

Overview

Watertown can increase informed participation, enhance community pride, and improve livability through consistent and engaged communication. Having a public communication plan in place will foster an engaged, informed community, increase citizen satisfaction, and attract quality employees.

The 2023-2026 Communication Plan is a living document intended to be adapted and enhanced as Watertown continues to evolve. This plan is expected to change to meet the emerging needs of the city as communications technology and platforms for citizen engagement continue to advance. As written today, it is a snapshot of the City's current communication goals and objectives and a unified method to achieve those goals and best serve Watertown's citizens.

The Plan outlines an overall communications philosophy, structure, audience, and platforms.

This plan refers to general communication regarding the City of Watertown and its various departments, services, and programs. For disaster or emergency situations, please refer to the Emergency Management Plan for the City of Watertown.

- Communications Team
 - Media and Communications Director (FT), Media Productions Manager (FT), Communications Assistants (2 PT)
 - Work in cooperation with PIOs from police and fire, subject matter experts from city departments, and spokesperson
 - City officials, committee and commission members, and staff have the duty to serve as ambassadors for the city.
- Media Productions accomplishments 2021-2022
 - May 2021 – hired full-time director to oversee Watertown TV, website, social media, and serve as the City's public information officer.
 - Revitalized content for Facebook account with enhanced infographics and frequency of posting, added an Instagram account.
 - Redesigned city's semi-annual newsletter to increase clarity of information and uphold brand standards
 - Increased Facebook followers by 37% and gained 371 Instagram followers
 - Replaced Council Chambers audio system with functional and updated technology to increase ease of remote meeting communication and quality of meeting recordings (November 2022)
- Demographics/Audience and current analytics
 - Demographics of Watertown (taken from 2020 US Census)
 - Total population: 22,926
 - Total housing units: 9,294
 - Employment rate: 63.7%
 - Median Household income: \$52,440
 - 7% of households speak Spanish in the home (second most commonly spoken language)
 - Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Google Analytics statistics overview as of October 2022

- City website: 43,000 visits in 2022 (From April to October. Google Analytics was connected to site in April)
- 6,902 Facebook Followers
 - 71% female-identifying followers
 - Most common age ranges are 35-44 (19.4%), 45-54 (14.4%)
- 438 Instagram followers
 - 77.8% female-identifying followers
 - Most common age ranges are 35-44 (20.2%), 45-54 (23.3%)
- 701 YouTube Subscribers
- Communications Roles
 - Spokesperson: Mayor or Council President. The spokesperson faithfully represents the city's positions to the public and media.
 - Public Information Officer: Media & Communications Director. The PIO is the individual responsible for communicating with the public, media, and/or coordinating with other agencies, as necessary, with incident related information requirements.
 - Subject Matter Experts: Department heads, managers. Subject matter experts may be called upon when appropriate to enlighten the public regarding their area of expertise.
- Communications Structure
 - Public (external) Communication Goal: Responsibly communicate information regarding City programs, services, news, and events through a framework of unified, layered communication methods that follow industry best practices and standards.
 - Objective 1: Regularly communicate the matters before Watertown City Council, and their decisions and actions to the public.
 - Objective 2: Make information about City programs, services, and activities readily available to the public and easy to comprehend.
 - Objective 3: Increase awareness, interest, participation, and engagement of residents, businesses, and community leaders in City government programs, services, and activities.
 - Internal Communication Goal: Develop and maintain positive working relationships with members of the media on all aspects of City municipal services, programs, activities, and news.
 - Objective 1: Provide consistent, proactive news releases and public service announcements to achieve accurate coverage.
 - Objective 2: Provide timely response to media inquiries and requests.
 - Objective 3: Unify City communication outreach efforts.
- Key Messages
 - Core services (waste removal, streets, safety)
 - Construction – keeping the public abreast of changing conditions throughout construction season
 - City budget implementation with a focus on the value citizens receive for their tax dollar
 - Community events and recreational opportunities (share info from community organizations and groups with a focus on events that fit the city's mission statement)
 - Development and business retention (featured business videos, new development announcements)

- Legal & Ethical Considerations: Media Productions aspires to high quality in our communication, but other considerations also guide us. We are careful to ensure that we implement all legal requirements and carefully consider ethical standards.
 - Wisconsin Open Meetings Law: The state's open meetings laws find and declare that all public bodies exist to aid in the conduct of the people's business. It is the intent of the law that their actions be taken openly and that deliberations are conducted openly. We take every step to ensure that our communications meet the letter and spirit of these requirements.
 - Accessibility: We make every reasonable effort to ensure that our messaging is available to all audiences, regardless of language or accessibility needs.
 - We strive to provide complete and unbiased information on emerging events. We believe that our audiences should be informed about issues before they reach decision from the Common Council, and that Media Productions will best serve the public interest by acting as responsible advocates for the Council's policy decisions when made.
- Our Communications Assets
 - Owned digital assets, including official social media outlets
 - Official City of Watertown website (ci.watertown.wi.us)
 - City of Watertown YouTube channel
 - City of Watertown Facebook
 - City of Watertown Instagram
 - City of Watertown LinkedIn
 - Watertown Park and Rec Facebook
 - Watertown TV Facebook page
 - Watertown Department of Public Health Facebook page
 - Watertown WI Police Department Facebook page
 - Watertown WI Fire Department Facebook page
 - Print
 - City Connection newsletter (semi-annual publication printed and distributed by APG Southern WI/Hometown News Group)
 - Various other print resources created within city departments (senior center newsletter, recreation brochures, economic development brochures and informational one-sheets)
 - Cable Access Channels
 - The City owns two cable access channels (channels 984 and 985) that are available to all local Spectrum customers. These channels air city meetings, various informational productions from the city, and community contributed programming. These channels are maintained by the Media Productions Department.
- Current Communications Tools (software, services, tools, and platforms)
 - Brand and Logo Guidelines: A guidelines manual was approved by Watertown City Council in February of 2016. The manual sets out key messages, a tagline, and the guidelines for uniform logo usage in all applications. The Media and Communications Director serves as the Brand Champion of the City of Watertown brand.
 - Adobe Creative Suite: Video and photo editing. Print and other graphic design layout software.

- Canva: Online service offering premade graphic templates. The City has a limited free subscription
- Revize: city website content management platform
- Tip 411: Police Department tip reporting service
- Archive Social: Service which archives all social account activity for open records purposes
- Text My Gov: Service that sends out text alerts and provides limited chatbot-like assistance via SMS for certain keywords. This service will be sunset in 2023 due to low citizen usage

Appendix 1: Communications Plan Implementation

Public (external) Communication Goal: Responsibly communicate information regarding City programs, services, news, and events through a framework of unified, layered communication methods that follow industry best practices and standards.		
Objective 1: Regularly communicate the matters before Watertown City Council, and their decisions and actions to the public.		
	Frequency/Timing	Progress Information
Tactic 1: Provide internet streaming video of Common Council Meetings and replay on cable channel	ONGOING	This has been done consistently since (at least) 2019.
Tactic 2: Distribute media releases on major projects and other matters.	ONGOING	
Objective 2: Make information about City programs, services, and activities readily available to the public and easy to comprehend.		
Tactic 1: Work with contracted website vendor to maintain reliable public website.	ONGOING	
Tactic 2: Coordinate and train departmental staff responsible (website coordinators) for website information updates and maintenance.	ONGOING	2022: Coordinated a 2-session group website training with vendor representative in July.
Tactic 3: Work with contracted vendor on redesign development of all City sites per 4-5-year standard site longevity standards	Assess needs and project budget in 2023 with intention to budget for and redesign 2024.	Last redesign/launch completed in 2020.
Tactic 4: Analyze current communication channel statistics for patterns and deficiencies.	ONGOING	
Tactic 5: Make reasonable accommodations available and upon request in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.	ONGOING	2022: Inclusion of image descriptions in social media postings where appropriate.

Objective 3: Increase awareness, interest, participation, and engagement of residents, businesses, and community leaders in City government programs, services, and activities.		
Tactic 1: Oversee departmental release of information and coordinate cross promotional efforts.	ONGOING	2022: Established regular monthly communications call to coordinate efforts and awareness between departments.
Tactic 2: Produce and circulate quality programming through Watertown TV and the City's YouTube channel.	ONGOING	
Tactic 3: Monitor and engage in official City social media outlets.	ONGOING	
Tactic 4: Produce print and digital publications for city-wide distribution, most notably the City Connection.	ONGOING	2021: Complete overhaul of City Connection publication.

Internal Communication Goal: Develop and maintain positive working relationships with members of the media on all aspects of City municipal services, programs, activities, and news.		
Objective 1: Provide consistent, proactive news releases and public service announcements to achieve accurate coverage		
	Frequency/Timing	Progress Information
Tactic 1: Maintain regular media distribution list and technique for efficient delivery of releases and news tips.	ONGOING	
Tactic 2: Promote various City sources for information about City programs and service to the media for proactive media access.	ONGOING	2022 – created a dedicated page on the city’s website for press releases, setting the stage to automate the distribution process.
Objective 2: Provide timely response to media inquiries and requests.		
Tactic 1: Respond to media requests and inquiries in a timely manner	ONGOING	
Tactic 2: Coordinate subject matter experts as needed for media requests.	ONGOING	
Objective 3: Unify City communication outreach efforts.		
Tactic 1: Establish processes for release of information to media. Assess regularly to determine efficiency of processes.	Examine yearly, create new processes as necessary	2022: Press release policy created, establishing a set process for all departments to follow when releasing information to the public.
Tactic 2: Utilize regular Leadership Team Meetings as internal forum to participate in an ongoing discussion about items of potential media interest.	Monthly meetings	

Appendix B: Digital Strategy

The Digital Strategy applies to the City's primary website and social media platforms managed by Media Operations Center. It has been developed to guide nature of content and frequency of sharing on a per-platform basis that can be managed by existing staff resources.

OUR VOICE:

- Respectful
- Good-natured
- Factual
- Professional

OUR STRATEGY:

Digital channel	Message types	Frequency
City website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All service, facility, and event information • Latest city news and announcements 	Weekly updates
Watertown TV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common Council Meeting coverage • Other series and stand-alone programming • Content from other government agencies (county, state) • Public Service announcements and community event bulletins 	Biweekly meeting coverage Weekly changes in program content Weekly changes in community bulletin board
Facebook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News, updates, events, factoids, goodwill messages 	10-12 posts/week
Instagram	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News, updates, events, factoids, goodwill messages • Showcase images of Watertown community and events 	10-12 posts/week
YouTube	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content from Watertown TV that is original to the Media Operations Center 	10-20 uploads/month
Linked In	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment messages • City and employee successes • Business and development-related news relating to the city 	1-5 posts/month