



City of Morgan Hill

Legislation Text

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CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: JANUARY 25, 2017

PREPARED BY: Maureen Tobin, Communications and Engagement Manager

APPROVED BY: City Manager

COMMUNICATIONS ASSESSMENT REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. Accept Communications Assessment Report from Tripepi Smith;
2. Discuss City Council's expectations and goals for enhancing the City's communication and engagement efforts; and
3. Direct staff to schedule a community inclusiveness City Council workshop.

COUNCIL PRIORITIES, GOALS & STRATEGIES:

Ongoing Priorities

Fostering a positive organizational culture

Preserving and cultivating public trust

2016 Focus Areas

Enhancing Our Services

Improving Our Communication

REPORT NARRATIVE:

Background

The City Council approved the creation and hiring of a City Communications and Engagement Manager during the 2013-14 budget process. The intent of the position was to oversee development, implementation, and support of City-wide communication efforts and to serve as the primary administrator of the City's community engagement, public information, and internal communications. The position was filled effective January 2014 and has now been in place for three years. Maureen Tobin has filled this role since its inception.

With the onset of the Downtown Placemaking Investment Strategy in early 2014, a comprehensive and strategic communications and engagement process for the downtown projects was developed, implemented, and managed by the new Communications and Engagement Manager. The ongoing, extensive responsibilities related to the communication and outreach for the downtown projects quickly become the primary and often sole focus of the new role. With the completion of the downtown projects in May 2016, the focus of this role has returned to the overall management of city-wide communication and engagement efforts, providing the opportunity to move forward with the

original intent of this role and to improve upon our current efforts.

Communications Assessment Process

In support of the City Council's 2016 Focus Area of Improving Communication, the City engaged Tripepi Smith, a marketing, technology and public affairs consulting firm, to assess the City's current communication strategy and processes. This Communications Assessment took place from August through November of 2016. As noted in the Tripepi Smith report, the assessment involved interviews with 48 individuals including: City Council Members, City Teammates, Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Association, the School District, the library, and involved citizens.

Additionally, Tripepi Smith, conducted a thorough evaluation of the many City communication platforms and methods, reviewing analytics and statistical information. A final step in the assessment was a bilingual (English/Spanish) communications survey which was shared electronically with the community through our various communications channels: City website, Facebook, Twitter, and Nextdoor. A bilingual postcard was also mailed to all residents encouraging participation in the survey and providing a simple link to use to access the survey directly in either English or Spanish.

Based upon the findings during the assessment process, Tripepi Smith has provided the City with a detailed report (attached) and recommendations.

Solid Foundation

Tripepi Smith notes that the City has successfully developed a solid communications foundation from which to build upon. An example is Morgan Hill has one of the more active email marketing platforms (Constant Contact) Tripepi Smith has observed. Other notable Communications efforts include:

- Hiring the City's first-ever full-time Communications and Engagement Manager three years ago.
- Completely refreshing and updating the City website two years ago, making it mobile-friendly, providing a fresh new look, improving searchability, and making it translatable with Google Translate.
- Adopting the "Spectrum of Public Participation" guidelines for Community Engagement.
- Establishing a main City Facebook Page three years ago, which has over 2,500 Page Likes/Fans now.
- Establishing a main City Twitter account two years ago.
- Implementing "Siteimprove" for better overall website management and analytics review.
- Implementing a strategic and comprehensive Communications & Engagement process as part of the Downtown projects and single-lane pilot project.
- Holding regular "Coffee with the Mayor" meetings to engage with community members in an informal environment.
- Holding the City's first-ever "Coffee with a Cop" in Fall 2016.

- Implementing the use of a digital tool called “Flipping Book” to display its budget and master plans in an interactive format.

Additionally, while not statically valid or scientific, the Communications Survey indicated that 61% of respondents agreed that the City is doing a good job of communicating important information.

Recommendations

Building upon the foundation already in place, Tripepi Smith has outlined eleven (11) recommendations with associated Action Steps for improving and enhancing our communications and engagement efforts:

1. Continue to Optimize Website and Define Governance
2. Develop Social Media Strategy and Policy
3. Optimize Social Media Sites
4. Drive Social Media Audience Growth
5. Integrate Cohesive Communications Strategy Throughout Departments
6. Develop Media Engagement Strategy, Policies and Procedures
7. Deepen Direct Electronic Communications with Residents
8. Communications Metrics: Measure What Matters
9. Empower Staff and Council as Information Ambassadors
10. Continue to Grow and Celebrate Transparency Efforts
11. Evaluate a Changed Model for Staff Support of City Communications

Staff agrees with all recommendations made by Tripepi Smith and acknowledges that it will take significant time and staffing resources to implement all of them. Staff will continue to focus on our City wide social media and website optimization and is recommending the following as the main priorities for enhancing our organization wide communication and engagement efforts:

Bilingual Communications

Although Tripepi Smith did not make a recommendation in relation to bilingual communication, it is noted in their observations. The topic of Spanish communications and outreach has come up many times over the past few years from the City Council, community members, and teammates. In recent months, the request to improve the City’s bilingual communication efforts has increased.

Currently, the City provides limited information in Spanish:

- Translatable website pages with Google Translate enabled
- Eblasts and social media posts with links to Spanish translations
 - Rain and flooding public service announcements (PSAs)
 - Cooling Center PSAs
 - Council Support and Assurance Statement
 - City Council Vacancy and Request for Applicants

As Tripepi Smith notes, there is no formal policy or direction about when or what to send to the community in Spanish. There has been a general understanding that Health and Safety information will, in general, be shared bilingually. Staff is seeking Council direction on its expectations for providing City communications, documents, and agendas in Spanish.

Community Inclusiveness

This assessment process has also prompted staff to think about the concept of community inclusiveness, of which communication is one aspect. Building upon the City Council's recent letter of community support and assurance, staff recommends that the Council schedule a workshop to initiate a more formal discussion on this topic. To start, this could include reviewing the City's current policies, projects, and programs. From the City's successful affordable housing program, Youth Action Council Senior Citizen's Ball, and Parent Project, to after school programs at Village Avante and Murphy Ranch, support of the El Toro Youth Center, Morgan Hill Values Youth conference and our involvement in the South County Youth Task Force Morgan Hill has made strides in serving the entire community. That being said, there are many areas in which we can improve to work with and involve our entire community. This recommended workshop would be a first step forward.

Cohesive Communications Strategy throughout Departments

Finally, the City's communication efforts and strategies have evolved in a decentralized manner with several City departments managing their own communication and engagement strategies and efforts independently. Some of this occurred out of necessity and lack of resources, but it has resulted in varied approaches, methods, use of varied visuals, and inconsistent use of the City logo.

An informal "communications team" has been convened in recent months by the Communications and Engagement Manager and staff will be formalizing this team. Tripepi Smith suggests in its recommendations, this team will discuss upcoming content, best practices, consistency in messaging, and regularly review and update of a master content calendar. This group will also serve as the recommended "social media team."

A first priority will be to update and enhance the existing "Style Guide" and implement its consistent use throughout the organization.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: Involve

- Several community members and individuals representing key organizations were interviewed by Tripepi Smith as part of the Communications Assessment.
- A communications survey, in both English and Spanish, was shared electronically with residents through Constant Contact eblasts, social media posts on Facebook and Twitter, post to Nextdoor, Newsflash on the City website, and a devoted page on the City website. Additionally, a bilingual (English/Spanish) postcard was mailed to all residents encouraging their participation in the survey and providing links to both the English and Spanish surveys.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS:

In addition to the priorities noted by staff in relation to the recommendations provided in the report by Tripepi Smith, the City Council could provide additional direction to staff for further or different priority enhancements to citywide communications and engagement efforts and strategies.

PRIOR CITY COUNCIL AND COMMISSION ACTIONS:

At the City Council 2016 Goal Setting Retreat, the City Council adopted *Improving Our Communication* as a 2016 Focus Area.

FISCAL AND RESOURCE IMPACT:

In addition to the teammates in various departments throughout the City involved in communications, the Communications and Engagement budget includes staffing for a full time benefitted

Communications and Engagement Manager position and a part-time temporary Communications Assistant position budgeted for 16 hours/week at \$15/hour. This part-time temporary position has been filled twice during the past three years with varying success. It currently is unfilled.

It is recommended by Tripepi Smith that this position be filled. Staff will begin a recruitment process to fill this position immediately, but it should be noted that it may take time to find a person with the right skill set to add value to the City's communication efforts and free up some of the Communications and Engagement Manager's time. Depending on the City Council's priorities for enhancing communication and engagement, it may be necessary to consider different staffing resources in the future.

The implementation of a comprehensive, consistent and strategic bilingual (Spanish) communications program is not included in the current budget. If the City Council directs staff to implement a new program, any budgetary adjustments would be recommended in the mid cycle budget update.

CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act):

Not a Project

LINKS/ATTACHMENTS:

Tripepi Smith Communications Assessment Report