executive's Office of Communications. All information is provided in a timely, accurate and objective manner, with press releases distributed two to six weeks prior to an event to all interested parties electronically via email to more than 100 media outlets throughout the area.

The Marketing Division distributes press releases electronically via e-mail through Microsoft Outlook and then adds the releases to the PRC website under "Press Releases," where they are accessible to the public.

Special media events call attention to parks openings or a new feature at a park, and are held with the Commissioner and/or the County Executive in attendance. The Marketing Division issues a media advisory several days prior to and again the day of a media event to all interested parties electronically via email to more than 100 media outlets throughout the area.

Media inquiries are routed through the Marketing Director, who serves as the first point of contact with responsibility for coordinating and handling inquiries in a timely manner. The Media Policy is reviewed yearly with all annual and seasonal employees.

Crisis Management (a serious incident that will generate intense public or media focus whether immediately or within a short period of time) is coordinated in conjunction with responding departments and the County Executive's Office of Communications to determine the response, the responder and the location of briefing.

E-Marketing

Websites

The most comprehensive, most immediate and easily accessible source of information for residents is the www.westchestergov.com/parks website, which can be accessed directly online or through the Westchester County government main website:

www.westchestergov.com. It provides a variety of information and can be accessed 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It features:

- Overview: The comprehensive site offers Park Pass information, user fees for entrance and parking, golf and swimming, and other recreational activities and children's summer camps. There is also information about the Department and our various citizens' organizations such as the Westchester Parks Foundation and the Parks, Recreation and Conservation Board.
- Calendar listings: published quarterly for nature centers, Muscote Farm, Lasdon Arboretum with brief descriptions of each. Also, major events throughout the year.
- Activities: find out where to golf, hike, bike, walk, swim, fish, picnic, horseback ride, etc.
- Parks/Facilities: a map with a list of all facilities and what activities and amenities are available at each is on this site, along with directions to the parks.

Additional informational websites www.playland.com, www.golf.westchestergov.com and www.countycenter.biz.

Each site provides information about each facility and a calendar of events. These can be accessed directly, from the Parks site, from the main Westchester county website, and via all search engines.

All websites are updated as needed and many features are interactive, such as summer camp registration forms and sports tournament entry applications. Last-minute cancellations/program changes are posted prominently. All information can be downloaded and printed to keep for future reference. The Golf and County Center websites were developed by Marketing staff.

Electronic mail and Newsletters /E-blasts

These are brief notices sent electronically to announce a special program or promotion. Distribution is by request.

E-blasts are sent to those who sign up for particular interests in a variety of categories. The public can sign up for our weekly electronic E-blast and notifications for parks/facilities updates, program and camp registration, tickets sales, and discount codes. The list includes over 75,000 names and are deployed weekly and on an as needed basis. E-blasts link directly to the website where visitors are directed for more information.

Social Media

Keeping pace with the most popular social media trends, our accounts keep residents in touch with all current happenings within the parks system. They are updated daily and feature activities for the week. Cancellations, date changes or other last-minute information is also posted here. The Social Media Policy is reviewed yearly with all annual and seasonal employees.

- PRC is active on the following platforms: o [Facebook](#) o [X \(Twitter\)](#) o [Instagram](#) o [TikTok](#) o [Threads](#) o [YouTube](#)
- [Linked In](#)

(914) 864-PARK (7275)

Like the websites, this phone line is available to residents 24/7 and offers recorded information. It is also updated with any cancellation or change of venue information that may occur at the last minute.

Print Marketing Brochures and Calendars

These are designed in-house by Marketing Division graphic artists and produced and distributed throughout the parks system. All events are listed on the parks' main website, in their own divisions, as well as on the comprehensive calendar that is available on the main government website.

Advertising

Print ads are placed in local newspapers and publications to promote Playland, summer camps, concerts, movies and the large-scale program Westchester's Winter Wonderland. Many times these ads are bartered with the media in exchange for tickets to the events and sponsorships.

Cross Promotion

PRC works to promote its programs and services through outreach with other county departments. Literature is sent to the Office of Tourism, the departments of Public Safety, Health, and Senior Services and Programs, as well as during events that are hosted by them.

Constituent Services

The Marketing Director manages all public information activities via phone call, email, or snail mail; addressing customer comments, inquiries and complaints, ensuring that every comment is acknowledged, answered in a timely manner, and analyzed for trends. Any sensitive issues and suggestions for are brought to the attention of the First Deputy Commissioner and the County Executive's Office.

Freedom of Information Law (FOIL)

The Marketing Director manages all Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) requests and documents from the media and other sources. The Marketing Director serves as the FOIL Officer, who evaluates the legality, confers with personnel as required to assure a coordinated response, fulfilling all requests in a timely manner. A periodic review of training is provided by the Westchester County Law Department for the FOIL officer/staff member. The FOIL Policy is reviewed yearly with all annual and seasonal Parks employees.

E-Responses to public FOIL requests are managed by the Department's FOIL Officer and the Westchester County Law Department following all applicable laws as well as established PRC policies and procedures.

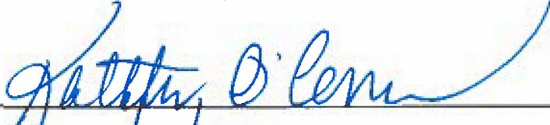
As outlined in the PRC Public Information Policy, the Marketing Division uses a variety of communication tools to provide information to the media and the public.

The Public Information Policy is reviewed and updated yearly by the First Deputy Commissioner and Marketing Director, who present it to the Commissioner for approval.

Approved by:

Kathleen M. O'Connor
Commissioner – Parks, Recreation & Conservation

Signature:



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Last Review: November 2023

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