
City of Veneta Communication Plan

Adopted

January 26, 2015

City of Veneta Communication Plan

Purpose

Recognizing the value of citizen involvement and the wealth of good information and resources that the citizens of Veneta possess, the Veneta City Council identified a goal to improve community awareness of City issues and public engagement opportunities during its 2013 Goal Setting Session.

A proactive approach is needed to foster effective two-way communication. Understanding citizen concerns, ideas and values is critical to the City's decision-making process, and much of a city's overall success depends upon the quality of its communication.

To that end, our city must identify, create and budget adequate resources to engage citizens and citizen groups to effectively become a part of the decision-making process.

Guiding Principals

Open, Two-Way Communication: Ensure that information is shared throughout the community and the organization, emphasizing two-way informational flow.

Proactive Problem Solving: Identify methods by which the City will provide prompt, accurate and timely information on the City's actions, issues and decisions.

Decentralized Communication: Strengthen direct communication between elected officials, City departments and citizens rather than trying to funnel all information through a central point of contact or department. This provides for more knowledgeable discourse, strengthens accountability and also makes it easier to access or provide information on City activities. The City must work to balance open and decentralized communication while producing a clear, consistent and focused message.

Inclusive Communication: Include everyone in the process who cares to participate and encourage those who are not currently engaged, in order to build collaboration and a sense of belonging.

Consistent Message: Support, reinforce and reflect the goals of the City government as established by the City Council and the City management, thus underscoring the idea of an organization with one common purpose – serving its citizens.

Objectives of the Communication Plan

- Develop a communication plan that will promote understanding of the City and its functions.
- Outline engagement opportunities.
- Foster appreciation for Veneta's history.
- Establish means to disseminate and receive feedback to and from the public.
- Develop a flexible plan that allows for the city and community's changing needs.

Target Audiences

The process of identifying and prioritizing target audiences is a key strategic component of a communication plan. Understanding the audience enables the City to better relate to its social environment and the unique needs of different groups.

Primary Target Audiences:

Citizens of Veneta: The citizens of Veneta are the highest priority target audience. Strengthening the relationship between City government and its residents is the starting point of a sound communications plan.

Business Owners: Business owners help foster the economic development of Veneta by creating employment opportunities and delivering goods and services locally. They also serve as a model for potential business owners and residents who are considering living and/or working in Veneta.

Members of City Boards, Commissions and Committees: While these individuals are included under the citizens of Veneta, it is important to recognize the work they do on behalf of the community and government, which in turn makes them a distinct and specific target audience.

Media: This audience includes a variety of print, web and broadcast mediums.

Community Organizations: Local area non-profits, service clubs, community service agencies, and faith communities.

Secondary Target Audiences:

Fern Ridge Residents: Those who live outside Veneta city limits and work, shop or visit in Veneta.

Other Government Entities: Local, state, and federal jurisdictions.

Municipal Government Associations: Organizations such as the Lane Council of Governments, City/County Insurance Services and the League of Oregon Cities.

Visitors: Visitors may include potential residents and business owners, or patrons of local establishments.

Communication Tools (External)

Website: Comprehensive web site designed to enable staff to post information as needed. The site contains news items, department information, calendar of City meetings and events, agendas and minutes for all Boards, Commissions, Committees and Council. It offers easy access to City programs, services, documents and ePermitting. The City's web page provides 24-hour access to City information and enables residents and outlying community residents to cross reference information so it is accessible from multiple entry points.

City Newsletter: A monthly print publication included with utility bills and available on the City website. Information is submitted by the management team and occasionally a deputy, and informs the public of City services, issues, tips and events affecting the community, along with the monthly civic calendar.

Press Releases: A prepared news or publicity item about City of Veneta business. News releases should be timely and relevant and contain the facts of the information. The release should include basic information: who, what, where, when, why and how.

Display Advertisements: The City occasionally places display advertisements in local newspapers to call attention to City programs and upcoming public events.

Public Notices: Items posted according to state law.

Public Meetings: In addition to the regularly scheduled Council and assorted Board, Committee and Commission meetings, which are always open for public comment, other public meetings targeted towards specific issues are also held as needed to present the community with an opportunity to express opinions and give input on specific City issues.

Brochures: Varieties of informational brochures are created in-house and are available at City Hall.

Assorted Printed Materials: Flyers, door hangers, postcards, maps, etc. are created as needed to provide information about City programs and issues.

Water Quality Report: Completed each June and posted to the City website. Meets the EPA requirement of providing a Consumer Confidence Report (CCR) on the quality of Veneta's drinking water.

Social Media: Use of web 2.0 services to disseminate information to a larger demographic of customers (see Social Media Policy).

Budget in Brief: Script/brochure explaining the Veneta City Budget in a condensed, easy to read format, to provide basic information about the current fiscal year budget.

Communication Tools (Internal)

Management Team Meetings: The City Administrator meets with the management team each week to review up-coming Council meetings, action items and to keep each other informed of issues in their own departments. The meetings provide an opportunity for department managers to keep abreast of what is happening in all departments.

Department Meetings: Each department meets regularly to exchange information and to update each other on issues and activities within the department and other departments.

Employee Committee Meetings: Safety committee meetings occur once a month to review any accidents, identify needed trainings and conduct facility inspections.

Evaluation Methods

To ensure successful efficiency and effectiveness of the communication plan, various communication tools and an ongoing evaluation method should take place.

Strategies:

- Institute an ongoing communication survey to assess effectiveness of City communication.
- Monitor and fine-tune the existing communication tools, and seek additional tools as needed.
- Ensure that the communication tools are diverse in order to reach various segments of the targeted audiences.
- Research communication tools and techniques to remain up-to-date on types of communication which will continue to engage and expand target audiences in the communication process and increase their commitment to the interactive government process.

Actions:

Communication Effectiveness Research: Conduct surveys to gather information that identifies the level of effectiveness of City communication. Survey methods should include a diverse set of tools, such as online, email and mail. The implementation must reach a broad spectrum of Veneta citizens so that the results accurately reflect the demographic make-up of the community.

Measuring Communication Success: Assess the tools in place and overall communication efforts in order to determine necessary modifications the City could implement. Determine if additional tools may be utilized to update the efficiency of communication.

Communications Training: Provide communication training for City officials and staff, including the Mayor, Council Members, City Administrator and management team, as well as City staff and members of City commissions, committees and boards.

Resource Allocation

Budget: There is not a specific budget for communications. Resources are allocated from major fund categories to support implementing elements of the Communication Plan. Most major funds also have a Public Relations line-item to support implementation activities.

Staff Time: The Management Analyst position, with input from Department Heads, handles the core functions of communication operations. This includes website posting and updates, press releases, creating promotional pieces for City events, and maintaining social media accounts. This position, in its role as Information Specialist for the City, dedicates only a portion of its time to communication duties.

Defining Responsibilities

Information Specialist: The role of Information Specialist (IS) may be filled by multiple employees of the City of Veneta. The IS manages community relations and coordinates with regional agencies as needed. Some of the IS' duties include: responding to citizens' concerns and comments; serving as the "voice and face" of the City. The responsibility for IS duties will be shared between the Management Analyst and City's Management Team depending on circumstances.

Social Media Policy

Every day people engage in online communication. The City recognizes the vital importance of participating in this type of communication and is committed to ensuring the City participates in a responsible and balanced approach.

I. Official City Social Media Sites

Official City use of social media is intended to broaden the reach of communication and engagement with the community and with stakeholders, while utilizing fundamental platforms that offer methods of communicating beyond traditional sources of information such as the City website.

Official social media tools should be used to:

- Deliver public information, customer service and E-Government to City residents
- Advance City goals such as creating a culture of engagement
- Communicate directly to the public especially during emergencies
- Increase government transparency and efficiency

II. Publishing

1. Publishers

At least one information specialist will serve as the lead staff person for official City social media sites. Mandatory duties include serving as the lead contact for an account, developing the engagement framework for posting information and ensuring the social media site is regularly updated. The IS will monitor content on all official social media sites to ensure a consistent message and for adherence to this policy.

Only City staff will serve as publishers; publishers will attend training sessions. Volunteers, interns, contractors and board/committee/commission members are not eligible to administer official accounts.

2. Posting Guidelines

Social media content is fleeting because updates compete for attention in personal social media news streams. Official City social media sites need to be clear, precise and follow industry best practices for posting updates.

Three tenets City social media publishers must follow regarding the types of content to share:

- Relevant: Information that helps residents and pertains to their daily lives
- Timely: Information about deadlines, upcoming events, news or related to current events
- Actionable: Information to register, attend, go or do

Legal requirements and City guidelines towards the protection of confidential, sensitive, and internal use information still apply.

III. Links

As an extension of the City's communication platform, social media sites should include links that direct users back to the City's website for more information, forms, documents or online services whenever possible. External links to media articles or other relevant content are permitted on official City social media sites to share information.

IV. Emergencies

During emergencies, all social media content and postings must be coordinated with the City Administrator and the Incident Commander. Specifically, social media publishers need to complete the following tasks in the event of an emergency:

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1. Un-schedule any posts that may appear during the height of the incident.
 2. If there is information clearly delivered from the Incident Commander and/or the City Administrator, then publish to social media and other platforms. If there is any doubt, then IS must check with either or both individuals to verify information before posting.
 3. If the public provides any life safety information via private social media messaging, reach out to Incident Commander and/or the City Administrator ASAP to share information.
 4. Timestamp posts so it is clear when the information was published. Use a template such as: “12/20, 1:33 pm: (message here)”
 5. Please “Share” City information on Facebook as needed.
 6. Be aware of hashtags. If collaborating agencies’ public information offices have identified hashtags in reference to a shared emergency, utilize the hashtag to maintain consistency and collaboration with agencies.
 7. Social media content must be usable, especially to people using mobile devices. For example, provide links to webpages, not PDFs unless absolutely necessary.
 8. All incidents evolve over time and City staff may need to change how social media assets are being used from strategic and tactical perspectives.

V. Embedding Icons and Content

Social media icons and content players such as embedded Facebook posts, videos or pictures may be placed on City web pages. Social media content from agencies may also be embedded. The City reserves the right to use social media content on citywide web pages, social media sites and other platforms.

VI. Understanding Publisher and Personal Roles

The City will grant administrative rights to page publisher(s). All publishers must use their own personal Facebook profiles to access official City sites (the public will not know publisher identities). It is a violation of Facebook’s terms of service to create additional personal profiles or to create a generic personal profile to administer a business page.

VII. Wall Settings

The City Facebook page is not an “open forum”. Temporary exceptions for turning on the wall may be used and granted by the City Administrator in cases of emergencies where situational awareness of an unfolding event would be helpful.

VIII. Updating from Mobile Devices

If publishers use personal devices such as an iPhone or Droid with Facebook apps, the official City social media site can be managed from these devices. However, be aware the app does not provide the full set of page management features found on Facebook’s desktop browser version. If a publisher loses a personal phone and someone accesses the Facebook app, then an official City resource is at risk. If you are publisher and use a smartphone, then you must protect City information by using a passcode on your personal device.

IX. Replying

There is no method to disable private messages on Facebook. Messages shall be replied to as needed. Replying through an official account is equivalent to serving as an official online spokesperson for the City.

X. Liking/Following

Like or follow select government agencies, entities, media, key partners/nonprofits and industry-specific groups to develop a larger reach.

XI. Archives and Retention

Communications received through social media are public records that generally should be considered as “correspondence” for the purposes of Oregon retention laws. Generally, such social media responses need to be retained as long as administratively necessary before it can be destroyed.

XII. Security

Passwords should maintain complexity requirements and use uppercase letters, lowercase letters, numbers, and special characters. Passwords to social media sites should be changed at a minimum of every 90 days. In the event of a compromise, or suspected compromise, passwords should be changed immediately. An official City email address should be used to establish an official social media site whenever possible. Credentials to City social media sites should be protected and limited to authorized personnel.

XIII. Compliance

In order to comply with the retention requirements of the Oregon Public Records Law (ORS Chapter 192 and OAR 166-200-0005 *et seq*), it is the policy of the City that personnel may not post original content to social media sites unless content is preserved and retained according to Oregon Public Records Law.

The Oregon Public Records Law and relevant City records retention schedules apply to all content posted to the City’s social media site. The content will be retained for the period required by the relevant records retention schedule and maintained in a format that preserves the integrity of the original record, is easily accessible, and is allowable under the Oregon Records Retention Law.

Use of social media sites by personnel may not violate the Oregon Public Meetings Law (ORS 192.610 through ORS 192.710).

When posting information to the City’s social media sites, personnel are responsible for complying with all applicable federal, state and local laws, regulations and policies, including but not limited to laws governing copyright, public records, free speech and privacy.