

REPORT TO CITY COUNCIL

DATE: MAY 26, 2021
TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL
FROM: NATHAN HAMBURGER, CITY MANAGER
BY: RAMIRO ADEVA, ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER
SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Public outreach and engagement has always been a priority for the City. However, prior to 2020, steps had never been taken to conduct a comprehensive review to determine the effectiveness and/or efficiency of the current practices of conveying important information, and whether there were ways to improve overall communication efficacy.

In December 2019, a formal Communications Ad Hoc Committee was appointed, further emphasizing the City's commitment to focus attention towards gaining understanding of the City's communication resources. Subsequently, during budget discussions in 2020, the City Council approved a recommendation by the Committee to award a contract to SAE Communications to prepare the City's first Strategic Communications Plan (See attached final draft).

On February 11, 2021, SAE Communications presented the draft Strategic Communications Plan to the Communications Subcommittee consisting of Mayor Pro Tem Lopez and Councilmember Northrup. Generally, the subcommittee was complimentary of the final product, but directed staff to review the plan's proposed first-year Priority Implementation Chart to determine if all recommended priority tactics could realistically be completed in year one. Staff reviewed the initial chart and presented a revised Priority Implementation Chart at a meeting of the subcommittee on March 31, 2021, which proposed the recommended tactics be completed over a two-year period instead of one year. That revised chart is included on page 46 of the attached draft.

SAE Communications will be providing a presentation to the City Council, highlighting the work that was completed, and summarizing the main points of the final plan produced.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff respectfully recommends the City Council approve the Strategic Communications Plan.

Attachment: Strategic Communications Plan

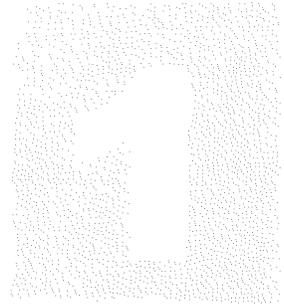


CITY OF AGOURA HILLS
Office of the City Manager

Strategic Communications Plan

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Introduction

The City of Agoura Hills should be congratulated for undertaking this process of reviewing the City's communications effectiveness and looking for recommendations which will help ensure improved understanding of its services, programs and issues. The goals of this Plan are to:

- Analyze existing communications programs and materials
- Assess the perception of the City's communications efforts among a variety of constituencies
- Identify opportunities to increase the effectiveness of communications processes and tools, and
- Recommend specific action steps that will enhance the City's future communications success while considering realistic limitations on staff and financial resources

This report should be considered a blueprint for the City to refine its communications program into a formal part of its institutional structure and culture. This Plan is focused on implementation within the next three to five years.

Communications today is much more complex than in previous decades. Most of us are overloaded with information and therefore are much less likely to read in-depth articles or materials about government agencies or services; many are apt to be informed by visual images and by communications vehicles which reach us with messages specifically tailored to our needs and concerns. The City's challenge is to convey consistent messages which serve to explain the organization's purpose and reason for its decisions and invite input, both on an overarching level as well as on specific project/issue levels.

Our efforts were made infinitely easier by the cooperation and openness of all those we worked with on this project. Members of the City Council, staff, community members and business representatives were universally helpful, honest and willing to share their perceptions with our team. We are especially appreciative to the staff in the City Manager's Office.

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Finally, it is important to note that the principles of communications – a two-way process of communicating and listening – have been viewed as major elements of business and are increasingly not only a function of government, but an integral part. As Thomas Jefferson wrote, “If we think society not enlightened enough to exercise their control over government with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it away from them, but to inform them.”

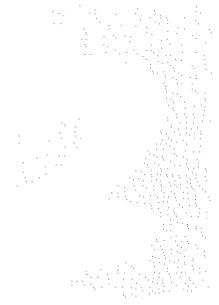


Scott Summerfield

*Principals
SAE Communications*



Sheri Benninghoven, APR



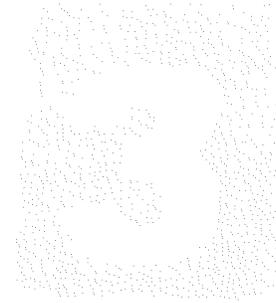
Research Steps

Research was conducted using a proven process of qualitative and quantitative methodologies. One-on-one interviews were conducted by members of the SAE Communications team with a variety of individuals representing internal City audiences and community members. The list of these participants is included in the appendix. It is important to note that no single person's opinions are quoted; it is the composite of all the voices heard that forms the basis of the recommendations in this Plan.

Further, we were fortunate to review formal research conducted by Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) for the City; the research reviewed related specifically to awareness of and attitudes toward communication efforts.

SAE's research steps included:

- Individual interviews with members of the City Council
- Several individual interviews and background sessions with the Assistant City Manager
- Individual interviews with department heads and senior staff
- Individual interviews with community leaders and business representatives
- Evaluation of City printed and electronic materials
- Evaluation of social media content
- Analysis of media coverage
- Evaluation of the City's web site
- Evaluation of social media accounts



Research Results Overview

Summary of external interview observations:

- City does a very good job at keeping residents informed about a wide range of services and programs, especially considering the size of the City staff and its limited resources
- Email of various newsletters and related content is the primary method of City and elected official communication and is generally valued by community members; some confusion regarding type and source of content was expressed
- Facebook pages are an important communications tool
- Mayor's Address videos are well-regarded
- Emergency alerts have improved since deficiencies were identified during the Woolsey Fire
- Communication has become more frequent since the onset of COVID-19, and reaction has been very favorable
- If a resident seeks specific information, it is generally easy to find once the resident becomes familiar with City Hall systems
- Website is not used frequently, and navigation can be frustrating
- A periodic, perhaps quarterly, resident update on key community issues and City Council actions would be helpful for those who do not closely follow City news
- Use of social media is good, but can be used more strategically
- Communication is good between City and other organizations, such as chamber of commerce and school district
- The City's relatively small size provides opportunities for connection between residents and staff/elected officials

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- City has made a targeted effort to keep businesses informed about important issues, especially rules/regulations related to COVID-19
- *The Acorn* is an important source of information for the community and an opportunity exists for the City to pitch important stories about City decisions, programs and service delivery.
- Face-to-face, personal interaction is highly-valued in the community
- There is a vocal/visible segment of the community that is highly-engaged in City issues, and another segment that will frequently complain about not hearing important news even though it may have been communicated via multiple channels
- Important stories that should be told include:
 - City decisions to balance open space with desired amenities, types of businesses
 - Envidable quality of life
 - Impact of proposed development projects
 - High level of support for local businesses
 - Commitment to environment
 - Program/services that appeal to those with families
- Major current/forecasted issues requiring strategic communication include:
 - Agoura Village development
 - Wildland fire safety and prevention efforts
 - Traffic (including cut-through from 101)
 - Long-term impact of COVID-19 on City revenues and operations
 - Ongoing support of struggling local businesses
 - Efforts to make/keep housing affordable for young families
 - Helping residents understand the State's Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) mandated new housing units and what they mean to the community's future

Summary of internal interview observations:

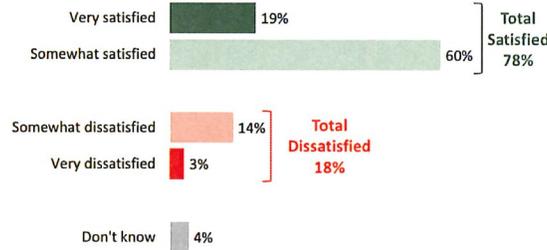
- City does a very good job communicating with residents and business operators and continues to improve its efforts
- Current management team is more focused on strategic communications, reflecting the Council's focus

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- Face-to-face, personal interaction is highly-valued in the community
- *The Acorn* is an important source of information in the community
- Ability to be informed about City issues depends greatly on resident's desire for communication
- Website is hard to use and navigation is difficult
- Emergency alerts have improved since deficiencies were identified during the Woolsey Fire
- Communication has become more frequent since the onset of COVID-19, and reaction has been very favorable
- Social media presence has expanded and improved but can be better
- Must include traditional forms of communication in overall mix since there are many seniors who don't use social media
- Desire for more frequent email and social media communication
- Communication with businesses has been prioritized and appreciated
- Communication is good between City and other organizations, such as chamber of commerce and school district
- City staff, though small, isn't always aware of important City Council actions
- Important stories that should be told include:
 - City staff tries very hard to provide exemplary service
 - Very strong commitment to customer service
 - City's support for local businesses during COVID-19
 - How to prepare/plan for future crises such as wildfires
- Major current/forecasted issues requiring strategic communication include:
 - Agoura Village development
 - General land use issues
 - Helping public understand RHNA numbers and what they mean to the community's future
 - Long-term impact of COVID-19 on City revenues and operations
 - Traffic

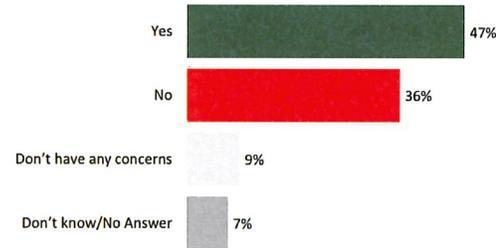
FM3's communications survey findings:

A large majority are satisfied with the City's efforts to communicate with residents, although only about two-in-ten said they are very satisfied.



FM3 RESEARCH Q. How would you rate your satisfaction with the City of Agoura Hills' efforts to communicate with City residents through mail, the City's website and social media accounts, and other means? Would you say you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied?

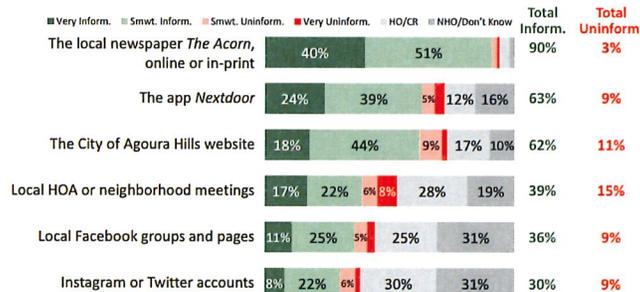
A plurality feel they have had the opportunity to voice their concerns to the City on major decisions that affect life in Agoura Hills.



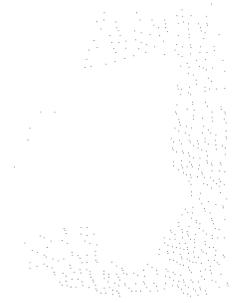
FM3 RESEARCH Q. For the City of Agoura Hills' communications to its residents about important decisions and changes that are made, do you feel that you have had the opportunity to voice your concerns to the City on major decisions that affect life in Agoura Hills?

The Acorn is considered the most informative source to learn about Agoura Hills City government, with NextDoor and the City's website a distant second and third most informative sources.

(Ranked by Total Informative)



FM3 RESEARCH Q. I am going to mention some sources of information about Agoura Hills City government. For each one you have either heard about, please tell me if you think it is informative or not. You can also say if you have heard of the information source but don't know enough about it to have an opinion, or haven't heard about the source at all.



Situation Analysis

The research findings illuminated a number of issues or challenges facing the City and how it communicates with residents and others; the following are our major conclusions. The Tactics section of this Plan provides detailed recommendations on how to address these issues.

Opportunities

- City elected and appointed officials agree that communicating with those served and with employees is a high priority.
- The City Council's Communications Subcommittee is an excellent method of highlighting the City's focus on communication and gaining valuable insights.
- Direct communications with residents and business owners via social media tools present a tremendous opportunity.
- There is significant agreement across the organization that messaging and strategic communications is vitally needed.
- Tasking a senior staff member in the CMO with communications responsibilities and supported with an inhouse team outside counsel and training is the best initial step to balance limited resources with a desire to increase communications programming.
- *The Acorn* is a well-read local source of news and information.

Challenges

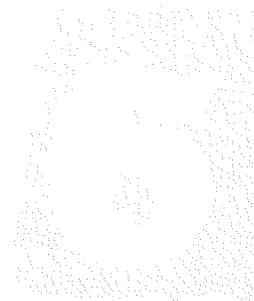
- There is no dedicated communications professional driving all City information programs, internally or externally.
- There is a very serious lack of funding and staffing that will limit the City's ability to implement major or sweeping communications efforts.

- Communicating internally to all employees is a high priority for all; however, there does not appear to be consistent tools or channels in place to ensure widespread information sharing.
- Social media use is inconsistent and used by more departments than others, with a lack of content and focus on the most important City Hall decisions, projects.
- Decentralized communication efforts means no single individual takes ownership to drive strategies, especially across department lines.
- City staff have full workloads and little ability to take on new communications assignments.
- The decentralized nature of City government and the ‘contract city’ structure means each department tends to operate separately, creating a challenge to coordinated communications.
- The website includes inconsistent graphic design and navigation, which can be confusing; some content is updated regularly and some infrequently.
- The multitude of e-newsletters include a variety of graphic design principles and branding that can be confusing to grasp and is heavily used by just one department, such as:
 - “Monday Mornings” from Community Services with numerous graphics types/styles
 - “Community Connect” from Community Services with numerous graphics types/styles
 - The “Mayor’s Address” email announcement with no graphic treatment
 - City news email announcement with no graphic treatment
 - Special event emails from Community Services (such as the recent “Meet the Author” and “Artists 2020 Retrospective”) with varying graphic design



Communication Goals

- Increase confidence in the decisions programs and services offered by the City
- Raise public understanding of the City's role in delivering a vast array of services and of the diligence of the City's efforts to make the best decisions possible
- Instill a sense of partnership between the City and those it serves
- Embark on a path that leads to direct and thusly improved communication flow between the City and residents/businesses
- Simplify and clarify communications channels



Communication Objectives

- Generate positive comments about the City's improved ability to connect with and communicate among at least 75 percent of those interviewed for this Plan in 24 months
- Generate a minimum of 12 news or feature media stories per year about the City/departments which deliver an important Key Message
- Generate a minimum of a 10 percent increase in the awareness of and reliance on City communications tools as a source of information about local government programs and services in 24 months
- Conduct a baseline user survey of web site visitors and re-conduct within 24 months (or after any redesign, navigation update); generate a minimum of a 20 percent increase in positive comments regarding usability/navigation
- Generate a 100 percent increase in the number of Twitter and general City Facebook subscribers (followers/likes) in 24 months
- Generate a minimum 20 percent increase in the positive comments from employees within 24 months (reconduct the internal interviews)



Audiences

Residents

- Seniors
- Parents / PTA
- Old Agoura
- School leaders
- Homeowner association leaders, residents
- Local business owners, their employees
- Youth
- Non-City residents in unincorporated area

City of Agoura Hills

- City Council
- Department heads/managers
- City employees; field, office
- City boards/commission members

Community Organizations

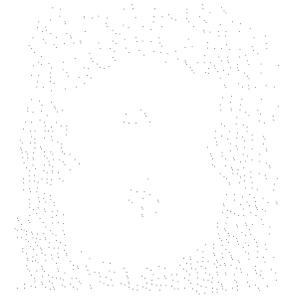
- Greater Conejo Valley Chamber of Commerce
- Las Virgenes Unified School District

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- Employees of businesses located in Agoura Hills

Elected/appointed officials and staff of other government entities

- County government
- Special districts



Organizational Key Messages

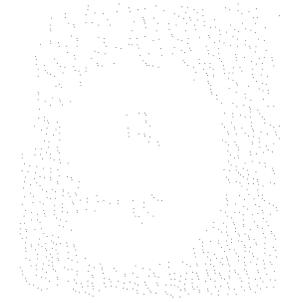
Key Messages convey to the public and other audiences the City's goals, programs and services. Messages are the "big picture" explanations that the City wants all audiences to know; they also provide the context for the individual initiatives, department programs, etc. These are included in all comments to the media, written articles, speeches, presentations, web postings and all other communications from the City. The bullets under each message explain or expand on the message, adding facts, anecdotes, etc. It is important to note that messages will not necessarily be used verbatim by staff or elected/appointed officials; each individual speaks with a unique voice, and the messages should be used as a guideline for communicating the most important thoughts about each issue (thus are not the same as "talking points").

Messages should be revisited regularly to ensure they continue to represent the main issues that the community needs to know. Additional messages *must* be developed for every project, program or major incident that takes place. A Message Development/Delivery training program will allow City personnel to understand the role of a message and how to develop and deliver them.

The messages below explain the City's overall purpose and current initiatives. They are a first draft and will evolve during the coming months as the City refines its communications efforts. The final overall Key Message platform will also include detailed "proof points" under each message; these provide specific examples, statistics and other information which support the messages.

City of Agoura Hills Organizational Key Messages - Draft

- **Decisions made by the City Council and programs implemented by City staff are designed to protect the small town feel of Agoura Hills.**
 - Proof points would include examples of decisions and programs.
 - Note awards won, kudos from residents, etc.
 - Note interesting or unusual types of services that are unknown or invisible to most City residents and examples of how Agoura Hills is unique.
- **The City of Agoura Hills is constantly working to balance the need to provide local amenities with the desire to maintain and protect open space.**
 - Describe the Agoura Village review process and changes required.
 - Other examples of local amenities that are popular now but were initially opposed.
- **The residents of Agoura Hills are well-served by a highly dedicated group of City employees.**
 - Mention 24/7 operations during pandemic response.
 - Note examples of employees going “above and beyond.”
 - Note creativity in managing increased demands for service.
- **The City of Agoura Hills City Hall is a friendly, one-stop place to obtain community information.**
 - Proof points would include examples of the types of questions answered each week.
 - Note the customer service orientation of City staff.

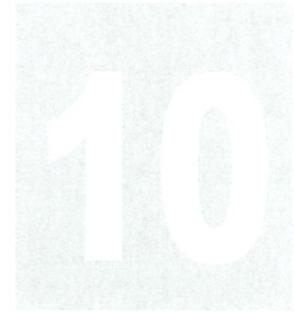


External Communications Strategies

There are nine overarching communications strategies which emerged as the research, challenges, opportunities, goals and objectives were developed. The tactics to address each are contained in the next section.

1. **Department Public Information Team** – Leverage the communications resources and knowledge within each City department to benefit the City as a whole. This team is especially important to serve as the emergency public information team during an EOC activation.
2. **Strategic Communications** – Institutionalize the role and importance of strategic communications planning/counsel and key messages throughout the organization.
3. **“Personal Touch” / Opinion Leader Communications Programming** – Engage residents by adopting tactics that bring all together to learn and exchange information about City programs, issues and decisions. Identify and inform key opinion and community leaders by category, such as City Commissioners, parents or business organization leaders/participants, school leaders, faith-based leaders/participants, etc. A unifying trait to engage with these individuals is personalized attention; tactics focusing on this “personal touch” will be most effective.
4. **Media Relations** – Educate residents via an active media relations program to generate hard news about City priorities as well as feature stories that help to tell the City’s story.
5. **Direct Communications Channels and an Electronic Community Relations Program** – Increase awareness of City programs and services via pushed information channels as well as via engagement through an electronic community relations program, including an easy-to-navigate website, e-newsletters, social media channels, e-broadcasts of public meetings, etc.
6. **Video** – Generate confidence and engagement through the strategic use of video.
7. **Traditional Communications Relations** – Establish a Community Relations program to communicate/connect with residents.

8. **Advertising** – Strategically use advertising to increase awareness of key initiatives and programs.
9. **Emergency Public Information** – Ensure life- and property-saving information reaches those impacted during and after a natural or human-caused disaster.



External Communications Tactics

The following series of tactics are aligned under each of the above-mentioned Communications Strategies. While ambitious, the implementation can occur in part with existing staff resources and a focused internal team approach.

While a list of priority tactics is included in a later section, this symbol  is used below to note the highest priority tactics, or those recommended for implementation in the first year following adoption of the Plan. As noted previously, this Plan is intended to be implemented over the coming three to five years.

1. Department Public Information Team – Leverage the communications resources and knowledge within each City department to benefit the City as a whole. This team is especially important to serve as the emergency public information team during an EOC activation.

This concept involves identifying a manager from each City department to meet regularly as a team to share information, advise regarding communications strategies and jointly develop information efforts that cross departmental lines.

Form City Staff Public Information Team (“PIT Crew” – or similar name).  This team, led and overseen by the Assistant City Manager and assisted by the CMO’s Administrative Aide, is responsible for communications/civic engagement, will serve as a central information sharing body and will help develop communications strategies and help address controversial issues. Representatives from each City department should form the PIT Crew. Communications-related training and annual workshops, such as “PIO Boot Camp,” would be held. The group would also share breaking news or major initiative information. The agenda for each month’s meeting would include the following:

- Major issues impacting each department
- Communications counsel on how to address departmental issues
- Major actions from the City Council – past and anticipated
- Community relations challenges

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- Issues that cross departmental lines
- Review, update of Master Editorial Calendar

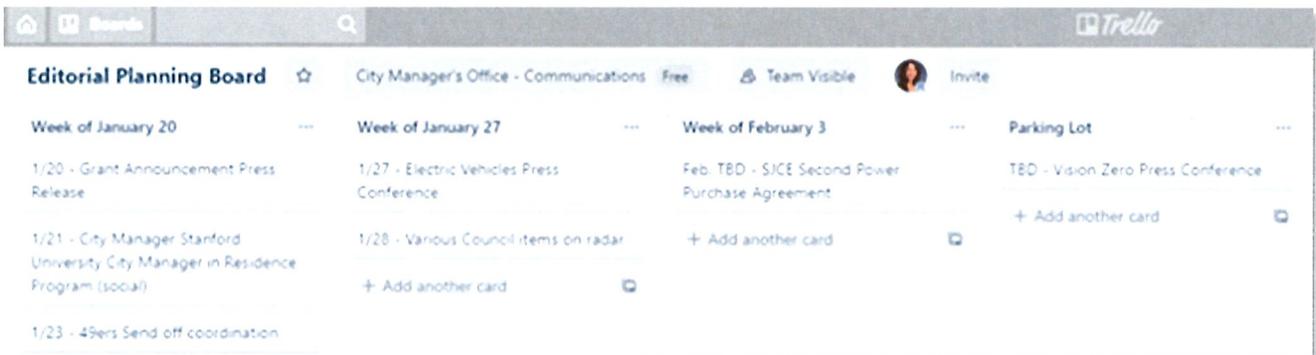
Meetings can occasionally include training opportunities, such as crisis communications, EOC/JIC operations, key message development/delivery, media pitching, writing, presentation training, social media best practices, etc.

A key role for the PIT Crew will be to serve as the emergency communications organization. Therefore, periodic emergency drills or tabletop exercises would also be part of the training program. Another training element would address the tactics necessary both during an emergency but also during non-crisis periods, such as the following:

- Managing emergency communications
- Social media during a disaster
- Conducting press conferences
- Writing press releases
- Community meeting planning during a disaster
- Local Assistance Center organization and communications

This body would also be responsible for implementation of major aspects of this Strategic Communications Plan, determining how best to move forward on the highest priority tactics.

Maintain a Master Editorial/Projects Calendar. ♦ This tactic is a method of planning for major events, City Council topics, decisions, and issues across all departments. The PIT Crew would review and update monthly as a regular agenda item. This is the best method to organizationally plan for and strategically monitor significant stories. Attention to each item can appear in all City communications channels, from social media to media pitching to community presentations. Various software programs are available to assist coordination across departments. The example below is from task management firm Trello.



2. Institutionalize the role and importance of strategic communications planning/counsel and key messages throughout the organization.

Conduct Key Message Development/Delivery Training for all City managers. ♦ Message Development/Delivery Training should be conducted regularly for all employees who may serve as a media spokesperson or who present information to the Council/community, including department and division managers and all communications-related staff members. This training includes an introduction to the concept of key messages, elements of a key message, how to deliver messages, venues for message delivery and other techniques. The training for all management team members should include what is and isn't newsworthy; on-camera interview techniques; how to control an interview (i.e., getting the City's messages delivered); how to develop strategic messages; trends in news coverage; how to generate media coverage of City issues; and other topics. Refresher training should be held on an annual basis, using real-world issues facing City staff as the basis for mock interview sessions.

Build Key Message development into every project/issue. ♦ Every project manager within each department must become proficient in preparing key messages regarding their programs. Further, every City Council agenda item which might generate media interest or be of broad interest in the community should have a key message. Key messages, once approved, should be distributed to all employees. A "Message Vault" should be developed so that any time a question arises regarding a particular subject, the approved points can be accessed easily.

Conduct strategic communications training for management staff. This highly-tailored training would involve helping all managers to understand the relationship between their areas of responsibility and the audiences affected by those programs. Each manager would eventually be responsible for including plans to reach targeted audiences with explanations of the City's activities (key messages) and the results. Components explained in the training include audiences, messages, strategies and tactics. This training is typically a four-hour class and could begin with the PIT Crew.

Establish protocol for how the CMO or PIT Crew responds to a department issue or need. A Communications Plan or Approach, which is a "mini" Plan, should be prepared for any project or issue which could generate media interest or which would be of interest to a somewhat broad group of residents, business owners or visitors. The brief document uses a bullet format to note audiences, messages, tactics, timeline, responsibilities and budget.

Provide key messages and issue summaries to City Council. ♦ A common refrain from internal and external audiences interviewed for this Plan indicate a high level of word-of-mouth transmission of information throughout the community, especially via current and past City Council members. Ensuring these important community/opinion leaders may easily convey the most important information about all significant City programs, services and projects requires the adoption of a key message development program and dissemination to elected and appointed officials.

3. “Personal Touch” / Opinion Leader Communications Programming – Engage residents by adopting tactics that bring all together to learn and exchange information about City programs, issues, and decisions. Identify and inform key opinion and community leaders by category, such as City Commissioners, parents, visitors or business organization leaders/participants, school leaders, faith-based leaders/participants, etc. A unifying trait to engage with these individuals is personalized attention; tactics focusing on this “personal touch” will be most effective.

Engage residents at their neighborhood level through in-home/small group/topic specific gatherings. ♦ Holding hyper-local neighborhood meetings about area-specific or citywide topics has the benefit of engaging residents in ways that larger “town hall” meetings do not. When a neighbor invites other neighbors to gather in their home to hear from a City representative about an important topic, many benefits ensue: attendees do not come with the mindset of “taking on” the City or “us” versus “them,” but come with a more moderate view of coming to listen, gather information and share opinions. This is a vastly different mindset than attending a City-sponsored “community meeting” where views are often built on agitation. This tactic is being adopted throughout the state with excellent results. The challenge is that these take considerable time to find hosts and organize, but the benefits are significant.

Homeowner association leadership briefings/populate HOA communications channels. ♦ The leaders of the homeowner associations in Agoura Hills are important opinion sources and shape the views of not only those who reside in their respective communities but also throughout the city. Quarterly or twice-yearly briefings of the HOA leadership, placing content in the HOA newsletters, and making presentations at the HOA annual/regular meetings will provide a “personal touch” type of connection to important audiences.

Provide content of interest to parents at through the School District. ♦ Parents of children attending school in Agoura Hills are key audiences, as are the youth served. Rather than relying on the news media and/or creating new channels, inserting messages and content into existing tools produced by the District and potentially PTAs is ideal. Presentations at PTA events/gatherings should also be part of regular outreach efforts.

Target City commissioners for specific outreach. ♦ Board members and commissioners play an important role to not only represent the community within the City governance structure but they are viewed as City Hall insiders out in the community. It’s imperative that they are not only aware of City goals, programs, projects and issues, but feel as though they are treated as “insiders.”

4. Educate residents via an active media relations program to generate hard news about City priorities as well as feature stories that help to tell the City's story.

While in a limited media market in general, 90 percent of Agoura Hills residents cite *The Acorn* as the most informative source to learn about City government; the Agoura Hills Patch also generates interest. Highly unique stories or features are potential for pitching to KCLU and LA or central coast broadcast outlets or business journals.

That said, the shrinking news hole, fewer trained journalists and the real and perceived bias on the part of the media against government means that staff time and resources spent on media relations should be balanced with the City's increased capability to push content directly to residents via social media and other online or electronic tools.

Prioritize, focus pitching efforts. ♦ Story pitching should support the major City goals for each fiscal year, and City Council goals should drive story angles. Setting feature story placement objectives for each staff member who pitches to the media should be incorporated into performance reviews. Pitching requires understanding how outlets wish to be pitched, preparing the pitch script and supporting materials and identifying topic experts from among the City staff, making the pitch and following up and coordinating with the reporter during the story preparation. A goal of 12 feature stories per year per for the full PIT Crew would be ambitious but attainable.



Mayor proud of city's pandemic response

Reached out quickly to residents
/ November 05, 2020

By Ian Bradley
ianbradley@theacorn.com

review the more than decade-old Agoura Village specific plan."
She ended her address by thanking the city

Share news and feature media coverage. ♦ Sharing or leveraging stories about Agoura Hills gives much greater visibility than the single appearance in a media outlet. Target audiences include the City Council, all City department managers, community leaders, business leaders, City board/commission members and other opinion leaders. Distribution methods include posting to Twitter/Facebook or other social media outlets, adding a link to the City website, and sending via email to key audiences (especially employees), etc. Obtaining media outlet permission to reproduce stories is advised.

Centralize press release distribution method; address issues of consistency of content, writing quality, format, etc. Use a "hybrid" press release distribution model where most news is pitched directly to *The Acorn* while news of interest to a larger geography would be sent via traditional press release to outlets from LA through Ventura County.

Prepare occasional "op-ed stories". Preparing op-ed stories on local, regional and statewide topics and placed with print and online outlets can be a very effective method of increasing the City's visibility and educating the public on issues before they become highly controversial. These pieces should focus on broad topics which impact many residents and/or business owners, and touch on a variety of sides to any given issue. Opinion or guest columns are generally pitched to the op-ed page editor and are offered exclusively to that publication as a means of generating interest. They can also appear on the City's website once they have appeared in print and can be "pushed" electronically to various opinion leader databases and through social media. These would be authored by various City department heads or the City Manager.

Implement a written media policy. A written media relations policy should be developed and adopted. It should state when to issue press releases; identify how media calls should be dealt with; who should and should not respond; who to go to for assistance; how inquiries relating to legal and personnel issues should be handled; etc. Handling Public Records Act requests would also be addressed.

Prepare easy-to-read summary of City Council agenda items and actions. ♦ A brief summary should be prepared of major City Council agenda items and the resulting action for use by the news media, for posting on the City’s website, for posting to social media channels and to send to community leaders via a “push” email program.

EXAMPLE: Ventura County issues an “Agenda Alert” to help reporters get a sense of the significant items on each BOS agenda.



**COUNTY OF VENTURA
COUNTY EXECUTIVE OFFICE**

800 So. Victoria Ave., Hall of Administration, Ventura, CA 93009
<http://www.ventura.org>

Agenda Alert
NOTEWORTHY ITEM(S)

Mike Powers
County Executive Officer

CONTACT: Bill Nash
Communications Manager
TEL: (805) 654-2640
FAX: (805) 658-4500

January 13, 2015

**Environmental Health Division’s Mobile Device Apps
Agenda Item: #44 Time Certain at 10:00 a.m.**

The Environmental Health Division inspects about 4,000 retail food facilities throughout Ventura County, and monitors ocean water quality at many beaches along the coastline. To provide the public with easier access to the inspection results, the EHD developed the *VC Safe Diner* and *VC Safe Beaches* mobile apps. The *VC Safe Diner* app is currently available and the *VC Safe Beaches* app will be available in the next few weeks.

VC Safe Diner

The *VC Safe Diner* app allows users to view the following information on their mobile devices:

- Locations of permitted food facilities near the user’s current location.
- View the permit status of the facility (open or closed).
- View the most recent inspection reports on a certain facility. (Displayed within 24 hours of completion.)
- File a complaint about unsanitary conditions or improper food handling.

VC Safe Beaches

The *VC Safe Beaches* app allows users to review ocean water quality sampling results from various beaches along the County coastline, identifying where contact with the ocean water should be avoided. (The most recent sample results posted within 48 hours of collection.)

(Background documents attached.)

5. Direct Communications Channels and an Electronic Community Relations Program – Increase awareness of City programs and services via pushed information channels as well as via engagement through an electronic community relations program, including an easy-to-navigate website, e-newsletters, social media channels, e-broadcasts of public meetings, etc.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Post content on social media channels to increase engagement, storytelling. ♦ A variety of social media channels are typically used for different types of content. Facebook is more suited for storytelling, feature stories, engagement and a relaxed tone. Twitter is best used for breaking news, harder information, briefs, etc. However, some content should be posted to each channel regardless of the focus. These strategic decisions would ordinarily be made by a professional communicator on the City staff. Lacking this position, training should be provided for anyone who posts to the City’s social media accounts.

All posts should be actively monitored to respond to questions, acknowledge feedback, send poster to other sites, etc. This customer service orientation is in place on-site within City Hall and should be mirrored on social media. This is also how the City can increase those who follow or like their government.

Social media presents a wonderful opportunity to humanize City government. Poking fun at government systems/people, jargon, rules, etc. is a way to help the public engage with their government.

Social media user comparison to other public agencies – each with approx. 20,000 population and Agoura Hills’ comp agencies.

	Facebook Followers	Twitter Followers
<i>Agoura Hills</i>	<i>637</i>	<i>6,167</i>
Calabasas		
Hermosa Beach	7,323	1,399
La Canada Flintridge	2,511	1,452
Orinda	743	2,560
Port Hueneme	2,443	1,566
Westlake Village (smaller; incl for comparison)	1,078	917

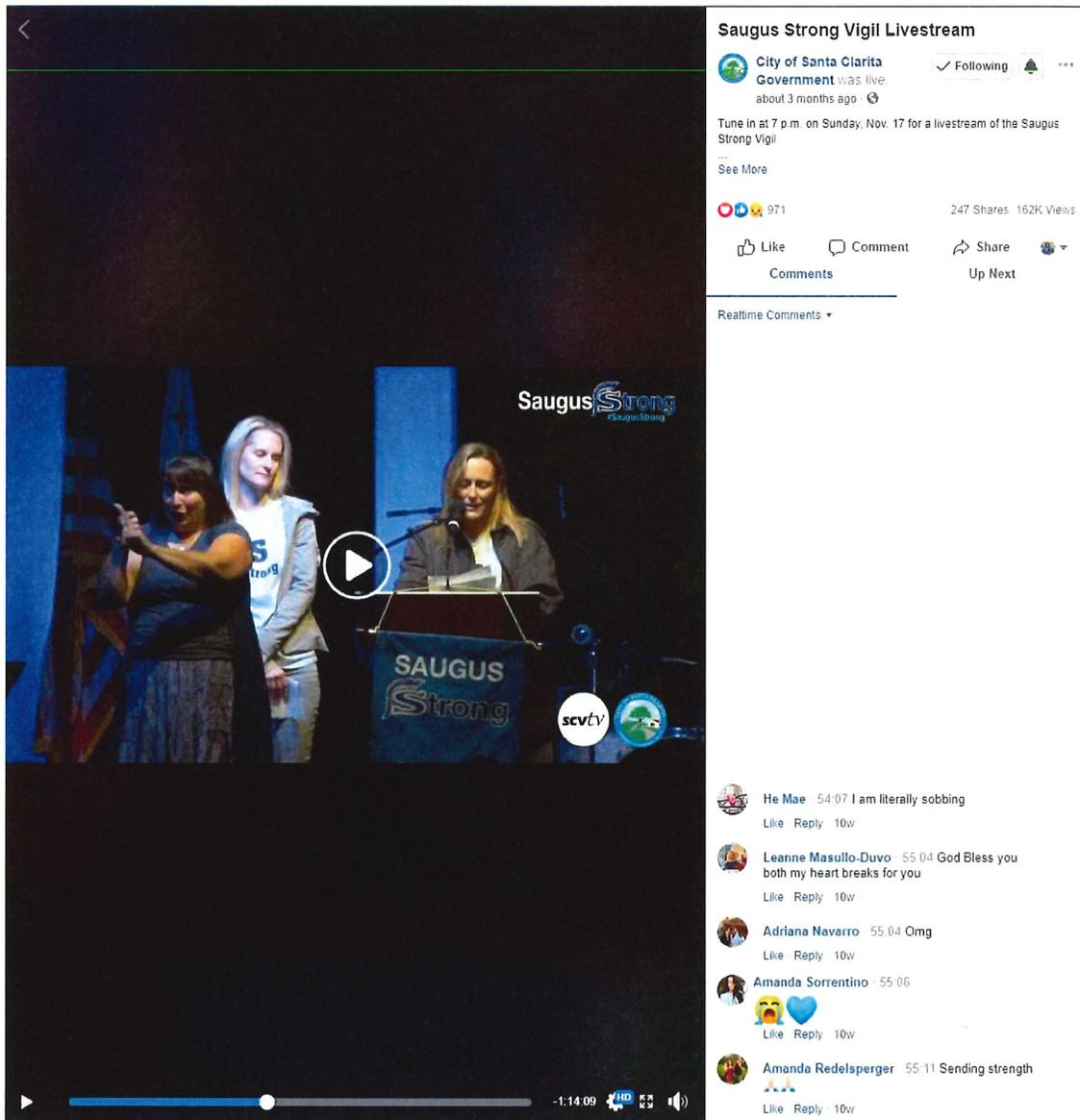
Use social media management tool to simplify, ease postings. ♦ Hootsuite is one of many tools referred to as a “Social Media Management System” or tool. It enables the City to keep track and manage numerous social network channels. It can also enable the City to monitor what people are saying about it and help it to respond instantly. Measurement of social media performance across networks is also possible. This would enable the City to establish user goals, monitor comments and schedule posts to various outlets.

Develop Nextdoor strategy: Be active, carefully. ♦ Nextdoor has become the platform of choice for many residents at the neighborhood level. Public agencies are prohibited from belonging to a specific neighborhood Nextdoor, however an official account enables the City to post information throughout the community. It’s vital the City post to this outlet as unlike other social media channels, this platform is viewed by users as free from the bias of user-owned accounts, such as Twitter and Facebook. Care should be taken to correct misinformation in a non-aggressive manner and to not engage in general discussion.

Promote City programing on YouTube channel. With 149 subscribers and often just a dozen or two viewings of public meetings, this outlet could be promoted to more fully engage with the public. Linking to new videos as well as current productions (City Council and Mayor’s Address) on Facebook and Twitter can help generate awareness.



Use Facebook Live to “broadcast” important public hearings or other important City Council meeting items, important community meetings, events, etc. ♦ This capability has numerous benefits, including the ability to facilitate public comments during a meeting and broaden the reach of viewership. It also provides a more common and popular venue than the City’s YouTube channel.



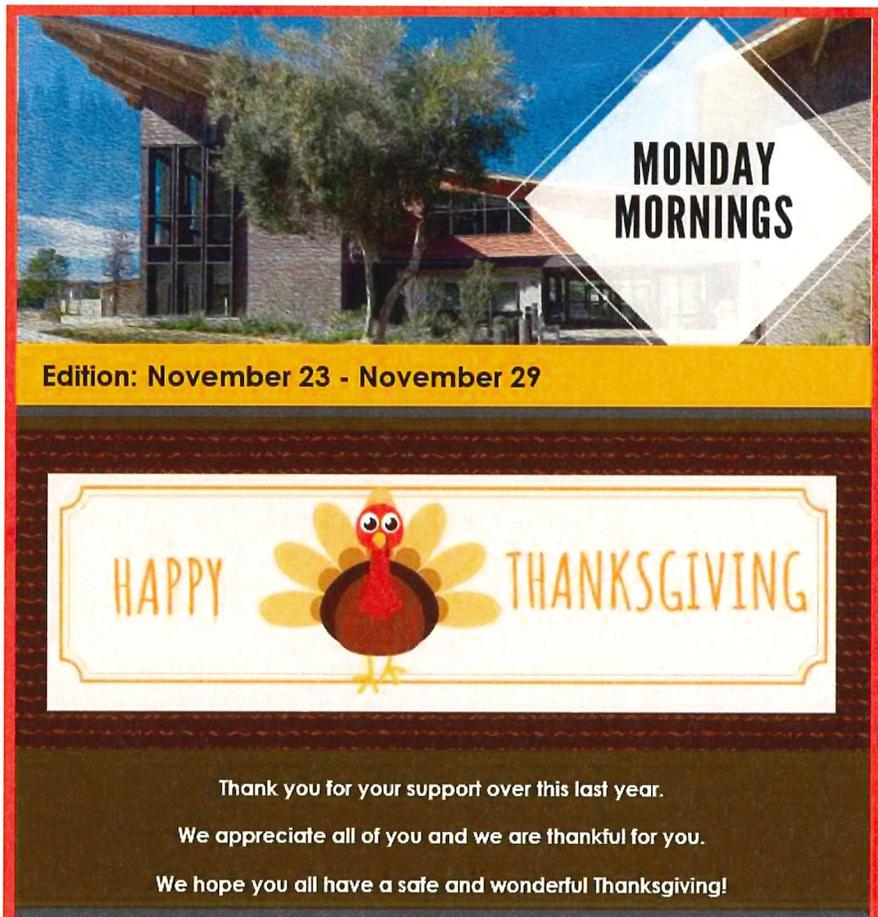
The City of Santa Clarita used Facebook Live to stream the community vigil following the shooting at Saugus High School.

Create Twitter-based program to engage children with “Ask A City Hall Grown-Up”. This is built off other entities’ efforts to engage children using social media and involves a partnership with the school district or individual schools to offer children a chance to ask questions about City government. This could be a one-time event or regular feature. The goal is to engage and learn, and humor can be a key ingredient; we know kids can ask pretty funny questions, and answers can engage, too. The target age is kindergarten through second grade, but it could also focus on older children for a more serious, substantive encounter. Questions can be submitted in a variety of ways and responses are given on video and shared via social media.



**ELECTRONIC
NEWSLETTERS**

Conduct deeper examination of the myriad email newsletters and various City databases for electronic communications. ♦ The City sends multiple newsletters from various departments. The variety of formats, graphic design, content, sources, etc. can be challenging for subscribers and sometimes overwhelming. Recommend a fuller examination of the content, databases, graphic design and user interest. This recommendation is particularly directed at Community Services, especially their large database that is not used by other City communications, their extensive use of clip art, the array of publications, etc.



Send existing City newsletter directly (versus via link); convert to electronic format versus PDF. ♦ Sending an email with a link to a PDF of a newsletter has several limitations: users typically prefer fewer clicks to reach content; the lack of graphic design in the email means there is little to draw a user to click through to the newsletter; and a PDF versus electronic format is older technology that often presents hurdles to

interactivity, e.g., links often do not work, depending on the software of the end user. Further, the ability to drive traffic to the City's website is lost or limited.

If this newsletter is printed and distributed, recommend an analysis of the number of copies printed and then distributed; the cost to design/layout; and of the number reached via the City's distribution database.

Fall Newsletter



City of Agoura Hills <agourahillscity@public.govdelivery.com>
To [redacted]@saecomunications.com



Mon 1:24 PM

The fall edition of the Agoura Hills City Newsletter is here! Topics include COVID-19 and the holiday season, upcoming events, and more. Visit the link below to catch up with the City.

Visit this link: [Agoura Hills Fall Newsletter](#)

Stay Connected with the City of Agoura Hills:



SUBSCRIBER SERVICES:

[Manage Subscriptions](#) | [Unsubscribe All](#) | [Help](#)

This email was sent to [redacted]@saecomunications.com using GovDelivery Communications Cloud on behalf of: City of Agoura Hills
· 30001 Ladyface Court · Agoura Hills, CA · 91301 · (818) 597-7300



Image of email message from City with link to newsletter.

Services » View »

News and Updates

Font Size: [+](#) [-](#) [+](#) [Share & Bookmark](#) [Feedback](#) [Print](#)

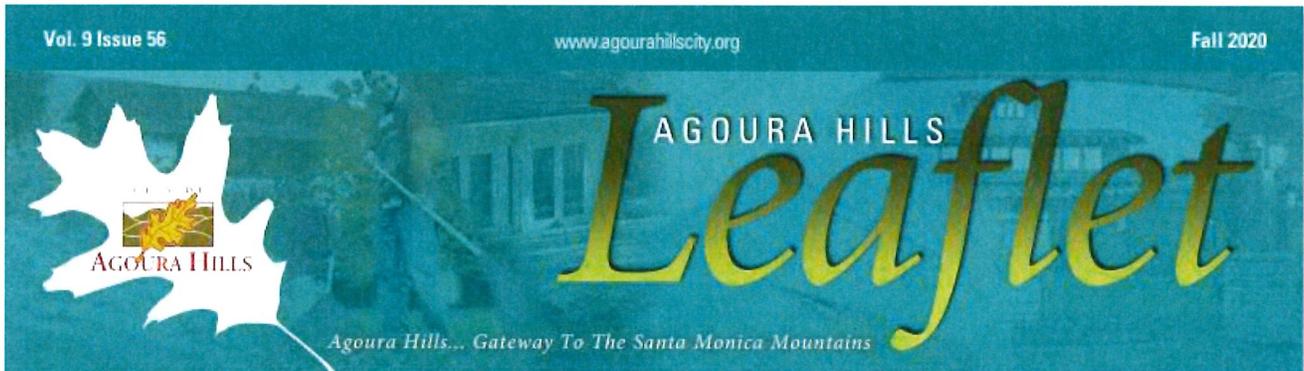
Fall Newsletter

Post Date: 11/23/2020 1:10 PM

The fall edition of the Agoura Hills City Newsletter is here! Topics include COVID-19 and the holiday season, upcoming events, and more. Visit the link below to catch up with the City.

Follow this link: [Agoura Hills Fall Newsletter](#)

Image of website box from News site with link to newsletter.



PHOTOGRAPHY

Train and empower City staff to photograph service delivery. Empowering employees to occasionally snap a photo of their service delivery and sending to the CMO for posting on social media will not only positively engage and promote the work of employees, but can turn the entire organization into a communications team that takes pride in showing what it does. Photos – which are highly effective at generating attention – would populate the website and social media channels and can be from the field or an office.

WEBSITE

Link COVID-19 information to a one-stop location on the website; highlight more effectively at top of City webpage. ♦ The small box at the top of the City’s webpage with COVID-19 information can be difficult find and read, and the graphic presentation does not call attention to this important content. Recommend a button or standing box in center of page with latest information and link to a one-stop webpage with all COVID-19 information and links to county, state and CDC guidelines.



Improve website navigation/functionality. ♦ The City’s site navigation is generally average and often challenging to navigate. Increased content, more frequent refreshing of the home page headlines, more interactivity and more ability to more easily search/navigate to information help the site better meet the needs of residents and businesses.

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Create a consistent “look and feel” for all graphics. To provide consistent, improved and cohesive look/feel to City publications, recommend creating or moving existing graphic design staff into the CMO’s office to serve the needs of all departments and prioritize needs. *See section regarding organizational structure of communications functions.*

TOWN HALL

Conduct “Tele-Town Hall®” to gather input via unique electronic community gathering. The Tele-Town Hall® is the first large-scale, personal communication tool to help organizations easily interact with hundreds of individuals through a town hall-style meeting conducted via the telephone and web. Tele-Town Hall® rapidly dials out to a list of phone numbers provided by the City. Audience members receive personalized, pre-recorded messages inviting them to remain on the line if they wish to be transferred to your live Tele-Town Hall® event regarding a specific project or issue. Once they have joined the Tele-Town Hall® event, participants can press a button on their keypad to request to ask your speakers a live question, as well as respond to integrated survey questions. Participants who are unable to ask questions live have the option to leave a personal message with a call screener. Participant statistics are provided along with links for posting to the City’s website.

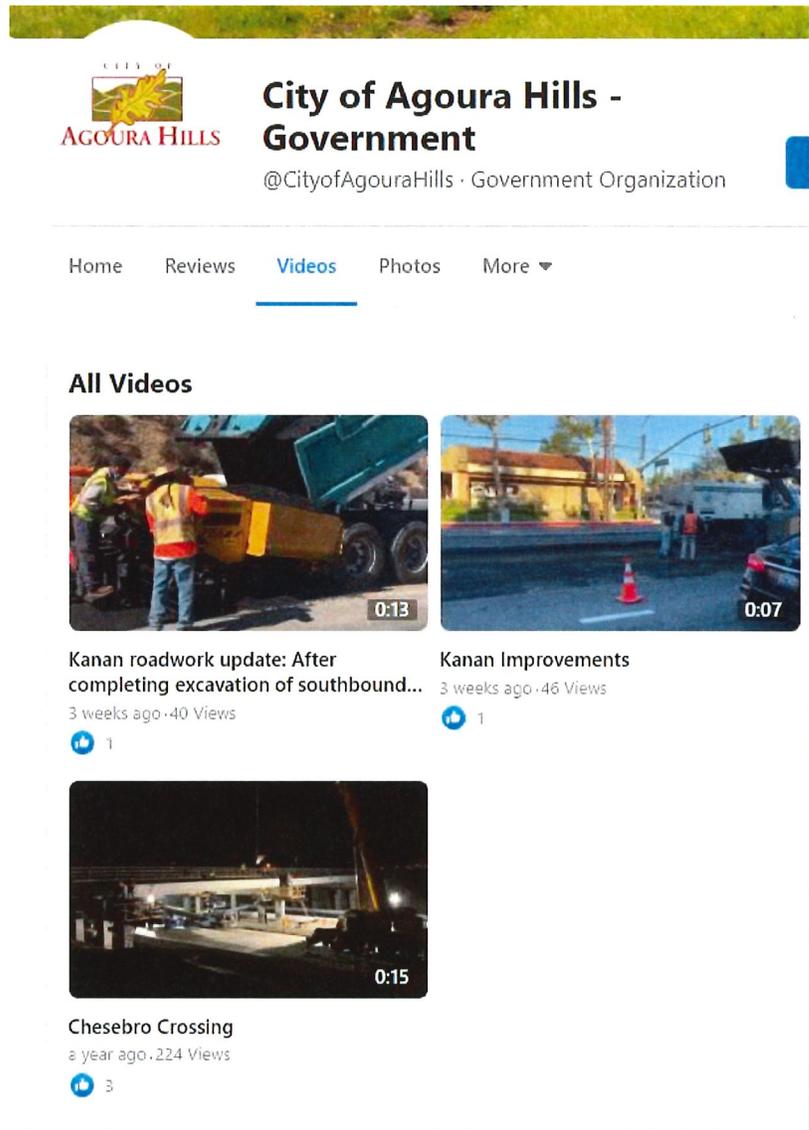
6. Generate confidence and engagement through the strategic use of video.

The City has an opportunity to generate greater awareness of City service delivery and decision-making through the use of videos to engage the public.

Broadly use video programming to tell City service-related stories. ♦

Recommend the production of short (2-3-minutes) videos to highlight the array of services being delivered, decisions being made and projects/people serving the community. The videos should populate all social media and web-based channels (Facebook, link via Twitter, website, YouTube, and others). The production quality should move from formal style to more informal, even handheld, via the use of mobile devices, which can also reduce production costs. This is the style that more and more citizens relate to via their own social media use and which will a) humanize the video clip and b) enable more productions to be completed. Further, more storytelling can occur with simple slide-based “videos” that require less post-production work.

Currently, there are virtually no videos distributed via the City’s Facebook page. It appears few of the City Council or Mayor’s Address videos or links to them are distributed via social media. Note: the image at right shows very good viewership of these videos distributed via Facebook: 40 to 224 views, much higher than via the City’s YouTube channel.



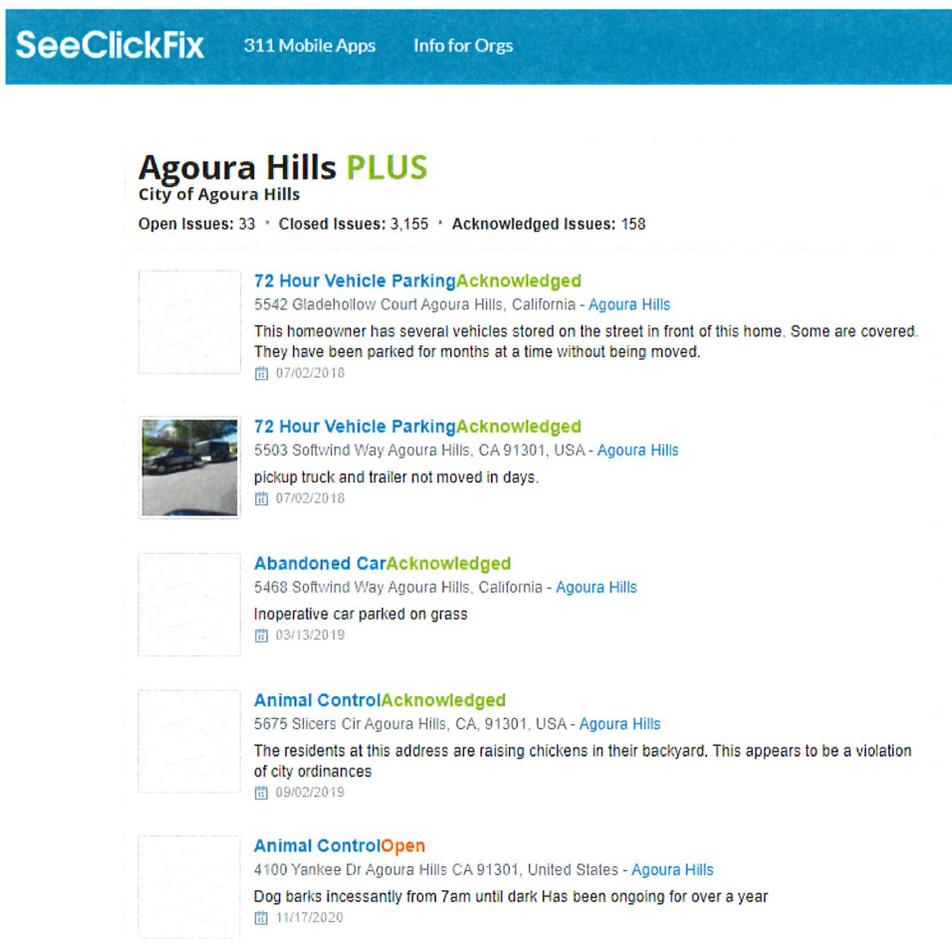
Continue “Mayor’s Address” videos; shorten length. ♦ These are extremely well-received by virtually everyone interviewed for this Plan. We fully recommend continuing them; however, consider making them shorter (the 11/10/20 version was 10 minutes and 30 seconds, too long for current attention spans). This can be accomplished by shortening the script or focusing each 2- to 3-minute version on a specific topic.

7. Establish a Community Relations program to communicate/connect with residents.

Target local service organizations, non-profit boards for presentations. ♦ City staff should regularly present the status of various projects/issues to key service clubs and related organizations, including the Greater Conejo Valley Chamber board and committee meetings; the YMCA of Conejo Valley; Boys and Girls Clubs; etc.

Market the City’s “SeeClickFix” Citizen Request Management (CRM) program to improve customer service and allow citizens to directly and easily request City services. ♦ Since the City began using “SeeClickFix” in June of 2016, 3,155 issues have been closed; 166 were acknowledged; and 28 are currently open. Many of those interviewed for this Plan indicated a lack of broad community awareness of this City capability, which allows for requests for services to be entered via a website or a mobile device app.

Recommend focusing on this CRM program in all existing City communications tools and that it be branded for ready awareness by all in the community.

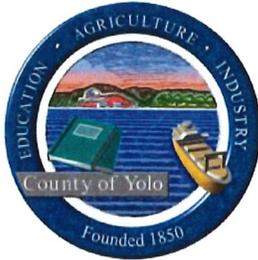


Establish “City 101” information series. Consisting of a series of presentations that explain what the City does, this is a longer-term tactic that will generate a broad array of engaged citizens who have in-depth knowledge of issues, projects and operations. Envisioned to be held 1 to 2 times per year, the series would include subjects such as those included in the Yolo County example below.

*EXAMPLE: Yolo County Government 101: Yolo County previous offered a series of classes designed to involve and engage the public. Videos of the sessions can be viewed here:
<http://dctv.davismedia.org/node/37374>*

Yolo County Government 101

Submitted by [agsilva](#) on Thu, 04/26/2012 - 2:29pm



A series of public lectures with Q&A, offered by Yolo County officials describing, directly to the public, the services offered to residents.

Episodes Include:

- 1: County Government
- 2: Land Use
- 3: Legal Services
- 4: Public Safety
- 5: Fiscal Services
- 6: Social Services
- 7: Public Health, Public Guardian
- 8: Water & Flood Control
- 9: County Library, Elections

[Details](#)

Public Contact Info:

If you require information or would like to comment on the Resident's Academy (Yolo 101), you may contact Yolo County Human Resources, at 530-666-8426 or email margaret.raley@yolocounty.org.

Website: <http://www.yolocounty.org/Index.aspx?page=1532>

CITY OF AGOURA HILLS
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN 2021



Install video boards in City Hall lobby. Placing an informational video monitor in City Hall with central programming would allow a significant dataset of information to be conveyed in a consistent manner.

Conduct online surveys and “question of the week” to engage the public. Fun and engaging tools exist to generate awareness and a sense of fun about local government, while generating confidence in City governance. A variety of online surveys and series of inviting questions are wonderful, low-cost tools that get people excited about their local agency.

8. Strategically use advertising to increase awareness of key initiatives and programs.

Continue purchase of paid content in *The Acorn* -- promote strategic content. ♦ Building on current purchase of space in *The Acorn*, recommend that the City focus the content in a strategic manner that generates awareness of key City projects, decisions, issues. The ad should appear in the same location in the print edition and at the same frequency with similar graphic design for each ad. Examples include information about Agoura Village development review; how to subscribe to emergency alerts, how to subscribe to City general communications, major City Council decisions, etc.

9. Ensure life- and property-saving information reaches those impacted during and after a natural or human-caused disaster.

Create an Emergency Public Information Plan. ♦ The City has experienced an array of significant crises or emergencies in recent years. Emergency communications has improved dramatically and the interviewees for this Plan fully acknowledge the efforts. An Emergency Public Information Plan documents all potential threats and creates a strategic, thoughtful and tailored set of communications tactics and checklists that should be implemented, depending on the incident.

**Sample Emergency Public Information Plan
Table of Contents**

Table of Contents	Basic Lead Public Information Officer Responsibilities.....	Make Determination to Establish a Media Briefing Center
Section 1: Purpose/Policies	Activating the Joint Information System.....	
Purpose	Scalable System: Single Individual v. Team	Section 11: Message Development Steps
Plan Review, Training.....		Message Development Questions.....
Communications Mission and Vision; Business Plan.....		
Emergency Public Information Support of Emergency Operations Plan..	Section 7: Public Information in the Incident Command System	Section 12: Reaching People with Access and Functional Needs (AFN)
	Introduction	Section 13: Privacy, General Access Issues, Special Situations
Section 2: Definitions	Incident Command System ...	
Section 3: Phases of the Incident; Crisis v. Incident	Disaster Public Information Principles	Appendix A: Checklists – Joint Information Center Positions
Notification		Lead Public Information Officer
Level 1 -2 – Triggering Event: Stand By/Local Emergency Response.....	Section 8: Joint Information System/Joint Information Center	JIC Manager
Level 3-4 – Regional Emergency/National Emergency	Coordinated and Consistent Messages.....	Lead PIO Writing Assistant ...
Public Information in a Crisis	Principle of Autonomy	Group Supervisor – Research/Writing Group.....
Public Information in an Incident	Joint Information Center Operation	Unit Leader – Research/Information Gathering Unit
Location of the EOC:	Joint Information System Organization/Functions.....	Unit Leader – Strategy/Messaging Unit
Section 4: Information Flow / Incident Progression	Demobilizing the JIC	Unit Leader – Writing Unit.....
Information Flow: Crisis or Incident	Joint Information Center Organization Chart	Unit Leader – Rumor Control/Media Monitoring Unit
Progression: From Normal Business to Crisis to Incident		Unit Leader – Translation Unit
Section 5: Crisis Communication Response/Roles	Section 9: Incident Public Information Elements - Description	Group Supervisor – Information Dissemination Group.....
What Triggers a Coordinated Crisis Communication Response?.....	Lead PIO	Unit Leader – Employee/Internal Communications Unit
Types of Crises	JIC Manager.....	Unit Leader – Media Phone Spokesperson Unit.....
Section 6: Public Information Response/Roles	Lead PIO Writing Assistant....	Unit Leader – Media Briefing Center / Press Conference....
Who is the Lead Public Information Officer?	Research, Writing, Information Gathering Group	Unit Leader – Web/Social Media.....
Role of the Public Information Officer	Dissemination Group.....	
	Field Information Group.....	
	Section 10: Field Information / Media Briefing Center	
	Make Determination to Establish Field Information Center.....	

Market and promote new CodeRED mass emergency alert system to increase subscribers. ♦ This tool has proven to be an exceptional method of alerting the public to a crisis or disaster. Increasing subscribers

should be a high priority. This can be accomplished by adding a tag line to nearly all communications tools directing residents and business owners to subscribe and conducting special information campaigns.

Conduct tabletop and exercises for PIT Crew. ♦ Annual exercises should be conducted to ensure the City public information team understands how to respond and communicate during a disaster. PIT Crew members should participate in as many LA County or regional exercises or drills as possible.



Internal Communications Strategies

The following internal communications strategies are recommended to engage and inform employees.

1. **Implement a targeted internal communications program** – Increase awareness among employees by implementing a variety of communications vehicles which reach employees via the most convenient tool possible.
2. **Create an engaging Intranet site** – Embark on an internal communications and education program to convey to all City employees their importance within the organization and organizational goals/programs through a robust Intranet. This tool is typically used by agencies with a large number of employees, many of whom work in several different locations. Recommend consideration of this tool in the latter stages of the implementation of this plan.



Internal Communications Tactics

1. Broad-based communications program - Increase awareness among employees by implementing a variety of communications vehicles which reach employees via the most convenient tool possible.

Formal internal communications programs allow all City employees to understand the goals and programs of the organization; see their role in the overall implementation of the programs; help accomplish the goals; and articulate the successes to family, friends, neighbors and other City employees. In effect, this allows them to serve as spokespersons for the City.

Schedule regular visits by the City Manager to all employees. ♦ It is recommended that the City Manager conduct regular briefings in a “brown bag” setting by department. In addition to organizational progress, attendees should have an opportunity to ask questions.

Make consistent use of video messages by the City Manager to send to all employees. ♦ Front line supervisors should ensure all field employees know how to view the video.

EXAMPLE: “POLB in 3”. Check out an example here from the Port of Long Beach: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rpiUj8GzWrA>

Use email more regularly to communicate with all staff. ♦ The CMO’s office has periodically used the “all personnel” feature of email to make Citywide announcements; this should be continued and expanded. Email should be sent directly from the CEO’s email address. Review content of *Friday Focus* newsletter for content that may be of interest to employees.

Distribute special bulletins regarding major initiatives. ♦ A new publication should be created just for City employees to provide breaking, urgent or significant news. The “Update” or similarly-named publication should be developed to educate all employees about major projects or issues that cross departmental lines and which will generate considerable community or media interest. The approved Key Messages for each item would be shared in this channel.

Send City Council meeting summaries. ♦ As with the tactic described above, this should be distributed to employees, the media, community and opinion leaders and those who subscribe via the website.

2. Create an engaging Intranet site - Embark on an internal communications and education program to convey to all City employees their importance within the organization and organizational goals/programs through a robust Intranet.

Conduct employee survey regarding use, functionality of the City Intranet. ♦ The Intranet, when used properly and consistently, can be a vital internal communication link for employees – both one-way and two-way information flow and engagement. Departmental, Citywide, benefits, new employee orientation and City Council information should all be included, along with employee profiles and exciting content. A few key elements should be considered as this is accomplished:

1. Make the Intranet essential
2. Align with the City's goals
3. Provide consistent, reliable and fresh content
4. Build ownership among all departments as the Intranet is visioned and programmed
5. Incorporate the use of the Intranet in all new employee onboarding



Public Information Program: Organizational Structure

Create internal “Public Information Team” v. new Public Information Officer position - SAE
Communications recommends the formation of a internal team of City employees, described in Section 1 as a Public Information Team (aka the “PIT Crew”) to focus the City’s efforts on improved communications with various audiences and to work to implement the strategies and tactics identified in this Plan.

This approach is an alternative to creating a new Public Information Officer or similar position and is recommended due to the extreme budgetary condition of the City and its limited ability to fund new positions. Considering that this Plan focuses on the needs of the City for the coming three to five years, it will take considerable time to implement all recommendations. At the point where the Plan has been substantially addressed and implemented, the City’s fiscal health may likely provide for the addition of a professional communicator, which is the ideal solution to increasing engagement and trust in local government. The Public Information Team should be supported with training and supplemented with training and outside communications counsel, should funds allow.

Analyze current communications staff, funds for potential realignment/reorganization – SAE will work with staff to analyze any funds currently being spent on communications, publicity or related staff positions or contracts to determine any potential realignment of current public information efforts.

Hire staff writer – Recommend hiring either a full-time staff member or a contract writer to prepare materials using contemporary writing style that simplifies complex government programs and makes the content understandable to the general public. The position should be housed in the City Manager’s Office under the direction of the Assistant City Manager, and be available to all City departments to write various types of content:

- Press releases
- Articles
- Newsletters (in conjunction with existing staff)
- Op-eds
- Social media posts (in conjunction with existing staff)
- Special reports

Consolidate graphic design functions – To accomplish the goal of creating a consistent look/feel of all materials, known as “branding,” recommend moving existing graphic design staff/contractors into the City Manager’s office and adopting a uniform look and feel for all City publications. Current materials adopt a variety of brands, including use of fonts, layout, colors, graphics, photos, hot links, clip art, etc. This often sends confusing clues regarding what entity is actually producing and sending the particular item.

Examples of various City-produced materials:

STAY SAFE!

With recent changes in the LA County Public Health Order, please follow these simple steps to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and to keep our community safe!

- NO LARGE GATHERINGS**
Gatherings larger than 100 people that have multiple households are **not permitted**.
- NO MULTIPLE HOUSEHOLDS**
Gatherings from more than three (3) different households are **not permitted**.
- NO OUTDOOR DINING**
Outdoor dining is prohibited, restaurants are open for take-out/delivery service and to function gift cards. The City of Agoura Hills encourages people to **SUPPORT LOCAL BUSINESSES.**
- As a REMINDER:
NO ORGANIZED GROUP ACTIVITIES
Organized group activities, including sports activities, are **not permitted** in the parks.
- PICNIC SHELTERS/PARK RESTROOMS/BALLFIELDS REMAIN CLOSED**

Wear a mask! Practice Social Distancing!
HELP KEEP AGOURA HILLS SAFE!

CITY OF AGOURA HILLS

How to Safely Gather:

- Private gatherings that include more than three household are prohibited
- All private gatherings must be held outside
- All attendees must adhere to social distancing protocols and wear a mask face covering

DONATIONS!

The City of Agoura Hills is working with multiple organizations for collecting donations.

- ASA - America Supporting Americans
- Los Angeles County, Youth for Women
- Womans Food Bank
- San Fernando and Grand Forks
- Toy Drive - Benefitting Homeless and Military Families

Donations stop until end of December 31st. Please drop off your donations at the Agoura Hills Department and Civic Center located at 29000 Agoura Hills.

FOOD AND TOY DONATION DRIVE

The City of Agoura Hills is working with ASA, America Supporting Americans, Manana Food Bank and a Toy Drive benefiting homeless and military families.

Donations can be dropped off at the Center.

HALLOWEEN
in Agoura Hills

It's going to be a little different this year!

Due to COVID-19 LA County has banned public gatherings and discourages residents from participating in trick-or-treating and other traditional Halloween activities.

"Haunted Hempstead" is canceled. The Sheriff's Department and City CERT Team will not be assisting with traffic control in the area.

Please enjoy these safe and fun Halloween Activities

- ALL AGES COSTUME CONTEST**
When to submit photos: Agoura Hills@agourahills.org
Deadline to submit: October 15, 2020
Submit photos to: Mayor's Reception & Civic Center, 29000 Laguna Drive, Agoura Hills, CA 91301
Prizes: \$25 gift card
- PUMPKIN DECORATING CONTEST**
When to submit photos: Agoura Hills@agourahills.org
Deadline to submit: October 15, 2020
Submit photos to: Mayor's Reception & Civic Center, 29000 Laguna Drive, Agoura Hills, CA 91301
Prizes: \$25 gift card
- TEEN GAME NIGHT & COSTUME CONTEST**
When to submit photos: Agoura Hills@agourahills.org
Deadline to submit: October 15, 2020
Submit photos to: Mayor's Reception & Civic Center, 29000 Laguna Drive, Agoura Hills, CA 91301
Prizes: \$25 gift card
- HOUSE DECORATING CONTEST**
When to submit photos: Agoura Hills@agourahills.org
Deadline to submit: October 15, 2020
Submit photos to: Mayor's Reception & Civic Center, 29000 Laguna Drive, Agoura Hills, CA 91301
Prizes: \$25 gift card

Please Note: If you do decide to trick-or-treat or engage in activities in close proximity to those outside your household please remember to practice social distancing and wear proper personal protective gear. Masks should be worn at all times, and gloves are strongly recommended.

More information: www.ci.agoura-hills.ca.us or 818-587-7300

VIRTUAL STATE OF THE CITY

The City of Agoura Hills and the Greater Conejo Valley Chamber of Commerce held the 8th Annual Agoura Hills State of the City Address, featuring keynote speaker Mayor Illece Buckley Weber, on October 28, 2020.

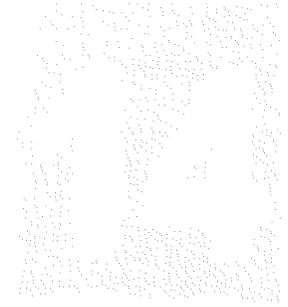
Mayor Illece Buckley Weber addressed the current state of the City of Agoura Hills as the community continues to navigate COVID-19 and how some of our local businesses have adapted. She also announced the 2020 Agoura Hills Business of the Year and Tom Cohen of Cohen, Begun & Deck and Chair of the Chamber Board gave a State of the Chamber address.

To view the Virtual State of the City full video please visit this link:
<https://vimeo.com/event/410275>

Voter Registration & Ballot Questions

The City of Agoura Hills is consolidated with the County of Los Angeles for the Agoura Hills General Municipal Election.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, County offices remain closed to the public. Election services are offered online at lavote.net or by calling the number below. Your wait time may be longer than usual. We apologize for any inconvenience and thank you for your patience!



Program Evaluation

SAE Communications recommends the following evaluation activities be conducted to measure the effectiveness of ongoing City activities and behavior/perception changes among the City's key audiences:

- Media content analysis (analyze message delivery in articles, compare stories pitched with actual features, etc.) to measure effectiveness of the media relations program – periodically
- Readership survey of key publications – biannually
- Re-conduct the one-on-one interviews conducted for this Plan to determine a perceived change in communications effectiveness – biannually
- Re-conduct the FM3 resident survey to determine if objectives have been met or perceptions changed – biannually
- Conduct a website user satisfaction survey – biannually
- Include communications-related performance measures for each department head; revise annually, tie to Strategic Communications Plan



Priority Implementation Chart

The chart below captures the highest priority tactics recommended for initial Plan implementation.

<i>First Year – Recommended Priority Tactics</i>	
Staffing	Retain consultant or full time PIO/Media Officer
Messaging	Establish messaging strategy, culture
Internal Team	Create internal team to support communications
Training	Topics: media, social media, coordination
Social Media	Strategy for Nextdoor, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, etc.
Crisis Planning	Create emergency public information plan, alerts, drills
CRM / Alerts	Re-promote “SeeClickFix,” emergency alert sign-ups
City Council Message Support	Provide key messages to City Council
Master Calendar	Implement planning calendar system
Media Pitching	Begin pitching effort, including training

<i>Second Year – Recommended Priority Tactics</i>	
Resident Engagement	Use messaging strategy to support engagement
HOA Outreach	Implement program to inform residents of HOAs
Expanded Media Relations	Broaden pitching effort building on training from year one
Electronic Communications	Implement electronic community relations program



Appendix A – Interviewees

Ramiro Adeva – Assistant City Manager
Chris Anstead – Councilmember
John Asuncion – Planning Commissioner
Danielle Borja – Chamber of Commerce CEO
Amy Brink – Community Services Director
Louis Celaya – Deputy City Manager
Joice Corridori – Resident
Danny Farkash – Old Agoura HOA Representative
Jessica Forte – Public Works Director
Bill Koehler – Former Councilmember
Mark LaValle – Restaurant Owner
Deborah Lopez – Councilmember
Christy Pinuelas – Finance Director
Kimberly Rodrigues – City Clerk
Dan Stepenosky – School District Superintendent
Bill Tucker – Retail Developer
Dennis Weber – Mayor Pro Tem
Illece Buckley Weber – Mayor
Joan Yacovone – Former Councilmember

CITY OF AGOURA HILLS
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN 2021



Prepared by SAE Communications
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