



Town of Franklin

Civic Engagement & Communications Master Plan 2016-2017

To “tell the story” of town government through timely and thoughtful communication.

Background

Community Brand

Franklin is a safe and vibrant community with excellent public schools, strong neighborhoods, great family amenities and a responsive town government.

Purpose & Guiding Principle

The Civic Engagement & Communications Master Plan is a comprehensive, streamlined blueprint to provide excellent customer service by allowing residents to access services with their local government 24/7-365 days a year. This plan recognizes priorities may change based off the needs of the community, funding availability or internal staff priorities.

Methods of Engagement

The Town of Franklin recognizes that residents receive their town news from a variety of sources and conduct business both in person and desire expanded services online. The Town will continue to communicate through traditional formats such as newspapers, the town website, direct public outreach and Franklin TV. The Town will also spearhead a renewed effort to become a trustworthy source for town news on social media (Facebook & Twitter), as well as explore new avenues such as opening a Youtube site and expanded service delivery on various mobile technologies.

2016 Goals & Objectives

Goal #1: Increase coordination & expand outreach

The Town Administrator's Office will lead a coordinated effort of elected officials, town agencies, town stakeholders, and local media outlets to expand and coordinate communication efforts through diverse mediums.

Tasks:

- The Administrator's Office will take a leadership role to encourage all community stakeholders to build communication into their regular work flow and prioritize external communication with the community.
- The Administrator's Office will maintain a centralized contact email group of local news outlets and stay in communication with those entities.
- The Town will explore new ways to do "old school" community outreach, including instituting a "Welcoming Corps" as a new Senior Center Work Program that will enlist a small group of seniors as the "Welcoming Corps" who call and mail a set of materials from the Town Council welcoming new residents to Town. The materials will include a standard letter from the Council, online resources available to residents, social media opportunities and other key helpful information like trash and recycling schedules, etc.
- Encourage Fire Department, Police Department and DPW to continue to do their grassroots outreach with various "Touch A Truck", holiday type events for families.

Goal #2: Increase social media presence

The Town will look to increase its reliability for distribution of town news on social media.

Tasks:

- The first year goal will be to realize a 25% increase in Twitter and Facebook followers on the Municipal Building accounts by the end of the 2016 calendar year.
- Town departments who manage their own respective social media accounts (departments not located in the municipal building) will post at least one Facebook post and/or one tweet per week that reflects the work of the department. The departments will focus on the helpful tips for residents, trends, key dates, pictures, updates, stories or accomplishments of the department. Departments also have the authority to post pictures of their work.
- Town departments who do not manage their own social media accounts (departments

in the municipal building) will channel the information through the Town Administrator's Office on a bi-weekly basis. The focus will be similar to other departments; content will focus on the helpful tips for residents, trends, key dates, pictures, updates, stories or accomplishments of the department, as well as pictures.

- The Planning & Community Development Office will renew an effort to market a LinkedIn account, "Franklin Development" specifically to network and market the community among planning professionals and the business community on opportunities in Franklin.
- The Administrator's Office will work with municipal building department staff to build additional capacity in departments in the Municipal Building who wish to post their own social media information.
- The Human Resources Department will establish a Town of Franklin LinkedIn account to establish an online family of Franklin professionals and expand the Town to a new pool of professional applicants.
 - Example: [The City of Raleigh, NC](#).
- The Town will review and update its social media policy, as needed.

Goal #3: Maintain website content

The Town will renew a focus on updating and maintaining department websites with current, accurate and timely information, including but not limited to agendas, minutes, dates of key events, accomplishments, photos, policies, initiatives, decisions and resources (Attachment A).

Tasks:

- Ensure all web pages are up to date with staff contacts, board members and up to date initiatives and information.
- Department staff should hold brief, monthly recurring staff reviews to ensure the most up to date content is on their individual web pages, as well of the Boards & Committees they represent. Departments will follow a set of basic guidelines and best practices to keep their sites up to date with current information (Exhibit A).
- Town department heads will coordinate individual or group "Team" pictures of staff for their individual websites and request their respective Boards they work with put up pictures as well.

Goal #4: Provide Town Council actions taken

The Town Administrator's Office will publish the topics, votes and actions taken by the Town Council. Staff will utilize social media and the town website to communicate important topics on Town Council agenda and the results of those actions.

Tasks:

- After each Council meeting, the staff will produce an “Actions Taken” document with each Council vote and post on the website and throughout social media channels.
- Selected items off the agenda may also be highlighted by the staff or Council members by request.

Goal #5: Compliment Franklin TV's monthly news magazine

The Town Administrator's Office will collaborate with Franklin TV to produce content for its monthly news magazine, including short featurettes, documentaries, guests and other town updates on their regular programming. Franklin TV will serve as producer.

Tasks:

- The town will help collaborate with Franklin TV to complement the work they are doing through innovative featurettes, documentaries, guest interviews, seasonal Town Council updates, and much more. Some examples:
 - A seasonal recap of Town Council actions, news, accomplishments, stories, announcements, a look ahead and much more with the Town Administrator's Office;
 - Featured guests, including town department heads and staff to develop short featurettes about the work of Town departments and employees.
 - Scheduled programs on the docket for 2016:
 - MARCH: Recreation Department staff interview, tour of the new Beaver Street Building and visits to town fields, showcasing the Departmental philosophy;
 - APRIL: A behind-the-scenes look at the Senior Center expansion, interview with staff and programs that are offered (April Studio, November Building tour);
 - MAY: Guest Dale Kurtz to discuss Veteran's programs (including a studio interview, War Memorial visit and Memorial Day celebration);
 - JUNE: Jeff Nutting Fiscal Year in Review.
 - APRIL - NOVEMBER: A mini-documentary on the Town Clerk's office and what it takes to run a Presidential election;
 - SUMMER: A behind-the-scenes facility tour of the DPW;
 - SEPTEMBER: Studio interview with the Community Planning & Development Office and the variety of expertise in the office;
 - Other content as determined during the year.

- The featurettes will be also uploaded to a newly created Town Youtube account, posted on the Town’s social media forums and possibly offered as a podcast, digital, Blu-ray, and a variety of different formats by Franklin TV.

Goal #6: Implement strategic infrastructure improvements

The Technology Department will implement a strategic multi-year infrastructure improvement plan to modernize internal systems to enhance staff productivity and move the town website to a mobile friendly customer service-based platform. It is also critical with a large staff turnover occurring in the next 2-5 years, the Town set its course for the long-term.

Tasks:

Implement the following modernizations:

1. [Google Apps](#): the acquisition and transition away from First Class email and Microsoft Windows as the predominant platform for town employees.

The main objective of a transition is to *enhance internal staff productivity*, but [Google Apps](#) also provides a suite of modern tools and features that can enhance customer service. The goal is to have a platform the Town feels comfortable adopting for at least the next decade. Google has continued to innovate and should be the platform of choice for the foreseeable future.

The full suite will allow for countless features including dynamic email accounts, centralized staff directory, centralized internal calendar, centralized community calendar, shared and private cloud technology space for each user in Google Vault, shared Google Doc’s, Google Analytics, user friendly intranet sites, optional elected official town email accounts, better public records organization and many more tools that any user can adapt to their personal jobs.

The Franklin School Department is moving to Google Apps and the Town should stay consistent. The City of Boston has also moved to Google Apps two years ago.

2. [Website](#): migrate to a new Drupal-based platform for the website, which will rebrand the community, enhanced mobile capabilities for better customer service and reorganize the content to make it more user friendly. A central objective of the migration will be to market the community to the world and generate some community pride.
 - a. Six-month migration to Drupal.

- b. Staff training and explore the suite of tools with each department.
 - c. Staff would propose to move the website domain to www.franklinma.gov
3. Interactive Economic Development Tool: The Planning & Community Development Office will purchase and initiate an interactive, electronic GIS-based web tool that will showcase the Town of Franklin as the solution for any business, investor or family. The tool will enable prospective businesses to view the most update data of the town and region on factors that best determine business location (e.g. demographics, labor force, education, maps, schools, etc.).
 - a. Example: [Great Lakes Bay Region](#).

2017 Goals & Objectives

Goal #1: Review 2016 Goals & Objectives

2016 marked a year where communications was established as a priority for the Town Council. 2017 will begin with a review of efforts from the previous calendar year.

Tasks:

- Elected officials, Town staff and other stakeholders will hold a brief review of the progress of the 2016 objectives and make any adjustments to the communications program as needed.
- The staff will have the opportunity to adjust the communications plan based off community feedback and work flow.

Goal #2: Increase Social Media Growth

The Town will look to increase its participation in social media each year.

Tasks:

- The goal will be to realize an additional 25% increase in Twitter and Facebook followers on the Municipal Building accounts by the end of the 2017 calendar year.

Goal #3: Analyze strategic infrastructure improvements

The Town Administrator's Office and Technology Department will begin to develop a roadmap for future technology infrastructure improvements to provide expanded electronic customer

service features and analyze a cost-benefit of internal financial systems.

Tasks will be to look at the following areas of focus, as brought to us by our customers and town staff:

1. E-Permitting: research and demo a cost analysis for online permitting services for all town licenses and permits to allow customers to input applications and forms directly. The objective is to begin to develop a commitment to 100% electronic permitting.
2. Work Order Systems: analyze an easy to use online system for customer requests and feedback straight from your mobile phone.
3. Online budget modules: analyze fiscal transparency initiatives, such a ClearGov and Virtual Town Hall modules for access and coordination to the town budget and public records.
4. Internal Financial Systems: explore and analyze if there are future systems that are more user friendly than MUNIS with the suite or features.
5. Online payments: analyze different vendors to centralize as much online payment options and explore alternatives to reduce the heavy fees and staff administrative burden with UniPay.

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Exhibit A
Social Media Posting Guidelines

The goal of the Town’s social media sites is to use it as a tool to promote excellent customer service by communicating important information to the citizens and stakeholders of the Town.

Here are some general guidelines for adequately producing content for your social media sites:

1. Know your audience. Think clearly about who you are communicating with.
2. Build social media into your regular work flow. Social media should be an efficient extension of the work you are doing, not creating more tasks or documents.
3. Pictures tell 1,000 words. Take as many pictures as possible to visualize your story. Pictures depict a time and place and make people feel they are part of your team. Do not hesitate to be in the moment and capture photos of your staff and department that are reflective of the work you are doing in real time.
4. Timeliness is important. Every minute the world changes and our culture is more in the here and now than ever before. Don’t wait to get out your story.
5. The more the better. Fresh and current content is important. Social media followers desire a steady stream of information in small and manageable bites. Brevity and simplicity are often most successful.
6. Mundane content is OK. What may seem mundane or insider information to us is really interesting to a lot of local media followers. It also adds definition, context and depth to our work in Town government.
7. Follow other key agencies. Please follow other public or quasi-public stakeholders at the federal, state and local levels that help leverage your trust with the public as a valuable information source.
8. Exercise good judgement. Post positive, fun and informative content. If you have a small doubt, it’s probably worth not posting. For those who interact with children, abstain from posting pictures without written consent or those in large public, group settings.

What is needed to help “tell the story” of your department?

Exhibit B
Department Website Guidelines

The goal of the Town website is to use it as a tool to promote excellent customer service by communicating important information to the citizens and stakeholders of the Town.

Ideas to keep a website fresh and timely are always welcome!

Here are some general guidelines for adequately maintaining departmental web pages:

1. Up to date personnel and staff listings, phone numbers, emails, contact information.
2. Up to date Board/Committee member listings, phone numbers, emails, contact information.
3. Staff photo and/or other relevant pictures of your departmental work. A picture tells 1,000 words!
4. Short narrative describing the mission, purpose or main function(s) of your department.
5. Most recent events, key dates, documents, policies, initiatives, agreements, recent success stories that illuminate your department functions, purpose and mission.
6. Up to date agendas, minutes.
7. Helpful links to other resources, state agencies, communities that work closely with your department.
8. Brevity and simplicity are often most successful. Mundane content is OK.
9. Are there ways the website technology can help customers conduct business online? Applications, forms, payments, other?
10. At a minimum, have monthly staff reviews of website pages to make sure the most up to date, news, events, dates, staff, content, policy and decisions are available.

What is needed to help “tell the story” of your department?