



CITY OF MILPITAS AGENDA REPORT (AR)

Item Title:	Receive and Accept Report on the City’s Communication Function Study
Category:	Leadership and Support Services
Meeting Date:	2/18/2020
Staff Contact:	Walter C. Rossmann, 408-586-3111
Recommendation:	Receive and accept a report on the City’s communication function.

Background:

During the FY 2019-20 budget hearings in June 2019, City Council requested that the City’s Communication Function housed in the City Manager’s Office be studied. Based on this direction, staff prepared a Request for Proposals which was issued on July 16, 2019. After a competitive evaluation process, the Matrix Consulting Group (Matrix) was selected to undergo the study, which started in October 2019.

Analysis:

To comprehensively assess the City’s communication function and develop recommendations for a more efficient and effective communication function, Matrix interviewed key stakeholders such as the Mayor and City Councilmembers, staff from each city department, as well as the then incumbent Public Information Officer (PIO); conducted surveys of internal stakeholders on a variety of topics; completed a comparative survey assessment for public and external communications activities between the City of Milpitas and other comparable jurisdictions in the Bay Area; analyzed issues; and explored alternative service delivery options. Service delivery options explored included a centralized, decentralized, or hybrid model or fully outsourcing the function.

The attached report titled “Communications Study – Evaluation of Communications Practices” provides a profile of the City’s current communication function within the City Manager’s Office as well as collateral duties assigned to departmental staff; discusses 50 recommendations with various priority levels related to staffing, services, policies, and processes to streamline communication services; and details the results of comparative City survey of communications practices as well as employee surveys regarding internal and external communications. The statistically valid citywide residents’ survey which is scheduled for Council review at the March 3, 2020 City Council meeting will provide insight on the effectiveness of communication to our residents.

At the February 18 City Council meeting, representatives from the Matrix Consulting Group will summarize the report in a presentation to Council and be available for Council questions.

Currently, the City is staffed for a hybrid model whereby the PIO serves as a central point coordinating and supporting a range of internal and external communications activities on behalf of the City Council, City Manager, and City departments. The PIO position is responsible for developing and disseminating citywide communications, whereas three departments (Fire, Police, and Recreation) are responsible for conducting their own communications for department-specific initiatives and programs with Recreation having a dedicated staff for marketing its recreation programs. For the Public Safety departments, Public Safety staff handle communication tasks as ancillary duties to their primary work. Beyond these departments, there are other City departments that depending upon the nature of their activities utilize staff as needed or rely upon the PIO to communicate their messages.

The City's PIO position is supported through a part-time intern. Per the comparative City survey, based upon the roles and responsibilities identified for the public information office, all cities have an in-house PIO and a full-time permanent support position. A dedicated in-house PIO position affords several benefits for the City such as:

1. Ability to disseminate a centralized and cohesive message both internally and externally that is in alignment with the city's values, mission statement, and goals;
2. Knowledge and understanding of the community
3. Support to departments beyond technical and specialized messaging; and
4. Ability to respond to critical incidents and emergencies in a timely manner.

The City could develop an even more robust communication function through the addition of a full-time permanent support position as detailed in the report.

The incumbent of the Public Information Officer position left City employment early January of 2020. The City Manager's Office has not initiated a recruitment to fill this position pending Council review of the Communication Function Study. Based on the results of the study, staff recommends moving forward with the recruitment and incorporating study recommendations and Council input on overall approach for a citywide Communications strategy.

Policy Alternative:

Not applicable

Fiscal Impact:

Not applicable.

California Environmental Quality Act:

Not applicable.

Recommendation:

Receive and accept a report on the City's communication function.

Attachment:

Communications Study by Matrix – Evaluation of Communications Practices