ORANGE WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY

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

Meeting Summary
Community Engagement Committee
December 7, 2015 – 5:30 – 6:30 PM in the OWASA Boardroom

Committee Members present:	Ruchir Vora, Chair; Terri Buckner, Quinton Harper, Robert Morgan and John Young (Ex-Officio)
Other Board Members present:	Barbara Foushee
Staff:	Mary Darr, Patrick Davis, Ed Kerwin, Todd Taylor and Stephen Winters
Public:	None

The Committee discussed staff's *Draft Process to Establish the Key Expectations for OWASA's Community Engagement Work*. The Committee and staff agreed to the following:

- Our near-term priority for 2016 should be community engagement for specific projects and initiatives such as possible changes to our rate structure and Advanced Metering Infrastructure.
- Our general public information and outreach program (for non-project specific matters) is acceptable and that current initiatives should be continued. No further work is necessary to address non-project related communications and community engagement at this time.
- Staff will establish Community Engagement Plans (CEP) for all capital improvement projects and other initiatives following the *Guide for Preparing Community Engagement Plans* previously accepted by the Board (attached). The Committee noted that capital improvement projects and other initiatives vary in scale, community impact, duration, etc. and therefore project CEPs will utilize only those elements of the Guide relevant and applicable to the individual project.
- Staff will propose potential criteria to be used for determining when a CEP is to be submitted for Board review and approval. Staff will also provide an active example of a project CEP not requiring Board review and approval.
- Staff will propose a method to assist the Board and staff monitor the progress and ensure accountability that CEPs are successfully executed.
- Staff will prepare a list of 2016 projects/initiatives requiring Board review and approval of CEPs.
- The agenda item for the January 28, 2016 Board meeting will be revised to include the information noted above.

Meeting Summary prepared by:

Ed Kerwin

Ed Kerwin
Executive Director

Attachment
c: Board of Directors

ATTACHMENT

GUIDE FOR PREPARING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLANS

December 8, 2015

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.

9. ***Board engagement and staff communications:***

    a. What specific ways will the Board be involved in the community engagement activities?
    b. On what frequency and by what method(s) will staff keep the Board updated about the initiative?
    c. On what frequency and by what method(s) will the Board provide staff feedback regarding the effectiveness of the community engagement work for the initiative?