



City and Borough of Juneau
City & Borough Manager's Office
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TO: Chair Woll and Assembly Finance Committee
FROM: Katie Koester, City Manager
DATE: August 28, 2024
RE: Request for a Civic Engagement and Communications Strategy

We live in an era where how people receive information has changed and yet many of our strategies, dictated by statute or charter, are not effectively reaching our entire community. People are overloaded with information; how do we engage our citizens on topics they are interested in, in meaningful ways? In June, staff and a couple Assembly members, participated in a facilitated work session with Cedar Group to identify strategic goals and objectives for a scope of work for a new civic engagement and communications strategy. Topics that came out of that work session included:

- How useful/well received/well utilized are the communication strategies we currently invest in? What are the pain points for staff and the public?
- What are some new ideas and strategies on ways to engage the public in meaningful ways and diversify who we hear from?
- How can we develop meaningful public notice so people can engage when there is something they are interested in, and easily follow a topic through our system from COW, to AFC, to introduction?
- Plans for how to best use tools like listening sessions, surveys, and pop-up meetings.
- How to manage email, including BoroughAssembly.gov, effectively.
- Best practices for increasing our social media presence.
- Recommendations for website improvements so topics can easily be found and followed.
- Identify communications staffing and resource needs.
- Identify tools and workflow solutions to improve external and internal communication.

The purpose of the civic engagement strategy is to wrap our arms around what we currently do, what does not work, how we can improve, and how to prioritize our efforts. Implementing an effective strategy will take additional resources.

I am requesting a transfer of \$50,000 from CIP project Hut to Hut to fund a civic engagement and communications strategy. Hut to Hut was a vision of Manager Watt to develop a system of cabins linked by a water trail for a business to run. The project only has \$50,000 in it which was intended as seed money to flush out the concept. The idea has merit, however has not risen as a priority with all the competing projects CBJ has. I would like to use these funds to issue an RFP for a civic engagement strategy. Because Hut to Hut was funded through Sales Tax, this initiative will come to the Assembly as a resolution to deappropriate Hut to Hut and as an ordinance to appropriate \$50,000 to the Manager's Office.

Status: An ordinance to appropriate \$50,000 to the Manager's Office budget for a civic engagement and communications strategy was introduced on August 19, 2024. It is set for public hearing on September 16, 2024. The deappropriation resolution will also be on the September 16 agenda.