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MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor William Samaras and Members of the City Council

FROM: Eileen M. Donoghue *EMD*

DATE: July 18, 2018

SUBJECT: MOTION RESPONSE: C. Leahy - *Req. City Mgr. Update the City Council on Community Outreach Procedures.*

The City of Lowell utilizes a number of different methods when reaching out to the community. Depending on the message, different channels of communication will be used to reach the proper audience. On the whole, the City utilizes the following procedures for various outreach opportunities:

- Notices to the public (publicly posted on the bulletin board in JFK Plaza)
- “News Flash” posts on the City website
- Social Media (Facebook and Twitter)
- Signage
- Radio
- Print
- Billboard
- Banners
- Video
- In-person meetings
- Email/letter

Some outreach efforts are mandated by Massachusetts General Laws, for example, the City Clerk is in charge of posting all public meetings to the public bulletin board in the JFK Plaza pursuant to Open Meeting Laws. Certain information is required to be mailed out to residents, such as tax bills, which are mailed to the owner’s address that is kept on file in the City’s Munis program. These kinds of outreach are driven by the functionality of the departments around the City.

Various departments and advisory bodies perform different portions of the City’s overall community outreach effort. Most of the City’s outreach takes place digitally, either via the

City's website, social media accounts, or both. The City Manager's office maintains control of the City's website and "main" social media accounts; however there are a few other social media accounts which post within their specific areas of expertise (for example, the Emergency Management department may post about weather events, and the Lowell Police Department may post about public safety alerts).

In the last few weeks, there have been a couple of important outreach efforts that came from different City departments. During early July, a heatwave struck the region. Chief Jeff Winward of the Lowell Fire Department put out a press release regarding information about cooling stations around the City, which was immediately sent to the City Manager's office for posting to the website and to be shared via social media. Chief Winward sent the same press release to local news outlets as well. Due to the length of the heat wave, messaging regarding cooling station availability around the City was kept fresh on the website and social media accounts until the high temperatures subsided. The City Manager has performed a number of public "Listening Sessions" to garner community input on the search for the new Police Superintendent. These sessions were initially conceived via discussions in the City Manager's office, which led to a narrative being written, which was then posted as a News Flash to the homepage of the City website, and then shared widely via social media.

Departments will conduct their own routine outreach if it falls within the scope of their normal operations. The City Manager's office will collaborate with other departments in order to achieve common goals if such collaboration becomes useful. If departments other than the City Manager's office wish to perform outreach, it is coordinated and executed together.

There are times when individuals or groups around the City are contacted directly. For instance, if there is an event that will impact a micro-region within the city, a neighborhood group or other association may be contacted to help spread the word among their members. This typically occurs over a phone call or an email. The City always attempts proactive outreach rather than reactive communication whenever possible.

The City strives to utilize the most message-appropriate media when delivering messaging. Having a number of tools at the city's disposal allows for a variety of options to be leveraged when attempting to reach out to the community. Beyond community outreach the City is involved in more generalized marketing as well – these efforts include economic development, special events, and general live/work/play initiatives. A more specific breakdown of the various types of media, and instances when they may be utilized, follows below.

Please let me know if you would like any more information regarding this issue.

Community Outreach Methodology

- Notices posted to the public
 - Notices posted in this method are typically required by Open Meeting Law (or other Massachusetts General Laws) and include public meetings, real estate transaction information, invitations for bids, etc.
- Website “News Flash” Posts
 - The News Flash feature allows the City to post various informational messages on the front page of either departmental pages or the website’s homepage. This kind of messaging would include operational messages (i.e. street sweeping notifications, snow parking bans, special events), program announcements (i.e. Citywide Electricity Aggregation or Solid Waste/Recycling updates), road construction announcements (i.e. closures due to street paving), and other similar announcements. This serves as the main digital message board for the City as it allows the administration a focal point to deliver messaging that is of the most importance to the general public. News Flashes will typically be re-posted or referenced in social media posts, including Facebook and Twitter.
- Social Media
 - The City uses various social media accounts to spread messaging to the wider community. Facebook and Twitter are the main channels utilized, and will include media-appropriate messaging. Special events, street closures, programming updates, and more can be found here. The social media accounts will often be used to refer back to “News Flashes” on the City’s website, where more information is typically available.
 - Facebook: The City has a number of Facebook accounts by design, each serving a specific purpose.
 - City of Lowell (City of Lowell, MA – Government) is the most utilized account by the City, and has most operational and programmatic information messaging responsibilities.
 - Emergency Management (Lowell, MA Office of Emergency Management) posts information regarding weather events, natural disasters, snow emergencies, public safety activity, and more.
 - Lowell Police Department (Lowell Police Department Official) is dedicated to public safety issues including crime, public safety alerts/bulletins, announcements, parking ban information, and more.
 - The City Manager (City Manager Eileen M. Donoghue) has a Facebook page for instances where a personal note or announcement is necessary in addition to the other Facebook accounts.

- Economic Development (City of Lowell Economic Development Office) is dedicated to development initiatives, activities and events around the City.
 - Twitter: Similar to Facebook, the City maintains a number of Twitter accounts which are variously used to deliver
 - City of Lowell (@CityofLowellMA) is the main twitter handle for the City. This account has the most operational and programmatic messaging associated with it.
 - Emergency Management (@OEMLowell) is the Emergency Management handle, which posts information on weather events, public safety activities, emergencies and more.
 - Lowell Fire Department (@LowellFireDept) is the Lowell Fire Department's twitter handle, used to keep the public informed of operations and other information.
 - Lowell Police Department (@LowellPD) is the Lowell Police Department's twitter handle used to cover messaging on public safety, police community engagement, operational updates, and public safety alerts/bulletins.
 - Economic Development (@DoBizInLowell) is the economic development twitter handle, which posts messaging related to development activities, initiatives and programs around the City.
- Signage
 - In specific instances, the City will utilize signage for messaging. This would include signs special events (Folk Fest, Winter Fest, Summer Music Series, etc.) and more generalized marketing initiatives ("There's a lot to like about Lowell" signs currently displayed around the City)
- Radio
 - In specific instances, the City will utilize radio advertising. This is typically done for special events.
- Print
 - The City will utilize print media in certain instances. For example, in FY18, the Cultural Affairs and Special Events did some marketing in Merrimack Valley Magazine, and has in the past partnered with the Convention
- Billboard
 - The City has a couple of billboards at local venues, including LeLacheur Park and Tsongas Arena
- Banners
 - The City partnered with the Merrimack Convention and Visitors Bureau to put up a banner at Boston's Logan airport arrivals gate