

External Communications Survey

In an effort to gather information regarding the Council's expectations for the City's communication efforts, please complete the following survey by November 16. City staff will review the Council's answers to prepare a case for the November 24 work session.

Our Mission:

To work together to responsibly grow our community and to provide quality, cost-effective and efficient government services.

Our Objectives:

- Financial Stability
- A Balance of Rural Character and Urban Growth
- An Active and Connected Community
- Smart, Citizen-Focused Government
- An Effective Organization

Our Brand:

Brand colors include navy, crimson, olive green and gold. Graphic elements include cattails and "rivers."

Communication Tools:

- Print Newsletter: Ramsey Resident
- Weekly Update
- Website
- Email Subscriptions
- Text Message Subscriptions
- Electronic Community Sign
- Other Message Boards & Signage
- Social Media Platforms including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Youtube
- QCTV

Questions:

1) How would you describe good/effective communication?

- A) Providing information without personal bias, accurately, timely.
- B) After I have read it once, I understood it.
- C) Consistent messaging utilizing many vehicles to reach residents and businesses.
- D) Effective communication is when the recipient either understands it ,or has the opportunity to ask clarifying questions. It's not merely writing or posting, but also engaging in active dialogue when the opportunity requires it. Oftentimes the best is relatable and personal.
- E) Being accurate, honest and to the point. Brief summary followed by detail.

- F) Messaging that is able to reach people where they are at.
- G) Print Newsletter

2) Are the City's communication efforts meeting your expectations?

- A) No. When errors are noted, or omissions that information has been communicated to administration. Feedback on resolution on improving processes, or accountability or reprimands are not known.
- B) In the Ramsey Resident I feel all my needs are met. That being said, in work sessions or any meeting, when Dept heads are explaining a project or idea, too many words are used, they really need to learn to boil down the information that we really need. It often feels like they wish to win us over by wearing us down.
- C) No. I don't see coordination of communication. Newsletter seems to have a separate agenda. Facebook isn't consistent with posting. Engineering writes their own notices.
- D) Yes, but we can always get better.
- E) Not completely.
- F) For the most part yes. The efforts offer several different ways for people to receive the message.
- G) Yes.

3) If not, in what area can the City improve?

- A) Accuracy of information with more than one person reviewing information carefully, perspective of information needs to be more informative and less bias perspective. Responding to community discussion boards with the staff bias vs both sides, if applicable is not conveyed.
- B) Put a time limit on presentations.
- C) Pick a monthly/quarterly theme and make sure all communication reflects that. Email blasts when appropriate. Facebook links to city info and facts.
- D) The answer to residents questions usually exist (data or resources), it just isn't super easy to find, or is not outlined in a readable way from a citizen's perspective.
- E) Accurately portraying information for the residents. The content from meetings/documents is not always reflected accurately in how it is presented to residents.
- F) In my opinion, the website is hard to navigate. Finding information often involves multiple clicks and a high level of hunting or mining skills.
- G) I think we could improve our website

4) What information do you think residents are most interested in?

- A) Understanding how city processes work, what is the value they are getting from the monies spend in city funding early on in any process. Honest communication.
- B) >
- C) Development activities. Highway 10 planning.
- D) Topics/stories that uplift them, and stories that affect them. But at the root, it's stories that people can relate to, not just charts and maps.

- E) Current events and upcoming changes in the city.
- F) Things that directly impact their lives.
- G) What is happening in the community.

5) What feedback do you receive from residents regarding City communications?

- A) Communication is late and after the fact, not accurate information, mixed messages. When issues are brought up by residents they are brushed off. Residents express frustration when they are not treated with respect because they do not have the same understanding or information as staff does about an area of service. There needs to be an improved respect for residents when questions are raised to develop that respect.
- B) None.
- C) Residents never seem to know anything that is going on in the city. I am amazed at the ability to ignore info that is presented. No responses to Facebook posts that contain bad facts or misinformation.
- D) It comes from "I don't even know who to talk to" or not knowing where to look. The city is seen as a distant entity, rather than a body of people trying to support the residents.
- E) Some residents were unaware they could sign up for emails from the city.
- F) Nobody knows what is going on. Mostly because they are not following until it effects them directly. Not sure that is an example of ineffective or incomplete communication.
- G) Mostly just complaints that would be something that is affecting them personally.

6) Are there questions that are not being addressed?

- A) This is a broad question. All questions I received from the public that I am unable to address with a reference to our website, are communicated to two to three staff members for follow up.
- B) No
- C) Shockingly, the franchise is new news to many residents. It makes I seems like it was sneaky.
- D) They're often addressed, but through data and harder to digest. A good example is the franchise fee. There's mountains of data, but creating it as a story that is digestible and relatable hasn't always been easy to find.
- E) See above.
- F) Very rarely is the city not addressing an issue. More common is the case that the resident does not know where to find or can not find the answer in city communication channels.
- G) I believe we are doing a good job.

7) What tools does the City use that you believe are effective?

- A) Website, newsletter, letters. I am not hearing as much about the tools as to content and how the tools are used. Late on notices, bias information, etc.
- B) The Newsletter
- C) Ramsey Resident. Post a link on website and facebook.
- D) The website has quite a bit at it, but could use some SEO assistance so that people who are looking for information prior to landing on cityoframsey.com can find it. It's better than it has been before, but could always use a UX review. Facebook is also a valuable tool that is

used, but more for posting and limited engagement. In today's world, Zoom/Ascensions is a key tool as well, and should be further utilizing it whenever possible. The community has to get used to it, as well as the staff.

- E) The newsletter and social media posts.
- F) Cable TV, website, newsletter.
- G) Software, Newsletter and Resident Survey

8) What tools do you wish the City would utilize more? And less?

- A) This would be a question for staff to assess benefit /cost of service and bring that information to council for consideration.
- B) None.
- C) Same message over many communication vehicles. More frequent Facebook posts. Respond with factual links to other Ramsey community groups.
- D) Digital tools are key to success. I'd further dive into utilizing email as a system of interaction, alongside the print newsletters. I'd also encourage a more personal take on the city- perhaps a podcast where city staff interviews other city staff so that we as citizens know what exactly public works does as well as who they are (as an example). This helps garner support and clarity when discussing big investments like the new public works campus. I'd also say that further utilization of tools like Facebook, Twitter, and even Instagram (show off our parks!) would be great. Making the city more personal and approachable is a key way to impact how residents feel about the city, and gain their trust and interaction.
- E) N/A
- F) Website, FB, perhaps texting
- G) Website

9) What content do you believe the community prefers to receive and how frequently?

- A) Variety of content is needed for varying interests of residents.
- B) The Newsletter is fine.
- C) More is better. For instance - Plowing info - we publish yearly and yet there is misunderstanding about how it works. Development updates. I constantly am asked what's going on in the COR.
- D) Good news is something we're all hoping for as regularly as possible, however I think the Ramsey Resident does have a good cadence. Otherwise, any data that is timely should obviously be delivered in a timely fashion. We've got no secrets to hide, and transparency is where trust sees daylight.
- E) N/A
- F) Information that impacts them directly. Ex. Neighborhood projects.
- G) Newsletter – Bi-Monthly

10) What areas should Communications staff focus on growing?

- A) Educate residents on processes.. how and why one would get a CUP. What are the stages for finalizing a development? What goes into the maintenance of a park? How can a resident

participate in care of a park? What are the processes for bringing a concern forward and the process for that to be addressed?

- B) None
- C) Facebook responses. Respond with links to city info. Do not engage in back and forth. Website updates Email blasts for news. How do we collect email addresses currently?
- D) I think focusing on the “voice” of the city is important. Right now, it’s exactly what you’d expect (not a bad thing!), however there’s an opportunity to become more personal as an organization which creates a great opportunity for engagement.
- E) N/A
- F) Communication that is targeted toward small groups or Neighborhood groups.
- G) Ramsey Profile, social media

11) Should communications staff drop any of its current efforts?

- A) Frankly, I am not seeing additional communication efforts beyond regular staff communication. website, resident, FB
- B) ?
- C) Not sure
- D) I’m not aware of any, however not fully versed into what efforts may be in place.
- E) N/A
- F) Weekly update. I would question if that has much value for the effort. Or perhaps target this differently.
- G) Not sure what I would want to back off on.

12) What communication tool(s) is/are most effective for residents to receive City communications?

Print Newsletter: 5
Text Message: 1
Email: 4
Social Media posts: 3
Website Content: 4
Other: 1

13) How can the City best capture resident’s interest when presenting information?

Text: 6
Audio: 2
Visual: 2
Experiential: 0
Other: 2
Combination: 3

14) Our current approach on social media is to observe community pages and tailor our content to these conversations. We do not engage in back-and-forth conversations on community pages and rarely engage in back-and-forth conversations even on our own page unless someone has a question. Should we modify this approach? Please explain:

- A) Yes. When publishing an article in response to resident's concerns, the city is taking one side or the other without engaging in back and forth. We should be communicating what city plans and efforts are that come before the city in the regular process verse going to community pages and looking for how we can drive a certain narrative.
- B) Yes, don't encourage social media, it's ruining America. That's not just me saying that, The people who develop these social media web sites don't let their children use them at all. Often time they never look at them when they are at their homes. Watch the documentary " the social dilemma" on Netflix.
- C) Yes - provide links to city info. Do not engage in back and forth. Limit the response to facts/links
- D) I believe this is an important aspect of it, however I'd also have a content calendar separate from that. Conversations on social media are too often rooted in division, rather than connection. I'd also remember that it only represents a portion of the community, versus the entire populous. Engagement can be done, however perhaps instead of the city account itself, it should be referred back to those who represent the community. I'd also always encourage them to move to a phone call, zoom, or attend a public hearing that is related getting people out from the protection of their keyboards is an important distinction for active participation.
- E) No. I don't believe this would be a good use of resources. Community pages are a microcosm of the community.
- F) The modification that comes to mind would be to use these pages to proactively inform the community on activities of value or interest and then use the message to link the reader to more detail in a website location. Always including a like to a contact at the city.
- G) No.

15) Many cities put an emphasis on graphic design. For example, the communications staff creates logos and images for various projects/campaigns instead of outsourcing that work to a consulting agency. As it relates to Ramsey, we could create a branding package for our "Adopt A Flag" program and others. The City has worked with consulting groups to create a logo and branding package for our Highway 10 efforts. This could even be used to identify events like Happy Days or various departments such as police, fire or public works. How important is graphic design to you as it relates to brand establishment?

- A) We have a design. Let's use it in the best way to maximize city potential with minimal financial impact upfront. Right now with a negative position on Covid-19 who wants to go anywhere or do anything.
- B) I have no experience in this field, sorry.
- C) Logos are not necessary for departments and specific projects. They city and Happy Days have logos.

- D) As someone who studied both communications and graphic design in college and abroad, I may have a bias that design is an extremely important aspect of identity. This focus should not be lost, but expanded upon. Utilizing infographics or other design tools as part of the communication process is absolutely key in providing accurate and digestible information for residents. And, it is far more likely to actually gain the attention it may require.
- E) Branding is important. However, keep in mind what you are trying to accomplish when choosing where to invest. The police, fire and public works function and utilization will not increase/decrease because of money spent on branding. Spend it where you'll actually get a return on the investment. What are those things? Branding should follow that.
- F) This has low importance as it reads above. I would have more interest in our effort to use what we have and strive to always doing better to deliver on our brand promise. (city mission)
- G) I like our current City of Ramsey logo and feel that is our brand.

16) The City of Darwin, MN is home to the largest ball of twine. As silly as this may seem, this has been an incredibly effective marketing tool for the small town and has essentially “put Darwin on the map.” Similarly, Anoka has established themselves as the “Halloween Capital of the World.” This year, in fact, they unveiled a Jack-o-Lantern statue in their downtown district to commemorate this 100-year-old tradition. Should Ramsey invest, market and promote such a landmark? If so, could this landmark be something that already exists or something to be created? Suggestions:

- A) These ideas work because they are generic not contrived. Having a strategy for developing a "landmark" for a city comes from positive ideas despite troubling times. ie increasing Alpine dog park nothing from the communication team but generic from a resident and staff advancing an idea. Same with blue bird houses. We need to work on river bank stabilization but have lots of information already. Hosting an annual riverbank stabilization education with residents along the river utilizing ACD, LRRWMO and maybe a canoe along the river day. These features already exist. We need to drive the narrative.
- B) A statue of Mark Kuzma on a house in a roundabout at Armstrong and Alpine is a great idea.
- C) NO
- D) I for one believe that we'd need to HAVE something in order to claim something. To me, Ramsey is a great place to live because it has so little fanfare.
- E) What would be the investment of such a marketing tool and what would be the city's end goal? Attracting more residents? Attracting visitors to our businesses? Would the visitors who are interested in the “landmark” also be the type of customer who would frequent Ramsey businesses? Would the “landmark” be used to draw people to some sort of gathering/festival? If the latter option is the goal, with the never ending cancellation of all events would an investment for such a purpose make sense?
- F) Not at this time
- G) I do not think we need to; seems to me, we've had strong growth as it is.

17) The City of Ramsey is one of four member cities that comprise QCTV. Are you pleased with the video content generated from QCTV? If not, what would you like to see more of? Do you think the City should dedicate more time/resources to video content creation?

- A) I believe we should have an update on changes in format at QCTV before further discussion can be of benefit. CBA would be good as well.
- B) I'm very satisfied with our image on QCTV, they do a great job.
- C) I am happy with the content created. I do not think it reaches a wide audience. Very few people watch. Are viewership numbers available?
- D) Video content is an important tool for communication. I'd encourage, if not demand that, any video come with closed-captioning before its release. This is important when using video for social media, as so much of the content is digested without sound on a video without subtitles/closed-captioning would miss the opportunity to be understood completely in these scenarios - which is more common than not.
- E) The film quality is great.
- F) Very pleased with QCTV. Yes, we should include use of more video content in our effective communication strategy.
- G) Yes, I think they are doing a good job.

18) The City of Champlin worked with an outside advertising agency to create two, 30-second promotional videos of the City showcasing its assets – the housing market, their Mississippi Crossings riverfront development, its parks, etc. They share this advertisement on their website, social media and it plays before movies shown at their local movie theater. This serves as an effective marketing strategy to draw residents, developers and visitors to the City and its destinations. Should Ramsey invest in such an ad?

- A) What? Do we not have the technology and creativity to do this in house? Use would have to be assessed as we don't have a movie theater but on the website.
- B) I have no opinion on this.
- C) I believe several print ads and even a video have been created in the past. How to use this is the question.
- D) I'd like to see more examples, and the perceived ROI of such an ad. There's a big opportunity right now for us to expand the residential developments, and showcase that Ramsey is both telecommuter friendly, and have assets like the North Star for those who need to commute. I believe it is a great time for something like this, with the appropriately crafted message.
- E) Again, what will the return be on the investment off of the website/ social media? Movie theater advertising is probably less effective than it used to be.
- F) I would hesitate investing heavily into this focused use of video marketing. We should stay focused on the ways that we are staging the city to accept this growth when the market is ready to choose Ramsey. (EDA)
- G) I would not be interested in this at this time.

19) Are there any other examples of effective communication from area cities that you would like staff to explore?

- A) Branding discussions should happen quarterly or every 6 months in order to make them effective and worth staff time. Two years ago we had 2-3 discussions on branding nodes in Ramsey and since then nothing.
- B) No
- C) Team up with groups where people already gather. Churches have bulletins. Youth athletics have newsletters, tournaments. Home owner associations. Golf leagues. Schools. Apartments. Gas pump videos.
- D) City of Shoreview is a good example
- E) No
- F) Exploring examples of how other cities are using communication channels to meet people where they are at. This may give us insight on how we could offer a more diverse strategy. Ten times ten different ways kind of approach to communication.
- G) I think we need to focus on good information and content for the Ramsey Resident Newsletter.

20) Other comments:

- A) This survey generally is too lengthy to have a complete discussion on one work session. I am concerned that the role of communication and events coordinator will get dragged on and the outcome will be that everything will continue as is. I am of the belief that these communications concerns can be handled as a part of regular staff duties and it is up to the administration staff to be accountable for that outcome.
- B) Left blank.
- C) Left blank.
- D) Being newer, I am sure there's plenty I'm unaware of in terms of what the city is doing in terms of communication, and I'm excited to learn. But I'd also say that my perspective may come as an outsider or resident which might be valuable as I'm not someone so close to the project. Lastly, make everything on the website more mobile friendly and reach out if I can assist!
- E) Left blank.
- F) It may be helpful to include a systematic approach on evaluating the effectiveness of messaging. Things like impressions/clicks/reach etc. Ways we can measure our return on investment.
- G) Left blank.