

Memorandum

TO: City Council Workshop
FROM: Renee Eisenbeisz , Assistant City Manager
DATE: January 21, 2025
SUBJECT: Review of 2025 - 2026 strategic communications plan
ITEM NUMBER: 1.d
SECTION: GENERAL BUSINESS

REQUESTED MOTION

INTRODUCTION

In January 2023, the city council approved a strategic communications plan through 2024. The communications division has been using this plan since 2019 to guide its initiatives and annual work plans. Staff have updated the plan for 2025 - 2026 for the city council to review and discuss at the January 21 workshop.

DISCUSSION

The 2025 - 2026 plan is attached for council review. The plan is divided into three parts: introduction, strategy, and communications plan. All of the updates are under the communications plan section and relate to the action items for staff to complete. Many of the action items from the previous plan are ongoing and will be carried over into the next plan. The draft plan is attached. Staff have added or amended a few action items, which are highlighted in orange in the attached document, as well as removed some action items which are crossed out.

Below is a summary of the 2025 - 2026 goals, objectives, and action items. A spreadsheet is also attached that provides an update on the action items from the 2023 - 2024 plan.

Goal #1 - Reinforce the city's identity and community pride to strengthen public confidence, promote a positive city image, and enhance trust in our city government.

- Objective #1 – Reflect the city's mission and values in the way we do business
- Objective #2 – Strengthen the use of the city logo as a brand

Staff are recommending that we remove three action items as they are not driven by the communications division. The division will continue to assist departments with carrying out these items as needed. The e-newsletter action item is being updated and moved to goal #2, objective #2. More information on that action item is below. Given that there are no longer action items under the previous objective #2, it is recommended to be removed from the plan.

The remaining three action items under this goal are ongoing.

Goal #2 - Effectively use established media and emerging trends in communications to provide open and easy access of information to the community in the most accessible manner.

- Objective #1 – Develop communication tools based on data, feedback and priorities that align with the strategic communications plan
- Objective #2 – Identify key information the community desires to receive and methods in which to receive them

The majority of the action items listed under this goal are ongoing. The e-newsletters action item is being relocated to objective #2 and updated to reflect a transition to GovDelivery for e-newsletters. The city has been using its current system, Constant Contact, for 10 years. This is a basic system used by many organizations due to its low cost. However, due to its limited capabilities, we haven't been able to grow our subscribers much in 10 years. GovDelivery is a much more robust system used by more governments nationwide. Through GovDelivery, we will be able to send updates via email, text, or social media with one step publishing. Staff also believe that we will be able to grow our subscribers substantially thanks to the fact that e-newsletters are shared across similar communities and facilities so it's easy for individuals to find us and subscribe. An example of this is if a resident signed up for Ramsey County Parks and Recreation updates, they would see an option to register for nearby parks and recreation updates such as ours. GovDelivery was included in the 2025 budget.

With the addition of a social media specialist, staff hope to create a content strategy guide in 2025 to help ensure that our posts are engaging and reaching our audiences. Communications staff also continue to work with parks and recreation on marketing strategies and identifying what tools and messages are effective.

Goal #3 - Communicate city news and information internally and externally in a timely, accurate, and proactive manner, so that citizens, as well as employees, remain knowledgeable on city information.

- Objective #1 – Coordinate information from the city and community center to ensure consistency and accuracy
- Objective #2 – Enhance and manage websites to ensure content is relevant and engaging

Staff are recommending that we remove the first two action items under objective #1 as they are not driven by the communications division. The division will continue to assist departments with carrying out these items as needed.

The remaining action items listed under this goal are ongoing. The digital and mobile first plan is being carried over from the current plan and being updated to "explore and implement digital first strategies as we are able." The bullet points listed under this action item are the five pillars of digital first strategies for governments from the Federal Government's digital first strategy. We have already completed work in a number of these areas with the creation and use of our branding guidelines and emphasis on plain language use, working with AudioEye to ensure our websites meet accessibility standards, redesigning our website with a mobile-first design, and using a variety of communications tools.

Staff are adding an action item to meet the new federal accessibility rules for websites and digital services. The city needs to ensure it's in compliance by the end of 2027.

The city has been working on a website redesign over the last several months and it will be

launching in spring 2025.

Goal #4 - Support the city council in achieving overall goals and specific community programs. Additionally, facilitate citizen input and feedback concerning city policies and programs to aid in the decision making process.

- Objective #1 – Encourage citizens to become more knowledgeable, informed, and involved in the city and issues so that every citizen feels connected and involved
- Objective #2 – Use decision-making processes that are transparent, encourage input at appropriate times, and include a variety of ways for community members to participate and influence decisions.

All of the action items listed under this goal are ongoing. Communications staff will provide training on the public engagement guide to help departments connect with and engage residents.

Communications staff also attend numerous engagement events such as Night to Unite and multi-family engagement socials. They also help create content or communication plans for engagement opportunities.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff is seeking input on the updated plan to ensure it reflects the city council's goals. If supported, staff will bring it forward for final approval at a future meeting.

ATTACHMENTS

[Draft communications plan](#)
[2023 - 2024 plan status](#)