

**Minutes of the Veneta City Council  
Work Session  
September 8, 2014**

Present: Sandra Larson, Brittany Boothe, Thomas Cotter, Victoria Hedenstrom, and Thomas Laing

Others: Ric Ingham, City Administrator; Kay Bork, Community Development Director; Kyle Schauer, Public Works Director; Katie Babits, Management Analyst; and Darci Henneman, Assistant City Recorder

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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Sandra Larson called the Veneta City Council Work Session to order at 6:09 p.m.

Ingham said Babits has done a lot of work to set this up; providing the structure and backbone for the Communication Plan. He said if the Council is on the same page, we'll work toward finalizing the Plan.

**2. BACKGROUND**

**a. GOAL SETTING SESSION**

Babits provided a background on the Communication Plan and reviewed her power point presentation.

**b. CURRENT PRACTICES**

She reviewed the current practices – what City staff can post on the City's website and what we need LCOG to post.

In response to a question from Mayor Larson, Babits said the complaint form is online and is fillable. It can be printed and mailed, hand delivered, or emailed to staff.

In response to a question from Thomas Laing, Ingham said we don't have many complaint forms submitted.

Thomas Cotter said he felt our current practices seem inadequate for a City of our size.

Mayor Larson said everyone has agreed we need to beef up our website in some fashion.

Ingham said part of the work session is to gauge the level of dissatisfaction and that's why Babits has pulled together what we currently have and then break down each part of it. He said if we want to rate our newsletter it's likely about a six or seven and to get it to a nine or ten, here's the additional investment and funds we should put forth. He said it's easy to talk about dissatisfaction but what's appropriate as far as funds and staff time.

In response to a question from Thomas Laing, Ingham said the median age of residents 34 to 35.

**3. PROPOSED OUTLINE**

Babits said she reviewed Communication Plans from Junction City (pop. 5,000), Damascus, (pop. 10,000), Lebanon (pop. 15,000), and Ashland (pop. 20,000), which were all relatively the same and included the same components as her outline. She reviewed the proposed outline and asked if the Council had any questions.

In response to a question from Mayor Larson, Babits said the idea behind problem solving is to provide residents with complete, accurate, and timely information, before it becomes an issue. She said rather than reactive problem solving, it's put up front. She said problem solving and proactive could be melded into one.

In response to a question from Thomas Laing, Mayor Larson said canvassing residents on how the City's doing or what residents would like to see could be included in an evaluation.

Victoria Hedenstrom said problem solving and proactive are the same thing. She said but should be separate.

In response to a question from Thomas Cotter, Babits said we could rework the wording of "problem solving" and "proactive" to provide better clarification.

Mayor Larson said she would prefer a statement of principles as opposed to bullet points.

Thomas Laing suggested having a mission statement.

Babits said from the Communication Plans that she reviewed, guiding principles included a short paragraph explaining what it means to the city.

Babits reviewed the four objectives the Council identified in the Goal Setting Session: 1) to promote the understanding of the City's function, 2) outline engagement opportunities, 3) foster appreciation for Veneta's history, and 4) establish a means to disseminate and receive feedback to and from the public.

Mayor Larson suggested language should be included for public officials on how to properly address public comments.

In response to a question from Babits, it was the consensus of the Council nothing should be omitted from the Communication Plan objectives.

In response to a question from Babits, Mayor Larson felt nonprofits, i.e. school districts, library, fire district should not be secondary target audiences.

In response to a question from Thomas Laing, Ingham said when we do an outreach we would include local churches in with the civic and nonprofit entities.

Babits reviewed the proposed external communication tools which included what we currently use and said there are some things that could be used to update that process. She said she researched 10 cities of similar size to Veneta. She said those cities provide a newsletters in color; Veneta is the only newsletter not in color. Three cities provide monthly newsletters, a few provide a quarterly newsletter, and two cities provide newsletters twice a year. She said the City of Florence provides a Budget in Brief which is a document that outlines how and where it receives money and where it goes.

Victoria Hedenstrom said it's important to reach our younger citizens; either with Facebook or Twitter. She said the City should have some kind of social media tool that reaches that social media audience. She suggested an auto-generated newsletter.

In response to a question from Brittany Boothe, Ingham said we could still send the newsletter in the utility billing but we could include a survey asking if residents would prefer it be sent electronically. He said the difficult thing would be separating those residents out. He said the entity that prints our bills also prints the newsletter and does a bulk mailing at a discounted postage rate.

Thomas Laing suggested giving residents the option to receive the newsletter by mail.

Ingham said we knew social media would require a big discussion but we only have an hour to work through the entire Communication Plan.

Mayor Larson said if we decide that we want to become more active in social media, we need to really establish parameters and determine how involved the City should be.

Thomas Cotter suggested holding a workshop on social media.

Ingham said the International City County Managers Association (ICMA) hosts a webinar that provides information on what kind of active role a City can take regarding social media.

Victoria Hedenstrom said it could be a City generated Facebook page that is operated by one person and is set up so there's no ability to comment.

Babits said there's also an option for residents to comment but comments don't get posted until the approved by the administrator.

In response to a question from Mayor Larson, Victoria Hedenstrom said comments aren't posted but the City updates immediately pop up on her Facebook page.

In response to a question from Mayor Larson, Babits said with Facebook you have the opportunity to not approve a comment but with Twitter you don't have that option.

Babits reviewed Granicus survey on government use of social media results and results from an ICMA survey which indicated that about 70% of cities close to Veneta's size used social media as a method of communication and all sized cities in the western region use social media more than any other region.

Babits said the City's current and future internal communication tools include weekly management meetings, monthly department meetings, and safety committee meetings.

She said evaluation methods are very important to the Plan. She said regarding surveys we want to have interactive tools and techniques for people to communicate and tell us the Plan is working. She said many cities she's researched, use surveys at the front end and as an ongoing evaluation process. She said some cities conducted surveys before they created a Communication Plan to see how residents wanted to communicate and what methods they preferred. She said the surveys were very far reaching.

In response to a question from Mayor Larson, Babits some cities sent the surveys out with utility billing or in a mass email. She said the cities researched were of various sizes. She said cities closer to our size used surveys as an evaluation tool rather than to create a Communication Plan. She said a survey is something we could do but we need to determine when we want to have this evaluation tool; quarterly, twice a year, once a year and then later we could define what exactly should be included in it. She said many websites provide a "did you find this information useful" or a generic email that goes straight to a City staff person. She said examples of survey information would be things like "how did people find out about pool events, how many attended this year's events verses last year's event". Also we need to provide training for officials and staff on how to use the communication system specifically if we get a Facebook or Twitter account. She said this is information we should be able to pass to residents right away.

#### **4. RESOURCE ALLOCATION & TIMELINE**

Babits said this is something we need to define. She said what percentage of staff time will need to be dedicated to the Communication Plan? How will we allocate funds to pay for that staff time? These would need to be defined but stay flexible and we should outline how we're going to separate the information and who's responsibility it is to carry it out.

Babits provided a rough draft of the timeline and in October she will present more information and details. She said the information gathered from tonight's meeting should provide for a completed Communication Plan at the first meeting in November.

In response to a question from Mayor Larson, Ingham said the Communication Plan will be more like a Master Plan and won't include the level of detail for specifics like social media. He said after we have the Communication Plan, hopefully we'd have some kind of action plan which would include a new logo and website but we won't try to roll out a website, logo, and news media issues all at one time. He said we need to pick and choose which tools the Council views as priorities. He said by January 2015 we won't see all of the tools implemented.

In response to a question from Brittany Boothe, Babits said she would email Junction City's Communication Plan to her.

Ingham said Babits has the City's draft Plan about 60% completed.

Mayor Larson said she will wait to see Babits draft Plan.

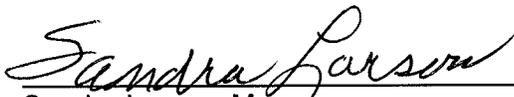
Ingham said Babits also included information that will go to the logo committee tomorrow. He said the information was based on the survey results from staff to how best utilize the City's logo.

**5. OTHER**

None

**6. ADJOURN**

Mayor Larson adjourned the Veneta City Council Work Session at 7:00 p.m.

  
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Sandra Larson, Mayor

ATTEST:

  
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Darci Henneman, Assistant City Recorder  
(Minutes prepared by DHenneman)