

Date: 02/11/2023

To: Chair and Directors, Committee of the Whole

And To: Murray Daly, Chief Administrative Officer

From: Gerald Pinchbeck, Manager of Communications

Date of Meeting: Committee of the Whole_Nov08_2023

File: 1470-01

Short Summary:

Communications Strategy 2023-2027

Background:

The Board approved a communications plan in February 2019 covering the period from 2019-2022. Due to the plan expiring, the Communications department set a business plan objective to update the plan for the next four years. This strategy proposes to do that.

The previous plan established a shift and focus to digital based communications, due to the frequency with which communications could be issued, the ability to manage messaging through the platform, and the unique capabilities to engage with residents directly on the platform. Additionally, this reduced costs for the CRD to communicate with residents and interested parties, with a total spend of under \$5,000 over the term of the plan.

The Board must be aware that the proposed telephone survey intended to evaluate the plan was not conducted. This is due to the cost of the survey, time limitations due to emergency response requirements, and turnover within the department. Statistical metrics were gathered to inform the plan and offer limited insights into the outcomes of the previous plan.

In short, the new Communications Strategy focuses on managing the CRD's reputation effectively, improving the accessibility of information provided through our communications, and support a culture of public engagement. As a broad guiding document, versus a specific action plan, the strategy identifies how we will shift our efforts over the next four years and align resources with organizational activities, versus the specific outcomes that will be achieved because of the plan.

The new Communications Strategy proposes to expand our digital footprint through new and existing platforms, while also exploring a transition to non-digital communications. Feedback generated over the previous term and during campaign-specific engagements identified

significant value was generated from non-digital methods, including mailed advertisements, newsprint, radio, and signage.

The objectives of the strategy remain similar to the previous communications plan. The focus however, has shifted to maintaining previous targets as opposed to reaching for those targets. An initial evaluation is also proposed to establish the baseline level of information about how our communications efforts are being received, followed by an end-of-plan evaluation in 2027 to measure progress. The initial evaluation is included in the department's 2024 business plan objectives.

This strategy does not establish our vision for public engagement; instead, it seeks only to establish how we operate at the "Inform" end of the public engagement spectrum. A complementary engagement strategy is being developed and will be presented to the Policy Committee for initial review.

Next steps for review include:

1. Endorsing the strategy;
2. Requesting amendments to reflect the Board's vision;
3. Refer the strategy to an appropriate Board committee (i.e. Executive Committee or Policy Committee);
4. Refer the strategy to a public consultation process.

Attachments:

1. CRD Corporate Communications Strategy 2023-2027

Receipt Only:

That the memorandum from Gerald Pinchbeck, Manager of Communications dated November 2, 2023, regarding Communications Strategy 2023-2027, be received. *Further action at the discretion of the Committee.*