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COMMUNICATION	
F&A -	Nov. 12/13
ITEM -	1

DATE: November 12, 2013

TO: Regional Councillor Michael Di Biase

CC: Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua, Mayor and Members of Council
Barbara Cribbett, Interim City Manager
Gary Williams, Director of Corporate Communications

FROM: Tim Simmonds, Executive Director, Office of the City Manager

RE: **Additional information – 2014 Corporate Communications ARRs
Finance and Administration Committee, November 12, 2013**

As per Council's request at the Council Meeting of October 29, 2013 Item 1, Report No. 45, of the Committee of the Whole (Working Session), which was adopted, as amended, by Council on October 29, 2013)

Background

The City's website, vaughan.ca, is a critical piece of municipal infrastructure. It is the primary communications vehicle for the City with an average of 100,000 visits per month. A considerable investment has been made over the past four years in the redesign and restructuring of the website. The priority today is to keep the website content up to date and ensure the website continues to evolve to meet the changing public demand for online services. This requires appropriate staff resources.

Situation in 2009

In 2009, Corporate Communications requested one additional staff complement titled – "Communications Specialist – Website Editorial Services." The request was based on the pre-2009 volume of website content and the increased frequency of website postings as the corporate website evolved to become the 'anchor' communication vehicle for the City. The position was approved through the budget process.

The position was filled in late 2009 and was primarily responsible for ensuring the information on the City's website was timely, accurate and accessible. The position also supported Council, Senior Management and client departments by providing advice and assistance in the development of editorial content for the web, particularly as it relates to corporate projects and initiatives being communicated on the corporate website.

Situation in 2013

Since 2009, this new position has evolved as the corporate website has increased in size and usage. In 2011, less than two years since the Website Editorial Services position was created, the website saw a 17.9% increase in website hits. That figure increased by 29.5% the following year. The City's efforts to 'push' visitors to the website for information and services has also increased annually and has contributed to the increase in traffic.

Furthermore, a number of additional web-based services have been launched since 2009 that were not originally considered in the creation of the new position, including:

- Corporate e-Newsletters – twice monthly

- Three social media sites (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube) and a blog, and
- E-Blast alerts

The responsibility to create content, update and monitor these additional web-based information channels which serve the entire corporation fall under the role of the Communications Specialist – Website Editorial Services.

New Decentralized Website Structure

In January 2013, the new corporate website was launched. In support of the new website, a content management system was created, shifting responsibility for web content to each department – this is referred to as a “decentralized content management approach.” The content management system employs an approval process for all website content, which is managed by each department. Currently, there are approximately 76 active website content contributors from all departments.

The Communications Specialist – Website Editorial Services currently manages web content on 27 corporate webpages, including the home page, news section and emergency/closure messages.

Since the launch in January 2013, the number of webpages has increased by 46 per cent and the number of documents posted to the website has increased by 45 per cent. There is more dynamic website content than ever before.

Decentralizing the content requirements worked well during the review and transfer of information from the old website to the new website. However, the 76 individuals who are active as the content contributors for their respective departments are now required to generate new content and market the City’s major programs and initiatives online, while still working at their regular jobs.

Many do not have the required time, communications and marketing skills:

- Little or no professional writing and editing skills
- No graphic design expertise
- The need to promote the City brand and speak with a unified voice
- The need to assign top priority to City communications with the public

Projected Situation in 2014 – Maximizing the City’s Investment

The 2014 ARR request for a Communications Specialist – Website Content Management would serve as a “newspaper editor” and provide needed support for all departments with the creation of web content, page design and presentation. As well, the significant increase in the amount of web content over the past five years, the growing use of web-based communications channels (including social media) and the focus on providing more online services in the future, as identified in the Corporate Communications Strategy, means the web-based activities of the department and the City are increasing. The goal is to be a leader in municipal communications – and make sure the City does not fall behind.

Public Service Renewal Program

The department has submitted a second ARR which is a conversion of a vacant position. Through the Public Service Renewal program, Corporate Communications has identified an opportunity to realign resources and convert a current vacant senior communications specialist position into two junior positions. This will provide the department with increased capacity to manage its assignments. The more strategic tasks, previously managed by the vacant specialist position, will be assigned to the communications specialists already on staff. The two conversion positions are partially offset by funding already available within the department’s budget.

Current Job Responsibilities – Corporate Communications

Job Title	Primary roles	Description
Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic planning • Council and SMT support • Issues management • Reputation management • Crisis communications 	Responsible for the direction of the department in the planning, development, implementation and maintenance of a wide range of external and internal communications programs and services.
Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff management • Project management • Issues management • Protocol and policy • Committee support • Special projects 	Responsible for managing the staff, projects and activities of the department.
Senior Communications Specialist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues management • Social media development • Media relations • News monitoring • eCommunications 	Responsible for providing strategic communications support, contributing to the development and implementation of internal communications, eCommunications, issues management and media strategies that target internal and external audiences.
Communications Specialist – Client Services/Issues Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media relations • Media list management • Issues management • Communications support for Mayor and Members of Council • Committee support • Internal communications 	Responsible for communications and issues management in support of the Mayor and Members of Council, including writing speeches and drafting news releases. Produces key messages and briefing notes relating to City projects and initiatives as well as issues of interest to the media. Manages the implementation of the internal communications strategy.
Communications Specialist – Marketing and Special Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing / Advertising • Committee support • Annual report production • Brochure production (creative design) • Branding • Photo resources • City Page content (statutory ads) 	Responsible for marketing and special project co-ordination, acting as a resource to departments providing advice and assistance in the development and implementation of departmental and special project communications strategies.

Communications Specialist – Website Editorial Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate website content • eNewsletter production • Video production • Social media tracking • VaughanTV (internal TV network) • Website support for special projects • Photography 	Serves as the website content contributor for Communications, producing content and editing for 27 pages. Scripts and produces multi-media content for website and social media channels. Monitors our social media channels and provides daily reports. Provides photography services. Supports departments by providing advice and assistance in the development of web content.
Communications Specialist – (Redeployed) Communications Co-ordinator – Two positions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media monitoring • Press release research and development • Social media monitoring and content development • Writing and editing • Marketing assistance • eCommunications assistance • Media relations assistance 	Assists with the delivery of media relations (press releases, research, monitoring). eCommunications support and tactical implementation for social media channels and website. Supports Communication Specialists with the implementation of communication plans for various departments. Assists in researching and tracking issues, and maintaining media and issue management files.

Conclusion

The Corporate Communications department continues to expand its activities, particularly in the area of e-communications, to better support the growth of the City. Corporate social media sites have been launched, the frequency of the corporate e-newsletter has increased, more multimedia news releases are being produced, video production has increased and the social media and news monitoring tasks have expanded.

Each year, the Corporate Communications department issues an average of 250 news releases, public service announcements and media advisories. The department manages 200 media inquiries. More than 700 messages, speaking notes and newspaper columns are written in support of the corporation. None of these tasks can be discontinued in order to provide the needed staff support for the growth in the website and e-communications.

The priority is to support Council and City departments in providing Vaughan residents and businesses with proactive communications, including two-way communications, utilizing new technologies and e-communications. The 2014 ARR will help the corporation achieve this goal.

Sincerely,



Tim Simmonds
Executive Director, Office of the City Manager