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May 17 · 58 tweets · adamadonaldson/status/1658954429905657857

Happening soon: A council workshop meeting about communications and community investments.

City Council Preview – What's on the Agenda for the May 17 Meeting?
City council doesn't get to leave for the unofficial first long weekend of summer without learning something first. In yet another workshop-style meeting meant to orient council to the intern…

https://guelphpolitico.ca/2023/05/05/city-council-preview-whats-on-the-agenda-for-the-…

Chair Downer has called the meeting to order. She begins by recognising #InternationalDayAgainstHomophobia and notes that council is looking forward to the opening of the city's first LGBTQ+ crosswalk later this month.

Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and General Nature Thereof? Nope.

Lisa Duarte, GM of Strategic Communications and Community Engagement, begins. Outlines what they're going to cover tonight:

Agenda

1. Departmental overview
2. How we serve
3. Influences on our work
4. Where we're headed
5. Community engagement review
6. Co-design: Report on engagement

Strategic Communications and Community Engagement (SCCE) is how the City communicates to the people of Guelph and how the people communicate back to the City.

Influences? Changes in tech, trust in government, the growing problem of disinformation and misinformation, and the risk of being inundated with too much information. There's also a need to focus on inclusion, diversity, equity, anti-racism, and accessibility (social justice)

On fishing misinformation, Laura Mousseau, Manager of Strategic Communication, there needs to be a focus on clarity and consistency, and well as transparency. People need to see how decisions are made and understand why.

That's why staff spent a few years creating this:

Specs:

One City. One Voice.
Shared Purpose.

The City's plan for future-ready communications and engagement

Vision

An engaged community that listens to and learns from one another to shape Guelph's future.

Mission

We deepen engagement between the City and those impacted by and interested in our work. We communicate truth, nurture relationships, create space for all voices, listen, and foster dialogue.

One City. One Voice.
Shared Purpose.

Listen	Two-way communications (listening and sharing) is critical to learning, fostering mutually beneficial relationships and building trust.
Elevate	Listening and learning allow us to keep improving how we communicate and engage. We strive to serve from a culture of curiosity, innovation, and growth so that we support each other and people in our community with empathy and understanding.
Evolve	We strive to evolve so that City services, including communications and engagement, are innovative, thoughtful, intentional, and inclusive.

Projects underway in terms of communications:

Key projects

Community Engagement Framework and Community Engagement Policy	2023
Inclusive language and image guidelines	2023
Digital communications and community engagement strategy	2023
Brand refresh	2024
Proactive promotion of City channels	2024
Website redesign	2024-25
Internal communications strategy	2024
Develop and deliver appropriate corporate training	Ongoing

Glen Lombard, Manager of Community Engagement, takes over to talk about the refresh of community engagement. How can we evolve the City's Engagement Framework and practices to better meet the community's expectations?

Lombard says that they've learned a lot about what works and what doesn't in the last 10 years, and notes some of the previously mentioned impacts: tech, disinformation, and DEI measures.

The City began their review last fall with regular participants, marginalised groups, Indigenous communities, and affinity groups. They heard that the original goal of the Community Engagement Framework is still very top of mind for residents.

What did they hear:
-improved accessibility
-connection between engagement and decision
-creative space
-earlier engagement
-better access to data
-clear roll for advisory groups.

So staff came up with some design principles.

Draft community engagement design principles

- Identify and address barriers
- Focus on equity-denied groups
- Engage early and evolve as we go
- Connect the dots
- Meet community where they are
- Deliver diverse engagement opportunities
- Report back
- Spark curiosity and joy

The new framework will be brought to council in June, fyi.

So there's going to be an activity requiring inaction with council. Apparently, they had homework for tonight.

Council are being asked to analyse that they liked, didn't like, had mixed feelings about three different examples of community engagement...
1) Ward boundary review: https://pub-guelph.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=36625
2) Tree canopy: https://pub-guelph.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=36624
3) Metcalfe sidewalk: https://pub-guelph.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=36623

Cllr Caton says that they like the outline of options the Metcalfe example, and in the tree canopy she liked the breakdown of feedback into categories.

Cllr Allt says length is what he likes, an executive report should be 2 pages max with citations to info elsewhere when required.

Cllr O'Rourke says that she likes when the policy issue that council is trying to solve is clearly stated. Likes the clarity of options and the explanation of methodology used.

Cllr Goller says that the graph in the ward boundaries paper was helpful because a lot of that data was hard to visualise.

What would they improve? Cllr Busuttil agrees with Goller that visuals help, and that was the case with the Metcalfe sidewalk report. Also, it's helpful to know where the gaps are in a given engagement; who didn't respond?

Caton suggests a possible timeline when a project might get refreshed or updated so that it's easy to see how long changes might be in effect. Also recommends more graphs and charts for large data sets.

O'Rourke says that when she's reading a report she's trying to figure out how to weigh public input, who provided input in terms of representation and how that stacks up to delegations.

Goller says that he would there to be consistency when generating a report; in these examples 2 were completed by staff and 1 was done by a consultant. A template? Also would like to see more communications with ppl who participate, let them know when engagement comes to council.

Allt says that when options are listed he would like to see the point-spread, is there a 10-point difference between option #1 or option #2? Also, phrases like "significant activity" could mean many, many things.

Mayor Guthrie says that he would like to see a classification between what is proactive (open houses) and reactive (online survey). Also, is there a way to see if there's any overlap between the people who go to open houses and respond to the surveys.

Guthrie says that there should be some follow up when the decision comes back, asking the people who take part if their thoughts and ideas are represented in the final product.

O'Rourke asks about A.I., are we worried about bots or are we looking at ways that this tech can be used helpfully. She also asks about weighing more "spontaneous" interactions like the ones on social media.

Questions about the presentation? Busuttil asks about staff vision for capacity building. Lombard says that they're building on work they're already doing, the shift in focus has come out of the engagement already done, and they're trying to figure out how to work better.

Allt says that he encourages staff to take a balanced approach in gathering feedback, meaning don't rely too much on the digital tech. There are older people and others who aren't as tech savvy as we might think.

O'Rourke asks about choosing what a consultation is going to look like. Lombard says there's a lot of consideration in making those decisions, sometimes there's no opportunity for a community to engage if a specific decision has to be made.

Guthrie asks about the hand off of information from a community engagement project. Lombard says that they look at the data and point things out, but the project manager also looks has access to the data to create those summaries. It's a team effort.

Guthrie asks if the raw data becomes open data at the end of the day. Lombard says that depends on the nature of the data, if it's personal info then no, but higher level insights do get shared.

Guthrie asks if there will be a discussion about when the City doesn't need to engage? Lombard says that gets to matters of meaningful direction. Sometimes what's set out in policy drive direction, but that will part of the discussion in June.

Caton makes the point that perhaps engagement materials can be provided in the top 5 languages spoke as first languages in Guelph. Mousseau says that's something that the City is moving on, they're also looking at outlets that print in other languages.

Downer asks about provided parameters for input, especially in the case of planning meetings, perhaps we need to separate out the different types of public engagement because not all public matters are the same.

Cllr Caron asks about removing hate speech from surveys collected from online submissions. Lombard points says that the City doesn't collect hate speech in the submission for the community engagement & points to last week when the City scrubbed homophobic posts from Twitter feed.

No more questions or comments, but wait, there's more!

A second presentation: Community Investment in Focus.

Danna Evans, General Manager of Culture and Recreation and Alex Goss, Manager of Community Investment will present.

What is community investment? It Improvs wellbeing and vitality, it was first approved by Council in 2012, and it supports the Building our Future pillar of the Strategic Plan

Supporting community partners can be an important benefit because there are times that a partner agency is better equipped to provide a service than the City is.

Some of the stuff that the City invests in community-wise:

Who are these partners? This are the groups that the City has Community Benefit agreements with:

Contributions to these groups represent $2.4 million in funding. They also come with more direct reach to different residents and have their own relationships and partnerships that they can access. The return on investment is 120 per cent.

The circle of process, roles and responsibilities.

Now Community Grants, a centralised place for different organisations in Guelph to apply for funds to help improve life and create new opportunities. A good recent example was a pamphlet from Guelph Black Heritage that laid out the history of Guelph's Black residents.

Over $1 million in emergency funding was handed out during the pandemic, and in the last year the City has been moving back to some of their usual funding projects like micro-grants, which cover a wide variety of projects from pottery to bicycle repairs.

In terms of investment in individuals there's the sliding scale affordable bus pass, Fee Assistance in Recreation (FAIR), the Welcome to Guelph package, and the Personal Assistant for Leisure Activities (PAL) program.

Goss says that the City has a significant role to play in the quality life for the residents of Guelph, and that's the end of the presentation.

Busuttil asks how this will align with the earlier presentation. Goss says they build connections between groups funded with CBAs, and keep them aware of engagements that might benefit from their contribution.
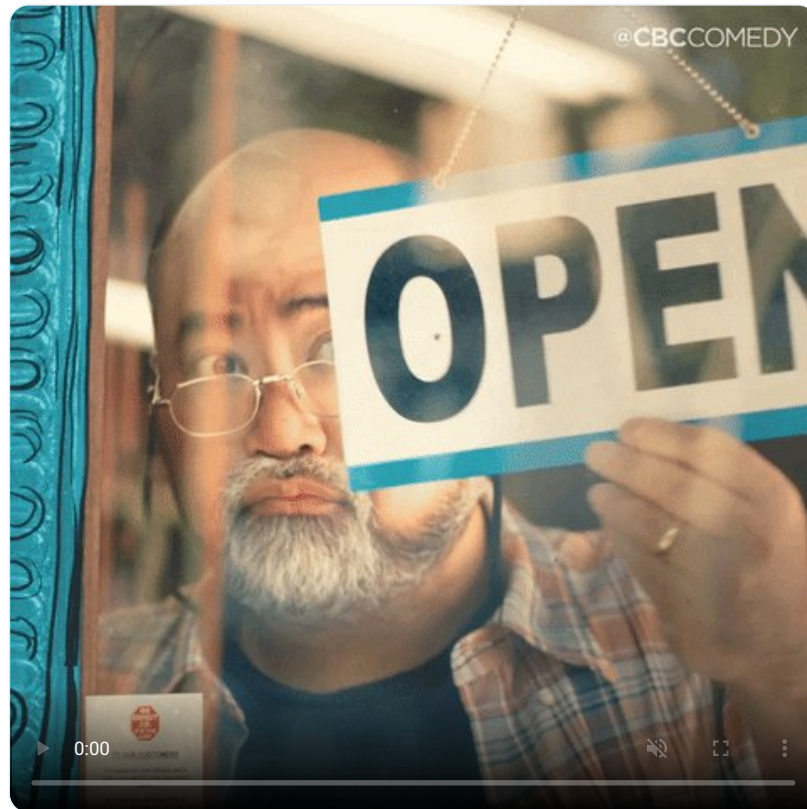
Busuttil asks if there's a mater plan for community investment and is there evaluation? Goss Community Investment Strategy is the closest to a master plan, and there is annual reporting for the investments.

Busuttil says that she's asking about evaluation. Evans says there's no formal mechanisms because there's no common definition for what is efficient that can be applied to all the organisations. There is accountability in the public disclosure though.

O'Rourke asks how the City measures progress? Goss says that staff are looking at couple of things, and the Community Plan is one. They're also looking at the Strategic Plan to see how the work measures against those goals.

Caton asks if there's an opportunity to expand who qualifies for the affordable bus pass. Goss says that they're always looking for new barriers not previously identified. Evans adds that all subsidy programs are "right-sized" for the original cost.

Nothing further from council, so that means the meeting is over.

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