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Deputy DPD Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Kevin J. Murphy, City Manager

FROM: Diane N. Tradd, Assistant City Manager/DD Director

SUBJECT: COUNCIL MOTION OF 1/30/18 BY COUNCILOR LEAHY
REQUEST CITY MANAGER WORK WITH DPD TO ESTABLISH AND ENHANCE
MARKETING CAMPAIGN FOR CITY OF LOWELL

Current Marketing Efforts

From 2015 to 2016 the City of Lowell worked cooperatively with the Lowell Plan and UMass Lowell on a comprehensive marketing and branding campaign that launched the “#Lowell: There’s a lot to like Campaign.” In Fiscal year 2017, the City’s office of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (C.A.S.E.) took stewardship of the #Lowell campaign and branding identity. Since then C.A.S.E. has worked to amplify the Lowell brand and established likelowell.com as a destination website, which contains a great deal of information about events, businesses, and lifestyle amenities.

C.A.S.E. reinvented the #Lowell: There’s a lot to like” marketing campaign focusing on digital, print, and multimedia outlets that heavily targeted leisure audiences within a 50 mile radius of Lowell. Through these efforts the “LikeLowell” brand was successfully established as the social media presence for “There’s a lot to like.” In the first six months of fiscal year 2018 alone, the current campaign resulted in 40,000 visits to the webpage. Additionally, through our campaigns on platforms such as Google and Facebook our various image ads were shown close to 4 million times.

By all accounts, this was and remains a successful effort, evidenced by the number of unique businesses that have since located in the downtown and other neighborhoods around the city, the growth of annual festivals and events, and increased levels of private investment of all kinds – commercial and residential redevelopment projects.

The City’s Economic Development (ED) Office, which is charged with business recruitment and retention, provides information on its webpage that covers everything from financial resources that are available to businesses, to site identification, news, a calendar of events, and more. It has produced a number of printed materials over the years that it has used to highlight Lowell’s assets and as a reference piece for people who are considering starting or relocating a business to Lowell.

The ED Office also takes advantage of promotional events and activities. Just last month it set up a table with information at a UMass Lowell hockey game where Kronos employees were featured guests – an event that it helped to organize. Next month, the City will co-host “Mass Innovation Nights 107” at the UMass Lowell iHub, which is a well-known monthly networking and showcase event for technology startups that usually occurs in Boston or Cambridge. The logistics are being jointly handled by the ED Office (with assistance from C.A.S.E.) and UMass Lowell representatives; it will feature entrepreneurs from both Lowell and the Boston/Cambridge technology community. The City takes full advantage of these events, which are prime opportunities to showcase firsthand Lowell’s burgeoning economy and lifestyle amenities.

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Social media plays an outsized role in how the City markets itself, both from a cultural/lifestyle and business development perspective. C.A.S.E. manages social media accounts on Facebook (5,300+ followers), Twitter (840+ followers), and Instagram (530+ followers). This does not include individual social media accounts for various annual events such as the Folk Festival and Winterfest. C.A.S.E. carefully curates its accounts to deliver timely information about events, businesses, and promotions to its followers, which oftentimes gets shared and “liked” several times over via other social media accounts, thereby extending the reach of respective messages.

The Economic Development Office has maintained a Facebook page for some time and currently has over 730 followers. It regularly cross-promotes postings from the “Like Lowell” Facebook page, in addition to highlighting events (such as the upcoming Mass Innovation Nights 107 on February 15th, 6pm at the iHub), news articles, and business updates. Shortly after the arrival of the City’s new Director of Economic Development the office proceeded to establish a Twitter profile (@dobizinLowell) in order to expand its overall social media reach. In less than a week the Twitter profile had close to 40 followers.

Moving Forward

C.A.S.E. and the ED Office will continue the marketing efforts summarized in this memo and will improve upon them where they see the opportunity to do so. There is also a clear recognition by the City that more can and should be done to market the City to visitors and businesses. The City’s Director of Economic Development, Andrew Shapiro, has already met with the Assistant City Manager Mike McGovern to discuss the production of a new webpage focused on marketing the City to businesses; this page would supplant the current Economic Development landing page on the City’s website, provide thoughtful visuals, video testimonials, and a compendium of information for new and existing businesses. C.A.S.E. and the ED Office feel that a new economic development focused web presence that cross-brands itself with the “#Lowell: There’s a lot to like” branding message will have the strongest impact given it is already well known and has proven to work quite well. Moreover, businesses place a high value on the cultural and lifestyle amenities that the “Like Lowell” page so successfully promotes; therefore having a direct connection to that page and branding will strengthen the message being put forth in terms of economic development.

DNT/ns

1/31/18

Attachment

cc: Henri Marchand, Director, Cultural Affairs & Special Events
Tobias Marx, Special Events Coordinator
Andrew Shapiro, Director of Economic Development