City of Long Beach
Working Together to Serve

Memorandum

Date: January 31, 2018

To: Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Patrick H. West, City Manager

Subject: **Neighborhood Engagement and Community Communications Plan**

At its August 22, 2017 meeting, the City Council requested that the City Manager develop a *Neighborhood Engagement and Community Communications Plan* that outlines the following:

1. Detail the City's existing internal and external communication channels and public affairs efforts;
2. Report on past citywide surveys or other feedback mechanisms pertaining to the prioritization and citizen/user satisfaction of existing City services;
3. Align departmental coordination and public outreach within one of the five stated priorities of the City Council; and,
4. Specify on how the City's Communications staff aims to expand the scope, reach and effectiveness of public communication to increase transparency and strengthen levels of civic engagement in the years ahead.

The City Manager's Public Affairs and Communications Team (*Team*) is in the preliminary stages of developing a comprehensive *City Strategic Communications Plan* (*Plan*). The *Team* has identified the communications assets within the immediate purview of the City Manager's Office (attached), begun identifying department-specific assets, commenced research on communications needs and gaps, as well as understanding the needs of the various demographic groups within the City.

The *Plan* will include goals, measurable objectives, and relevant and strategic tactics. It is being developed based on internal and external communications needs, demographic research, and identifying and evaluating all City communications assets (such as digital media, events, press releases, mobile applications and surveys). The *Plan* will include a neighborhood engagement component, as requested by City Council, which is fitting for a City Strategic Communications Plan.

2017 Expanded and Improved Communications Channels

The *Team* has implemented new initiatives, despite major staff transitions in 2017, that have both increased public engagement and opened new channels of City internal communications. These initiatives were developed as part of an initial informal gap analysis, where the *Team* found there were immediate opportunities of improvement. The following describes some of the accomplishments and service improvements that have expanded the *Team's*

scope using new and existing internal and external communication channels, and have increased transparency and civic engagement opportunities.

Social/Digital Media

- Initiated new digital marketing strategies, with the objective to catalyze the reach and effectiveness of social media to communicate directly with the public, increase transparency, and strengthen levels of civic engagement throughout the community. These digital approaches include:
    - Live-streamed press conferences, grand openings and/or ribbon cuttings and other City events, by utilizing Facebook Live, Instagram Live, and Twitter's Periscope (never before implemented), bringing more visibility to these events and tapping into Long Beach's online community in order to provide a direct source of live time updates.
    - The use of social media polls to engage with the public in a new way on the City's social media platforms. Polls have been published on Twitter and Instagram Story.
    - The creation of an official @CityofLongBeachCa Instagram page that within less than a year currently reaches over 3,000 followers.
    - The launch of a monthly "Facebook Live" series, resulting from the partnership with City departments. Past Facebook live episodes include: the City's General Plan Noise Element update, My Brother's Keeper, and the Long Beach Animal Care Services' adoption programs. In an effort to increase reach and engagement, the "Live" series has also been extended to Instagram Live.
    - The revamping of the City's LinkLB Newsletter branded as the #GoLongBeach Newsletter launched in March 2017. The #GoLongBeach Newsletter now has nearly 2,000 subcribers. This newsletter is produced on a monthly basis and highlights all City initiatives and news along with announcements on upcoming events to keep Long Beach stakeholders informed of everything happening in the City. People can subscribe to the newsletter via Facebook and LongBeach.gov.
    - The launch of the *City of Long Beach News Alerts,* a curation of Long Beach media mentions in print, broadcast, radio, and digital media stories sent out to all City employees to better inform staff of "Long Beach in the news." This is sent every Friday morning.
    - The launch of the first social media campaign series (Land Use Element Social Media Campaign) with sponsored posts involving multiple stakeholders including Council Offices, City Manager's Office, and City Departments. Sponsored posts serve as a tool to override the algorithms on social platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram, that only highlight certain posts receiving high volumes of engagement. Through sponsored posts, we are able to bring forth pertinent information to followers onto their newsfeed.

- Developed "InsideLB," a blog that explores the myriad projects, programs and happenings within the City. Initial content and design are being finalized, and the blog will launch early 2018.
- The acquisition of Sprout Social, a social media management tool that provides metrics, and Meltwater, a social listening tool that provides insights and analytics. Both softwares have been used to create comprehensive social media insight reports that are compiled on a weekly basis to include social media highlights and metrics for the official City social pages.
- The monitoring and assessment of 50+ City department social media pages by interpreting analytics from engagement and online activity, which then informs the Citywide social media strategy.
- The creation of a social media content calendar to develop digital marketing strategies.

Media Relations

- In 2017, generated approximately 200 press releases to keep the public informed about City services, accomplishments, and opportunities for community involvement and engagement. As a result, the City has received local, regional, and occasionally national coverage by media outlets such as: Los Angeles Times, CNBC, Southern California Public Radio, NBC4, Urbanize LA, Curbed LA, Los Angeles Business Journal, CBS Los Angeles, La Opinión and more.
- Expanded the City's media presence and recognition by updating its media contact lists to include regional and national media outlets not yet previously included, strengthening media relations by personally inviting the media to City events, and responding to media inquiries in a timely manner.
- Initiated a national and regional public relations campaign. The campaign aims to raise awareness of the greater public about the innovative and forward-thinking projects and programs that Long Beach is taking the lead on.
- Contracted with Meltwater, an online tool that provides media reach insights, analytics and records.

Branding and Marketing

- Managed City branding of print, broadcast and digital collateral and developed the first City of Long Beach Style Guide.
- Added a City Graphic Designer to the *Team*, who is reponsible for unifying the City's voice through large branding projects such as further developing the current Style Guide, developing brand templates, providing department logo recommendations, innovating merchandise branding ideas, creating a unified City email signature, and leading other special graphic design projects in collaboration with departments.

- Purchased professional software and guides such as Pantone and Adobe Suite that makes user-centered design possible and enables the *Team* to create material that is intuitive and easy for the public or department to understand and digest.

Events

- Created an ongoing internal events calendar.
- Supported City departments by broadcasting livestream videos through the City's social channels.

Internal Communications

- Facilitated a bi-monthly, interdepartmental Citywide Communications meetings, in which Public Information Officers and other communications staff gather for information exchange and capacity building. At these meetings, attendees share best communications practices, provide updates on new departmental initiatives, introduce new communications tools, and learn from expert guest speakers on a variety of topics relevant to the City.
- Facilitated monthly Social Media Administrators meetings. Social media administrators gather together once a month to discuss new departmental programs and events, share social media and communications best practices, learn from expert guest speakers, and network to build strategy surrounding social media campaigns and unifying the City's voice through online platforms.

Communications Coordination

Each City department has their own communications functions and have identified communications roles within their organizational structure. Those roles vary, from media relations to marketing. However, departmental communications functions and roles are coordinated with the City Manager's *Team*. Mechanisms are in place for departments to work with the *Team* to seek guidance and approval on marketing/branding collateral, and when needed, media relations.

Though interaction with departments is fluid day-in and day-out, the *Team* meets formally with City department communicators monthly to coordinate efforts and provide training. In 2018, the *Team* is increasing those engagement meetings. At the close of 2017, the *Team* met formally with City Council chiefs of staff, to commence a more open dialogue and strengthen coordination. In 2018, the *Team* plans to increase these types of formal meetings with City Council communications staff.

The *Team's* direct engagement approach, and with coordination with departments, is a blend between macro communications to the entire City and hyperlocal on specific issues to specific neighborhoods, as appropriate. Different targeted engagement tools and tactics, including new and traditional media, are considered in these outreach efforts.

Surveys

Currently, the City conducts a citywide survey called *The Long Beach Budget Priority Survey*, and there have been several other department-specific surveys conducted, such as the recent Land Use Element survey. City departments are also involved in community events, pop-up booths, and other outreach activities that yield feedback from the community.

In recent years, there has not been a formal citywide general survey that measures community priorities and allows residents and business owners the opportunity to provide feedback on City services. For Fiscal Year 2018, $40,000 in funding has been allocated to conduct such a survey. The statistical survey will be developed by mid-2018, and include qualitative and quantitative questions. This survey will become an element of the *City Strategic Communications Plan*.

Next Steps

The *Team* will provide City Council with updates on the progress of this development with the goal of presenting a comprehensive *Plan* at the end of the research, analysis and development. The *Team* will continue to analyze City Communications assets that currently live within the immediate purview of the City Manager's Office and those that live at the department level. They will be analyzed for strengths, weaknesses, successes and challenges. Internal and external communications needs, and demographics, will continue to be evaluated to develop a framework for a draft City Strategic Communications Plan.

The *Plan* will:

1. Identify City communications channels and tools with guidance on usage;
2. Put in place mechanisms to receive internal and external feedback regarding City communications efforts and City services;
3. Align with the City's vision, mission, values and priorities, which are interrelated to City Council's Stated Priorities. The *Team* will consider the Council's goals, and proactively solicit feedback, in the development of the *Plan*. This will foster synergy among City department communications, between City departments and City Council, and improve the engagement of City stakeholders on citywide initiatives; and,
4. Develop mechanisms to update the *Plan* on scheduled intervals to continually refresh strategies and tools which will lead to the most current and effective civic engagement opportunities locally, regionally and nationally.

To support these efforts, the City Manager's Office will soon finalize the recruitment for the Public Affairs Officer. Staff will provide another update to City Council in 90 days.

The City Manager's Office is committed to an open, transparent government, with the highest standards for providing timely and relevant information throughout the community.

PHW:KL
Attachment

cc: CHARLES PARKIN, CITY ATTORNEY
LAURA L. DOUD, CITY AUDITOR
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TOM MODICA, ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER
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DEPARTMENT HEADS
MONIQUE DE LA GARZA (REF. FILE #17-0713)

City Manager's Office: Communications & Public Affairs Communications Assets Inventory*

Updated: January 2018

DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS

- Social Media (FB,Twitter, IG, Nextdoor, YouTube)
- Email Marketing (Newsletter)
- Long Beach.gov Homepage
- insideLB Blog
- Video Production (LBTV)

MEDIA RELATIONS

- Press Releases
- Media Advisories
- Press Alerts (Internal Comms)
- Media Inquires
- Media Pitches

EVENT COORDINATION

- Groundbreakings
- Ribbon Cuttings
- Press Conferences
- Media Engagement

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL COMMUNICATIONS

- Communications Bi-monthly Meetings
- PIO Bi-monthly Sub-committee Meetings
- Social Media Monthly Meetings
- PIO Distribution Email
- Social Media Distribution Email
- Communications/ Technical Support

CITY BRANDING & DESIGN MANAGEMENT

- Style Guide
- Logos
- Printed Collateral
- Digital Collateral
- Forms & Templates

*within the City Manager's Communications and Public Affairs Team's immediate purview