


June 3, 2014

To: Mayor and Members of Council
From: Scott C. Stiles, Interim City Manager 
Subject: **Community Engagement Report**

Reference document # 201400298

The City Council, at its session on Tuesday, March 11, 2014, referred the following item for report:

MOTION, dated 3/11/2014, submitted by Councilmember Kevin Flynn, WE MOVE that the City Administration prepare and submit a report about the recommendations set forth in the recent presentation, "Strength in Unity: A Proposal to Create a Flourishing Citizen Engagement Culture in Cincinnati," given to the Rules and Audit Committee. A copy of the presentation and report is attached to this motion. The report should also list any costs that would be necessitated by the implementation of the Citizen Engagement recommendations contained in the presentation. The report should also include any resolutions, ordinances and any additional documents required to adopt these principles should Council determine the recommendations should be implemented.

The report presented by the Citizen Engagement Action Team (CEAT), "Strength in Unity: A Proposal to Create a Flourishing Citizen Engagement Culture in Cincinnati" offers recommendations to improve the community engagement process. The administration recognizes the extensive research, collaboration and time the CEAT has dedicated to the development of a report with specific recommendations for the City to consider adopting. Many recommendations within the CEAT report represent a best-case scenario wherein the City dedicates sufficient resources to continually reach out, involve, and take action based upon the will of the Cincinnati community. The City faces financial and time constraints that must be taken into account when looking at full implementation of CEAT's recommendations. Also, the CEAT recommendations should be viewed in the context of what the City is currently doing to actively engage the community, and improvements planned for the near future. Many of the objectives outlined in the CEAT recommendations are reflected in the community outreach efforts taking place throughout many City departments. However, the administration recognizes that outreach and public involvement is not always consistent across departments and projects, and, as the CEAT report points out, the City does not have an overarching mission statement to guide actions related to engagement.

Current Infrastructure: The City employs many, varied means to include the public in government activities. For example, the City's public website includes a list and description of several Boards and Commissions through which people actively participate, and which require notice to the public of activities under their jurisdiction. Plan Cincinnati, the City's first comprehensive plan in around 30 years, was recently implemented, laying out a vision for the future of our city as developed by the public through extensive outreach by City administration. Priority Driven Budgeting was used to guide recent development of departmental budgets, based on ranking and rating of more than 400 programs within

City of Cincinnati government. The Cincinnati Police Department and Facilities Management, when exploring a new District 3 Headquarters, employed the Planning Department in coordinating community-

wide engagement efforts to select a site and to design the headquarters' public components. More recently, the Cincinnati Police Department has conducted a series of Town Hall Meetings in all Police Districts within the city, making direct connection with each community and its members' concerns regarding safety in their neighborhood. Very recently, the City launched Open Data Cincy, which actively makes government data more readily available to the public. Ongoing, the City stays connected through a Customer Service Request line, via phone and online, now including a user-friendly mobile app. The City further uses technology to keep in touch with the public through ongoing use of social media, a two way open communication that widely disseminates information and responds quickly to citizen feedback and inquiries.

The CEAT report includes *specific recommendations* of action steps for the City. Below is a list of the recommendations, along with an outline of the activities and estimated resources needed for each of the recommendations.

1. *Adopt a Citizen Engagement Policy and Principles.* The administration has reviewed the proposed "policy and principles". The administration defers to City Council to decide whether to adopt some version of the "policy and principles" through Motion, as a guide to the administration in developing the City's engagement policies and procedures. The administration recommends making some changes to the proposed document, including changing use of the word "citizen" to a more inclusive term. Also, perhaps add "responsibilities" where "rights" are discussed within the document, encouraging the public to exercise their responsibility to participate in engagement. Some of the costs associated with the ongoing adherence to actions related to those guidelines are outlined below, to the extent possible. *Development of the City's own Citizen Engagement Plan, and establishment of a Citizen Engagement advisory committee to assist in implementation, training and evaluation efforts.* Although the membership in the advisory committee would be voluntary, City staff time would be required to coordinate the activities of the committee as they interact with various City departments. If implemented across all City departments, one FTE would likely be fully engaged in related activities – developing and implementing a plan, conducting outreach & education, addressing community concerns, exploring opportunities and leading workgroups. An estimated \$65,000 plus associated employee benefits would be required.
2. *Create a Citizen Engagement Infrastructure.* As described above, the City currently engages the public in a variety of ways. However, there is room for improvement. The City would benefit from the development of an overarching Citizen Engagement Mission and guidelines for departments to follow when embarking on a project or program that will impact the public. Time and resources would be needed to develop a structure for City-wide policy and procedures for engagement. The FTE described above would be tasked with leading development and implementation of engagement infrastructure. That staff person would need to have some resources in order to coordinate with community members and City departments in a consistent and productive manner. Some of those estimated costs are outlined below.
3. *Create a Citizen Engagement Academy for Training and Development.* The City's Human Resources Department has a leadership development program for City staff. Additional resources would be needed to implement training to incorporate Community Engagement as part of the Leadership Training series. The cost is not known until the scope and depth of the training programs are established. At this time, based on past training efforts, an estimate would be \$35,000 annually. Also, the Cincinnati area is fortunate to have several higher education resources related to Leadership training and education, such as the Xavier Leadership Center. However, General Fund budgets for training have been drastically reduced over the past several years. In order to benefit from the wealth of training resources available, sufficient funds for such training would be need to be budgeted.

4. *Implement a Strategy on How to Use Social Media to Implement Citizen Engagement.* As described above, the City currently uses social media. However, the City would like to expand its use, and is currently constrained by resources. The cost of expanding the use of social media would be better known once a plan is enacted that spells out the role of social media in engagement efforts. However, based on past efforts, we estimate a need of \$20,000 for phone and electronic surveys, \$15,000 for technology and new media initiatives (development of an engagement webpage with interactive tools, in conjunction with ETS, construction and operation of an interactive app/comment board, and related video/photos).
5. *Develop an Annual Report Card on Results and Accountability for Citizen Engagement.* A report card may be created and disseminated through use of some online surveys to help minimize cost. However, time and resources would be needed to analyze and react to the information the City receives from the completed surveys. An estimated \$20,000 would be needed for collateral materials and annual report.

Going forward, the City plans to complete a structured analysis of how we currently engage with citizens in government - both across departments and from the top down. The administration recognizes that, while some of the recommendations in the CEAT report are reflected in the activities of the City's current engagement efforts, the City and the Cincinnati community will benefit from giving more structure to the City's mission and the agency wide methods for engagement. One tangible effort the administration is pursuing is to focus the attention toward Citizen Engagement as a core function of the Office of Communication under the City Manager's Office. Additional resources of \$25,000 are contained in the City Manager's Recommended FY 2015 Update Budget specifically dedicated to engagement within the Office of Communication. Additionally, the City Manager plans to change the title of the *Director of Communication* to *Director of Communication and Engagement*. The refocus of the Office and its top officer will act directly on the recommendations contained within the CEAT report, including improvement in "Citizen Engagement Infrastructure", coordination with the City's Human Resources Department. The City is also participating in a grant-funded state-wide initiative, Lean Ohio, a Lean Six Sigma management training program aimed at local governments. As part of the City's activities in that program, we are expected to identify specific challenges facing the City and apply the Lean Ohio principles to addressing those problems. Improving Community Engagement will be the Department of Communication's challenge to address during these sessions. Action steps will come out of these sessions that the Office of the City Manager will act to implement, including City-wide directives regarding engagement.

The City invites members of the CEAT and other groups to help the City identify and analyze more opportunities to use tools to connect with this city's people, and be more responsive to the public's vision for the future of their city. The administration looks forward to improving the City's relationship with the public, and learning from improved communication, so we may provide city services that address the true needs of the community. This report lays out estimated costs needed to implement the CEAT recommendations based on our best estimates at this time, but the actual resources and staff time associated with implementing improvements can be better determined once the scope of the City's plan is fleshed out with the Office of Communication and the Human Resources Department, along with City departments engaged in programs and projects that affect the public.

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CC: Elizabeth Wetzel, CMO Senior Project Coordinator