

City of Piedmont
COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

DATE: December 15, 2025

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Rosanna Bayon Moore, City Administrator

SUBJECT: Informational Update on the City Communications Program

RECOMMENDATION

Receive an informational report on the City's Communications Program.

SUMMARY

Since its establishment in the FY2021-22 budget cycle, the Communications Program has continued to evolve to meet the City's growing needs for timely public information, accessible multimedia communications, and meaningful public engagement. Guided by a multi-year development roadmap presented to City Council in April 2023, the City has made significant progress in establishing modern public information systems, developing multimedia capabilities, and enhancing public engagement.

This report provides an overview of current program functions, describes the Program's ongoing development, and outlines major initiatives planned for the coming year. Key outcomes and performance indicators will be shared in the presentation to Council.

BACKGROUND

The City Council established a Communications Program Manager role in the FY2021-22 budget cycle to strengthen public information, enhance transparency, and expand opportunities for residents to engage with City services and major initiatives. Previously, the City did not have a centralized communications function. The Communications Program Manager position was filled in August 2022. Since that time, the Program's responsibilities have broadened. As major City projects and policy initiatives increasingly require opportunities for meaningful resident participation, public engagement naturally emerged as an area of focus and was formally added to the Communications Officer classification in October 2025.

Program Scope

The Communications Program now encompasses four interconnected areas of work, each contributing to transparency, resident understanding, and effective communication about City services and initiatives.

- **Public Information:** Providing timely, accurate, and accessible information to residents about City decisions, services, and programs through news releases, city website, media relations, email newsletters, and issue- and project-based communication plans.

- **Digital media:** Using digital and multimedia tools to make complex information clearer and more accessible. This work area includes video storytelling and project updates, visual explainers and graphics, digital asset libraries, and social media communications. Digital media expands the reach of City messaging beyond traditional civic participants and meets residents' evolving communication preferences.
- **Public engagement:** Designing and implementing public engagement strategies that help residents understand issues, explore tradeoffs, and provide meaningful input. This includes creating and implementing engagement plans, as well as facilitating surveys, workshops, open houses, and other engagement tools. The addition of this function to the Communications Program reflects the City's commitment to accessible, meaningful, and well-structured engagement processes.
- **Broadcast operations:** Ensures that public meetings are reliably accessible to all residents through live and recorded coverage of City Council and Commission meetings, production support for public meetings, and oversight of KCOM technical systems and broadcast infrastructure. This function supports open government and ensures that residents can follow City decision-making regardless of their ability to attend in person.

In addition to day-to-day public information, digital media, and engagement activities, the Communications Program provides strategic functions that ensure clarity, consistency, and effective public understanding across departments. These include:

- **Long-range communications planning** for major projects and initiatives, identifying messaging needs and potential risks early in the process.
- **Narrative development and issue framing** to help residents understand complex or long-term topics in clear, accessible terms.
- **Collaborating with departments to align communications with organizational goals**, working to understand long-term priorities and identifying opportunities where communication efforts can meaningfully advance those objectives.
- **Guidance on sensitive or high-impact topics**, including recommendations on tone, timing, and public expectations.

The program is staffed by a Communications Officer, a full-time Video Communications Specialist/TV Station Manager, and four part-time video technicians who together provide the capacity needed to support meeting broadcasts and multimedia production.

DISCUSSION

A three-phase maturity roadmap for the Communications Program was presented to City Council in April 2023:

- **Phase 1 – Infrastructure:** Establish a steady cadence of public information and develop core tools, templates, workflows.
- **Phase 2 – Expanded tool set:** Broaden reach and impact through development of multimedia capabilities, more sophisticated communications planning, expanded outreach channels, and creation of asset libraries.

- **Phase 3 – Strategic Communications:** Communications becomes an effective tool for advancing organizational and department strategic priorities; Communications and engagement are seamlessly integrated into major initiatives.

The Program has steadily progressed through Phases 1 and 2 and is now transitioning into Phase 3. Communications is increasingly used as a strategic tool to support operations, major capital projects, and policy development. The 2023 roadmap continues to guide program development, ensuring that communications capacity grows in alignment with the organization’s evolving needs. The addition of public engagement functions has broadened the Program’s role and influenced the pace and sequencing of progress.

Audience reach and growth

Investments in communications continue to broaden the City’s reach beyond traditional civic participants.

- The City’s monthly email newsletter maintains an average open rate of 67%, indicating stable engagement from longstanding subscribers.
- Social media reach continues to expand, receiving high levels of engagement from residents.
- Public engagement opportunities are drawing significantly more participation than the City has historically achieved, indicating broader awareness and impact.
- Video content is now complementing written updates as a way to reach both established and new audiences. Videos published to the City’s YouTube channel were viewed over 22,000 times and earned nearly 1,000 hours of watch time in 2025.

Additional metrics will be presented as part of the oral report delivered to City Council.

Major initiatives for 2025

In addition to daily operations, the FY2025-26 budget includes three system replacement projects to modernize outdated software and hardware systems.

- **Council Chambers A/V and Broadcast Modernization:** Upgrade of the City’s aging broadcast control system, used for delivering meeting video to the community.
- **City website replacement:** Platform replacement and comprehensive redesign to improve usability, ADA compliance, mobile experience, navigation, and service-oriented content delivery.
- **Cable server replacement and OTT transition:** Modernizing KCOM hardware to support web-based streaming and connected TV platforms, increasing public accessibility to meeting broadcasts.

These initiatives will strengthen the City’s digital transparency infrastructure and support long-term sustainability of communications and broadcast operations.

FISCAL IMPACT

No additional fiscal impact beyond approved FY 25/26 appropriations.