

8/19/2020

ITEM 2

August 19, 2020

To: Economic Development, Communications, and Marketing Committee

From: Councilmember Debi Davis, Committee Chair

New Communications Efforts To Deal with COVID-19 Pandemic

To respond to an unprecedented pandemic and the needs of our residents, it's important that we use our communications resources to better align with the needs of the moment. Our communications efforts to date have been adequate in some areas. But they are lacking in others.

Now, it's time to step up to the challenge. We need to do a better job of helping our community now and over the next 9-12 months. If we don't mobilize our communications resources to improve our efforts, we will have let our community down. We'd like to reach more residents than we're reaching now. We should step up the information that's flowing to our residents. Here are some ideas:

- Increase social media presence by sponsoring ads on social media platforms.
- Increase the frequency of newsletters to residents and businesses to biweekly and cut distribution costs by using door-to-door distribution services.
- Create a weekly telephone town hall that's simultaneously broadcast on Facebook and YouTube to disseminate information of COVID-19 programs and information featuring city leaders and subject matter experts.
- Establish a text message communications system for residents to share information about critical city issues.

To pay for these ideas, we recommend reallocating communications funding from our three consulting groups to fund these efforts which are a higher priority during the pandemic than other city communication efforts.

We ask city staff to prioritize this effort and bring a plan to the council meeting on September 1 for approval.

Other Important Responses to COVID-19 Pandemic

- The staff suggestion of making grants to small businesses for safety improvements is a good one and the marketing committee should recommend it. The best use of our resources would be to do concrete things to help businesses open safely to the public.

POST MEETING MATERIAL

- ❑ The current emergency rental assistance program can currently help approximately 250 households according to City staff. This is a good start and we should evaluate it in a few months and consider enhancing the program if needed.

- ❑ With our \$1.59 million of CARES funding, we recommend using it to do the following:
 - ❑ maintain the current level of garbage rates for the next six months,
 - ❑ establish a fund to help low-income families with garbage rate increases
 - ❑ share accurate information with residents (this is important given the level of disinformation and confusion in the community about garbage rates and carts), and
 - ❑ be creative and engage our community. (maybe we could set up a system for residents who may not need assistance to help others who may).

We should evaluate these efforts every 3 months for their effectiveness and determine if we have re-allocated our resources and done an effective job to meet the needs of the pandemic now and for the next year.