

DATE OF MEETING June 26, 2023

AUTHORED BY TRISH WEBB, MANAGER, COMMUNICATIONS

SUBJECT **2023 COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN**

## **OVERVIEW**

### **Purpose of Report**

To provide Council with the updated City of Nanaimo 2023 Communications and Engagement Plan.

### **Recommendation**

That the Governance and Priorities Committee recommend that Council endorse the City of Nanaimo 2023 Communications and Engagement Plan.

## **BACKGROUND**

The 2023 Communications and Engagement Plan reflects the goals of Council's Strategic Framework, the actions adopted by Council under *City Plan – Nanaimo ReImagined* and recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness. This plan builds on the structures and practices established in the Council approved 2013 City of Nanaimo Communications Plan, whose goals have largely been achieved.

## **DISCUSSION**

The 2023 Communications and Engagement Plan is structured around the following three goals and includes specific strategies and actions to reach each of those goals.

### **Goal 1 - Reach people where they are with the information they need.**

Strategies include:

- using a survey tool to assess current and preferred methods of communications to determine the best channels to reach specific audiences; and,
- improving access to information by reducing barriers, including through use of inclusive plain language and creating documents and webpages that are readable with accessibility technologies.

The first of the strategies outlined above has just been completed.

To ensure members of the community are informed and involved with the business of the City of Nanaimo, residents were invited to participate in a survey through Get Involved Nanaimo. The survey asked for information such as how residents receive information about the City, their preferred information sources, whether they felt they were well-informed about City issues, how

they preferred to communicate with the City, and to provide information about their age, postal code and whether they live in Nanaimo.

### Results:

- Responses from the 492 participants show that only 53 per cent of those taking the survey feel well-informed on City business. Their top stated preferences for how the City could stay better connected with them included a newsletter mailed to their home more than once per year, more information on the City website, more videos about City initiatives, and email.
- Survey respondents said their top sources of information are the City's website, City social media and Nanaimo News Now. Further detail on preferred commercial media – radio and newspaper- shows that respondents use a variety of sources, but most respondents skipped past questions about radio and print. Most respondents (85 per cent) are on social media, and of those 60 per cent follow the City's Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and/or YouTube accounts, with Facebook ranking as the majority's preferred channel and the City's website as the most useful.
- The top five types of information people said they were most interested in are community events, project updates, breaking news, Council decisions and public safety. Half of all respondents said they would like to hear from the city weekly, and 25.6 per cent said they want to hear from us monthly.
- The City website is the preferred source of information in the event of urgent news, followed by the City's Facebook page.
- Most respondents (72.4 per cent) indicated that they have never attended a City of Nanaimo open house.
- The ages of respondents was fairly evenly divided, which does not exactly reflect the proportions of these age groups in the population. Staff have access to more detailed demographic information about Nanaimo's residents that can help determine how best to reach people who are not currently engaged in communicating with the City.

### **Goal 2 - Support Council in achieving City Priorities.**

Strategies include:

- enhancing internal communications channels to better inform Council;
- improving operational tools to support ongoing City functions;
- providing advice and support to Council for advocacy activities;
- supporting the implementation of City Plan and the actions in the Integrated Action Plan.

Examples of ongoing initiatives and future enhancements to communications, engagement and advocacy include:

- upgrading Council's SharePoint site to Microsoft 365 to allow easier access and enhancing it to share up-to-date and current information with Council;
- adding supports and resources to better utilize our engagement software Get Involved Nanaimo to include financial and budgeting engagement, etc.;
- sharing Council's advocacy efforts and developing information packages outlining the strategies, ask and outcomes for community awareness; and,
- developing communications strategies to inform and engage the public with the implementation of the City Plan Integrated Action Plan.

### **Goal 3 - Engage with the public to tell the Nanaimo story.**

Strategies include:

- developing corporate standards and practices for public inquiries and complaints to improve the City's responsiveness;
- inviting community groups and individuals to share their stories through City communications channels; and,
- creating and implementing new graphic standards in alignment with the new Tourism Nanaimo destination brand campaign.

The first of the strategies outlined above is part of a Corporate-wide strategy that will align with the Communications and Engagement Plan to measure customer service standards and other levels of service throughout the organization. Performance measures and comparators throughout the City, once developed, will allow for the standards and practices to be implemented.

Examples of meeting the other strategies listed above include:

- Using online platforms, and our engagement tool Get Involved Nanaimo to have the public share their stories;
- Using the opportunity presented by Tourism Nanaimo to ensure their brand aligns and can be utilized where possible with ours; and,
- Ensuring our templates and graphic materials, as well as our language and style, is consistent throughout the organization.

### **CONCLUSION:**

The Communications and Engagement Plan is meant to be an overarching set of goals that can be adapted to the ever-changing demands of the organization. Enhancing and improving what we are currently doing and looking toward the future is the intended outcome of this plan; though it is also meant to be fluid as is the nature of Communications.

## **OPTIONS**

1. That the Governance and Priorities Committee recommend that Council endorse the City of Nanaimo 2023 Communications and Engagement Plan.
  - The advantages of this option: Staff can immediately begin implementing the strategies and actions outlined in the report.
  - The disadvantages of this option: None identified.
  - Financial Implications: Staff will begin identifying the resources required to undertake the actions outlined in the plan and propose recommendations during the budgeting process.
2. That the Governance and Priorities Committee identify specific changes to the Plan and direct Staff to return to Council with a revised Plan for adoption by Council.
  - The advantages of this option: Input from the Governance and Priorities Committee members will be included in the Plan.
  - The disadvantages of this option: None identified.
  - Financial Implications: None identified.
3. That the Governance and Priorities Committee provide alternative direction.
  - The advantages of this option: If an alternative plan is requested, Staff may return with a plan that better meets the needs of Council and the community.
  - The disadvantages of this option: Extensive consultation with Council will be required to better understand their needs and goals.
  - Financial Implications: Staff will be challenged to meet business planning deadlines for the budget cycle.

## **SUMMARY POINTS**

- The 2023 Communications and Engagement plan is based on Council's Strategic Priorities, the City Plan Integrated Action Plan and recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness.
- The Plan is structured around three goals and includes specific strategies and actions to achieve those goals.
- The Communications and Engagement Plan is meant to be an overarching set of goals that can be adapted to the ever-changing demands of the organization.

## **ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment A: 2023 Communications and Engagement Plan  
Attachment B: PowerPoint

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**Concurrence by:**

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