

City of Huntington Woods
Communication Committee
November 10, 2020
Minutes

The remote meeting called to order at 7:05 p.m.

Present: Erin Walker, Jeff Samoray, Chera Reid, Will Butler, Lauren Willens, David Welch, Ilene Cantor, Amy Sullivan.

Absent: No one.

There were no changes to the agenda and the October minutes were approved as written.

Public participation – None.

The first item of business was the results of the communication survey. Will noted the strong reliance on the print newsletter and the app was supported 50/50 by residents. Ilene felt residents needed more info on the app related to the cost. Jeff suggested maybe money would be better spent on a professional communication consultant/employee to augment the current methods. Lauren wondered if the strong response from older residents reflected an “anti-app” bias. How do we determine if there is value and a ROI for this kind of investment? Erin suggested offering an app as a pilot program to gauge interest but then we would have to manage how to terminate the project if it is deemed not worthwhile. Lauren thought a short-term pilot program would help with the PR in case it was canceled. Chera suggested it be piloted to a dedicated subset of residents so expectations would be set. She felt it was useful to push information out quickly to residents. Will wondered if the website was more mobile-friendly if an app was necessary. Ilene felt there was value to doing both – improving the website and considering a stand-alone app. Chera asked if cities ever partnered to share communication efforts. Amy said she was not aware of any; she is only aware of cities hiring employees for communication efforts. Amy told the committee about a push notification platform already in place – Nixle – run by the Public Safety Department. It is used to send out notices via text and/or email on safety type issues – water main breaks and lost dogs. Many committee members were unaware of the program and agreed if it could be used to push out info from other departments, then it would need a campaign to promote it. But there was also a risk that if Nixle was promoted and then an app was introduced, that it would be confusing for residents. Lauren felt that different demographics of the city, had different needs and if that could be ascertained then the appropriate communication method could be used to push out targeted information but the survey results were broad in terms of specific needs. David thought we should promote what we have in place and then consider whether a new

communication platform was needed. Chera, Jeff and Ilene supported continuing to investigate an app and Will suggested setting up demonstrations with the app vendors. The committee discussed whether an app company would consider creating an app for a temporary period as a trial and if the committee could be the beta group for trying its functionality. Erin asked if Amy knew how much traffic other cities see from their apps. She said no but would try to find out.

The last item of business was an update on the project discussed with Commissioner Elder at the last meeting. An RFP has been prepared for the master plan update and proposals are due December 16th. A planning firm will be selected by the City Commission and then the Communication Committee can begin working on how to promote the master plan process and the educational component for the community engagement sessions.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m.