



North Carolina  
Association of  
County Commissioners

# Navigating the Media

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## Speakers

- ▶ Lacy Pate, Public Relations Manager, NCACC
- ▶ Jessica Loeper, Chief Communications Officer, New Hanover County
- ▶ Tim Buckland, Intergovernmental Affairs Manager, New Hanover County
- ▶ Frank Williams, NCACC President-Elect, Brunswick County Commissioner

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## Media Essentials

- ▶ Why is media engagement important?
- ▶ Why should counties develop a communications strategy and who can help?
- ▶ What do reporters want?
- ▶ How should elected officials engage with the media?

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## Why communicate with the media?

If there is a story to tell, someone will tell it.

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## Symbiotic vs. Unfavorable

### Symbiotic

- Elected officials and the county get help from the media in promoting priorities and accomplishments
- The media helps get critical information out to residents
- Residents get consistent and accurate information



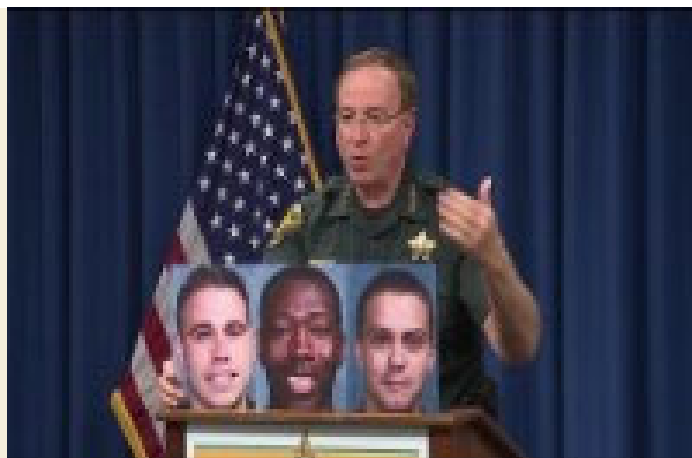
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## Symbiotic vs. Unfavorable

### Symbiotic

- People tend to believe what they hear first.
- When you know a story will break, get your side out first.
- “so many departments say, ‘we can’t discuss a personnel matter’ and blow off the public. I applaud this sheriff for his transparency.”
- “Sheriff Grady is so honest he would arrest himself”



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## Symbiotic vs. Unfavorable

### Unfavorable

- County or elected official's reputation is compromised
- Inconsistent messaging
- Misinformation or disinformation is spread
- Public trust is lost



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## Media Training 101

### Communications planning

- Who is my PIO, how can they help?
- How can we communicate with local media?
- How can we ensure consistent and accurate messaging?



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## Reporter Relations 101

### What do reporters want?

- What motivates reporters?
- How do we generate media interest?
- How do we cultivate positive relations with reporters?
- How do we handle aggressive or inaccurate reporting?



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## Crisis Communications

### Tips for weathering crises

- What should elected officials do to prepare for a looming crisis?
- What steps should we follow to respond to a media inquiry?
- What if we can't answer a question?
- What happens if we say nothing?



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