



WASHOE COUNTY

Integrity Communication Service

www.washoecounty.us

STAFF REPORT

BOARD MEETING DATE: February 16, 2021

DATE: Monday, February 15, 2021

TO: Board of County Commissioners

FROM: Dave Solaro, Arch., P.E., Assistant County Manager
Community Services Department, 328-3600, dsolaro@washoecounty.us

Nancy Leuenhagen, Communications Director
Office of the County Manager, 328-2069, leuenhagen@washoecounty.us

THROUGH: Eric P. Brown, County Manager

SUBJECT: Recommendation and possible action to create a Commissioner Engagement Program in the Office of the County Manager which will be overseen by the Communications Director, and which will facilitate and administer a commissioner-citizen engagement process utilizing two tracks, Commissioner Outreach and the Community Advisory Boards, both working in unison for balanced and complete community engagement; request and possible action to fund the Program in FY22 with an estimated program budget of \$372,000 to cover personnel, technology and program costs, a portion of which will be offset with revenues already established in the Office of the County Manager. Manager's Office. (All Commission Districts.)

SUMMARY

At numerous Board of County Commissioners (Board) meetings, Commissioners have requested further discussion related to the Washoe County CAB program. As Washoe County has gone through a change in leadership, obtaining insight from the new County Manager was necessary prior to bringing this item to the Board for review and discussion. This item requests direction from the Board to create a two track program that includes Commissioner outreach focusing on data driven commissioner-citizen engagement in the Communications Division of the Office of the County Manager and updating the Citizen Advisory Program (CAB) to be focused on development projects and located in the Community Services Dept. (CSD)

Strategic Objective supported by this item: Strengthening our culture of service.

AGENDA ITEM # _____

PREVIOUS ACTION

On August 12, 2020 The Board of County Commissioners gave direction to explore and possibly expand the current Manager's Office Communications Team to create a comprehensive community engagement program, expand the existing CAB program, and schedule an update on developing the program to the Board at a future meeting.

On January 23, 2018 – The Board acknowledged an update and provided direction to staff on changes to the Citizen Advisory Board (CAB) program to change the meeting dates of CAB's and provide additional structural changes for facilitating discussions relevant to development items at the CAB's.

On June 27, 2017 – The Board acknowledged an update and gave direction to staff on changes to the Citizen Advisory Board (CAB) program.

On August 9, 2016 – The Board approved dissolving the West Truckee Meadows and the Verdi Township CAB and creating the West Truckee Meadows/ Verdi Township CAB.

On June 28, 2016 - Board acknowledged an update and gave direction to staff. No action on this item.

On February 9, 2016 – The Board acknowledged an update and directed staff to take necessary steps to start the Gerlach/Empire CAB as soon as possible in 2016.

On October 27, 2015 – The Board acknowledged an update and took no action on this item.

On June 9, 2015 – The Board approved updated by-laws to reflect the approved CAB structure and redefined purpose for FY 2015-2016.

On May 12, 2015 – The Board approved revised resolutions for each CAB and updated the standard CAB structure for program changes and a community forum program.

On April 14, 2015 – The Board provided direction to staff on the CAB program structure.

BACKGROUND

The Washoe County Board of County Commissioners are permitted to create advisory boards per state law (NRS 244.1945). The Board created the Citizen Advisory Board Program which consists of nine citizen boards that represent distinct geographic areas across unincorporated Washoe County. The Citizen Advisory Boards are advisory to decision making boards in the County including Board of Adjustment, Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners.

The current CABs were recreated on April 13, 2013, per direction of the Board of County Commissioners after an extensive outreach and revitalization process called the Citizen Involvement Revitalization Project (CIRP). The CIRP was initiated by the Board due to concerns that the CAB program was not efficiently soliciting feedback due to:

- Reduction in participation by advisory board members (in 2012 nine of the fourteen CABs received three or fewer applications for vacant positions).
- Reduced participation in traditional CAB meetings by the general community (in 2007, 94 percent of CAB meetings had fewer than 15 people in attendance, including members of the CAB and county staff).
- CABs had high administrative costs associated with managing the appointed advisory boards and staff resources (CAB meetings were estimated to cost \$4,484 for each meeting held).

As can be seen with the previous actions section of this staff report, and continued requests from the Board related to CAB structure and value, the CAB is still not meeting the expectations of the community or the Board.

ROADMAP TO A SOLUTION

Created out of the need to provide greater and more expansive community engagement and administrative support to Washoe County's five Commissioners; thereby providing increased and more targeted service deliver to the residents of Washoe County. With the goal of strengthening Commissioners relationships with their district community and stakeholders. In support of the strategic plan initiative #5:

- Strengthening our culture of service: Community engagement continue to engage citizens across the community through diverse channels.

A cross functional committee that included 14 employees from 6 departments participated in 6 discussion meetings to come up with the proposed two-tier program.

Track one: to create the Commission Engagement Program under the Office of the County Manager/Communication Division. Program to include:

- Outreach & district specific communication
- Technology to support data gathering
- Educational opportunities for citizens
- Centralized program and process management

Track two: to enhance the current Citizen Advisory Board (CAB) program in CSD:

- Remain in CSD and refocus specifically on district level community development items.
- Re-engage local developers to expand outreach and public education on projects.
 - Restructure meetings for a more interactive community-developer dialogue and buy-in process.
- Liaison to community engagement team

The program recommendation would include hiring necessary staff, in a tiered plan over several budget years, to facilitate and administer district specific community engagement plans and proof of performance. The program would use data driven strategies to incorporate citizen feedback and implement support tools from the county's GIS/technology services department and Zencity. The program would work simultaneously with the Communications Division and expand on the following outreach tools:

Communication Division Outreach tools and 2020 metrics:

- 311 Total Monthly requests for 2020 ** Totaling: 46,897 (Compared to 2019 total: 14,807)
- Washoe311 Top 3 requests during this timeframe:
 - 1) COVID-19
 - 2) Absentee/Mail Ballots
 - 3) Voter Registration
- 452 media requests for 2020
- 14 press conferences/town halls related to COVID
- 10 media availabilities for General Election
- General Election Day livestream: 202,000 views; daily livestream leading up to Election Day totaled approximately 28,000 views
- 54 press releases issued in 2020
- Website total traffic: 442,749 unique users, 1,345,863 unique page visits
- Feedbackify: complaints, compliments, inquiries and suggestions: 1,102
- Social Media: Twitter – 2,379,200 Impressions, Facebook - reach of 1,948,105 people
- 1361 print jobs processed (In plant printing decommissioned for 2021)
- Employee messaging: Inside Washoe Approx. 600,000 site visits for the year (average 2300+ site visits per weekday) Yammer 1,880 Active users, 692 posted messages and 147,462 read messages

FISCAL IMPACT

If approved, the FY22 recommended budget will include sufficient budget authority in the Office of the County Manager to fund the program in the Communications Division at an estimated cost of \$372,000 for personnel, programming, and technology. The funding for the program budget will be offset with established revenues and reallocation of currently approved budget, resulting in a net zero budget impact.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Board of Commissioners create a Commissioner Engagement Program in the Office of the County Manager which will be overseen by the Communications Director, and which will facilitate and administer a commissioner-citizen engagement process utilizing two tracks, Commissioner Outreach and the Community Advisory Boards, both working in unison for balanced and complete community engagement; and to fund the Program in FY22 with an estimated program budget of \$372,000 to cover personnel, technology and program costs.

POSSIBLE MOTION

Should the Board agree with staff's recommendation, a possible motion would be: move to create a Commissioner Engagement Program in the Office of the County Manager which will be overseen by the Communications Director, and which will facilitate and administer a commissioner-citizen engagement process utilizing two tracks, Commissioner Outreach and the Community Advisory Boards, both working in unison for balanced and complete community engagement; and to fund the Program in FY22 with an estimated program budget of \$372,000 to cover personnel, technology and program costs.