

**COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT MEMORANDUM
#09-2020**

DATE: February 10, 2020
TO: Honorable Mayor Meredith Leighty and City Council Members
THROUGH: Heather Geyer, City Manager 
FROM: Diana Wilson, Communications Director 
SUBJECT: Communications Plan for Council Activities

PURPOSE

To review the planned level of service for communications of city council activities such as current issues, award presentations, Mingle with the Mayor, and Ward meetings.

BACKGROUND

The City Council Communications Efforts 2020 is included as Attachment 1. The Communications Department would like acceptance/input on the support plan to assist with timelines and staff assignments.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Review and give staff additional guidance on the council communications plan.

BUDGET/TIME IMPLICATIONS

None. The items in the plan are part of existing staff responsibilities and 2020 budget.

STAFF REFERENCE

If Council members have any comments or questions they may contact Diana Wilson, Director of Communications, at 303.450.8713 or dwilson@northglenn.org.

ATTACHMENTS

1. City Council Communications Efforts 2020

The Communications staff will communicate all official council events, highlight city council issues/work on city communications platforms, and coordinate with city council members on promotion for outreach efforts.

What are our platforms?

The *Connection*: an 8-12 page full-color newsletter mailed monthly to every address in Northglenn

Website: www.northglenn.org

Social media: City of Northglenn Facebook page, Twitter account, Instagram profile, YouTube channel, and Nextdoor
Please note, on Nextdoor we can post information/respond to comments on our posts, but are not able to engage in other conversations

City Manager's Report: an internal e-newsletter for employees and city council

Channel 8: available to Comcast subscribers

Direct mail: primarily postcards to notify residents of mayor, ward, and other public meetings

What has changed recently?

The legislative recap section in the monthly *Connection* now looks ahead, takes a deeper dive into Council's most relevant work, and encourages input.

Connection articles tie to strategic plan goals as much as possible, with one goal in particular highlighted each month.

In addition to the monthly Mayor column, a Ward is featured in each issue of the *Connection*. The Ward 1 council member "get to know you" article has run. Ward 3 will be next since Council member Brown is out in February. After "get to know you" is complete, we plan to have ward-relevant topics covered in the article.

Social media related to city council activity has increased (i.e. regular schedule for upcoming meetings) and there are more real time posts (i.e. photos of ward meetings, recognitions at council meetings).

A Mayor's Monthly Minute video with brief updates on council activities has been added for social media and Channel 8.

Council Q & A section has been added to webpages.

What is in process?

E-Newsletter

In mid-March we hope to launch a monthly e-newsletter. The goal is to highlight 4-6 issues or events in a short format and refer back to our website and social media for detailed information. At least one topic each month will be council related. Anyone may subscribe, it is not limited to residents.

New Resident Welcome

A welcome letter or signed welcome card from the Mayor and City Council with a city information one-pager will be mailed to known new residents each quarter.

Annual Report

A 2019 report is in process. An overview format that highlights achievements is planned for this year and will be included in the March *Connection*. A PDF will be available online, and we'll print for meetings by request. We would like to make the 2020 annual report the first page(s) of a 2021 calendar and hand it out at Noel Northglenn; this will depend on funding and staff workload.

Mayor and Ward Outreach

Promotion for Mayor Mingle and ward meetings is an on-going process. Meetings will be featured in the *Connection* the month before and/or month of depending on timing; postcard is mailed to residents in that ward, postcards will be provided to council members to hand out if requested; postcards/flyers/posters are available at city facility front desks; and we promote on social media.

Recommended – council members should host 2-4 ward meetings a year, in their ward. Please set dates a minimum of six weeks ahead of time, and an annual schedule would be ideal for promotion purposes. Please see the idea section for more on ward meetings. Set so far: Ward 1 – April 4; Ward 4 -- March 19, June 11, Aug. 20 & Oct. 15

Mingle with the Mayor: first was Jan. 21. Tentative – March 14, May, July, Sept, Nov. Recommendation: every other month in different parts of the city on different days of the week/times. Possibly combine with existing event.

Digital Engagement Tool

We plan to invest in an additional module of a current platform (OpenGov) that enables “virtual townhalls.” We’ll evaluate use after one year and determine whether to reinvest or upgrade. We will likely invest in an additional module as a project presentation and interaction platform that is more flexible than our traditional website.

Telephone and/or livestream town halls

These are expensive (\$1500-3000), so we suggest we try one this year and evaluate the return on investment. This tool is meant to facilitate a moderated discussion, so council will need to pick a topic. In order to promote effectively, we should set it a minimum of six weeks in advance. Possible topics: 2021 Budget, Composting, Marijuana local legislation, Comprehensive Plan process (also would work in 2021).

State of the City

Other cities have mixed reports on this type of effort. Some have the Mayor featured in video, some tie a Mayor address to a business luncheon partnering with a service club, some have it as a feature before a council meeting (live and taped). No surrounding city seems to have a long track record of a consistent method. Recommendation – if we would like to do this in 2020, go with a “traveling show” method and possibly a short video tag-teaming the mayor and city manager. If we want more of an event, determine what success would look like then consider a January timeframe (to allow for adequate planning and promotion time).

Ideas to Consider

Resident Recognition Program

Recommendation – morph this into the Good Neighbor Awards (see attachment).

Ward Postcards

A postcard size piece, full-color printed on both sides with council member photos and contact information on one side (maybe ward map), and current city info (commonly called phone numbers, website, social media, possibly upcoming events) on the back. Developed and printed by request. No cards would be printed after April 30 on an election year.

City-wide town halls

Recommendation -- establish a regular citywide event hosted by city council every October. Consider a weekday evening at the recreation center with an “open house” entry area with tables by different commissions, departments, and programs. The featured event would be a panel discussion by elected officials on a current topic on even years and a candidate forum facilitated by an outside neutral party on odd years.

A “Meet your City Council Members” table at events

Recommendation – ask council members to sign up for shifts at the July 4 event and Noel Northglenn. Have city information and city logo items or giveaways available at the table. Use the time as an opportunity to introduce yourself personally to residents and have casual conversations. We would promote council presence at the event on our platforms.

Mixing it up for Ward meetings

If you want to attract a different audience or have a different level of engagement I recommend changing locations, format, and communicate expectations for attendee participation. Ideas: have a meeting that is inviting residents to weigh in on a ward-related issue (then communicate the impact it made on a decision), make the meeting more of a “meet up” featuring an activity – walk around the lake, playground trash pick-up, etc., team up with a business or businesses in your ward, (think table at a supermarket, or chatting with customers waiting for a service), consider use of the Comprehensive Plan “meeting in a box.”

Another idea is to record council a promotion about an upcoming ward meeting on a Monday night before/after council to use as promotion on social media.