



CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM

TO: Mayor & City Council

DATE: July 1, 2011

FROM: John McDonough, City Manager

AGENDA ITEM: Consideration of a Task Change Order for Communication Services

MEETING DATE: For Submission onto the July 12, 2011, City Council Meeting Agenda

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: (Attach additional pages if necessary)

See attached:

Memorandum

APPROVAL BY CITY MANAGER: gmm APPROVED

_____ NOT APPROVED

PLACED ON AGENDA FOR: 7/12/2011

CITY ATTORNEY APPROVAL REQUIRED: () YES () NO

CITY ATTORNEY APPROVAL: [Signature]

REMARKS:

Sandy Springs Communications

Proposal: Enhancing Communications

7 July 2011

Challenge:

Refine and refocus Sandy Springs' communications message, materials, and media outreach to better communicate the benefits of living, working, and doing business in Sandy Springs.

Overall Communications Goal:

Create the maximum number of opportunities for residents, businesses, and organizations to learn about Sandy Springs and steps taken by the City to enhance quality of life in the community.

Key Communications Objective:

Create a clearer strategy, message, and communication tools for improving City's reach to key audiences, including, but not limited to: residents, community organizations, local businesses, and potential new residents and businesses.

Three-Part Approach:

The Collaborative proposes a three-part approach for achieving the above goals and objectives, including: Communications Plan, Windows into Sandy Springs, and Art Director Consultation.

Communications Plan: Producing a Communications Plan for the City of Sandy Springs is a cost-effective way for the City to clarify its communication goals and to identify communications strategies that result in successful outcomes. It involves conducting an audit of current City communication activities, followed by a "Communications Summit" of Sandy Springs representatives to explore ways for improving messaging and outreach. The audit is important to better understand the ways in which City residents, business and community organizations receive information. To do this we typically conduct focus groups with residents, business representatives, community groups, and others. We also interview representatives of the City to determine the methods they are currently using for communicating with the public. The objective is to identify measures for eliminating duplication, as well as for proposing steps for improving coordination that result in more efficient and consistent communications from the City that align with public preferences.

As part of the audit, we typically conduct a random sample phone survey of approximately fifteen questions to obtain a statistically reliable sample set of approximately 1200 respondents. In addition to asking questions about media sources commonly used to gather information, we recommend that the survey include questions about public attitudes regarding City services and programs, satisfaction levels, and expectations of current and possible new City initiatives. The results of the information will provide City leaders with a clearer understanding of public goals and objectives. Additionally, it will provide a baseline for assessing effectiveness of the City's communications efforts when future surveys are conducted (we recommend in two years).

Using information from the audit, focus groups, survey, and other sources, we propose conducting a Communications Summit. Such an activity involves two facilitated half-day sessions with representatives of the City, public, business community, and non-profit organizations to better understand the range of interests in Sandy Springs, expectations of the City, and how to fashion the City's communications efforts to best communicate with different audiences. Based on the Summit, we interpret the knowledge gained and draft an integrated strategy for improving Sandy Springs' communications. To illustrate key strategy concepts, we create preliminary concepts and sample text. The graphics and text serve to give Summit participants examples of ways the communications strategies might take form. Emerging from the Summit, we also outline possible public relations steps for increasing awareness of City activities.

Windows into Sandy Springs: Based on our initial assessment of the work being performed by the Media and Communications Department, we recommend that the City undertake a new public information initiative. The working title for the initiative is 'Windows into Sandy Springs.' The initiative adds video production capabilities to the City's Media and Communications Department. There are two main immediate applications for the videos: 1) videos that address frequently asked questions by City residents that would be posted on the City's website and disseminated via YouTube and other social media; and 2) video portraits of representative Sandy Springs residents, business people, and others to communicate the breadth and diversity of the people who live and work in this extraordinary community. Here again, the videos would be posted on the City's website and disseminated via social media outlets.

With respect to videotapes that address frequently asked questions regarding City services, the videos both provide information in a commonly used format, while serving to reduce the time City staff spend answering frequently asked questions (allowing staff to focus on other City initiatives). For example, one video could be of the City's building inspectors discussing the steps homeowners need to take if they want to be the general contractors for a home improvement project such as adding on a deck. Another could be of City arborists explaining steps homeowners should take for conducting a tree survey of their property.

With regard to videos portraits, a possible complementary effort might be to design and print street-banners displaying photos and facts about the individuals. These would hang along high visibility locations in the City. A possible additional element to this initiative might be to organize both the videos and banners by groups. For example, the first set of profiles could be of those individuals we know as members of the "Greatest Generation." Another set of profiles could be of young people, retailers, volunteers, police officers, etc.

There are a number of other ways this initiative could evolve. For a more interactive experience, the City may find local residents and organizations wanting to create their own video profiles and display them on the new 'Windows into Sandy Springs' section of the City's website. Naturally, if this were to occur, staff of the City Media and Communications Department would select videos that met the established standards for the initiative.

Art Director Consultation: To augment the City's Media and Communications Department's graphic design capabilities, it is recommended that City engage the services of an Art Director on a retainer basis for eight hours per month for one year. The goal is to provide City staff with the ability

to call on the services of a seasoned, senior designer to guide the creation and production of City communication materials.

Deliverables

- **Communications Plan:** Consists of a tabulated analysis of resident survey, an audit and assessment of current City communication activities, and a communications strategy. The Plan identifies steps to improve the intake of public interest information, as well as action items to develop the City’s dissemination efforts. The Plan would also include graphic concepts and sample text to illustrate products for implementing the Communications Plan.
- **Windows into Sandy Springs:** It is estimated that City staff members would produce three-to-five videos approximately two-to-three minutes in length per month in the first two months. Following this start up period, it is hoped that as the experience of staff grows, the number of videos could increase.
- **Art Director Consultation:** Eight hours of professional services per month for one year.

Cost

The total cost for this three-part initiative is \$189,515 for one year. This includes the following:

Communications Plan (Audit, Summit & Plan):	\$19,900
Phone Survey (as part of Audit):	\$15,000
Windows into Sandy Springs:	
One full-time staff person for one year (position will also organize open houses, town hall meetings and other projects)	\$125,215
Video production and editing equipment (e.g., software, lighting, etc.)	\$15,000
Art Director Consultation:	\$14,400
	TOTAL \$189,515