Media Training

Hillary Mintz, PIO/Press Secretary
Waukesha County Executive's Office

Background

Former investigative reporter WISN-12 (ABC) **2010-2023**

Covered high profile trials, Waukesha parade tragedy, Kyle Rittenhouse

Emmy Award winning journalist, RNC with Secret Service Joint Information Center

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HOW TO EFFECTIVELY DEAL WITH MEDIA AND CONSTIUENTS?

Have no fear

Everything is public

Own the good and the bad

Be accessible!

THINK LIKE A REPORTER

****AIM TO HOLD THOSE IN POWER ACCOUNTABLE**

CURIOUS

STORYTELLERS

WHAT HAPPENEND?

WHY SHOULD PUBLIC CARE?

COST?

IMPACT?

NEWS RELEASE= EXPECT CALLS, PLAN AND PREPARE

WHAT IS NEWS?

How do newsrooms decide on what to cover?

- **-Emotional**
- **-Visual**
- **-Buzzworthy**
- **-News you can use**

Media Requests

Protecting the County/municipality's interest is **top priority**.

What will you gain? Will this get our message across?

BUILD A BENCH OF INTERVIEWEES

FULFULL REQUESTS ASAP

PREPARATION

*We don't work on media deadlines, but it's important to be aware.

Deadlines:

Newspapers- Late afternoon

Radio/TV- 1-2 hours before broadcast 4,5,6pm, 10pm

Internet- Rolling deadlines 24/7

Message Development

KEEP IT BRIEF

3 one-sentence messages

Write for the ear ***not the eye

Practice your message out loud

NO TECHINCAL JARGON- keep it conversational

Short sentences

Everyday words

Focus on audience needs and values

Types of Messages

Fact/Result

Problem/Solution

Advocacy or Call to Action

Benefits

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Messaging

- **1 sentence = your most important point, what does audience needs to know?**
- **Answer**
- **Transition**
- **Message**

- Example: Reporter “Were you prepared to handle extensive power outages?”
- Interviewee: (Answer) “Yes.”
- (Transition) “We wanted to get ahead of the storm, so we made sure enough staff would be available to restore power as quickly as possible.”
- (Message) An event like this is an example of why we remind customers to prepare for outages, check our outage maps, and communicate with frequent updates about restoration status via social media.

On Camera

BE YOURSELF

NO NEED TO BE PERFECT

NEVER USE **“No comment” –explain ***why** you can’t talk about it

Off limit topics: confidential employee or patient records, layoffs, lawsuits, death or injury to an employee

TELL A STORY

**Average length of story between 20 seconds and 1:20 seconds

NEVER SAY **“THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS”**

Media Availability

For significant events, pre-planned time for interviews

Send alert to newsrooms, interviews available at certain block of time

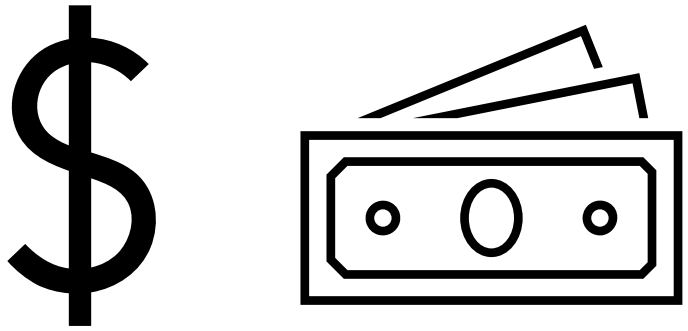
Frees up crews, gives media re-useable sound for multiple newscasts

Annual County Budget

-Invite local paper for an embargoed preview

-can expand to more outlets

YOU CONTROL THE NARRATIVE



Examples:
Budget & Revenue Coverage

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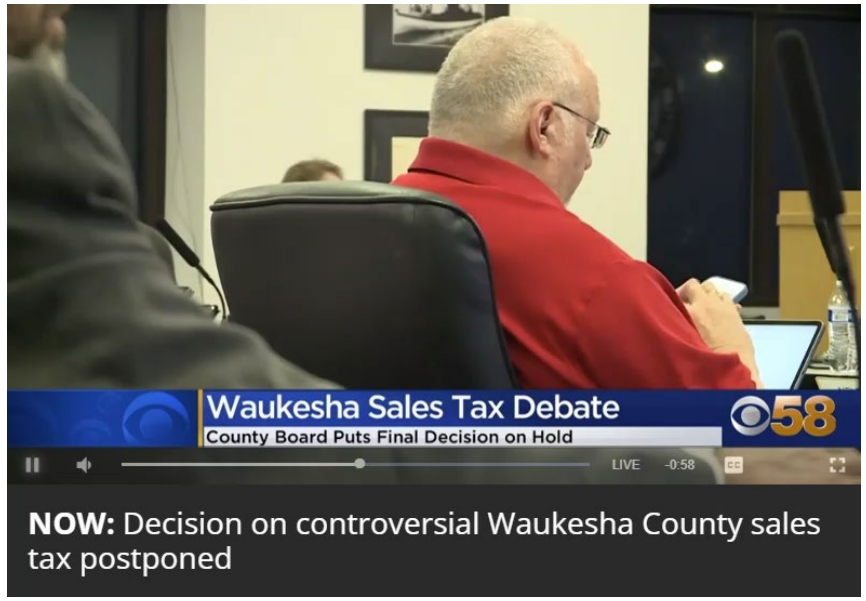
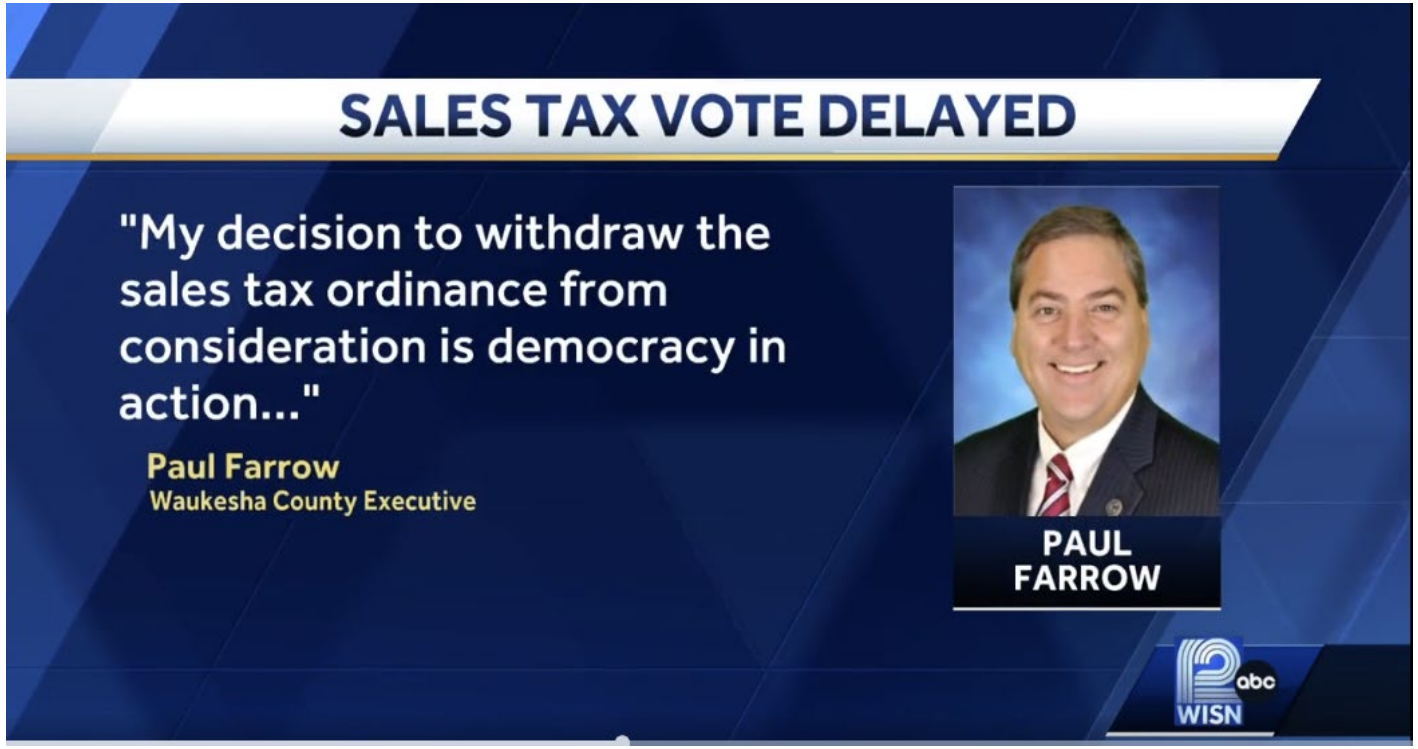
- ANNUAL COUNTY BUDGET
- 2025 BUDGET=$5 million shortfall
- Service/staff cuts
- 0.5% SALES TAX PROPOSAL
- Public pushback
- 11th hour ordinance pulled prior to vote



Examples:

Media Response:

Ordinance is pulled
News Release
Social Media
No on-camera interviews
Message= **democracy in action**
We know we need a revenue solution, but we're pulling the sales tax option back now



Public Response

- Months leading up to vote, county set up dedicated website with FAQs, timeline
- Taxpayers emailed County Execs Office, we responded- social media comments
- Plan to holding future public info sessions to help constituents learn about county's financial challenges and potential revenue streams
- JANUARY- COUNTY EXEC ANNOUNCED SALES TAX PKG DEAD
- FOCUS SHIFT TO STATE FUNDING FOR MANDATED PROGRAMS

Waukesha County sales tax proposal officially dead

by Adam Roberts — January 29, 2025, 7:20 am in Government and Politics, Homepage Showcase, News, Wisconsin

Waukesha County Executive Paul Farrow speaks to the Board of Supervisors Tuesday, informing them a 0.5 percent county sales tax ordinance is officially dead. January 28th, 2025. Image Credit: Waukesha County

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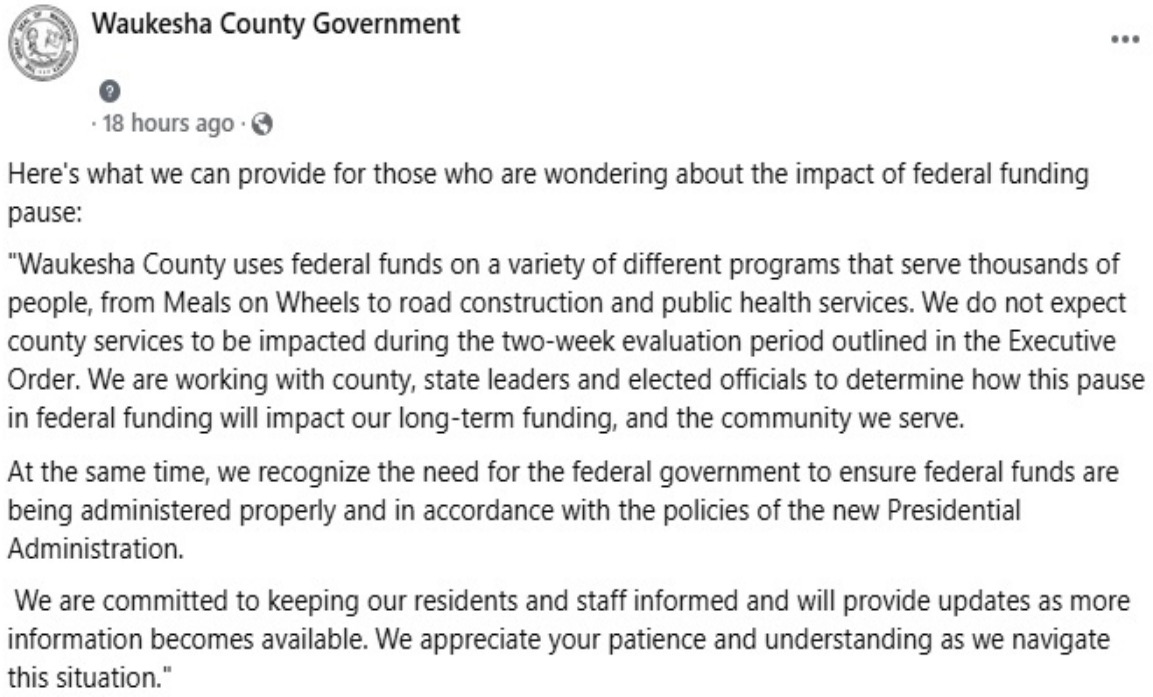
Examples:
Fed $$$ pause

- **Media/public Response:**
- Jan 28-Statement issued following multiple requests from reporters about county program impact
- 20 shares, almost 13k views
- **Anticipate** requests and questions
- Multiple requests about our Meals on Wheels program



Waukesha County Government

· 18 hours ago ·

Here's what we can provide for those who are wondering about the impact of federal funding pause:

"Waukesha County uses federal funds on a variety of different programs that serve thousands of people, from Meals on Wheels to road construction and public health services. We do not expect county services to be impacted during the two-week evaluation period outlined in the Executive Order. We are working with county, state leaders and elected officials to determine how this pause in federal funding will impact our long-term funding, and the community we serve.

At the same time, we recognize the need for the federal government to ensure federal funds are being administered properly and in accordance with the policies of the new Presidential Administration.

We are committed to keeping our residents and staff informed and will provide updates as more information becomes available. We appreciate your patience and understanding as we navigate this situation."

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SOCIAL MEDIA

FACEBOOK, X, INSTAGRAM, NEXTDOOR

Creates one official source of information

Reporters might post or report on what they see first

*Posting quick (within minutes) **reduces** the amount of calls you or your dept will get- **BUILDS PUBLIC TRUST**

SOCIAL MEDIA cont'd

- **Works for recruitment**
- Airport snowplow drivers
- News coverage, social media
- Filled nearly all the positions

SOCIAL MEDIA cont’d

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“Gen Z Marketing Script”
Generated nearly 10k views on Facebook
50 shares
Best performing post
HUMOR WORKS!

Examples: Soundbites

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Misconceptions

Curve ball questions

Negative focus, out of context

Questions ahead of time- WRONG

(generally they will provide an overall angle/topic)

Reality: Good journalists care about being accurate, fair and telling engaging stories

Off the record?

NO SUCH THING

By telling a reporter on the phone “I’ll only speak to you if this is “off the record” is not protection.

Wisconsin is a 1 party consent state.

Most reporters *would keep their word, but some won’t

Anything you say before, during or after the interview can be quoted in a news story- they might not tell you

Ex: Waukesha County Board to vote on budget-altering sales tax proposal

Relationships

TWO WAY STREET

- Building relationships, builds trust
- Journalists need you, and you need them
- Inaccurate report?
  - -Don’t be afraid to hold journalists accountable

News Releases

Expect follow up requests
Prepare for interviews
State if someone is available for interviews

TOOLS

Artificial Intelligence AI

TREAT AI AS AN ASSISTANT, NOT AS AN AUTHORITY

GovAI

Cutting-edge tool designed specifically for local government and public sector professionals

Chat GPT

QUICK MESSAGES

**ALWAYS REVIEW

CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN-

Support framework in response to **or in anticipation of significant events. Ensures consistent approach, shared expectations, and accountability in providing public information.

Stay Informed

If you might *be the news, follow the news!
Keep tabs on major headlines
Watch the news to see what they use (length of soundbites)
Social media
QUESTIONS???

THANK YOU!

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Download the Presentation

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