

# Communications Plan

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TOWN OF CARRBORO

2017

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## Introduction

The Town of Carrboro is committed to improving communications with its external stakeholders and internally throughout the organization. This commitment is evident through the creation of a Communications Team with representatives from each Town department who have collaborated to produce this Communications Plan.

Communications with stakeholders is a sound investment of Carrboro's resources and will continue to have a place among the Town's primary functions. Through this plan, staff will make every effort to improve public access to information about the Town and its services, programs and decisions; provide timely communication with stakeholders; assure the Town provides clear and useful information; and enhance transparency of decision-making and outcomes.

The Town will strive to tell our story- continuously, comprehensively, and enthusiastically.

### The objectives of this plan are to:

- Increase awareness
- Increase engagement
- Provide access
- Establish transparency
- Tell our story

## Communications Team Members

Julie Eckenrode, Assistant to the Town Manager (Project Manager)

Sharmin Mirman, Assistant to the Mayor

Andy Vogel, Information and Technology Manager

Annette Stone, Community and Economic Development Director

Earlene Hicks, Assistant to the Finance Director

Will Potter, Fire Driver

Patricia McGuire, Planning Director

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Jane Tuohey, Administrative Assistant

Chris Attack, Police Captain

JD Freeman, Public Works Director

Eric Marsh, Assistant to the Public Works Director

Charles Harrington, Recreation Supervisor

## Executive Summary of 2016 Citizen Communications Survey

The Town of Carrboro's Communications Team conducted a survey of area residents, business owners, visitors, and other interested parties to learn how stakeholders were receiving information from the Town; what information they are receiving; how they prefer to receive information from the Town; and input on how to improve communications between the Town and its stakeholders.

The survey was conducted from August 17- September 19, 2016. It was available in an online and paper version. The online version was advertised via email, on the Town's website, social media outlets, and on other local listservs including HOA's, church contacts, and school contacts. The paper version was available in English and Spanish and was available at Town Hall, El Centro Hispano, the Latina Festival, the Cybrary, the Carrboro Farmers Market, the Seymour Center, and by special request.

The survey received 364 responses.

The data from the survey was used to develop the goals, objectives, and action steps included in this plan.

### Results Summary

Results of the survey lead to the following conclusions:

- 71% of respondents live in Carrboro; 27% work in Carrboro
- 99% of respondents have internet access
- About half of the respondents have lived in Carrboro for 5+ years.
- The majority of respondents receive their information about the Town from an indirect source (from a neighbor, info posted on Nextdoor, shared posts and tweets on social media)
- The top 3 utilized methods to get information from the Town are banners/signs/posters/flyers, Facebook, and the Town website.
- The top 3 preferred methods to receive information from the Town are News Flash (email from the Town with a news story/event), Facebook, email/listserv (i.e. Carrboro business listserv, HOA distribution, etc.)
- 52% of respondents are very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the information they receive pertaining to Town of Carrboro news, information, and events. 31% are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and 16% are somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.
- Nearly half of respondents use local radio stations (WCOM, WCHL, and WUNC) to find out about what's happening in Carrboro and more than half use print material (Chapel Hill magazine, Chapel Hill News, The Daily Tar Heel)

## Recommendations to improve Town communications

After reviewing the survey data and listening to the needs of each Town department, the Communications Team identified five (5) goals to help improve internal and external communication and specifically address the objectives of this plan.

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### Goal #1 Increase public awareness of and participation in Town decisions.

#### Objective #1

Disseminate information to the media and stakeholders related to Town decisions.

##### *Actions:*

- 1:** Investigate electronic sign or signs for use on Town-owned property to display meeting times and public input opportunities.
- 2:** Establish internal procedures to keep track of upcoming decisions and public input opportunities.
- 3:** Examine and consider expanding outreach to media and stakeholders via news releases, public service announcements, and/or advertising.

#### Objective #2

Effectively and efficiently use social media to increase public awareness about Town decisions.

##### *Actions:*

- 1:** Evaluate current social media presence and followers.
- 2:** Educate staff on best practices for using social media for local government (develop parameters).

#### Objective #3

Provide for alternative input methods to allow citizen participation in Town decisions.

##### *Actions:*

- 1:** Identify input opportunities for in person and virtual participation (i.e. wiki maps, Skype, public and satellite meetings, a civic engagement tool).
- 2:** Evaluate options, select approaches, and train staff and community to use new input opportunities.
- 3:** Seek feedback on use of tools from the public, demonstrate change based on feedback.

#### Objective #4

Increase efforts to recruit and train residents for service on advisory boards.

##### *Actions:*

- 1:** Evaluate biannual community survey responses to determine needs of stakeholders.
  - 2:** Develop in person and virtual methods for recruiting and training stakeholders (i.e. Citizens Academy or Carrboro Gov 101).
  - 3:** Regularly monitor advisory board participation and publish information regarding vacancies and how stakeholders can be involved in other volunteer capacities.
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## Goal #2 Increase public awareness of Town programs and services.

### Objective #1

Disseminate information across broad platforms and venues to ensure equitable access to information.

#### *Actions:*

- 1:** Identify and promote key locations and events (i.e. Carrboro Day) where written information can be distributed (i.e. face to face – personal interactions).
- 2:** Develop procedure for sharing information with stakeholders who choose not to access information electronically.
- 3:** Create relationship with local radio stations such as WCOM, WCHL/Chapelboro and WXYC.
- 4:** Investigate ability to create video content for use in various places (i.e. website, local channels)
- 5:** Investigate ability to create content in multiple languages.

### Objective #2

Utilize Town website as primary means of promoting Town programs and services.

#### *Actions:*

- 1:** Centralize Town event information via Community Events Calendar.
- 2:** Create easily accessible information on status of Town projects.

### Objective #3

Educate public on where to obtain information on Town services and programs.

#### *Actions:*

- 1:** Periodically send instructions on where/how information may be obtained via Master Listserv.
- 2:** Inform citizens about the various means of obtaining information about Town programs and services (electronic and non-electronic).

### Objective #4

Seek feedback and evaluation on current Town programs and services.

#### *Actions:*

- 1:** Encourage each department to seek feedback on programs and services within their department.
  - 2:** Analyze feedback to improve quality of programs and services.
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### Goal # 3 Create opportunities for stakeholders to provide feedback to the Town.

#### Objective #1

Evaluate existing opportunities for stakeholders to provide feedback to the town.

##### *Actions:*

- 1:** Establish criteria to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of existing feedback opportunities (i.e. response rates to a survey).
- 2:** Ensure current feedback opportunities are measurable.
- 3:** Establish benchmarks for future improvement.

#### Objective #2

Establish a process to analyze feedback.

##### *Actions:*

- 1:** Assess the existing ways that we analyze feedback.
- 2:** Adopt a feedback framework that can be used across all departments.

#### Objective #3

Educate stakeholders on current opportunities to provide feedback.

##### *Actions:*

- 1:** Better utilize preferred communication methods (established by 2016 Citizen Communication Survey) to seek feedback.
  - 2:** Create education materials and distribute via preferred communication methods regarding feedback opportunities.
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## Goal # 4 Create internal systems to standardize and enhance the quality of communication created and distributed by Town Departments.

### Objective #1

Improve internal communications with Staff in order for them to be an information resource for internal and external customers.

#### *Actions:*

- 1:** Help employees develop effective communication skills to ensure that all Town employees are informed about town goals, hot topics, new initiatives, programs so they can serve as community ambassadors.
- 2:** Promote and utilize the Town's intranet to direct staff to find updated information about Town government activities, new initiatives, programs, and hot topics.
- 3:** Create external and internal electronic newsletters to communicate Town news and information to citizens and employees.
- 4:** Develop multiple channels for communicating town news to employees including intranet, email, posted notices and staff meetings.
- 5:** Standardize Board of Aldermen presentations, email signatures and letterhead for consistent communication from Town officials.

### Objective #2

Create a permanent communications team with a representative from each department to be responsible for proactively identifying and coordinating Town information to be communicated both internally and externally.

#### *Actions:*

- 1:** Train communication team members to identify newsworthy items, write news releases, prepare public service announcements, post items to website and to create social media content to effectively communicate Town's messaging.
  - 2:** Establish a process to periodically monitor and evaluate Town communications activities.
  - 3:** Create a campaign to encourage citizens to subscribe to receive Town communication via CivicPlus Notify Me.
  - 4:** Provide continuing education and training for town employees on the capabilities and features of town website.
  - 5:** Establish a chain of command system for how communication is handled within this policy including a point person for major events.
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## Goal #5 Coordinate and standardize emergency communication.

### Objective #1

Increase the effectiveness of both the OCAAlerts (Reverse 911) system and our internal Everbridge (employee notification) system.

#### *Actions:*

- 1:** Develop a coordinated community information campaign to increase the percentage of residents effectively utilizing the OCAAlerts system (e.g. social media, informational sign) as well as to increase understanding of the purpose of the OCAAlerts system.
- 2:** Develop criteria for OCAAlerts activation for community notifications.
- 3:** Create procedural guidelines for departments/department heads outlining how to initiate an OCAAlerts activation.
- 4:** Increase employee participation in the internal Everbridge system to 100%. Ensure accurate information is maintained in the system through routine informational updates and reviews.

### Objective #2

Enhance overall town communication during emergency situations.

#### *Actions:*

- 1:** Utilize non-public safety personnel in the role of Public Information Officer (PIO) and/or to support the mission of the public safety PIO during emergency situations.
- 2:** Require department heads to participate in National Incident Management System (NIMS)/Incident Command System (ICS) training to improve awareness and understanding of emergency communication. Offer all town personnel the option of attending the same training.
- 3:** Explore the possibility of adding a full-time Town of Carrboro PIO.
- 4:** Expand current NIMS/ICS training for PW, PD, and FD with an emphasis on interoperability and coordination between the three departments.
- 5:** Train the current Town PIO to perform public safety PIO duties.

### Objective #3

Research and improve the most effective method(s) of information dissemination to the public before, during, and after an emergency.

#### *Actions:*

- 1:** Examine current mediums utilized for communication during all phases of an emergency with an emphasis on establishing the most effective method(s) for information dissemination.
- 2:** Evaluate how and what information is currently disseminated, as well as what internal and external stakeholders would like to be disseminated.
- 3:** Identify current Town performance (baseline) as it pertains to emergency communications. Create a benchmark that satisfies both internal and external stakeholders. Perform gap analysis to improve performance from baseline to the established benchmark.

### Objective #4

Focus efforts on prevention and education before an emergency or crisis.

#### *Actions:*

- 1:** FD – Improve public education and prevention efforts to limit the effects of a natural or man-made disaster before the disaster occurs.
  - 2:** PD – Enhance community outreach efforts to reduce crime victimization and to increase contact with at-risk community members.
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