

H I G H G R O U N D
PUBLIC AFFAIRS CONSULTANTS

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Richard Karwaczka, County Administrator, Cochise County
Anne Coppola, Contracts Administrator, Cochise County

FR: Paul Bentz, Sr. Vice President – Research and Strategy, HighGround, Inc.

RE: Public Involvement Process and Potential Election Proposal

DT: February 28, 2022

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a proposal including our consulting capabilities regarding a public involvement process and potential election proposal to address public safety issues facing Cochise County. Our team has a solid track record of successful public affairs work that reflects our unique ability among Arizona firms to manage challenging political and public policy issues in various environments.

HighGround provides its clients with a success oriented, diverse team of media, public, business, and government affairs experts. We specialize in dealing with complex issues on behalf of clients that face challenges or seek opportunities on a variety of governmental and public affairs levels. Many of these issues involve interfacing with local, county, state, and federal government entities, strengthening business relationships, developing diverse coalitions, and crafting thoughtful media strategies.

We recommend a robust public engagement effort to improve awareness within the community about the public safety needs of Cochise County. This proposal is aimed at helping Cochise County save money, time, and ultimately, make an educated decision on whether to call for an election. Nothing in this proposal should be construed as advocacy (which cannot be done at taxpayer expense) and our team will maintain a strict adherence to activities that are permitted under election law.

At this time, this proposal envisions all offerings as pre-election activities and our engagement will end at the time an election is called. Our team does offer election communications services on behalf of municipalities with an understanding that it precludes HighGround from any advocacy activities.

There are several key areas in which HighGround can be helpful:

1. Strategic Planning

HighGround can help with an election committee and strategic planning process that allows Cochise County to engage the community, have thoughtful dialogue, and provide an educated decision on if an election proposal should or should not move forward.

We recognize that county staff is incredibly busy with a significant amount of other day-to-day duties. Our team can provide a thoughtful strategy, timeline, and certain deliverables to help the process along. However, as we mentioned, there will need to be significant county staff engagement to manage portions of this process internally – organizing meetings, community outreach, gathering certain materials, etc.

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As such, this proposal envisions HighGround performing a consulting role that includes the following services:

- Strategic timeline for Election Advisory Committee process to help keep the committee on track
- Strategic messaging and writing
- Assistance in developing an outreach and community engagement strategy during development
- List of needs and goals through the end of the development process
- Reviewing meeting results and next steps
- Assist in a media engagement and social media plan
- Participating in meetings as necessary

It should be noted that this proposal and cost estimate does not reflect facilitating or management of actual meetings, process management or material compilation, citizen or committee recruitment, scheduling, or direct public outreach.

2. Messaging and Communications

Collaborating with staff and the development team, we will develop a messaging and communications plan to correlate with development process (and the election as well should you choose to proceed). We will work with all team members to ensure that everyone is using the same messaging and focused on improving public awareness. As part of this effort, our team would perform the following tasks:

- Develop consistent talking points.
- Create a branded effort focused on key issues.
- Develop bridge messaging regarding difficult topics.
- Conduct speaker training and develop materials focused on message discipline.
- Create and implement a free media editorial calendar that includes social media strategy, op-ed submissions, media events, and community messaging.
- Develop social communication schedule that engages the community early on, gaining early brand recognition and engagement including an effort to sign residents up to receive more information.

3. Opinion Research

As part of the public process, Cochise County consider opinion research in the form of a strategic messaging survey, focus groups, or other platforms to gather public opinion on perception of the county, awareness of facility needs, public safety priorities, community views on public safety, mental health, addiction, and argumentation. As part of the research, we would like to explore the following areas:

- Test perception of the county and the direction of public safety
- Test messengers and credibility
- Test awareness of public safety needs, funding options, and general impressions regarding positive/negative reception, community satisfaction, and service



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- Explore several messages for and against the proposal, growth, economic development, and taxation
- A ballot test to help provide a baseline understanding to help the Board of Supervisors make their decision
- The cost of the survey is a one-time fee based on length. Here are the price ranges:
 - **Survey estimate** **(N=400)**
 - 10 minutes \$15,200
 - 15 minutes \$20,000
 - 20 minutes \$24,000

The costs would include crafting the survey, conducting the calls, community outreach, and providing results. The opinion research and the actual associated costs will be approved by the client before it is executed.

If we engage in a public opinion survey, the timeline following approval will be approximately 7-10 days based on available field time, calling time, and compilation of data. Survey results will include topline that highlight the main results of the survey, cross tabulations that examine specific demographics, and an in-depth survey presentation available for briefings of interested parties.

Suggested Price Proposal

Our firm works on a monthly fee basis with a thirty-day cancellation clause by either party. Our experience shows that both the client and provider are better served with a retainer fee arrangement. As is customary for these types of projects, our proposed monthly fee for public affairs and strategic communication services is \$3,500 a month for 6 months (March through August).

The cost of a community survey or any other deliverable services is not included in the monthly retainer.