

**DATE:** September 16, 2016  
**TO:** Mayor and City Council  
**FROM:** Laura Newman, City Administrator

**SUBJECT:** PROPOSAL TO HIRE A COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

One of the first tasks requested from the new City Administrator was to determine whether the City needed a communication position. After researching Batavia's needs and meeting with Geneva's Communication Coordinator, it is clear that this position would greatly benefit the City.

### Background

The explosion of social media as a means of obtaining information is a real game changer for municipal government. No longer is the city website a primary means of obtaining information, people choosing instead to react to and take as fact information, and more importantly, misinformation which has been published on social media sites. No City employee has time to monitor these streams of communication and misinformation, if unanswered, takes on a life and false validity when not contradicted. (See, for instance, the "Goose Abuse" scenario.)

Furthermore, constituents expect that information will be provided directly to them in a place that they regularly seek such information rather having to go search it out. Not only the format, but the timeframe within which the public expects to be informed on matters has been significantly reduced. All of these conditions have placed a great deal of burden on all of the City's departments to try to apportion some of their limited resources toward providing communication of items of importance to the public. Unfortunately, they can barely keep up with the public demand for such information.

Having a position dedicated to City communications would address the issues previously mentioned and provide a valuable service to the community. Right now, internal staff can barely keep up with minimal communication efforts while trying to stay on top of their primary responsibilities. Due to this situation, we receive frequent complaints from the public that our level of communication is inadequate.

### Analysis

I recently asked Department Heads how a dedicated communications professional could assist their departments to improve City services and here are some of the responses that I received:

1. The City Website and Social Media Pages

The City recently improved the look of the City website but without someone dedicated to making it user friendly and keeping the information up to date, the public loses confidence in it as a source of

information. One of the Communications Coordinator's primary responsibilities would be the website, not only design of the website and keeping the information fresh and consistent, but also to monitor the analytics such as how often the website is visited and what information are those visitors looking for. A Communications Coordinator would also be able to create campaigns that encourage the public to sign up to receive automated messages from the City so that they can be informed of major events such as power outages and street closures.

The City's presence on social media today is very limited. With the addition of a Communication Coordinator, information from the City website will also be shared on social media outlets where it can pop up in users' newsfeeds and be available for them to share with their connections, thus multiplying the number of people with whom information is shared.

Another important aspect of the Communication Coordinator position will be to monitor social media conversations about the City. Where public concern is expressed on these media, the information can be routed to the appropriate City department. If incorrect information is being shared, users can be directed to City resources for correct information.

## 2. Public Information Officer

The Communication Coordinator would act as the City's primary point of contact for various external media sources such as newspapers, radio and television stations. This position would create frequent press releases that would be submitted to various outlets as well as providing fresh content to the City's website and social media sites.

## 3. Create Information Campaigns and Promotional Materials

This position would be responsible for creating information campaigns aimed at getting important information to appropriate parties. An example would be getting citizens to sign up for email notifications on the City website so that they can receive personal notification of important events. At this time, there are still only a small fraction of citizens who have signed up for this service. Information campaigns can also be created that teach interested parties about services available such as how to pay your bills online or how to apply for a construction permit.

When the City embarks on long term projects, like the One Washington Place development, the Communications Coordinator can manage all aspects of communication about the project to keep the public informed. Even where a project is short term, such as a temporary road closure, advanced communication can go out to affected residents.

There is a need to create materials that promote our City to different constituencies such as potential employees, residents or businesses. The Communications Coordinator will have both photography and graphic design skills to design these materials. In addition, this position can take photographs at City events to build a library of photos that can be used on the website and social media sites to attract interest in our community.

#### 4. Emergency Communications

Currently, the City uses its outgoing recorded message to provide information to the public about emergencies such as power outages. The Communications Coordinator will develop a program to reach citizens more efficiently and provide more detailed information.

#### Summary

The above-listed items are some of the more important aspects of the Communications Coordinator position. A more detailed job description is attached which also outlines the required qualifications for a candidate for this position. The position would report to the City Administrator and the starting salary is expected to be 57,329 to \$79,049, however, we expect to be able to hire in the \$57,329 - \$67,320 (midpoint) range.

#### Requested Action

This is not a budgeted position for 2016. However, due to the urgency of the City's need for this position, staff is requesting approval to hire this position immediately.



## COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR – Position Description

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**Department/Division:** Administration  
**Employment Status:** Full-time  
**Salary Grade:** 12  
**FLSA:** Exempt  
**Union:** N/A  
**Employment Commission:** N/A  
**Date Approved:**

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### I. POSITION SUMMARY

Under the general supervision of the City Administrator, this professional position is responsible for all aspects of City's communication plan. The City has special responsibilities regarding the collection and dissemination of information, and its dealing with third parties must be done so in a spirit of openness and desire for transparency. The variety of communication mechanisms places more importance on the need for accuracy and clarity, and while technology can be helpful, the City must still maintain a strong communication network with all segments of the community. The City's communication avenues may include social media outlets, e-news, BATV, website, freedom of information requests, press releases and local and state organizations.

In supporting the City's management team, this position performs a wide variety of responsible, complex and confidential administrative duties in support of the City Administrator; performs duties that require considerable confidentiality, initiative, tact, mature and independent judgment; strong interpersonal and organizational skills; coordinates meetings and activities with other departments and outside agencies.

### II. SUPERVISION RECEIVED/EXERCISED

This position serves under the direct supervision of the City Administrator. This position has no direct supervision of staff but may give direction regarding project work to other departments from time to time through Department Heads.

### III. ESSENTIAL DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES

- Determines with the City Administrator, the annual and future goals and objectives of the City's Communications initiative in support of the Strategic Plan.
- Develops communication strategies which may include conducting research, increasing website visibility of content, communicating with the media and writing content. These strategies will effectively and efficiently deliver the city's message and support and promote

the city's mission and key beliefs.

- Maintain knowledge of emerging modes of communication and assess their applicability to and/or inclusion in City's communication program. Maintain open lines of communication with all community organizations provide prompt responses to requests for public information about the city.
- Coordinate the development and maintenance of the city's website, Intranet and other information platforms as the City deems appropriate such as Twitter and Facebook to ensure an efficient, effective, user-friendly information source.
- Serve as the City's primary Freedom of Information Act officer and coordinate the response of FOIA requests through the responsible departments in the manner defined by law.
- Coordinate the writing and development of surveys, newsletters, annual reports, informational brochures, messages, videos and presentations for distribution to the public. Update existing and new brochures/letters/forms as needed.
- Act as the spokesperson for the city. Serve as a liaison between the city and news media and develop news releases for distribution. Monitor and inform city administration of pertinent city media coverage and municipal-related media coverage.
- Act as the City's official photographer and is responsible for the archiving of the photographs taken. Develops and maintains a photo library of City activities, programs, services, special events and facilities. The responsibility includes serving as the photographer, editing digital photographs and establishing a City catalog of photos and graphic images.
- Serve as a resource to, and work with, department heads to communicate department-specific programs/activities to the public.
- Work in conjunction with other department leaders to coordinate crisis management communications for the city.
- When determined appropriate, attend City Council and COW meetings to communicate communication initiatives to the residents and City Council and gather information and public input at the meetings. Represent the city by serving on various community and internal committees/boards such as Special Events.
- Assist the City's Economic Development Program Director and/or Consultant in developing and executing marketing plans, programs and initiatives. Additionally support Economic Development through the website page(s) on tasks such as updating the demographic and socio-economic data, inventory of available commercial and industrial properties and the business recruiting and retention incentive programs.
- Promote the city and its departments through various award and recognition programs at the city, county, state and national levels.
- Performs other duties as assigned.

#### **IV. MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS – EDUCATION & EXPERIENCE**

Graduation from a four-year college or university with a bachelor's degree in communications, journalism, marketing and/ or business administration. A minimum of three (3) years of experience in communications and/or marketing or any equivalent combination of education and experience which provides necessary knowledge, abilities, and skills.

#### **V. MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS - KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS & ABILITIES**

- Significant experience in municipal community relations, public relations, public/governmental affairs and/or journalism preferred.
- Ability to establish and maintain an effective working relationship with elected officials, employees, agencies, other governmental units and the public using strong interpersonal communication skill.
- Ability to work independently with initiative to complete both long-term and short-term projects under a deadline.
- Photography, video experience preferred.
- Demonstrated ability to handle confidential material and information in an ethical, professional manner.
- Ability to speak and communicate clearly in an office environment and successfully communicate through various social media outlets.
- Ability to speak and make presentations effectively before groups of employees, elected officials or residents
- Ability to compose routine correspondence and routine reports in a clear, concise, logical, and effective manner, utilizing proper grammar, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, and tone.
- Ability to collect, logically organizes, and analyze information, and make appropriate decisions or recommendations within scope of position responsibilities.
- Ability to solve problems and exercise good sound judgment independently.
- Ability to accurately proofread and edit documents for correct grammar, spelling, sentence structure, punctuation, tone and content.
- Ability to effectively utilize Microsoft Office products (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Publisher) standard features to create properly designed and formatted documents/flyers/brochures and maintain calendar and communication.

- Ability to perform moderately complex mathematical calculations, including the ability to add, subtract, multiply, and divide in all units of measure, using whole numbers, common fractions, and decimals, and to compute percentages,
- Ability and willingness to respond to sensitive situations twenty-four (24) hours a day, seven (7) days a week, and to carry a wireless communication device.

## **VI. SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS/QUALIFICATIONS**

State of Illinois Class “B” Driver’s License.

## **VII. PHYSICAL DEMANDS**

The physical demands described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

Light physical activity performing non-strenuous daily activities of a productive/technical nature at moderate noise levels in a well-lighted, heated and/or air-conditioned indoor office setting with adequate ventilation, including:

1. Physical ability to sit, stand, walk, climb, balance, stoop, kneel or crouch.
2. Physical ability to reach items with arms and hands and manual dexterity and fine motor skills sufficient to perform all essential and additional job functions and basic requirements listed above.
3. Physical ability to hear ordinary conversation, such as questions from residents, as well as other sounds, such as the telephone ringing, etc.
4. Ability to see close, at a distance, and with peripheral vision as well as to adjust vision focus.
5. Work is performed mostly in an office setting, but the position also requires the employee to drive to visit other City facilities as well as to appear outdoors and indoors at various public functions.
6. The employee is occasionally required to walk, and lift and/or move up to 25 pounds.

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**This job description should not be interpreted as all-inclusive or as an employment agreement between the employer and employee. It is intended to identify the essential functions and requirements of this job and is subject to change as the needs of the employer and requirements of the job change. Incumbents may be required to perform job-related responsibilities and tasks other than those stated in this specification. Any essential function of this position will be evaluated should an incumbent/applicant be unable to**

**perform the function due to a disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Reasonable accommodation for the specific disability will be made for the incumbent/applicant when possible.**

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Authorization:

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Human Resources Director

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Date

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City Administrator

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Date

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