

To: Members of Administrative Committee
From: Dana McDaniel, City Manager
Date: April 29, 2021
Initiated By: Lindsay Weisenauer, Public Affairs Officer
Re: Council Public Engagement and Boards and Commission Recruitment Update

Summary

The Administrative Committee met on December 4, 2020, to discuss the topics of communication and public engagement and board and commission recruitment. The following briefly outlines updates to the discussion and action items addressed at the meeting.

Public Engagement

Action Items

- *Ms. Burness will make Zencity available to Council Members and provide some training on the use of the information available on the dashboard.*

UPDATE: Communications & Public Information staff members are scheduled to deliver a Zencity presentation to City Council at the May 17 Work Session. This presentation will detail how Zencity monitors and consolidates electronic communication across various platforms and uses artificial intelligence to develop insights on sentiment and trends. Those insights are then available to help keep a pulse on the community, detect misinformation, mitigate rumors, direct people to accurate information and block bots and fake accounts when they emerge. These insights can be used to determine how best to engage with the Dublin community at any given time on any given topic. "Projects" can also be set up proactively if Council or staff know ahead of time about a project, situation or event that the City would like to monitor short and/or long-term. After the May 17 report to Council, small group executive training sessions will be scheduled for Council members to demonstrate how to use Zencity as a tool for understanding residents' interests and concerns, gauging public sentiment, and monitoring opinions on topics of interest in the community. Zencity also offers a real-time survey tool that is funded through the 2021 Operating Budget, and CPI intends to utilize this year. Survey topics will be identified in cooperation with Dublin City Council and Staff. This survey option will be added to the City's other tools, including SurveyMonkey and WuFoo.

- *Communication and Public Information (CPI) will interview each Council Member to gather suggestions and ideas about how to increase online engagement with residents.*

UPDATE: After the May 4 Administrative Committee meeting, CPI staff will work with the Clerk of Council to set up optional one-on-one interviews with each Council Member to gather suggestions and ideas about how to increase online engagement with residents. A set of questions will be developed so each Council Member is asked the same questions, but Council Members will have ample opportunity to express their thoughts, ideas and suggestions.

- *Applying Council feedback and expert advice, construct a draft “next-generation” 2021 public engagement plan and content strategy for Council-with-resident communication to bring back to Council for review and discussion.*

UPDATE: CPI staff have engaged in benchmarking local, regional and national communities with a City Manager form of government in regards to public engagement and Council-with-resident communication. CPI will use the information gathered during this benchmarking and the information gathered during the one-on-one interviews with Dublin City Council members to draft a public engagement plan and content strategy to present to the Committee for review and discussion.

- *CPI to explore a dedicated resource to assist with Council/resident engagement. The resource will assist with development of content plans, pilot/launch a set of engagement tactics and measurements to achieve greater online City Council and citizen interaction.*

UPDATE: CPI will explore a dedicated resource to assist with Council/resident engagement. An individual will be identified for this role and expectations outlined as part of the public engagement plan that will be drafted and presented to Council for review, as indicated in the previous action item update.

Council Follow-Up

During the April 12, 2021, Council Meeting, reference was made to a communications tool the City of Hilliard is using. Staff reached out to the City of Hilliard regarding the Talk2Us Hilliard platform. Hilliard is using a vendor called Bang The Table. It is one of many engagement platforms available for government engagement. It is similar to MySidewalk, which the City of Dublin utilized briefly in 2015.

Pros:

- It houses feedback opportunities in one place and looks nice visually.
- Hilliard has found it to be a good way to get feedback without the negative backlash that can spiral on social media.
- It showcases nice branding and direct messaging.

Cons:

- There are barriers to entry – people have to register for an account.
- Hilliard says the system does have limitations and they have found participation varies a lot project by project.
- The content is managed by the vendor, not the City's communications staff, leading to limitations and lag time regarding updated and deleting inappropriate content.

Dublin has various feedback tools that are used regularly, including polls in the weekly eNews emails, Office 365 surveys and Survey Monkey questionnaires, which can be quickly designed and distributed resulting in useful, measurable insights. Additionally, the Zencity platform offers a survey function, which CPI will be utilizing in 2021.

Staff recommends leveraging the City's existing technologies more effectively to achieve many of the same positive outcomes presented by the Bang The Table platform. There is an opportunity to package all City feedback forums together under one umbrella, which can best be accomplished through the popular GoDublin application. Nearly 6,000 residents are already using GoDublin, which is available as both a smartphone app and web-based platform. Staff proposes capitalizing on the popularity and functionality of the app for engagement purposes by adding an icon to the front page labeled "Connect With Us" (or other label of choice). This icon would take users to a landing page with all ongoing and recent survey topics, similar to Hilliard's Talk2Us. A "Connect With Council" feature could also be included that could provide direct access to the Contact City Council email or include individual Council members' contact information, as currently featured on the Council Member profile page <https://dublinohiousa.gov/council/member-profile-assignments/>. CPI would appreciate the opportunity to discuss this concept with the Committee during the May 4 meeting.

Board and Commission Recruitment

Action Items:

- Website:
 - *Clerk's office will work with CPI to promote boards and commissions on the website in a more engaging and dynamic way through ideas such as current Board and Commission member interviews on experiences and expectations, FAQs, videos, etc.*
 - *List and promote all board and commission positions in one centralized area via a common gateway that allows interested residents to easily find and explore the multiple options available for serving their community*
 - *Enable year-around applications. Clerk's office and CPI will provide ways for interested parties to communicate their interest (via application or other form) on the web any time of the year, not just during recruitment time.*

UPDATE: In the first quarter of 2021, CPI created a landing page for Boards and Commissions, revamped the application and made it available year-round, promoted the page through the City's communication outlets, worked with Community Engagement to send to Volunteer list and discussed opportunities with the Community Task Force Communication & Education sub-committee. CPI is currently in the process of developing a year-round recruitment campaign that will include member interviews, a testimonial video series and other engaging content.

- Outreach:
 - *Social Media will be leveraged to advertise service to the community at least quarterly, with links to year-around-application and board and commission gateway*
 - *Explore opportunities to talk directly with the public about serving on a board or commission such as: in Citizen U classes, in Leadership classes at the Chamber, Community task forces, etc.*
 - *Work with the Outreach and Engagement Division to explore ways of advising their volunteer base of opportunities and working together on recruitment*
 - *Community Task Force members will advise on any suggestions they may have to reach out and provide the opportunity to serve to our more diverse population.*

UPDATE: In the first quarter of 2021, CPI leveraged social media to promote Boards and Commissions openings. Social media will be used throughout the year, at least quarterly, to

advertise service to the community. Exploration continues regarding opportunities to talk directly with the public about serving on a board or commissions. An in-person Citizen U is not being held in 2021 due to COVID-19 restrictions. There are opportunities for members of the Administrative Committee to be featured on the agenda for future Community Task Force meetings or meetings of the Communication and Education sub-committee. CPI has reached out to the Outreach and Engagement Division, which welcomes the opportunity to help build relationships to help recruitment efforts. By tapping into the Outreach and Engagement Division and Community Task Force networks, the City can significantly expand reach for recruitment and broaden the pool of candidates exponentially.

- *Interview/Appointment Process:*
 - *Provide candidates with the “Five Things We Recommend before the Interview” to facilitate easier exploration and improved preparation for interviews, including such things as watching/attending a Board or Commission meeting, reviewing Dublin’s Community Plan, reading the City Charter, outreach out to a current member, review FAQs on roles and responsibilities, etc.*
 - *Have an online repository of past and current applications. Explore if there are recruiting/repository tools that the City currently uses for volunteers, etc. that might be helpful.*
 - *Establish an administrative process for regular review and engagement with residents who have expressed interest, as there will be time between interest and open positions. Review metrics and measures regularly.*

UPDATE: CPI has developed a new framework for the website, which includes a five-step process to facilitate easier exploration and improve the process for interested candidates. Based on feedback from the Administrative Committee, the framework can be implemented or revised to incorporate any feedback from the Committee. If the Committee is agreeable to the framework, CPI would aim to implement it in the second quarter of 2021. New videos, features and openings would be added throughout the year and social media would be leveraged to amplify engagement with the page and generate interest. The Clerk’s office is working to identify processes for developing a repository for past and current applications and for regularly engaging with residents who have expressed interest in serving. The Clerk’s office is looking into software solutions to meet this need.

Recommendation

For Information Only