



City of Valdez Newsletter Plan

Prepared by Roxanne Murphy, Assistant City Manager

Last Updated March 9, 2021

Purpose

Valdez community members, the Valdez City Council and others have expressed a desire for the city to improve community outreach. This plan aims to address this need in an ongoing way, with the hope of gaining community support and involvement. The newsletter will be instrumental in gathering statistical information regarding what community members will select to read, and informal surveys and the like will be included, to inform a communications plan regarding what community members want to know from the city and how they would like to receive this information.

Audience

The primary audience for these endeavors are any City of Valdez residents. Other key audiences that the newsletter efforts will support include the Valdez City Council, Administration and Staff.

Timeline

Planning for the newsletter and outreach about it will occur through March and the newsletter will likely start to be published in mid-April.

Message

The primary messages will include updates regarding current topics and endeavors including Valdez City Council decisions, upcoming events, and the current work of Administration and City of Valdez Departments.

Channels of Communication

The initial tactic to improve this outreach will be a bi-weekly online newsletter that community members can opt in and out of electronically. Community members will be able to simply sign up for the newsletter in the same place on our city website where they can opt in for text messages and updates from other Valdez departments or programs. This will be an opportunity to provide outreach about all such Valdez subscription opportunities. This newsletter will be a tested prototype that would continue if successful.

Newsletter Management

The newsletter manager and editor will be Roxanne Murphy, who will partner with staff to create and publish stories and also serve as an ombudsman for any community questions or comments. As a backup, Executive Assistant Brianne Skilbred will be trained on how to manage and publish the newsletter. Mark Detter and Brianne will offer final reviews before the newsletter is published.



Resources

Information Technology has helped with purchasing the online service for this newsletter within their department 2021 department funding and convened training for staff regarding how to use the service. The service expense was \$3,204 for initial setup and training, and it will cost \$2,100 annually thereafter. The service will help any other city department that wants to create a newsletter, and all archives will be stored within the City of Valdez website, and be within our city's document retention protocols.

The primary resources for this service will be city staff and key decisions from the City Council. Another consistent resource will be the regular Directors Meetings and meeting minutes that are sent to all staff will be turned into stories or updates through the newsletter. The newsletter will also benefit outreach regarding events, projects, and community involvement opportunities, along with other topics of interest between our government and the community.

Benefits

Community members have expressed that they miss having a community newspaper. This newsletter will focus on at least creating news about what's going on with within the Valdez municipality.

The newsletter will create another way to get the word out about anything the government needs to communicate about.

Very rarely does the city celebrate key decisions, major accomplishments or milestones and the newsletter will help with announcing such information.

It can also be a benefit during the current pandemic.

The service the city has purchased for the newsletter will provide great statistics about what readers choose to view. That information will be used to improve the newsletter in an ongoing way, and this will help with understanding what the overall City of Valdez should be communicating more about. This information will be instrumental to create and overall communications plan.

The newsletter will also help push out emergency information or newsflashes that need immediate attention.

Obstacles

It will likely be a challenge to get the word out to our community about this newsletter, but the hope is that if the content is informative enough that community members will eventually encourage one another to sign up for the newsletter.

It may be a challenge to have content every other week, but there is a story to be told within just about every department and initiative, and matters that we need to remind the community about. Some weeks may just include fewer headlines. The publishing frequency of the newsletter will be reviewed in an ongoing way.

Another challenge is that there are members of our community who do not have internet access or e-mail. Printed copies of the newsletter will be available at the Front Desk of City Hall for anyone who does not have internet access.



To not compete with the KVAK weekly e-mail sent on Mondays, the City of Valdez newsletter will be e-mailed any other day of the week.

There will likely be community members who have questions, and Roxanne will serve as an ombudsman to respond to questions where appropriate, or send the questions or thoughts to the respective departments and staff.

Roxanne will also reach out regularly to departments and staff to seek reviews for newsletter content, and it will be conveyed that directors and any other staff should keep an eye out for such requests and the importance of providing edits and approvals. It will be a challenge for staff to respond to such outreach, but this could also become an opportunity to consistently improve the relationship between city staff and our community.

Planning for the newsletter and outreach will continually be carefully coordinated with Allie Ferko and her Public Information Officer responsibilities to ensure that the newsletter will not usurp PIO efforts, and will be another way to create outreach about PIO updates and efforts.

In keeping with municipal protocol, the newsletter will not be directly involved with municipal elections or the like, but it could include things like reminders to vote, how to vote and if requested or pertinent, the results of local elections. Other newsletter content guidelines will be developed and published.

Media Partnership and Initial Newsletter Rollout

Administration will work with the Clerk's Office to publish a news release about the newsletter, and will partner with KVAK and KCHU to create advertising to announce the rollout of it. A flyer announcing the newsletter will be posted around Valdez, information about it will be announced via City of Valdez social media and during City Council meetings. Outreach about it will also go to every City of Valdez board, commission and be sent to the business contact list managed by Economic Development. The outreach will include that printed copies of the newsletter can be picked up at the Front Desk of City Hall.

Evaluation Considerations

Newsletter data will be used to improve the stories and the prioritization of them from the top to the bottom of the newsletter. Roxanne will be listed as the contact for any feedback about the newsletter, anytime community members want to provide it. Newsletter surveys and the like will help with gauging effectiveness, continuing service delivery and how community members want to receive news or updates. Administration will also routinely ask community members, boards or commissions if they have any feedback about the newsletter. Reports will be provided to the Valdez City Council about readership and any effectiveness of the newsletter. If the newsletter proves to be less or ineffective, it will be ensured that newsletter would come to an end, as needed.