

## Policy Regarding External Communications about Current Events

*Board of Trustees Approved March 21, 2024*

**Purpose:** The purpose of this document is to provide guidance when developing formal UVJC communications regarding current events affecting our community. The policy is aimed at communications coming from the Board as representatives of the UVJC. Note: if Board members wish to speak on their own, they should make clear in their communications that they are giving their individual, personal opinions.

**Principles:** All communications should respect the following principles and should

- Align with our UVJC Mission statement: “Kol Ha’Emek, the Upper Valley Jewish Community, is an eclectic, welcoming, egalitarian congregation providing Jewish spiritual, educational, social and cultural opportunities to the Upper Connecticut River Valley of Vermont and New Hampshire.” URL [uvjc.org](http://uvjc.org) accessed 2/29/2024
- Acknowledge our community bylaws, which state, among other enumerated purposes, that as a community we "recognize the importance of the Land of Israel to the Jewish people and maintain our connection to the Jewish homeland."
- Recognize that our community doesn't speak with one voice and is pluralistic.
- Help maintain our commitment to remaining a safe space for our members and the Jewish community at large
- Maintain a respectful tone
- Uphold integrity, honesty, factual accuracy, and Jewish values

**Guidance:** In creating the communication, we should keep the following in mind:

- **Operational issues** (Internal decisions regarding communication). These are Board level decisions that should be documented appropriately with minutes or memos, including minority opinions and their reasoning when appropriate.
  - **If and why** we need to respond.
    - As a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) entity, the UVJC is not allowed to politic; we cannot work on behalf of or in opposition to specific candidates (see references).
    - We are allowed to lobby, as long as that is not a substantial part of our activities (see references).
  - **Timeframe for response (when):** urgently, near future, longer-term
  - **Method of communication (how):** for example, verbally, email, open letter, directed letter, over-arching statement for multiple uses
  - **Decide the direct audience:** whether public in general, government, media. In addition, decide on the breadth of the audience, e.g., one town or the Upper Valley as a whole, local media or statewide media
  - **Delegation of responsibilities:** so that work can be distributed and be accomplished expeditiously

- **Select signatories:** Will the communication be signed by the President, the Rabbi, the Board of Trustees, or some combination?
- **Decide on directing replies to the communication.** Use president@uvjc.org, rabbi@uvjc.org, or office@uvjc.org, as appropriate, if they are the designated recipients.
- **Content**
  - State the **goal** of the communication
  - State who we are
  - Describe the situation--**what** happened, is planned, or may happen in the future
  - Express our values, concerns, and reasons for addressing the situation
  - Indicate **why** we have to address the issue
  - Identify **who** we are addressing (the audience) and **who** is/was/will be affected
  - Provide information and education, as appropriate
  - Invite dialogue, as appropriate
  - Ask for what we want--have a clear **call to action**, such as--
    - Pause or stop current action
    - Active listening
    - Dialogue
    - Follow-up
    - Behavior change
    - Educate
    - Vote
    - Support
    - Other as appropriate to the situation
  - **Signatures**, as directed by the Board
  - **Reply recipients**, as directed by the Board
- **Board votes to approve**

## References

Regarding political issues: <https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/charitable-organizations/the-restriction-of-political-campaign-intervention-by-section-501c3-tax-exempt-organizations>

Regarding lobbying: <https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/lobbying>