

MEETING REPORT

OUTREACH / EDUCATION COMMITTEE WEDNESDAY, MARCH 3, 2010 2:15 P.M.

Directors: Bob Behee
Ralph Retherford

Public: John Mills
Kendall Flint, PMC

Staff: Pete Kampa
John Barnhart
Sheri Barnett
Lisa Westbrook
Casey Prunchak

Review of the Draft Communications Plan

Kendall Flint, Director of Strategic Planning distributed the draft Communications Plan.

Committee members, District staff and the public reviewed the following components and structure for the Communications Plan:

Goals –

- To provide TUD customers with a clear understanding of the District's operation, management and finances.
- To ensure that TUD customers are aware of the high level of customer service and high quality of water and wastewater services provided by the District.

Target Audiences –

- TUD Customers
- Internal Communications
- Media Relations
- Legislative Outreach
- Public Agency Outreach

Research –

- PMC staff reviewed several documents and/or programs to prepare the Communications Plan.

Meetings with Staff and Key Stakeholders –

- PMC facilitated a meeting with the Committee members, General Manager and key staff to develop shared goals for the Communications Plan.

Web Survey –

- PMC conducted an online survey using an e-mail database provided by TUD – over 1,500 customers were contacted via email and asked to participate.

Challenges –

- Lack of understanding among customers regarding TUD operations, finances and state/federal mandates.
- Perception that TUD may be acquiring systems for the purposes of expansion only.
- Perception that TUD may not be utilizing its fiscal resources in the best manner possible.

Opportunities –

- Overwhelmingly positive customer perception of TUD customer service.
- Majority of customers who ranked high-quality delivery of water and wastewater services above costs.
- Potential partnerships with Columbia College and the Tuolumne Chamber of Commerce.

Strategies and Tactics –

- Engage TUD staff in multiple departments to support and implement communications efforts.
 - Develop internal pool of writers (TUD staff)
 - Provide training for writer team (consultant)
 - Develop internal TUD briefing (TUD staff and interns)
- Focus banding and outreach efforts on programs that connect TUD staff directly with high-quality service and programs.
 - Revise advertising strategy to focus on employees (TUD or consultant)
 - Promote both department and individual achievement (TUD or consultant)
 - Focus outreach and advertising on key areas by quarter
- Incorporate fact-based outreach for all major TUD programs, plans and initiatives to help educate rate payers.
 - PMC recommends that TUD incorporate tasks specific to outreach in Request for Proposals and/or qualifications as appropriate when seeking consultants for work on major projects
- Better utilize Web-based outreach.
 - Revamp website (TUD or consultant)
 - Currently information on the website is stacked so that the newest information appears on the top of the screen. PMC suggests a three-pane format so that users can see more information simultaneously
 - Consistently update site (TUD and intern)
 - Quarterly customer surveys (TUD via SurveyMonkey)
 - E-newsletters for customers (TUD and intern)
- Proactively engage customers, media and legislators.
 - Expand media list (completed)
 - Develop TUD partners e-mail database (TUD) and distribute e-newsletters (TUD)
 - Revise billing statements and include news briefs about TUD programs and initiatives (TUD)
 - Produce education video about TUD operations (TUD and consultant)
- Shift advertising placement to print and Web mediums.
 - PMC recommends monthly educational advertisements that support the quarterly focus areas to run on Thursdays in the Community section of the Union Democrat, with banner advertising placement on the Web.
- Develop / enhance partnerships with associations and education and business resources.
 - Columbia College-development of an internship program
 - Business partnerships (Chamber of Commerce)
 - Associations (ACWA, CSDA, EPA)
- Use outside consultant(s) to provide strategic counsel for implementation.
 - Strategic planning
 - Grant research
 - Legislative outreach

Kendall Flint reported that the following additional components will be included in final Communications Plan:

- Budget (a time budget and a hard cost budget)
- Timeline
- Evaluation
- Various Appendixes

Committee members thanked Kendall Flint for a thorough and complete Communications Plan.

Kendall Flint requested that revisions/questions/comments to the draft Communications Plan be given to her prior to March 19, 2010 in order for her to incorporate the revisions prior to the April 7, 2010 regular Board meeting.

Discuss Role of Stakeholders and Public Involvement for the Urban Water Management Plan

Pete Kampa reported that while preparing to develop the Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP), District staff realized that the public involvement component is extremely important, and that we want their comments and input addressed at the beginning of the process.

John Mills explained that the state of planning for water use within California, especially by that actually carried out by public agencies has come to imply there will be some sort of public involvement. Mr. Mills indicated that sometimes this involvement comes without much guidance or thought as to what the role and purpose of those serving in the “public involvement” process are to do. A more thought out and structured process for public involvement often can produce a superior plan for the water agency and the agencies customers.

Committee members, District staff and the public reviewed the recommended representation for each of the following interest categories:

- County of Tuolumne – land use planning agency – one member
- City of Sonora – land use planning agency – one member
- Tuolumne County Economic Development Council – economic interest – one member
- Tuolumne County Farm Bureau – agriculture – one member
- Economic and housing interest – one member
- Citizen rate payer / general public – two members
- Conservation groups – various conservation interests – two members (one member of each interest)

John Mills reported that this would provide a nine member advisory group to the UWMP update. The group’s purpose would be to work primarily with District staff in the review of drafts of elements of the plan that could then be forwarded to the various Board committees for review and comment. Additionally, the group could provide recommendations to the staff regarding the general development of the plan. Mr. Mills explained that it is anticipated that the advisory group would meet approximately once per six weeks over the next twelve months, depending upon action to be taken by the group, and the group will only be authorized to act as a body and not as individuals.