

RESIDENT SERVICES AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE
MEETING REPORT
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2024 @ 6:00 P.M.

Attendees: Councillor Matt Leming, Committee Chair; Councillor George Scarpelli, Committee Vice-Chair; Councillor Anna Callahan; Councillor Emily Lazzaro; Councillor Justin Tseng; City Clerk Adam Hurtubise; other participants as noted in the body of this report.

Chair Leming called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. on February 13, 2024 via Zoom. The purpose of the meeting was to address several papers referred to the Committee.

Chair Leming thanked participants for attending. The first discussion item was **24-006**, the Governing Agenda from the January 24, 2024 Committee of the Whole Meeting. Councillor Callahan moved to suspend the rules to move this to the end of the meeting (Councillor Scarpelli second)—approved on a roll call vote of five in favor and zero opposed.

Discussion turned to **24-015**, the resolution to discuss Council communications and outreach strategy. Councillor Tseng said many of the ideas in his proposal to be discussed tonight are also in **24-006**. He said that he hopes to get feedback from where we are and where we need to be. He said that Councillors could create press releases to alert constituents and keep residents up to date. He said it would be appropriate for the Committee to approve monthly updates or summaries. He said every month, a Councillor could create this summary and vote it out to be published at a Council Meeting. He said that dispersing this function would make it less stressful for each individual Councillor. He said he had questions around the execution of this. He asked if this should be done within the Committee or as a subcommittee. He said that younger people often use social media and others, such as seniors, might want to read updates in the newsletter.

Councillor Callahan asked a procedural question about subcommittees and the City Clerk answered it. Councillor Scarpelli said that we do have an entire department that writes press releases and he asked if we will now be sending out our own. He asked if this were too redundant. He said sometimes more is better. He said that the City doesn't always do a decent job getting out information.

Councillor Tseng said that the Communications Department often focuses on items that the Mayor is doing and that Departments are doing. He said that historically, the Communications Department does not send out press releases on what the Council is doing.

Councillor Lazzaro said she likes the idea of communicating with people and said she thought it could be done in conjunction with the Mayor's Office. She said that it would make sense to communicate in a broad, generalized manner. She said we do not have

a newspaper in town and we want people to be able to understand what we are trying to accomplish. She said she also likes the idea of communicating on social media and through the Senior Center Newsletter. She said it should be simple and high level communication. Councillor Scarpelli said he shares these concerns and said we have to look at what the mechanism is going to be. He said the Council is limited in what we control unless we have buy-in with the City. He said even the Council's webpage can be confusing. He said we can take Councillor Lazzaro's suggestion about the newsletter. He said there isn't a main newspaper or identified link that we can use to reach every resident. He said engaged residents will understand what we are doing and see what we are doing. He said we need to work with the City, the Clerk, and our President to see what we can do to get our messaging out there.

Councillor Callahan said she likes the idea of sending out something that is unbiased. She said she likes the idea of getting this out before things are passed. She said she does not think that this has to be long. Councillor Tseng said it does not have to be long. He said that Steve Smirti has seemed receptive to some of these ideas.

Councillor Callahan said she has thought deeply on how to engage people who are not currently engaged with City government. She said that this type of update is just trying to get a certain piece of information out. She said she would also like to talk to the Communications Department.

Councillor Scarpelli said he wanted us to be accessible. He said he wants to be able to reach the residents who don't have access. He said he wants to be able to ensure that everyone in the City has access to our news and our newsletters. He said that we are the City Council and that the Communications Department has to work with us so we can get our message out. He said that the lack of a local newspaper has absolutely crippled our community. He said it is imperative to meet with City representatives as we try to reach underprivileged groups and other groups.

Councillor Tseng moved to get feedback from the Communications Director on the ideas in this powerpoint before our next meeting (Councillor Scarpelli)—approved on a roll call vote of five in favor and zero opposed.

Councillor Lazzaro said it seems like a good moment to mention the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion discussion we were hoping to get do during this meeting. She said if we want to make sure we are reaching everybody, there would be barriers. She said even when we had a newspaper, the information was only reaching subscribers. She said that perhaps Director Nwajei could assist with informing us on how people are accessing information.

Councillor Tseng said he could coordinate on getting feedback from Steve Smirti. He said it might not make sense to form a subcommittee for this topic. He said it might make more sense to get a list of Councillors who want to work on this topic. He said he does not want to editorialize in the newsletters. He asked about partnering with Medford Community Media.

Station Director Kevin Harrington said that Medford Community Media membership is open to Medford residents. He said Councillors are welcome to apply for membership. He said Councillors could get trained and then use the studio space. He said some people produce videos on their own time and submit it to the station. He said that the MCM staff is essentially providing the services but MCM is not meant to be a production company.

Councillor Scarpelli said that some items might be able to be added to the loop on public access. Director Harrington said that just about any image file can be added to the digital bulletin board.

Discussion turned to Paper **24-022**, on biennial training on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Councillor Lazzaro said she spoke with Director Nwajei a few times and that she and Director Nwajei are excited about doing this training. She said she has concerns about doing this without violating the Open Meeting Law. She said she wouldn't want to do it if it would cost us additional funds. She said it would make sense to include Director Nwajei because she is such a wonderful resource.

Councillor Scarpelli said that he thought it was great to get training. He said former City Solicitor Rumley used to bring Councillors into the office individually for training. Councillor Lazzaro said her understanding of the Open Meeting Law is that if you stay away from anything on the Council agenda, you might be able to have a training session without violating the Open Meeting Law. She said every year something comes up in Medford and that some of these topics could be variable. She said that there are many different ways to look at Diversity.

Councillor Tseng suggested inviting Director Nwajei to a meeting to look at what this might involve. He said it would be helpful to meet with Director Nwajei, and moved to invite Director Nwajei to come to our next meeting to discuss this (Councillor Lazzaro second)—approved on a roll call vote of five in favor and zero opposed.

Chair Leming asked if there would be any discussion on the Governing Agenda. Councillor Tseng said he thinks that it is pretty straightforward. He said that he wants to make sure that there will be lead Councillors on these projects. Councillor Tseng gave updates on various draft ordinances in the document. He said the hope was to meet with the Administration and get updates. He said he doesn't want this to be punitive or overly bureaucratic. He suggested finishing some open projects before addressing some of the items on the list that do not yet have paper numbers.

Councillor Tseng moved to keep Papers 24-015 and 24-022 in Committee (Councillor Callahan second)—approved on a roll call vote of five in favor and zero opposed.

Councillor Tseng moved to have Councillors submit feedback and ideas to the Clerk and the Chair on how to modernize Council Communications (Councillor Lazzaro second)—approved on a roll call vote of five in favor and zero opposed.

Councillor Tseng moved to adjourn at 7:05 p.m. (Councillor Scarpelli second)—
approved on a roll call vote of five in favor and zero opposed.