

Public Outreach and Engagement Committee

January 29, 2019
Meeting Notes

Members Attending:

Larry Nordvig, Chair, Powhatan County
Mike Gray, City of Richmond
Anne Marie Lauranzon, Hanover County
Frank Thornton, Henrico County
Chris Winslow, Chesterfield County

Others Attending:

Martha Shickle, RRPDC Executive Director
Katherine Busser, RRPDC Consultant
Julie Fry, RRPDC Staff/Recording Secretary

Mr. Nordvig called the meeting of the Public Outreach and Engagement Committee to order at approximately 2:35 p.m. He noted that as this meeting is considered an open meeting and subject to FOIA requests, Ms. Fry is in attendance to take notes of the committee's discussions. Mr. Nordvig asked Ms. Shickle to review today's meeting agenda.

Ms. Shickle reported that the new PlanRVA logo will be debuted at two upcoming events over the next few weeks – during the Virginia Association of Counties (VACo) Legislative Day activities this Thursday and as part of her presentation to the Ashland Community Leadership Program on February 7.

Ms. Shickle said before Ms. Busser begins her presentation on PlanRVA collaterals and an update on the website, she would like to review that during last month's meeting, examples of the website templates were provided. Also during last month's meeting, she asked members to begin to think about future objectives for the committee with regard to how to better engage the public. Ms. Shickle said that currently, the public is involved in public comment periods for some planning projects; however, the participation is limited.

During the Strategic Planning process, opportunities to better position the agency as a resource for the region were discussed. Ms. Shickle said it is also important to take steps that will position the agency to be more accessible to the general public and other regional organizations. The rebranding initiative was undertaken to reintroduce the agency to the general public as part of the agency's 50th anniversary celebrations.

As the website upgrade began, staff looked at websites of similar agencies and organizations to see how they presented information and solicited participation from the

community. The website should be a resource to access information and to learn more about the agency.

Ms. Shickle said she sees the role of the Public Outreach and Engagement Committee as a resource and guide for staff.

Ms. Lauranzon asked if previous materials and handouts can be provided to her as she was late joining the committee. She said she'd like to be able to see these materials to gain more background information on the work that has been completed previously. Ms. Busser said she can send these documents to Ms. Lauranzon. Ms. Busser noted that a link to the new website will not be available until the soft launch, and then it will be made available to a select group of people to test and provide feedback.

Mr. Nordvig said he will be glad to meet with Ms. Lauranzon to bring her up to date on the committee's work. He also asked how the general community can be steered to the new website when it becomes live.

Ms. Shickle said that she hopes the website will be used by the general public to learn more about regional cooperation. She said the localities will each have a page associated with the website on which they can share stories of mutual cooperation. The agency needs to be seen as a place where regional leaders meet to discuss and solve regional issues and concerns.

Ms. Lauranzon noted that any website should be used to provide information.

Other discussion points included:

- website should promote ways for the general public to become involved in regional events and initiatives
- website should be a place for those people who don't attend public meetings to get information
- need to determine how to drive people to the website
- focus now is on developing content; website promotion will come later
- the website can be used as a town meeting forum
- there should be information on how all of the jurisdictions cooperate with one another on a routine basis

Ms. Shickle said she would like to move on to allow Ms. Busser time to present examples of the website collaterals. She noted that Ms. Busser volunteered with the agency over the course of several months to facilitate development of the Strategic Plan. Last year, Ms. Shickle invited Ms. Busser to join the agency staff in order to help implement parts of the Strategic Plan – website upgrade and IT conversion.

Ms. Busser said as the website has been built, all of the brand system elements have also been developed. A sheet was provided that illustrates the font that will be used throughout the website and all other media. Ms. Busser also provided examples of the

color palette, which will be used throughout the website to tie all aspects of the agency together. The color palette will also bleed over into the collateral media – letterhead, business cards, Word documents, etc. Ms. Shickle added that currently there is no consistency in how any materials are presented.

Ms. Busser said all presentations must be consistent in order to drive the agency's identity. Examples of the website templates were provided to show how the main navigation bar stays in place at the top of each page. As site visitors go to other locations on the site from the home page, there are specific navigation bars on the left side. The color palette follows through the site. Ms. Busser pointed out that work has been done to ensure that all TPO-related information is presented in a way that will more easily provide information.

Mr. Winslow asked about the photo shown on the home page. He asked if this will be static. Ms. Busser said the home page will offer a photo carousel that will show each jurisdiction. These photos will be provided by each of the jurisdictions. There will also be a locality-specific page that will offer a place to highlight events and news in each locality. Ms. Busser pointed out that a lot of time was spent making sure that the site will be compliant with all state and federal regulations regarding readability, etc.

Ms. Shickle added that a Regional Communicators Roundtable meets quarterly to share best practices and information. Each of the localities is represented on the Roundtable.

Ms. Lauranzon asked if content for the website is still being written. Ms. Busser said that was correct. She said content is being written in Google Docs. Ms. Busser added that the respective Chairs of the RRPDC and RRTPO are being asked to write a welcome message that will tell visitors about the organization and its role in the region. A soft launch of the website will be initiated in March. A select group of stakeholders will be asked to provide feedback on the website.

Ms. Busser moved on to provide examples of the RRTPO and Emergency Management logos. She pointed out the associated icons that will be used with each subordinated section. There are four potential logos for the TPO. The executive committee of the Central Virginia Emergency Management Alliance (CVEMA) worked to select its new logo and icons. There are 23 localities in the Alliance. Focus was given to all of the workshops provided around the region by the Alliance. Ms. Busser pointed out that there were some copyright challenges with the icons, so care was taken to avoid any conflicts. She noted that West Cary Group also had icons that were available for use.

Ms. Shickle said she would like for the committee to review the proposed TPO logos and to make a recommendation that can be passed along to the TPO Executive Committee during the February 7 meeting. She said all of the CVEMA stakeholders had input as that new logo was developed.

Ms. Busser said the selected font and color palette carry through to both of the pages. The font is a universal font and meets all requirements for readability, translation, etc.

She said this is a more modern font and is available in PC and MAC versions. She said staff is recommending the TPO logo on the top left. She said the icon is supposed to mimic the Google map pin.

Mr. Nordvig said he preferred the TPO logo on the bottom left. Mr. Winslow said he also preferred the logo on the bottom left; he said he thought the pin was too abstract. Each of the other committee members agreed that the bottom left logo was preferred.

Ms. Shickle said the goal for a logo is to be easily recognizable in the region.

Ms. Lauranzon pointed out that the general public should not have to think about a logo; it should be easily recognizable. She said if the upper left logo looked more like the Google map pin, it could work. Mr. Nordvig recommended that the upper left logo be revised to make it look more like the Google map pin and suggested it could be in two colors.

Ms. Shickle said the two logos on the left can be shown to the TPO Executive Committee. She said she did not believe the TPO Board needed to vote on which logo to use. If they opt to vote on the choice, the vote will need to be taken in March to provide advance notice.

Mr. Nordvig suggested that the Public Outreach and Engagement Committee's recommendation of the logo on the bottom left should be presented to the TPO Executive Committee. Ms. Busser said the logo on the top left can be revised and both logos presented with the notation that the Public Outreach and Engagement Committee is recommending the bottom left logo. Ms. Busser also noted that on the TPO web page, information will be provided that explains about Metropolitan Planning Organizations.

Ms. Shickle said she would like some feedback from the committee on meeting frequency and structure. She said once the website is finalized, the committee will need to move on to other tasks.

Ms. Busser said a link to the new website will be provided to committee members for the soft launch. She said feedback on how to reach the general public and how to engage them in regional projects will be requested.

Ms. Shickle said there are a couple of issues on TPO membership being discussed at this time. The makeup of the Community Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC) is also being reviewed. She said there are more requirements for public outreach associated with the TPO. She said she would like the Public Outreach and Engagement Committee to be involved in TPO-related public participation discussions in order to provide consistency between the PDC and TPO and how to leverage that relationship with other organizations.

Mr. Winslow asked if the current public participation plan is on the RRPDC website. Ms. Shickle said it is posted. Mr. Winslow said he felt committee members should review the

plan and be prepared to discuss it at the next meeting. Ms. Shickle said many of the localities have good newsletters, and suggestions on what tools are more effective in the localities to reach out to their constituents will be appreciated. Mr. Winslow said the use of video has been shown to be more effective. Ms. Shickle said the agency's budget is limited and there is no dedicated communications person on staff.

Ms. Lauranzon said clear, concise messaging works best. She said a communications plan should be developed that will offer suggestions on how to get the message out to the general public. Ms. Shickle noted that many of the PDC members don't know what the agency does or how it interacts within the region. Ms. Lauranzon recommended that target audiences be identified and then the vehicles to reach those audiences can be developed.

Mr. Gray said members need an effective elevator speech that they can use whenever they're out at other events, meetings, and functions. Ms. Shickle said as content is being written for the website, a concise message for members to use can also be developed.

Mr. Nordvig asked members if there is a reason for the committee to meet prior to the soft launch of the website. Mr. Winslow said he thought members should be prepared to work on a communications plan at the next meeting.

Mr. Nordvig said he thought the committee should meet in March to provide feedback on the website, to offer ideas for a communications plan, and development of an elevator speech. He said subject matter that appeals to the average citizen is what will grab their attention. Ms. Lauranzon added that key benefits and advantages need to be communicated that can answer the question, "Why should I care?"

Ms. Busser said the Emergency Management group was asked to develop a calendar for the year that can highlight a different subject on preparedness each month.

Mr. Gray said he felt emphasis needs to be placed on how the localities within the region cooperate on a routine basis. Instead of focusing on an audience of CAOs/Managers and elected officials, focus should be placed on constituents. Ms. Lauranzon added that there should be a basic message that will resonate with everyone.

Ms. Shickle asked members when they would like to hold their next meeting. It was decided that the committee will meet again on Tuesday, March 26, at 2:30 p.m. at the RRPDC office.

As there was no other business to discuss, Mr. Nordvig adjourned the meeting at approximately 4:00 p.m.