ORANGE WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY

A public, non-profit agency providing water, sewer and reclaimed water services to the Carrboro-Chapel Hill community.

MEMORANDUM

TO: **Community Engagement Committee**
Steve Dear (Chair)
Terri Buckner
Quinton Harper
Michael Hughes
John Young (*ex officio*)

FROM: Ed Kerwin

DATE: October 24, 2014

SUBJECT: **October 29, 2014 Community Engagement Committee Meeting at 5:30 PM in the OWASA Boardroom**

Agenda

1. **Draft Framework for Community Engagement**

   Staff recommends that the Committee discuss and provide guidance on the attached Draft Framework for Community Engagement. The Committee is currently scheduled to submit a proposed framework for the full Board's discussion at the December 11, 2014 Work Session.

   This draft document does not include program details and means/methods for engagement but rather a proposed overall community engagement framework at a policy level. Staff believes this is the appropriate starting point for discussion on this important strategic initiative.

2. **Open Discussion**

Ed Kerwin
Executive Director

Attachment – Draft Framework for Community Engagement
c: Board of Directors

Attachment

DRAFT FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

October 24, 2014

OWASA will prepare community engagement plans as a required part of Strategic Planning and other key initiatives as determined by the Board of Directors.

This framework document sets forth the essential elements for community engagement plans, which will have more specific information as indicated in the attached template that provides general guidance for engagement plans.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT GOALS

Strategic Plan Initiative 2, Engage the Community, includes three goals:

Engage stakeholders to understand their perceptions and expectations so that they can help us make well-informed decisions about our services and so that we maintain their trust.

Empower stakeholders with relevant and timely information so they can understand and make meaningful contributions to our planning efforts.

Encourage stakeholder participation in shaping OWASA's future

PROCESS AND ROLES

The OWASA Board will provide guidance and direction regarding preparation of community engagement plans and will make decisions on the resources needed to carry out the plans. Staff will execute engagement plans in accord with the Board's policies and guidance.

The Board of Directors will determine which initiatives will involve the Board's discussion and decisions on engagement plans. For these plans, the process will include discussion and guidance in a work session meeting and, when needed, decisions in a business meeting.

The following table indicates Strategic Plan and other initiatives for which the Board will provide guidance and approve community engagement plans, and initiatives for which the staff will develop and implement engagement plans based on this general framework.

(Proposed)

Engagement plans involving Board discussion and guidance in a work session.	**Engagement plans to be prepared by staff.**
Formal action in business meeting, if desired by Board.	*Board to be informed and have opportunity to comment if desired.*
1. Proposed budgets, rates and capital improvement programs 2. Affordability (including Care to Share) and cost management 3. Major capital projects 4. Advanced metering infrastructure 5. Updating the long-range water supply plan (including water conservation plan as a component)/Jordan Lake allocation 6. Biosolids management plan 7. Management and disposition of property	1. Changes in billing 2. Energy management plan 3. Study of total compensation of employees 4. How citizens can help prevent wastewater overflows/protect water quality 5. The value of OWASA services

CORE ELEMENTS OF ENGAGEMENT PLANS

1. ***Proactive approach.*** Anticipate needs and issues, and initiate engagement processes.

2. ***Timely opportunities.*** Provide stakeholders adequate time to receive information and prepare to participate in engagement opportunities.

3. ***Multiple engagement methods.*** Use a variety of methods to inform and engage stakeholders. Communication methods will vary with topics and target audiences.

4. ***Quality and effectiveness.*** Communications will be clear, concise, appropriate for the target audience(s), and encourage two-way dialogue, while maximizing the value to OWASA ratepayers.

5. ***Success measures.*** Include desired outcomes and a process for measuring effectiveness.

Draft Template for preparing a community engagement plan

1. ***Purpose*** of the proposed policy/plan/initiative

2. Outcomes/objectives

   a. ***Define key messages***, information to be communicated, level of engagement desired, etc.
   b. ***Inform the relevant stakeholder group(s)*** about what is proposed, how they would be affected, costs and benefits, what would change, etc.
   c. ***Seek stakeholders' feedback and questions*** so that we can better understand their perspectives and expectations.
   d. ***Engage in dialogue*** by receiving stakeholders' comments, responding to questions and providing additional information as needed.
   e. ***Show that we listened to stakeholders' comments.***
   f. ***Encourage action by customers*** when applicable to the proposed policy, plan, initiative, etc.

3. ***Identify the stakeholder groups*** we want to inform and engage

   The engagement may include all accountholders, all system users including people who are not OWASA accountholders, or specific categories of customers/citizens.

4. Set forth our core messages

   These messages should concisely explain the key benefits or needs we want to meet.

5. ***Identify the key information stakeholders should have*** throughout the various stages of the engagement process

   a. ***What is proposed*** and why, including alternatives under consideration
   b. ***Who would be affected*** and how
   c. ***Costs and benefits***/advantages and disadvantages
   d. ***Return on community investment*** if applicable
   e. ***Timetable*** for public comment opportunities, decisions and potential implementation
   f. ***How to get more information***
   g. ***Board actions***
   h. ***Other*** as needed

6. ***Identify practical and cost-effective communication/engagement methods*** that are appropriate considering the level of impact and importance of the policy issue, plan, initiative, etc.

   a. The ***information process*** will include an appropriate mix of methods, which may include some or all of the following: electronic or paper mailing(s) to stakeholders,

news releases, outreach presentations to interested community groups including elected officials, paid advertising, social media, website information, announcements/presentations in televised Board meetings and community meeting(s).

b. The ***engagement/dialogue process*** will include opportunities to comment/ask questions in meeting(s) of the Board of Directors, to participate in less formal meetings for open discussion, outreach presentations and informal surveys. Formal surveys designed to achieve a representative sample of stakeholders' views may be done for high priority initiatives. It is important that OWASA take the message to stakeholders rather than expecting them to come to OWASA.
c. ***The level of resources and activity*** for a given engagement plan will depend on the expected level of community interest and the costs, benefits and impacts of the proposed initiative. For example, a proposal that would affect rates would normally involve a high level of information/engagement.

7. ***Provide a timetable*** for the information/engagement process

    a. The timetable will ***normally allow at least two to four weeks*** for the information process before the engagement/feedback opportunities.
    b. Some timetables ***may include multiple phases.***

8. ***Plan to measure effectiveness*** of the engagement

    a. Will include seeking ***stakeholders' feedback on quality and timeliness of information and engagement opportunities***
    b. Will normally include ***measurable objectives such as the number of outreach presentations,*** level of stakeholder participation in community meetings, etc.
    c. ***Formal surveys*** may be done to evaluate high priority engagements.