



Agenda Report

20-798

Agenda Date: 9/2/2020

REPORT TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, COMMUNICATIONS, AND MARKETING COMMITTEE

SUBJECT

Discussion and Possible Action on Communication Directives given at the August 19, 2020 Economic Development, Communications, and Marketing Committee Meeting [Council Pillar: Enhance Community Engagement and Transparency]

BACKGROUND

At the August 19, 2020 Economic Development, Communications, and Marketing Committee (Committee) meeting, Chair Debi Davis presented a memo to the Committee (Attachment 1), which included suggestions on how to reach more residents during the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic:

- Increasing social media presence by sponsoring ads on social media platforms;
- Increasing the frequency of newsletters to residents and businesses to bi-weekly and cut distribution costs by using door-to-door distribution services;
- Creating a weekly telephone town hall that is simultaneously broadcast on Facebook and YouTube which would provide updates on COVID-19 and available programs featuring City leaders and subject matter experts; and
- Establishing a text message communications system to send timely, short message service (SMS) messages to residents.

The Committee also discussed using one of the Communication consultants for this effort, Circlepoint, and potentially reallocating some of the funds from the other two consultant companies to this effort. As of August 27, 2020, the funds available for use with the three communications consultants are, as follows: 3fold Communications: \$94,462.50; Circlepoint: \$90,226.79; and, Singer Associates, Inc.: \$99,062.50.

Following the Committee's input on refocusing communication efforts, Chair Davis called a special Committee meeting on September 2, 2020 to discuss further and Circlepoint will be in attendance.

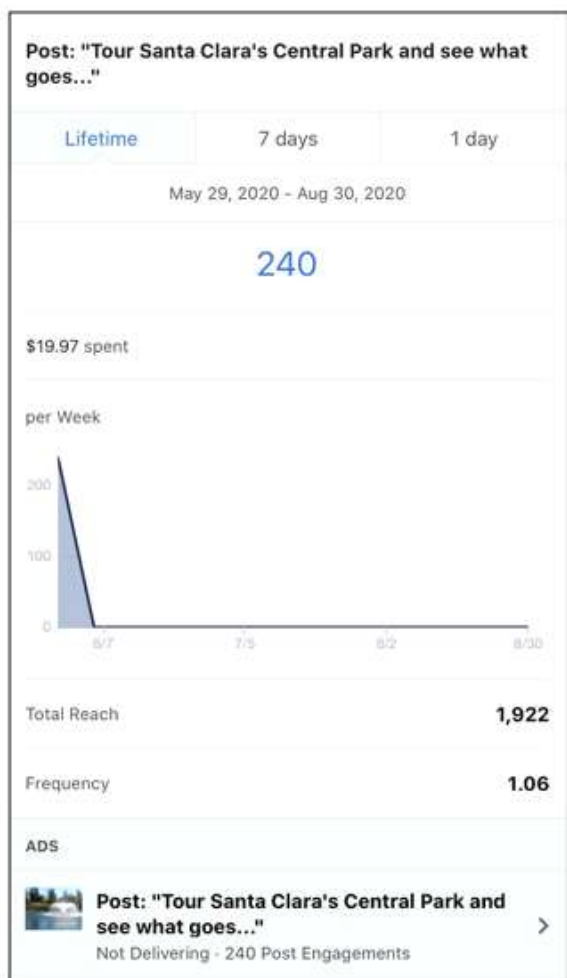
DISCUSSION

The Communications Division has begun exploring the suggestions provided in Chair Davis' memo, coupled with the Committee's discussion from the August 19, 2020 meeting. The summary below addresses each communications efforts, related considerations, and anticipated costs of implementation.

Social Media Ads

The City has promoted social media posts on Facebook and Twitter in certain circumstances such as

to increase awareness for raising attendance and participation in Citywide events. For example, see two promoted posts on Facebook for live streaming of the Prioritize Santa Clara virtual tours of City infrastructure in late May 2020.



Considerations/Cost: The cost per post is approximately \$50 or less. Staff can continue to implement this tactic quickly with minimal costs which can be absorbed through the pre-existing non-departmental advertising and community promotion budgets. Of note, the top social media networks offer cost-per-impression. Other cost factors involve the total amount to spend daily on a post/posts or setting a maximum amount to be spent when someone sees the post or takes a desired action. In terms of annual costs, an **initial \$5,000** could be allocated for this effort while the return on investment (ROI) is evaluated.

Newsletter Frequency and Door-to-Door Distribution

The City currently has a biweekly e-publication, City Hall News, that is distributed electronically to the public via email every other week (except for the winter holiday period when it is on hiatus) and available on www.SantaClaraCA.gov/CMblog <<http://www.SantaClaraCA.gov/CMblog>>. Additionally, the Inside Santa Clara newsletter is produced three times a year and mailed to approximately 58,000 residential and business addresses. The City newsletter is also available online, www.SantaClaraCA.gov/InsideSantaClara <<http://www.SantaClaraCA.gov/InsideSantaClara>>. Mission City Scenes (

<https://www.santaclaraca.gov/i-want-to/stay-informed/newsroom/city-publications/mission-city-scenes>) is a utility bill insert, produced monthly, that is also available to communicate directly with households.

The current publication that would accommodate this suggestion would be City Hall News, which is distributed electronically on a biweekly basis (Attachment 2) and typically contains six pages. It may be more cost effective to reduce this publication to fewer pages if the mode of distribution is door-to-door, given printing and distribution costs. Therefore, the City will solicit pricing for both six- and two-pages. There are no new costs for developing the newsletter other than the consultant costs which are already budgeted.

Considerations/Cost: Door-to-door distribution for governments is generally reserved for life/safety public information, such as: instruction for residents on water safety and to boil water, temporary water shut offs, natural disasters, and emergencies. In order to establish the cost for door-to-door distribution service, staff would need to undergo a competitive procurement process. The requirements in the solicitation will include the following:

1. Duplication of approximately 60,000 copies of a six-page color newsletter (or two-page as an option) on a bi-weekly basis
2. Compliance with City of Santa Clara's minimum wage ordinance, set at \$15.40 per hour through the 2020 calendar year with a link to the following information page
<https://www.santaclaraca.gov/business-development/business-services/minimum-wage->
3. Door-to-door delivery of a six-page newsletter (or two-page as an option) to each address in Santa Clara, equaling approximately 60,000 residences and businesses, every two weeks. This includes all single-family dwellings, multi-family dwellings, and other housing facilities, and Santa Clara-based businesses.
4. Vendors will be required to propose a distribution plan that includes a geographic plan for distribution, duration of time to distribute 60,000 newsletters, and the workforce required to distribute on a regular bi-weekly basis.
5. Vendors must demonstrate a dependable labor source to ensure reliable delivery, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, to ensure door-to-door distribution can be maintained throughout the year safely (for delivery staff and residents) and reliably. Vendors submitting proposals must also acknowledge compliance with both State of California and County of Santa Clara Public Health Orders and/or mandates.
6. Bi-weekly service assumes 22 times per year, allowing for four times throughout the year of no service.

Staff is ready to initiate a procurement process based on the above specifications. A competitive process would enable receipt of pricing based on a vendor's existing neighborhood distributions and whether the City can achieve cost savings through leveraging existing door-to-door distributions. Given the City's specifications and requirements, it is not known whether pricing advertised by businesses on websites is reliable until a formal procurement process is completed.

Alternatively, the Committee may want to consider using the US Postal Service (USPS) for mailing City Hall News. Bulk mail rates would apply and offers distribution to all residents and businesses. As background, the Inside Santa Clara newsletter has printing and USPS mailing costs of approximately

\$35,000 per edition (approximately \$10,000 for mail distribution and \$25,000 for printing), or \$105,000 annually. A typical edition of Inside Santa Clara has between 8-12 pages of content. This would be a faster option.

State Laws Apply - As with any public mailing, especially during a campaign season, the City must be mindful of the fact that expenditures of public funds can be interpreted as advocacy or restricted activity. For the purpose of this effort, previous advice from the City Attorney about no advocacy in the communication applies, from **Vargas v. Salinas**:

"In such cases, the determination of the propriety or impropriety of the expenditure depends upon a careful consideration of such factors as the style, tenor and timing of the publication; no hard and fast rule governs every case."

Staff, in coordination with the City Attorney's Office, must place consideration to the style, tenor and timing of the door-to-door bi-weekly distribution against these requirements.

Revamped City Hall News - Over a four week period, Circlepoint confirms that it can evaluate the City Hall News and provide recommendations for an effective, resident-friendly publication to be distributed through a door-to-door service.

Weekly Telephone Townhall

At the Committee meeting, the Committee clarified that instead of a weekly telephone townhalls, the production of weekly videos would enhance the City's pandemic outreach to the community. The weekly videos would explore the City's COVID-19 response efforts as well as spotlight residents and businesses that have been impacted by the pandemic and their stories of hope during this challenging time. In response, the City will produce a new interview-style video series, **Santa Clara Responds**, that will highlight these topics and more. The first episode will feature Chief Emergency Services Officer Lisa Schoenthal who breaks down the County of Santa Clara's Public Health Order and what it means for our city and its community members. A future episode will showcase some small business owners who are recipients of the City's Small Business Assistance Grant Program and how the grant has made a difference for their Santa Clara-based business. Similarly, recipients of the City's various COVID-19 assistance programs will also be featured.

Considerations/Cost: The video production costs would include the hourly rate of as-needed multimedia services staff for videography and editing, along with full-time staffing resources. There are no costs associated with sharing the videos on social media, the City website and the City's government channel, Santa Clara City Television.

Text Message Communications System

Fortunately, the City's agreement with its website vendor, Granicus, already has text messaging capability built in with its e-subscription service. There are 100,000 outbound text messages currently available to the City at no additional cost. Residents and other stakeholders would have to "opt-in" to receive City eNews via text. Outreach would take place to inform the public about this texting option to receive certain City news topics.

Considerations/Cost: Given that there are over 41,500 City e-subscribers, the City could exhaust 100,000 text messages within two text messages. For start, another 500,000 text messages would cost an estimated \$10,100, allowing for 10 text messages to be sent to the e-subscribers per year. If

more are desired, the City can purchase more. The City proposes to use this texting capability when (1) new COVID-19 programs are announced, (2) key citywide information is available on the City's website (with a link provided), and/or (3) any other advisories important to communicate. The City will begin soliciting e-subscribers to sign up for text messages over the next weeks and can begin this effort with the announcement of Healthy Meals 2.0 and our proposed second round of the City's Rental Assistance Program. The City would also draft standard operating procedures to guide staff in the proper use of this texting capability.

The City has requested text plan package options from Granicus for further consideration. The annual costs are dependent on how many City subscribers opt in to receive texts and how often the City sends out information via text during the pandemic. The Communications Division can use funds available in the non-departmental advertising and community promotion budget to absorb these additional costs.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The action being considered does not constitute a "project" within the meaning of the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15378(a) as it has no potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment.

FISCAL IMPACT

The fiscal impact is dependent on the tactic(s) that may be adopted. Although funding has been set aside for the three communications consultants for Fiscal Year 2020-2021, the consultants are only paid for communications and marketing services rendered. The funding amounts are also for the initial three-year term of the contract. As of August 27, 2020, the funds available for use are: 3fold Communications: \$94,462.50; Circlepoint: \$90,226.79; and, Singer Associates, Inc.: \$99,062.50. The funds available for each of the consultants do not reflect the costs of communications and marketing services rendered during the month of August 2020.

PUBLIC CONTACT

Public contact was made by posting the Economic Development, Communications, and Marketing Committee agenda on the City's official-notice bulletin board outside City Hall Council Chambers. A complete agenda packet is available on the City's website and in the City Clerk's Office at least 72 hours prior to a Regular Meeting and 24 hours prior to a Special Meeting. A hard copy of any agenda report may be requested by contacting the City Clerk's Office at (408) 615-2220, email clerk@santaclaraca.gov <<mailto:clerk@santaclaraca.gov>> or at the public information desk at any City of Santa Clara public library.

RECOMMENDATION

Receive Committee input.

Reviewed by: Lenka Wright, Director of Communications

Approved by: Deanna J. Santana, City Manager

ATTACHMENTS

1. Memo from Chair Davis
2. City Hall News - August 24, 2020

