

**CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM**  
CITY OF SHORELINE, WASHINGTON

<b>AGENDA TITLE:</b>	Update on Council Goal No. 4 – Enhance openness and opportunities for community engagement		
<b>DEPARTMENT:</b>	City Manager's Office		
<b>PRESENTED BY:</b>	Eric Bratton, Management Analyst		
<b>ACTION:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Ordinance	<input type="checkbox"/> Resolution	<input type="checkbox"/> Motion
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion	<input type="checkbox"/> Public Hearing	

**PROBLEM/ISSUE STATEMENT:**

City Council Goal #4 calls for enhanced openness and opportunities for community engagement. The City is committed to open, transparent, and responsive government. Over the past year, the City has continued to make more documents available online, expanded its use of social media, facilitated numerous public meetings and workshops on a variety of important City issues, and rolled out a new mass communication system that will allow the City to send out emergency notifications and community alerts on topics important to residents.

The lack of print media in Shoreline continues to present challenges to the City when it comes to getting our message out to residents. According to the results of City's 2012 Citizen Satisfaction Survey, *Currents* and the Recreation Guide remain the primary sources of information about City issues, events, and services for residents by a significant margin. The next most important source of information is the City's website. Staff has been working on improving all three to make them more engaging, informative and user friendly.

This update will review the action steps under Goal #4 and provide some examples of what we have done to achieve the goal.

**RESOURCE/FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

There is no financial impact associated with tonight's discussion. The City has entered into a contract with Everbridge to provide the City's mass communication system (Alert Shoreline) with an ongoing cost of \$15,930 per year and a one-time \$1,275 set-up fee that was paid for this year. The City also entered into a contract with Granicus for CivicIdeas, an online public participation system (Speak Up Shoreline!), for \$657 per month. The City entered into the contract in May, but payment for the first three months of the contract were reimbursed due to technical problems with setting up the site.

**RECOMMENDATION**

No action is required. This is intended as an update and for Council discussion.

Approved By:      City Manager ***DT***      City Attorney ***IS***

## **INTRODUCTION**

City Council Goal #4 calls for enhanced openness and opportunities for community engagement. A well informed and engaged community is vital to a well functioning government. The City is committed to open, transparent, and responsive government.

The lack of print news media in Shoreline has presented challenges to the City in trying to get its messages out. We have been relying on two online blogs, Shoreline-Lake Forest Park Patch and Shoreline Area News, to post news items from the City. However, their reach is limited, and it is unclear if Patch will even continue for much longer as they were identified by AOL as one of the Patch sites to be shut down.

In our most recent citizen satisfaction survey, 92% of residents said they receive news about City issues, services, and events from *Currents*. And 70% gain information from the Recreation Guide. *Currents* and the Recreation Guide were by far the most significant sources of information about City issues to residents according to the results of the 2012 Citizen Satisfaction Survey. The next most important source was the City's website at 36%.

Over the past year, staff has been looking at ways to make *Currents* even more engaging and informative for residents, and will begin testing different formats for ongoing discussions. In addition, the Recreation Guide has undergone significant changes over the past year to create a more engaging publication.

## **DISCUSSION**

Goal #4 has five actions steps. Below is a review and update of those action steps.

**1. Communicate and provide opportunities for public input on key policies and initiatives, including light rail station planning, safe community initiatives, the Point Wells Transportation Corridor Study, and other City projects.**

### *Press Releases and Monthly Editors Meetings*

In the past five years, the City has issued 170 press releases. Almost fifty percent of those have come in the past two years. Below is a table showing how many press releases have been issued in each of the past five years:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of Press Releases</b>
2009	21
2010	26
2011	39
2012	53
2013 (through September)	31
<b>Total</b>	<b>170</b>

As well, in an effort to have more City issues covered by local media sites, staff is proposing to have monthly meetings with the editors of Shoreline Area News and

Richmond Beach Community News to discuss City issues and answer questions. Our goal is to help those local media outlets provide more City coverage.

### *Light Rail Station Area Planning*

The City has hosted two light rail meetings this year and attended multiple community sponsored meetings focused on station area visioning. Staff has also helped our community partners publicize four community sponsored visioning events targeting different populations in Shoreline, and presented information at those meetings. Staff has also attended numerous neighborhood meetings and has attended the monthly meetings of the 185SCC neighborhood group to discuss light rail and station area planning. Staff will also begin to attend meetings of the 145<sup>th</sup> Street station neighborhood group that is forming. In addition to hosting and attending meetings, staff hosted City booths at several summer events, providing information and answering residents' questions about light rail.

On November 6, the City will host a design workshop where residents will put their visions on paper and design what they want to see in the station areas. In early 2014, those designs will be graphically represented and presented at a second series of design workshops.

The City is excited to announce the launch of a new tool to promote both public participation in light rail station area planning and healthy lifestyles. Walking maps, which can be found on the City's website (<http://shorelinewa.gov/index.aspx?page=1055>), have been developed for areas surrounding potential light rail stations at NE 185th and 145th Streets that outline a route for people to walk, bike, or drive and imagine how the neighborhoods could transition over time. Each map includes location-specific and thought-provoking questions to solicit input about housing, jobs and businesses, recreation and community services, and transportation and mobility within light rail station areas.

### *Safe Community Initiatives*

At last November's Crime Prevention Focus Group Forum, a common theme was the need for better communication between police and residents. The City has been working on several community outreach initiatives that will improve communication and hopefully address residents concerns. One enhancement to communication is Alert Shoreline. Alert Shoreline is the City's new mass communication system, which will allow for more timely and relevant communication between Police and residents interested in receiving police alerts impacting their neighborhoods. The system is further explained in the discussion of Action Step #5 below.

Another enhancement to communication and outreach is the redesign of the City's Block Watch program. A team of City and Police personnel have revised the program to remove some of the more restrictive requirements and make it more of a community outreach program. Residents will get to know the officers that actually are patrolling their neighborhoods and will hear first-hand what officers are seeing and what residents can do to protect themselves. The new program will be known as Shoreline Watch.

Another safe community event that has grown over the years is the annual National Night Out Against Crime. On August 6, forty-one National Night Out parties were held in

Shoreline. This continues to be a great summer event for Shoreline residents. City staff or Police personnel visited every registered party, providing information about Shoreline Watch and crime prevention in general. It was also an opportunity for residents to ask Police and staff questions and express their concerns.

#### *Point Wells Transportation Corridor Study*

The City continues to wait for Snohomish County and the developer BSRE Point Wells, LP to agree on an EIS process timeline before scheduling the dates for the Transportation Corridor Study. Once the dates are set, the City will get the information out through a wide variety of means, including *Currents*, postcards, press releases, emails to neighborhood groups and to individuals interested in receiving Point Wells information. In the meantime, the City continues to provide residents with updates when new information is available. The Transportation Corridor Study will be the most important opportunity for residents to express their concerns for the proposed project and to provide input on possible mitigation measures.

#### *Aurora Square CRA*

The City held two open houses to present the Aurora Square Community Renewal Area plan to residents, answer questions, and listen to concerns. In addition, Economic Development Manager Dan Eernisse has spoken to a number of different community groups about the CRA and what it means for the City. *Currents* has also run two articles discussing the CRA.

#### *Climate Action Plan*

The City held a Climate Action Plan Community Open House inviting people to review the plan, ask questions and provide comment. Approximately 20 people participated in the event. Residents could also review the plan and submit comments online.

## **2. Continue to support neighborhood associations and volunteer initiatives and to host community forums and workshops.**

Staff continues to work closely with neighborhood associations in a variety of ways to help them build capacity. Efforts include helping members develop Neighborhood Mini-Grant proposals, providing leadership training, and sending four neighborhood leaders to non-profit training workshops. Five mini-grants were approved this year covering all \$20,000 of the City's mini-grant funding. Mini-grants approved this year include: Ballinger/North City/Meridian Park Outdoor Movie Night; Echo Lake Mural; Hillwood Park adult fitness equipment installation and wellness workshop; Richmond Beach Halloween Carnival; and Ridgecrest 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. NE and NE 165<sup>th</sup> corner improvements.

With the help of a volunteer community facilitator, the Council of Neighborhoods developed new mission, vision, and values statements highlighting the diversity of the neighborhoods and emphasizing the need for open communication. As part of that process, the Council of Neighborhoods also held a contest to design a new logo. Several people submitted ideas, but the final design was submitted by Janis Trowbridge-Howes. The Council of Neighborhoods also engaged in concerted outreach over the summer, hosting a booth at the Shoreline Farmers Market four times, holding its annual used book sale at Swingin' summer Eve, and hosting a booth at Celebrate Shoreline. Each of these events helped raise awareness about the different

neighborhood associations and allow the associations to gather new contacts. Our neighborhood coordinators are instrumental in helping to organize these events and preparing materials.

The City Council and Council of Neighborhoods will also hold a joint dinner meeting on December 9. Last year's joint meeting was very successful and it is anticipated that this will be an annual meeting. In addition, to the joint dinner meeting, individual Councilmembers have been attending monthly Council of Neighborhood meetings, providing updates on Council activities and answering questions.

Staff has also continued to work closely with neighborhood associations on using different social media tools to help them communicate with their neighbors and build a sense of community. One of the newest social media platforms being used is [Nextdoor.com](http://Nextdoor.com). Nextdoor.com is a social networking site, much like Facebook, that allows neighbors to connect with each other and share information.

In May, the City hosted its annual volunteer appreciation event and had over 100 City volunteers attend. City volunteers provided 16,757 hours of service to the City last year – the equivalent of eight full-time employees.

In June, the City hosted a State of the City breakfast that was attended by approximately 50 business and community leaders and residents. The event turned out to be a great networking opportunity, helping to strengthen community connections and partnerships.

### **3. Develop a workplan to make more documents available online and to improve the website's ease of use.**

Currently, the City's website has 636 pages of content, 1,733 images, and 5,486 available documents. Staff continues to place more documents online daily. With so much information, it is important to ensure that the site is easy to navigate and individuals are able to access the information they need. Over the past year and a half, staff has been updating different sections of the website to make the site more user friendly. We are currently reviewing the permits pages and police pages. Earlier this year, Planning and Community Development launched its new online permit search tool. The tool allows people to search for past and present permits, see status updates and see who they need to contact at the City regarding that specific permit. Police have also created an online form that allows people to file traffic complaints.

The City is also in the process of updating its content management system (CMS) for the website. While there won't be significant changes to the look of the website, there will be some extra features and cleaner designs for some pages. The real benefit of the new system is on the 'back-end'; the online web-tool that allows staff to update the City's website. City staff responsible for updating the website will see a marked improvement in the design and ease of use of the new system. Keeping pages up-to-date will also be much easier, as notifications can be sent to remind people when pages need to be reviewed and updated.

Along with the CMS upgrade comes a mobile version of the City's website. This will make it easier for residents to view the website from their mobile devices. As smartphones become ubiquitous, the ability to present information easily viewed in a mobile format becomes critical.

The City has also recently started recording Park, Recreation and Cultural Services/Tree Board meetings and making the recordings available online. People are now able to watch live streaming and video archives of all City Council meetings, and listen to audio recordings of PRSC/Tree Board and Planning Commission meetings. Agendas and packets for upcoming meetings for all of the City's boards and commissions can be found online at least 24 hours prior to the meeting. Meeting minutes are made available within a couple of weeks. Staff has also worked hard to make archived meeting minutes and agendas online. People can also sign up with Alert Shoreline to have upcoming Council, PRCS/Tree Board, Library Board and Planning Commission packets emailed to them. Agendas for City Council dinner meetings will now also be available online.

#### **4. Advance public engagement with implementation of the City's e311 system, online town hall forums, online service requests, survey tools and social media platforms.**

The City continues to look for different ways to use its social media platforms to better reach and engage residents in conversation. Currently, the City has over 800 likes on Facebook. We hope to significantly increase that amount over the coming year by trying to engage people in more dialogue about issues, places, and events in Shoreline of interest to them. The City also started using Twitter on a regular basis this year. While our following is still fairly limited, we will continue to experiment with it and see what type of Tweets resonate with our followers so we can better target our messaging to them. Another popular social media tool that we will most likely launch in the coming months is Instagram. Instagram is a great way to visually share the great things going on in Shoreline.

One tool that we tried this year that has not been as successful as hoped has been Granicus' new public participation tool CivicIdeas, also known as Speak Up Shoreline!. Speak up Shoreline! is an online discussion forum that allows residents to interact with each other on important City issues. Launched this summer, we focused the first discussion on light rail station area planning. Unfortunately, only one person has contributed to the discussion so far. We advertised the site in *Currents*, on the website and in email blasts to various groups. We also have been advertising the site at light rail meetings and with the 185SCC group. The idea just hasn't caught on with Shoreline residents. Moving forward, we will probably discontinue using Speak Up Shoreline! and look at social media platforms that we are already using, such as Facebook, to try and engage people in conversations. More fully utilizing resources that we already have and that our residents are familiar with will hopefully lead to easier interaction and will help save resources.

## **5. Enhance the City's crime prevention and safe community communication programs including implementation of an E-Alert system and expanding the City's Neighborhood Block Watch Program.**

### *Crime Prevention and Shoreline Watch*

As stated above, the City has been revamping its Block Watch program to be less restrictive and focused more on community outreach between neighbors, the police and the City. The program will no longer be called Block Watch, but will be known as Shoreline Watch. The new program has been marketed in *Currents*, at National Night Out events, and will be on the City's website.

The March issue of *Currents* contained a six-page spread on public safety. Since that issue, the City has included a crime prevention tip article in every issue of *Currents* highlighting different ways people can keep themselves, their families and their property safe. The City also provides many crime prevention tips on the Police Department's webpage. As the Police page is updated, we will review the different tips and brochures to ensure there is consistent messaging and to make sure the information is presented in a user friendly manner.

Moving forward, we will continue to provide relevant and timely crime prevention tips in each issue of *Currents* as well as send messages to those individuals that have signed up for such notifications on Alert Shoreline.

### *Alert Shoreline*

The City has entered into a contract with Everbridge to provide mass communication capabilities to the City. The new system, which will take the place of the City's old community messaging eNews system and emergency notification system MyStateUSA, will allow us to send out emergency alerts and community information on a variety of topics. Residents can select how they want to receive emergency alerts, whether by email, text, or phone, and they may register more than one location in Shoreline of interest to them, such as their home, a relative's home, a work address, or their child's school. Should there be an emergency near one of those locations and an alert is issued, they will receive key information on where to go and what to do to keep themselves and their families safe.

In addition to receiving emergency alerts, residents can also receive community notifications on topics of interest to them. Currently, residents may sign-up for the following community notices:

- News Releases
- Road Closures
- City Council Agenda Packet
- Planning Commission Agenda Packet
- Library Board Agenda
- PRCS/Tree Board Agenda
- Point Wells Updates
- Neighborhoods
- Light Rail Station Area Planning
- Park Facility Closures and Updates
- Human Services
- Shoreline Watch (crime prevention tips)



Staff has placed articles about Alert Shoreline in the Summer and October issues of *Currents* and will continue to place ads in *Currents* in the months ahead. We also will send email messages to everyone signed up with our current eNews system letting them know that if they wish to continue to receive the alerts they will need to register with Alert Shoreline.

### **RESOURCE/FINANCIAL IMPACT**

There is no financial impact associated with tonight's discussion. The City has entered into a contract with Everbridge to provide the City's mass communication system (Alert Shoreline) with an ongoing cost of \$15,930 per year and a one-time \$1,275 set-up fee that was paid for this year. The City also entered into a contract with Granicus for CivicIdeas, an online public participation system (Speak Up Shoreline!), for \$600 per month.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

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