

**CITY OF NORWALK
COMMUNITY SERVICES AND PERSONNEL COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
NOVEMBER 18, 2020**

ATTENDANCE: Barbara Smyth, Chair; Greg Burnett; Dominique Johnson; Diana Revolus, Nick Sachinelli, Kadeem Roberts, Tom Keegan

STAFF: Lamont Daniels, Chief of Community Services; Josh Morgan, Communications Manager

OTHERS: David Heuvelman, Common Council

1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m. by Ms. Smyth.

2. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM MEETING HELD ON OCTOBER 21, 2020

Ms. Smyth said she had one minor typo on last paragraph, last line of page 3, change “Candance” to “cadence”

**** MR. ROBERTS MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS AMENDED.**

**** THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

4. DISCUSSION

Community Services

a. Strategies to promote city initiatives

Ms. Smyth said after our last meeting we came to a realization our message is not getting out to all of the public. Ms. Smyth said she sent an email to committee after meeting with Mr. Daniels and Mr. Morgan about some of our ideas Mr. Morgan has joined us to talk about some of those initiatives.

Mr. Morgan began his power point presentation to the committee.

He first gave a communications update. He said the city is providing emergency announcements, news and information, community engagement and vision and goals.

He said Mayor Rilling initiated a Communication Manager position in late 2017 which led to Mr. Morgan's hiring in 2018.

Mr. Morgan said at that time social media was being used in a passive manner. He explained questions were being left unanswered and public relations strategy was sporadic and the website was not very accessible on mobile devices.

He said the first step was to launch an Instagram page in August 2018. Went 5 percent to more than 72 percent of residents using social media at least once a day. Mr. Morgan said the city enhanced content by posting Council meetings to Facebook and discovered if they put a comment on the content more people who engage with the page.

He said another example was Beach Passes and how they were able to reach more people.

He said the goal is to add Ambassadors which are everyday residents, elected officials, businesses and community leaders help amplify the city. He said the city has been able to improve customer service.

He pointed out in January 2018 about 4,900 followers and in October 2020 almost 16,000 followers on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Mr. Morgan said we just do not want to be seen we want people to be talking about what is going on.

He said impressions are how many times someone saw the post and if you comment or like that is an engagement. Mr. Morgan said engagements are up to 33,000 a month.

Mr. Roberts asked if Mr. Morgan is boosting the posts. Mr. Morgan said this is all organic and the city has not done any social media advertising.

Ms. Smyth commended Mr. Morgan for his hard work and how impressive the increase in engagements is.

Ms. Revolus asked how are we engaging people who are not online and how are they getting kids involved who like to use TicToc and Snapchat.

Mr. Morgan said we are planning to have a TicToc and said he would talk about the digital divide later in the meeting.

Mr. Morgan said he wants to share the good news and promote some of the things going in the city. He said often the employees are doing great work but are too humble. He said the city turns out about 6-10 press releases a month and that does not include COVID updates.

He showed a slide with pictures of bus ads for the Plastic Bag Ordinance in Summer 2019 and Census in Spring 2020. The ads were in both English and Spanish for Plastic Bags and English, Spanish and Haitian/Creole for the Census.

He said another great partner is Norwalk Public Schools. He said they have gotten messages out through school newsletters.

Mr. Morgan said the website is close to 1.2 visits this year up from 825,000 in 2018. He said there was a huge spike in the summer months as people were researching beach passes and parks.

He said in 2018, 34 percent of visits came from mobile devices and now it is close to 50/50 desktop versus smartphone or tablet. Mr. Morgan pointed out the website has Google Translate on all its pages.

He said the CodeRED alerts from the Mayor have been improved to include both English and Spanish.

Mr. Morgan commended the work of the Community Services Partnerships which works with over 60 nonprofits.

Mr. Daniels said we are very aware of people who do not have access to the internet. He said the word of mouth becomes important and he said an example of this is more Hispanic/Latino people have come to Stepping Stones for COVID testing.

Ms. Revolus asked how if Facebook Live is something they are using and if they have any ideas to do a mass text connection.

Mr. Morgan said we have done a few Facebook Live that often occur during business hours and people can watch later.

Mr. Morgan pointed out they have been doing daily COVID updates to Twitter. He said it is good to know people are reading them and looking out for them. He said a post on storm debris reached over 10,000 people and another on COVID testing reached over 12,000.

He said the goals are reach hard to reach groups.

Mr. Morgan said the tactics are to transition COVID updates into a Community Newsletter, partner with outside groups such as Walk Bridge and explore using text messages, enhance the use of emails (notify me) more content on Channel 79, business partnerships and advertising and expand on relationships with nonprofits and local groups.

Ms. Revolus asked about digital signage and a You Tube page.

Mr. Morgan said You Tube is a great suggestion. He said we have a You Tube and we are looking to expand content Channel 79 for more home bound population and seniors. Mr. Morgan said regarding digital signage they partnering with SONO Collection on I-95 during early stages of the pandemic (Stay Safe, Stay Home).

Ms. Smyth said digital signage could drive people to Channel 79 or text message. Ms. Revolus said this could lead to a bar code system.

Mr. Keegan said the one place most people go to is supermarkets so we could go to Shop & Shop we could reach a lot of people.

Mr. Morgan said that is a great idea. He said supermarkets have been a good partner even before and during COVID. Mr. Sachinelli said since there is such a consensus we could bring in someone with expertise on this.

Mr. Roberts thanked Mr. Morgan for his emails and his hard work. He said as a young person who is internet savvy what can the young generation do to get the word out.

Mr. Morgan said the best thing to do is share content, like and engage and tell people to go to the website.

Mr. Heuvelman said he does believe a study of some kind is warranted regarding digital signage. He said Mr. Daniels and Mr. Morgan are doing wonderful work. He said we are in an unfortunate place, but have learned so much since COVID started. Mr. Heuvelman asked, considering many people have cut the cord with cable, if a You Tube video or a weekly podcast is that something the city would consider.

Mr. Morgan said we need to be controlling the messages that are going out.

Ms. Smyth said one question is the funding and where the funds will come from.

Ms. Revolus said she an idea of a gaming platform to engage our youth. She said our youth get our adults engaged.

Mr. Sachinelli asked about having the schools select kids have them read the Mayor's remarks on one of our platforms. Mr. Daniels said that is intriguing. He said we are in our 3rd town hall with our youth and he said a great topic would be social media.

ADJOURNMENT

**** MS. REVOLUS MADE A MOTION TO ADJOURN.**

**** THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

G. Venuto
Telesco Secretarial Services