



Legislation Text

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TITLE:

Update on Proposed Changes to the Town's Communications Plan to Improve Outreach and Communications Strategies to Underserved Community Members

PURPOSE: The purpose of this agenda item is to provide an update on a plan of action and strategies to increase access to information, resources and participation in civic processes by people of color, immigrant, refugee and other marginalized communities.

DEPARTMENT: Town Manager's Office

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INFORMATION: On June 11, 2020, the Council requested a plan for community outreach, education and engagement with intentional cultural sensitivity around language, values and perspectives.

The Town of Carrboro seeks to increase access to information, resources, and civic processes by people of color and marginalized communities through the implementation of racially and culturally inclusive outreach and public engagement processes. The Town will use strategies to effectively educate and inform communities about services, events and programs; opportunities for leadership; and avenues to make positive change.

The process will be guided by the Town's participation with the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE). The Town is committed to advancing racial equity across all functions and levels of municipal government.

The *Draft Inclusive Carrboro Communications and Community Engagement Plan* revises the current Town Communications Plan. The revision of an existing plan is part of a conscious effort to evaluate and update institutional practices as the Town works to dismantle institutional barriers faced by underserved communities.

The Communications Manager, in conjunction with the Race and Equity Officer, is developing strategies for the revised plan to improve engagement and inclusivity, which will include:

1. Building upon successful strategies for generalized communications and engagement
2. Connecting with minority communities and building relationships
3. Adopting a grassroots approach
4. Ensuring culturally appropriate messaging and information

All Town Departments participate in public engagement on projects of various scales. The Town of Carrboro adopted its *Town Communications Plan* in 2017 (included as attachment A). Through the revised *Inclusive Carrboro Communications and Community Outreach Plan* and an interdepartmental team approach, the Town will pursue a common set of goals, standards and best practices.

Our plan is to reengage a Town Communications Team, and with input from the GARE Core Team, to help think about communications and public engagement practices with an equity lens. Revising an existing organizational plan is a conscious effort to evaluate our institutional practices currently in place. Ultimately, having a single plan will help to dismantle institutional barriers faced by underserved communities.

The revised draft plan (Attachment B) includes new strategies to engage, as best as possible, the entire Carrboro community. Staff will pursue non-traditional methods of outreach to inspire entire community involvement. In this plan, we identify alternate opportunities for social interaction and relationship building by “going where the people are.” We will continue to expand new ways for the public to contribute input and offer feedback on the actions of local government.

It should be noted that many of these practices are being implemented by the Town of Carrboro in some form already. Staff intends to deploy new practices within a structural strategy and existing plan to maximize impacts on racial equity.

Next Steps:

1. Review draft plan by GARE Core Team and incorporate feedback
2. Review by interdepartmental Town Communications Team and incorporate feedback
3. Staff attendance at 3CMA Webinar Series: Unconscious Bias Training for Local Government Communicators (July 9) and How to Address Microaggressions and Known Offensive Language in Your Department/Municipality (July 16)
4. Take key actions from the draft plan: a) Recruit for Neighborhood Liaisons b) Analysis of Town communications and community engagement network
5. Final Inclusive Carrboro Communications and Community Engagement Plan Council review for possible adoption on Aug. 18.

FISCAL & STAFF IMPACT: To be determined.

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends the Council receive this update.