

W.S.D.

## Agenda Cover Memorandum

**Agenda Date:** JANUARY 25, 2006

**To:** Board of County Commissioners

**Department:** County Administration/Public Information

**Presented By:** Melinda Kletzok

**Subject:** In the matter of approving a Lane County Public Information Program and Budget

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I. **DISCUSSION:**

The Board of County Commissioners will review Lane County's Public Information Program. The program implements steps outlined in Lane County Strategic Objective Number 2, and is designed to help citizens become knowledgeable about their County government services, programs and budget.

II. **ISSUE/PROBLEM:**

The County projects a continuing budget deficit beginning in fiscal year 2007-08 and extending throughout the next decade. This situation is compounded by significant prior budget cuts over nearly two decades. Local quality of life is affected.

It is important Lane County bridge the wide information gaps in citizen understanding of the issues that have been identified by the Board of Commissioners, task forces, and citizen surveys. Plans to address this information deficit are outlined in Lane County's Strategic Objective Number 2.

*Objective 2: Engage and inform citizens about Lane County Government services.*

III. **DISCUSSION:**

**A. Background**

In recognition of the valuable role communication plays in democratic government and public institutions, the Board of Commissioners adopted the first public information plan in 1997 and an updated plan in 2002. Since that time, Lane County has followed a strategy of using mainly earned media and Website information to educate the public.

Virtually every step of the most recently adopted communications plan has been completed. Nonetheless, a serious communications gap continues to exist between the actual state of county programs and public awareness of the deterioration of services from their government. The evidence shows an earned media-only approach is not sufficient to circumvent a citizen information deficit.

## **B. Analysis**

Given Lane County's economic and service challenges in the coming years, Lane County has a responsibility to provide more extensive information outreach to the community.

The need for a more exhaustive public information program has been substantiated by and included in many recommendations from:

- Future Focus Task Force (1998)
- Lane County's Strategic Plan (2001)
- Lane County Commissioners (Strategic Objective 2, 2005)
- Lane County's internal management team (Strategic Objective 2, 2005)
- Service Stabilization Task Force (2004)
- City County Public Safety Task Force (2005)
- Citizen surveys (informal and formal, 2001-2005)
- Public hearing testimony (2005)
- Town hall meeting requests (2005)
- Media reports and editorials (2005)

Good governance requires Lane County provide more informative, intense, and engaging communications to help citizens become knowledgeable about their County government. Community institutions exist to deliver services to the general population by public consent. In order to gain and retain that confidence by the citizenry in their government, the institution must maintain a high degree of public communications.

Today, media and communications developments have enabled people to get their information from many different sources and thus they are deluged with millions of messages each day. Most of those messages are ignored or filtered out. That's why major institutions communicate with their public using many different channels and methods. Without this level of communication, the public is left without critical information it needs for understanding, responding to issues, and decision making.

**A plan has been created to provide an intense, high-profile, and broad scope of information to the public.** This will require leadership be actively engaged in providing content, serving as message delivery channels in the community, and working in concert to help accomplish the goals of Lane County's public information plan.

The plan is comprehensive and rather than hiring additional staff, which would have a long term cost, the recommended solution is to retain local services to temporarily augment Lane County's internal staffing. Resources must also be secured for information materials, production, and placement. A preliminary estimate for the entire program and staffing is \$250,000 - \$300,000. Of that, \$50,000 has already been approved in the existing Lane County budget.

The proposed Public Information Plan addresses guidelines set by Lane County's Strategic Objectives. Basic strategies will include three main components:

- Planning, management and coordination of information to the public and media outreach (internal and external)
- Message and creative development to communicate effectively with the public
- Community Outreach (in-person presentations to individuals, groups and other agencies)

### **PROPOSED PUBLIC INFORMATION PLAN**

#### ***Planning, management and coordination of information to the public and media outreach (internal and external)***

Use existing PIO/IGR structure to provide:

- Plan management and coordination
- Communication with Lane County employees
- News story development/news conferences
- Op-eds
- Editorial Board meetings
- Talk radio/TV
- Internet Site
- Metro TV presence (get costs)
- FAQs, info

#### ***Message and creative development***

- Message planning, timeline strategy, community feedback, consulting (six months)
- Visuals
- Public service announcements and paid advertising
- 5 - minute video
- Printed materials

#### ***Community Outreach***

- Separate strategies for urban and rural
- Organize informational meetings
- Identify groups (Chambers, granges, neighborhoods and civic)
- Schedule presentations

- Outreach events and materials
- Feedback strategy

**Note:** Ideally, an annual or periodic survey of public perceptions, awareness, and priorities would help the County track the effectiveness of its information efforts. Cost of a formal survey runs \$10,000-15,000.

**C. Alternatives/Options**

1. Adopt the Plan and Budget
2. Modify the plan/and or budget
3. Reject the Plan

**D. Recommendation:**

Option 1. Adopt the plan, and in subsequent years sustain communications outreach. Review the plan and budget annually.

**E. Timing**

1. Upon approval, the plan would be implemented as outlined in the plan's timeline.

**F. Funding –**

1. Lane County departments have been asked to reduce expenditures in materials and services sufficient to cover the proposed expenditure.

**IV. IMPLEMENTATION/FOLLOW-UP**

A Strategic Communications Team (formed in accordance with guidelines in the Lane County Strategic Objectives) will keep the board informed of the plan's progress each six weeks and through weekly updates by the Public Information Officer.

**V. ATTACHMENTS**

- 1) Plan including timeline

IN THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
OF LANE COUNTY, OREGON

ORDER NO. ) IN THE MATTER OF APPROVING  
) A LANE COUNTY PUBLIC INFORMATION  
) PROGRAM AND BUDGET

WHEREAS, Lane County Government operates by consent of citizens; and

WHEREAS, a wide information gap in citizen understanding of Lane County Government has been identified by the government, citizens, and many other community stakeholders; and

WHEREAS, The Board of Commissioners has planned through Lane County Strategic Objective Number 2 to bridge the information gap with a public information effort; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners has reviewed this plan and recommends its adoption and funding of up to \$250,000 in County lapse money from all departments to be applied to the plan's implementation;

NOW, THEREFORE IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the Public Information Plan proposed be adopted and the identified budget approved.

Dated this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2006.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair, Lane County Board of  
Commissioners

# Public Information Plan 2006

## *Engaging and Informing Citizens*

Lane County anticipates a substantial budget deficit beginning fiscal year 2007-08 and extending through the next decade. The shortfall of resources is on top of reductions during the past two decades, which have diminished the capacity of county government to provide safe, healthy and viable community conditions.

In order for Lane County Government to enhance citizen understanding of resource issues identified by the Board of Commissioners, task forces, and citizen surveys, the Board is considering an expanded public information initiative during the next six to 10 months. The basis for public information initiatives is contained in Lane County's Strategic Plan as well as Lane County Strategic Objective Number 2.

*Objective 2: Engage and inform citizens about Lane County Government services.*

### **Communications a Key Responsibility for Lane County Government**

In recognition of the valuable role communication plays in representative government and public institutions, the Board of Commissioners adopted the first public information plan in 1997 and an updated plan in 2002. Since then, Lane County relied heavily on media and Website information to inform the public.

Because Lane County faces serious funding and service challenges in the coming years, Lane County has a responsibility to intensify efforts to reach the community with information.

Mass media, personal media, and electronic/digital communications enable citizens to get information from many different sources. Many feel deluged with hundreds of messages each day. Many of those messages are ignored or filtered out. Therefore, many large institutions communicate with their constituents, clients and stakeholders using many different channels and methods. Without an intense level of communication, the public lacks critical information it needs for understanding, responding to issues, and making decisions.

**The following plan will provide a high-profile, broad scope of information to the public.**

# PUBLIC INFORMATION PLAN

## Goal

To Engage and Inform Citizens about Lane County Government Services

## Objective

To increase the public's awareness and understanding of Lane County Government services, programs and funding status by December 31, 2006.

## Basic Strategies

- Planning, management and coordination of information to the public and media outreach (internal and external)
- Message and creative development to communicate effectively with the public
- Community Outreach (in-person presentations to individuals, groups and other agencies)

## TACTICS

### *Planning, management and coordination of information to the public and media outreach (internal and external)*

Use existing PIO/IGR structure to provide:

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- Separate strategies for urban and rural
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- Schedule presentations
- Outreach events and materials
- Feedback strategy

A Strategic Communications Team (formed in accordance with guidelines in the Lane County Strategic Objectives) will keep the Lane County Board of Commissioners informed of the plan's progress each six weeks and through weekly updates by the Public Information Officer.

#### **MEASUREMENT**

Lane County has many informal and some formal survey results indicating a very low level of public awareness about Lane County programs, services and budget situation. Ideally, an annual or periodic survey of public perceptions, awareness, and priorities would help the County more effectively track the results of its information efforts. Cost of a formal survey runs \$10,000-15,000.



**Lane County Public Information Timeline  
January 24, 2006**

Task	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
<b>Planning/Strategies</b>												
Manage plan implementation												
Plan messages												
Finalize timeline & strategy											2007	2007
Develop consistent theme & visuals												
Create strategies to engage citizens												
Develop engaging feedback opportunities												
Share messages with county staff												
Consulting services												
<b>Employee Communication</b>												
Distribute existing materials												
Include articles in Fast Lane												
Keep staff informed in timely manner												
Hold interactive/cascading meetings												
<b>News Media</b>												
Respond to media inquiries												
Provide regular story ideas/four opportunities												
Meet with editors/reporters												
Place op-eds and commentaries												
Coordinate news conferences												
Schedule appearances on talk programs												
<b>Web Communication</b>												
Create content												
Provide feedback loop												
Put content online												
Update FAQs												
Update with new information												

Coding: Green represents work done by existing PIO/IGR structure. Blue represents work done by consultants. All work will be under the supervision of the Strategic Communications Team.

Task	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N
<b>Public Service Announcements</b>											
Write/develop storyboards											
Approach media about interest											
Produce announcements											
Negotiate placements with media											
PSAs run											2007
<b>Video</b>											
Write script/develop storyboards											
Shoot											
Produce											
Distribute (web, Metro TV, outreach)											
<b>Printed materials</b>											
Determine types & content/size											
Write copy											
Produce											
Print											
Distribute											
<b>Community Outreach Activities</b>											
Develop schedule for meetings											
Organize meetings											
Identify organizations for presentations											
Schedule presentations											
Write articles for organization publications											
Distribute articles to organizations											
Begin presentations											

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