



MEETING DATE: December 3rd, 2024

TO: Mayor and Members of Council
FROM: Lisa de Boer, Economic Development & Communications Officer
REPORT NO.: EDC-09-2024
SUBJECT: Annual Communication Plan Review

RECOMMENDATION:

That report no. EDC-09-2024 be received for information purposes.

BACKGROUND

In 2022, Council directed staff to develop a Communications Plan that would create a strategy around our communication goals and ensure that our entire municipality works to reach those goals. In May of 2023, Council approved the Communication Plan and directed staff to provide annual updates to Council on the progress/implementation of the Plan.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of the plan is to assist staff in achieving communication excellence. Communication excellence includes giving and receiving information, it requires nurturing relationships, and it forces us to look at communications strategically. By striving for communications excellence, we will achieve much more than a just satisfied constituent base, we will experience increase workplace satiation, greater efficiency when managing projects, a greater success rate when implementing change or new program/services, and a more trusted government.

DISCUSSION:

Goal #1 – Create Visual Standards and Branding

The objectives within this goal will be implemented once the new logo has been approved and adopted by Council (Early 2025).

Goal #2 – Support and encourage an engaged community that is aware of and participates in the public involvement process and recognizes its role in addressing issues and contributing to municipal policy and solutions.

- Staff have been effectively increasing public engagement with open houses, consultations with user/community groups as well as promoted surveys for feedback on municipal projects and services. Staff have discussed the implementation of polls when the appropriate issue arises.
- The Communication Officer has begun the development of a dedicated “How to Get Involved” section on the Township website that would include items such as public meetings, volunteer opportunities, surveys, open houses etc. It is expected that this section will be activated by the end of January 2025.

Goal #3 – Establish and build on mutually beneficial, trustworthy relationships with stakeholders.

- Staff have continued to develop e-newsletters/print newsletters and social media posts that provide updates to residents on municipal activities and news. The new Township mobile app has also provided a new source for municipal information and updates as well as newsworthy community stories.
- Staff have drafted a Corporate Customer Service Plan as well as a Media Response Plan for Council's review in February, 2025. Once the Customer Service Plan is approved by Council, this will be posted on the Township website.
- In 2025, a Citizen Satisfaction Survey will be developed (Spring 2025).
- A template for routine communications (public notices, press releases, signage) will be developed once the branding/logo has been approved. Implementation is expected for spring of 2025.

Goal #4 – Increase stakeholders' awareness of municipal program and initiatives.

- The Communication Officer will draft a Media Relations Plan for February, 2025 for Council's review.
- Staff have continued to successfully engage with stakeholders through in person events as well as through newsletters and social media.
- Brand management will be developed once the branding/logo has been approved.

Goal #5 – Improve the quality of the internal communications

- Staff will be working with the County IT department to develop an internal "need to know – Township news" site for staff. This will be undertaken through the Microsoft 365 program as recommended by the County IT department. This site will have information for employees to find resources on department activities, policies, recaps of Council meetings, newsletters etc.
- Staff will be developing "Lunch and Learn" staff meetings hosted twice a year for ALL staff to attend. These meetings will provide updates on departmental activities as well as information sessions (retirement, health & safety etc.)
- Department Managers have implemented monthly meetings.
- Communication Officer will email newsletters to all staff as well as Council members.

Goal #6 Improve organizations ability to anticipate and respond to issues

- Staff have discussed the use of online polls for applicable situations and when the issue arises, staff will promote this new communication tool to reach our residents.
- Department Managers will inform Council and front line staff when an issue arises with key messages for issues/projects, when applicable, in order to become more proactive vs. reactive.
- Staff will be developing a Customer Service Plan for February, 2025.
- Providing accessible feedback and responses to the public is always an important part of our communication plan and is summarized on our Township website.

CONCLUSION:

Communication is a key function of municipal government. Staff and Council communicate with residents in many different forms and for many different reasons. This communication plan will provide guidance to staff and Council to ensure that we are effectively communicating with all our residents.

This plan will help us identify opportunities to be more efficient with both internal and external communications. By creating more efficient procedures and by looking at communications strategically, we can avoid time-wasting, misunderstandings, capacity issues and questions caused by the lack of clear or timely messaging.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATONS: None at this time.

STRATEGIC PLAN:

This matter aligns with following strategic priorities:

Strategic Direction Three: Healthy Community – Goal 2 – Improve awareness of community resources

ATTACHMENTS:

Communications Plan

Lisa deBoer

Lisa de Boer
Economic Development & Communications