



Communication Plan

Enhanced Communication Efforts with
Orange County Citizenry
Winter, 2012



2012 COMMUNICATION PLAN

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BOARD OF SUPERVISORS VISION STATEMENT

In January/February, 2012, the Board of Supervisors worked to collaborate and develop guiding principles for their continued work. After much deliberation, the Board drafted and adopted its Vision Statement for 2022, and named 14 prioritized tasks to accomplish in 2012 and 2013. The Board agreed to the following purposes and principals to achieve success of its Vision for 2022: (1) A Vibrant Economy; (2) Effective, Reflective Government; and (3) Sustainable Land Use.

EFFECTIVE, REFLECTIVE GOVERNMENT

The following statements were agreed upon by the Board for their vision of an Effective, Reflective Government:

We want a County government that is reflective of citizens' needs.

We encourage citizen input through effective communication and active participation to aid in developing policies that move the county in a prosperous direction.

We actively participate with other elected boards and officials to ensure that we promote our mutual interests and better governance.

We focus on having a small and efficient government that provides core services.

We recognize that our volunteers and civic organizations supplement County services and substantially contribute to the quality of life for Orange County citizens.

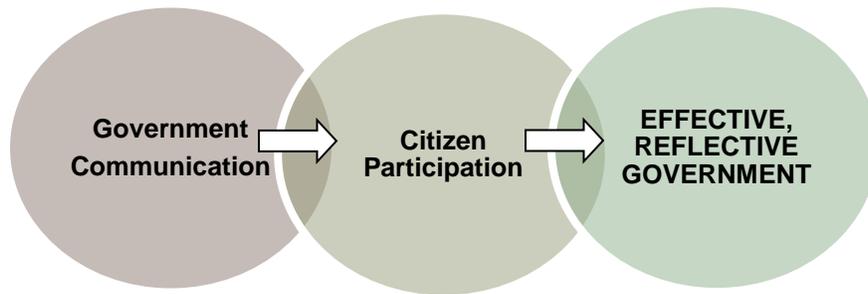
Our Capital Improvement Plan is a critical planning document that reflects our priorities and commitment to funding.

Our Vision encourages the Board to work toward a high level of consensus for the collective good of the citizenry.

PRIORITY SEVEN - IMPROVED COMMUNICATION WITH CITIZENS

The Board identified five of the 14 priorities specific to the principle of an Effective, Reflective Government as:

- ❖ Develop and Implement a strategy to list/outline/define core County services
 - To assist the Board in setting priorities for the budget and to avoid “mission creep”
 - To enable a strategy to effectively educate citizens about services/cost
- ❖ Redesign the CIP document and process to incorporate real funding (capital/operating)
- ❖ **Develop and implement a strategy to improve communication with citizens**
- ❖ Develop and implement a strategy to review County government processes to determine steps and timelines
- ❖ Meet with Town Councils in the County to share priorities and explore opportunities for initiatives that have mutual benefit



PROCESS

In order to develop and implement a strategy to improve communication with citizens, staff outlined steps necessary to study or work towards this goal. These steps include multiple brainstorming sessions, identification of those steps requiring Board of Supervisors action, and the redesign of the County's website to provide ease of navigation and allow more citizen engagement.

Staff held a brainstorming session with department directors and constitutional officers, a session with community stakeholders, and a worksession with the Board of Supervisors during their September 25, 2012, meeting.

Senior level staff, community representatives, and the Board acknowledged the need for a revised and enhanced website as imperative to our efforts to improve communication with citizens. In addition to the new website, several ideas were offered. Below is an analysis of those ideas.

SUGGESTIONS OFFERED:

- ❖ Surveying citizens (with the tax bills) regarding their communication preferences;
- ❖ Conducting Town Hall meetings in each district on various topics;
- ❖ Hosting a meeting of all Advisory Committee Chairs regarding the improvement of our communication efforts;
- ❖ Implementing a "Coffee with a Department Head," session to be held regularly and provide citizens with an opportunity to ask a specific department head about their respective departments;
- ❖ Creating a County-wide Facebook and Twitter page;
- ❖ Providing more input to the local cable access stations to get the word out;
- ❖ Implementing a quarterly electronic newsletter;
- ❖ Having a stronger presence at public events, such as the Street Festival, to provide general information about the County and its services;

- ❖ Using DeltAlert more often to notify residents of upcoming events, meetings, etc.;
- ❖ Implementing a 311 system which would help to funnel non-emergency calls and provide 24-hour answers to citizens' questions;
- ❖ Employing a full-time Public Relations officer to focus solely on the dissemination of information to the public and to manage press releases, event notifications, etc.;
- ❖ Training staff on the proper techniques for effective communication;
- ❖ Following-up with citizens to survey them about whether or not their expectations were met;
- ❖ Tracking trends from general inquiries received in the office to determine when staff should release a large scale announcement or press release;
- ❖ Conducting a County 101 course for interested residents/implementing another Leadership Orange session with the Chamber of Commerce;
- ❖ Interacting with high school students more often to provide opportunities for job shadowing/tours of County departments;
- ❖ Rotating the location of Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission, and School Board meetings, etc. more regularly;
- ❖ Posting larger signs at subject sites for public hearings, etc.;
- ❖ Providing Public Hearing information to the Board of Supervisors on the day it is advertised;
- ❖ Redesign of County website for increased citizen input opportunities, ease of navigation, and citizen alerts;
- ❖ Installing message boards at Collection Center sites;
- ❖ Increased frequency of Press Releases;
- ❖ Placing Zoning Determinations on the redesigned website for viewing by the public; and
- ❖ Creation of a County 101 course to provide on DVD.

ANALYSIS OF IDEAS SUGGESTED

Of the ideas proposed, many of the options were categorized based on the following criteria: low or high priority, immediate or delayed deliverables, funding levels, and whether or not Board action would be required. What follows is a matrix of this categorization. Also, it is important to note that those ideas which require Board action have been denoted with asterisks, and those ideas which require a significant amount of funding have been denoted with a (\$).

	IMMEDIATE DELIVERABLES	DELAYED DELIVERABLES
HIGH PRIORITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hosting a meeting of all Advisory Committee Chairs regarding the improvement of our communication efforts • Providing more input to local cable access stations to get the word out • Having a stronger presence at public events, such as Street Festivals • Rotating the location of Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission meetings more than once yearly * • Providing Public Hearing packet information to the Board of Supervisors on the day it is advertised • Posting larger signs at subject sites for public hearings, etc. • Implementing a quarterly electronic newsletter * • Redesign of County Website for increased citizen input opportunities, ease of navigation, and citizen alerts * (\$) • Increased frequency of Press Releases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting Town Hall meetings in each district on various topics set by the Board * • Training staff on the proper techniques for effective communication • Placing Zoning Determinations on the redesigned website for viewing by the public • Creation of a County 101 course to provide on DVD (\$)
LOW PRIORITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tracking trends from general inquiries received in the office to determine when staff should release a large scale announcement or press release 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveying Citizens (with the tax bills) regarding their communication preferences * (\$) • Implementing a "Coffee with a Department Head" • Implementing a 311 System which would help to funnel non-emergency calls and provide 24-hour service for answers to questions * (\$) • Conducting follow-up surveys with citizens to survey them about whether or not their expectations were met * (\$) • Interacting with High School students more often to provide opportunities for job shadowing/tours, etc. • Installing message boards at Collection Center sites * (\$)

PLAN OF WORK

Following the categorization of ideas, an analysis was conducted to establish immediate action, next steps, and future deliverables for each idea.

HIGH PRIORITY – IMMEDIATE DELIVERABLES

1. WEBSITE REDESIGN

Immediate Action

- ❖ Continue to receive input on the ongoing website redesign project, work with the vendor, CivicPlus, and incorporate brainstorming session(s) feedback, and staff input into the process.

Next Steps

- ❖ Ensure the following features are included in the website redesign:
 - Citizen alert option (“Notify Me”)
 - Ability for citizens to provide input
 - Well-defined calendar module
 - Well-defined news and announcements module
 - Ease of navigation
 - Zoning Determinations made available to the public
- ❖ Approve website design: December 20, 2012.

Future Deliverables

- ❖ Issue a press release prior to the launch of the redesigned website (April, 2013).
- ❖ Go-Live Date: May 31, 2013.
- ❖ Issue a press release announcing the launch of the new website (May 31, 2013).
- ❖ Encourage use of the site and explain the notification process for information uploaded or updated on the website. Staff should also explain the registration process for the “Notify Me” function or offer to register interested parties who fill out a request to be registered.
- ❖ Provide access by residents and visitors to an accurate, easy-to-navigate website.

2. INCREASED FREQUENCY OF PRESS RELEASES

Immediate Action

- ❖ Increase the frequency of press releases from all County departments and expand depth of topics for press releases to include those subjects which are more routine but helpful for citizens.

Next Steps

- ❖ Send a memorandum to all department directors and constitutional officers regarding the need for increased frequency of press releases.

Future Deliverables

- ❖ Issue more press releases compared to previous years.

3. **HOSTING A MEETING OF ALL ADVISORY COMMITTEE CHAIRS REGARDING THE IMPROVEMENT OF OUR COMMUNICATION EFFORTS**

Immediate Action

- ❖ Obtain a list of all Advisory Committee Chairs and identify a date for a meeting.

Next Steps

- ❖ Reach out to all Advisory Committee Chairs regarding the Board's Vision and Priority Seven and request their attendance at a meeting to discuss the improvement of communication efforts and to allow for introductions to be made of the Advisory Committee Chairs to each other.
- ❖ Hold meeting on the evening of December 17, 2012.

Future Deliverables

- ❖ Report back to the Board of Supervisors on the discussion held at the meeting and address next steps.

4. **PROVIDING MORE INPUT TO LOCAL CABLE ACCESS STATIONS TO GET THE WORD OUT**

Immediate Action

- ❖ Contact Comcast access station and Lake of the Woods access station to discuss the need to increase information dissemination.

Next Steps

- ❖ Submit information more frequently and ensure Board of Supervisors meetings and public hearings are displayed regularly.
- ❖ Review accessible stations bi-weekly to ensure accuracy of messages displayed.

Future Deliverables

- ❖ Display of frequent and accurate County messages/notices to viewing audience.

5. **IMPLEMENTING A QUARTERLY ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER**

Immediate Action

- ❖ Develop template for newsletter, including layout and content guidelines.
- ❖ Establish anticipated quarterly content and publication schedule for Calendar Year 2013.

Next Steps

- ❖ Receive Board of Supervisors approval and input for template and publication schedule.

Future Deliverables

- ❖ Issue a press release about the newsletter and the ability to be notified of its quarterly publication prior to June, 2013.
- ❖ Publish first newsletter in June, 2013, pending launch of new redesigned website.

6. **HAVING A STRONGER PRESENCE AT PUBLIC EVENTS, SUCH AS THE STREET FESTIVAL, TO PROVIDE GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE COUNTY AND ITS SERVICES**

Immediate Action

- ❖ Send memorandum requesting increased attendance at public events distributed to Department Directors.

Next Steps

- ❖ Receipt by County Administrator of schedule of events planned to attend for 2013 in January 2013.

Future Deliverables

- ❖ Submit 2013 year-end report from Department Directors detailing County presence at public events.

7. **ROTATING THE LOCATION OF BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, PLANNING COMMISSION, AND SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS, ETC., MORE REGULARLY**

Immediate Action

- ❖ Request Board of Supervisors to determine if more regular meetings should be scheduled at locations other than the Gordon Building when the 2013 meeting schedule is adopted.

Next Steps

- ❖ Adopt the 2013 meeting schedule, pending Board's determination of locations for regular meetings.

Future Deliverables

- ❖ Hold regular Board of Supervisors meetings in various locations, if applicable.

8. **PROVIDING BOARD OF SUPERVISORS PUBLIC HEARING PACKET INFORMATION TO THE BOARD ON THE DAY IT IS ADVERTISED**

Immediate Action

- ❖ Send memorandum to Administration staff regarding the need to provide public hearing packet information to the Board of Supervisors on the same day the notice of the hearing is publicized in a newspaper of general circulation.

Next Steps

- ❖ Begin this practice with first public hearing scheduled in 2013.

Future Deliverables

- ❖ Distribute public hearing packet information on day of advertisement.

9. POSTING LARGER SIGNS AT SUBJECT SITES FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS, ETC.

Immediate Action

- ❖ Send memorandum to Planning and Zoning staff to advise of need to post larger notification signs at subject sites, effective immediately.

Next Steps

- ❖ Work with Planning and Zoning staff to determine procedure and necessary materials/supplies to implement this practice.

Future Deliverables

- ❖ Post 2013 public hearing subject sites with larger signs.

HIGH PRIORITY – DELAYED DELIVERABLES

10. CONDUCTING TOWN HALL MEETINGS IN EACH DISTRICT ON VARIOUS TOPICS

Immediate Action

- ❖ Discuss with Board members regarding their interest to conduct Town Hall meetings and possible topics for the meetings.

Next Steps

- ❖ Reserve space for Town Hall meetings for those Board members wishing to conduct them and schedule accordingly.
- ❖ Communicate such meetings through the use of the County website, press releases, and listing of the upcoming meetings on Board of Supervisors meeting agendas.

Future Deliverables

- ❖ Conduct Town Hall meetings.

11. TRAINING STAFF ON TECHNIQUES FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Immediate Action

- ❖ Request training opportunities from Human Resources department including those courses which are offered free of charge by the Virginia Association of Counties.

Next Steps

- ❖ Schedule training and advertise its availability to staff.
- ❖ Issue directive from County Administrator of specific training for certain personnel (department directors, etc.).

Future Deliverables

- ❖ Display of more effective communication techniques to public as a result of training completed by County staff.

12. PLACING ZONING DETERMINATIONS ON THE REDESIGNED WEBSITE FOR VIEWING BY THE PUBLIC

Immediate Action

- ❖ Work with Planning and Zoning Staff to develop a procedure for the upload of all zoning determinations to the redesigned County website.

Next Steps

- ❖ Upload determinations on the redesigned County website, when it is launched (May, 2013).
- ❖ Encourage use of the site and explain the notification process for information uploaded or updated on the website. Staff should also explain the registration process for the "Notify Me" function or offer to register interested parties who fill out a request to be registered.

Future Deliverables

- ❖ Access to Zoning Determinations by the public for viewing.

13. CREATION OF A COUNTY 101 COURSE TO PROVIDE ON DVD

Immediate Action

- ❖ Work with Department of Fire and EMS to learn their recording capabilities for creation of a DVD.
- ❖ Establish content and order of DVD.
- ❖ Create schedule for recordings and distribute at Department Head meeting (February, 2013).

Next Steps

- ❖ Request minimal funding from Board for creation of DVD.
- ❖ Work with all Department Heads to include a segment on the DVD about their respective department.

Future Deliverables

- ❖ Create a DVD and make it available to the public in Fall/Winter, 2013.

LOW PRIORITY – IMMEDIATE DELIVERABLES

14. TRACKING TRENDS FROM GENERAL INQUIRIES RECEIVED IN THE OFFICE TO DETERMINE WHEN STAFF SHOULD RELEASE A LARGE SCALE ANNOUNCEMENT OR PRESS RELEASE

Immediate Action

- ❖ Send a memorandum to all department directors requesting that their office monitor each call and record the subject of that call.

Next Steps

- ❖ Request report from department directors at each department head meeting regarding those calls which may require a large scale announcement or press release from the County Administration office.

Future Deliverables

- ❖ Issue more press releases/public announcements compared to previous years.

LOW PRIORITY – DELAYED DELIVERABLES

The following ideas have been categorized as low priority and have delayed deliverables. These ideas will be evaluated in June, 2013, if the need arises or if the Board of Supervisors wishes for a particular idea to be implemented, at which time a plan of action will be established.

- ❖ Surveying citizens (with the tax bills) regarding their communication preferences.
- ❖ Implementing a “Coffee with a Department Head,” session to be held regularly and provide citizens with an opportunity to ask a specific department head about their respective departments.
- ❖ Implementing a 311 System which would help to funnel non-emergency calls and provide 24-hour answers to citizens’ questions.
- ❖ Following-up with citizens to survey them about whether or not their expectations were met.
- ❖ Interacting with High School students more often to provide opportunities for job shadowing/tours of County departments.
- ❖ Installing message boards at Collection Center sites.

SUMMARY

Understanding that communication is a process not an event, it is important that success in the implementation of these practices/ideas be measured to gauge the County’s overall ability to enhance its communication efforts. Based on the Communication Plan and the deliverables set forth, County staff will measure success with the Plan by evaluating things that can be objectively measured. (For instance: the number of press releases issued, the number of events in which a County presence is portrayed, the number of County 101 DVD’s distributed, the number of Board meetings held in various locations, the number of website visits per page, the number of individuals registered to be notified of new editions of the quarterly electronic newsletter, and the number of Town Hall meetings conducted.)

It is important to note that Effective, Reflective Government will only be created when the County communicates effectively and the public responds and participates. The efforts outlined in the plan should afford two-way communication between citizens and their local elected officials and the County staff.