

REQUEST FOR COUNCIL ACTION

Date: 1/26/2017
Item No.: 7.d

Department Approval

City Manager Approval



Item Description: Consider Renewal of Speak Up Roseville Contract

BACKGROUND

In March of 2015, the City Council approved a recommendation of the Community Engagement Commission to incorporate the Grancius civic engagement platform, Speak Up, into the City's website. The City then entered into a 2-year service agreement with Granicus. The 24-month agreement will automatically renew for an additional three terms of one year each unless either party notifies the other of its wish not to renew 30 days prior to each automatic one-year renewal, the first of which begins on March 24, 2017

On September 19, 2016, Communications staff provide the City Council with a Speak Up Roseville update. The discussion closed with councilmembers and staff agreeing that the module's engagement performance would be monitored for the remaining contract term. It was also agreed that staff would return with additional measurements to help prepare councilmembers to make an informed decision about continuing use of the module prior to the end of the current contract term.

Since the September check in, Staff posted six discussion items, which have generated 250 replies from users. Speak up Roseville also gained 46 new users, bringing the total user number to 172. In addition to the six discussions, staff also provided the module with a more prominent location on the City's official website to enhance its visibility, including it in the six-button group on the front page. Users have posted just 2 ideas in that time, but none in the last 3 months.

Recent Speak Up Discussions	Number of Topics	Number of User Replies
Volunteering	6	12
Rice & Larpenteur Revitalization	6	63
2040 Comprehensive Plan Update	2	17
Redevelopment In Roseville	5	24
Surface Water Management	6	28
Deer Management	5	106

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

The cost of Speak Up Roseville is \$4,800 annually, which is paid from the Communications Fund. The 24-month agreement will automatically renew for an additional three terms of one year each unless either party notifies the other of its wish to not renew 30 days prior to each automatic one-year renewal, the first of which begins on March 24, 2017.

24 **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

25 Staff requests City Council provide a recommendation whether to provide Granicus with a 30-day
26 notice of termination or allow the agreement to automatically renew for an additional three terms of
27 one year each.

28 **REQUESTED COUNCIL ACTION**

29 A motion recommending to provide Granicus with a 30-day notice of termination or a motion to
30 continue to utilization of Speak Up Roseville by allowing automatic renewal of the agreement.

Prepared by: Garry Bowman, Communications Manager

Attachment: A: September 19, 2016 minutes – Speak Up Roseville discussion

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c. Speak Up! Roseville Check-In and Discussion

As detailed in the RCA of today's date, Communications Manager Garry Bowman reviewed a history of this new communication tool and usage today, and referenced the two-year Granicus contract approved in March of 2015, expiring in March of 2017. Mr. Bowman sought direction from the City Council as to the future of this tool.

Council Positions / Direction to Staff

Mayor Roe stated that his observations to-date were that there seemed to be a disconnect between the site and decision-making by the city; and sought ideas to improve that connection for public feedback informing city advisory commissions and the City Council prior to decision-making. Mayor Roe stated while realizing agenda topics were not always available months in advance, he preferred a better way to get those topics at the forefront and receive public feedback in a more timely fashion from the public (e.g. stormwater issues).

Mr. Bowman agreed this was challenging from when an item was scheduled on a future agenda and time available to garner community feedback, noting that a longer period was often required. For those topics not immediate, Mr. Bowman advised feedback was possible; however, it was more challenging without that prior knowledge of a particular topic. Mr. Bowman offered to continue working on that challenge.

Councilmember Willmus stated he'd been skeptical of this model from the beginning, but was willing to see how it played out. Councilmember Willmus opined this tool was trying to reinvent the wheel, when other proven-effective social media options were available (e.g. Twitter and Facebook) with other communities working well with those models. Councilmember Willmus further opined he didn't like the compartmentalization of the NextDoor.com website as it wasn't community-wide. Councilmember Willmus stated the Speak Up! Roseville tool may be cumbersome for users if not familiar with social media, requiring more manipulation from discussion topics to viewer responses, and retaining those responses.

Mayor Roe agreed the process could be "clunky."

On the fiscal side, Councilmember Willmus questioned how long the tool should be sustained versus having the same or similar results from other social media options. Councilmember Willmus questioned the familiarity or awareness in the community of the Speak Up! Roseville tool, and suggested usage would increase if the public was actually more aware of it, and if not scared away by how "clunky" it was.

Working in the communications field, Councilmember Laliberte stated she had lots of thoughts, and agreed with Mayor Roe that it would be nice if the site was more connected with public input and decision-making topics by the City Coun-

cil. While recognizing there were timing constraints, Councilmember Laliberte opined she was aware of fits and starts with the tool. Even while more recent topics had been posted, Councilmember Laliberte noted there had been a gap in some instances over a period of time.

Councilmember Laliberte stated she was looking for expertise from Mr. Bowman to provide an analysis of the tool related to whether there was a regular day or time for posting, and what topics received the most action on a particular day or time or day, as well as improving and analyzing the frequency of topics posted. Councilmember Laliberte opined that the more data that could be gathered to determine if and how the site is working, the better. Councilmember Laliberte also requested information on the level of interest in the type of question (e.g. open-ended or yes/no) and when the most input was received. If it was decided to continue with this tool, Councilmember Laliberte stated she wanted to learn from the format used. However, as noted by Councilmember Willmus, similar to any civic engagement tool, Councilmember Laliberte agreed it was difficult to get people to participate if they didn't know about the site or if it was hard to use. Councilmember Laliberte asked that staff assess the most productive tools for public input: going to the public in their natural spaces, using Facebook, Twitter, NextDoor.com, or other options. While staff provided a copy of the agreement and the adopted policy/procedure document in tonight's meeting packet, Councilmember Laliberte stated it would have been helpful for the City Council and the public to have a recap by question or topic to-date and their response activity on a quarterly basis at the minimum.

Mr. Bowman reviewed the process for each new discussion on the site, with the same information going to other social media tools as well, and linking people to those tools and encouraging those signed up to make use of the Speak Up! Roseville tool. Mr. Bowman questioned if there was a reluctance by the public to sign up for another social media tool, or what the rationale was, or if it was a need for more promotion or announcements by the city. Mr. Bowman assured the City Council that staff continued to bolster Speak Up! Roseville on other social media tools, but agreed further consideration may be needed to develop more consistency in posting topics. As the contract moved closer to expiration, Mr. Bowman noted a more comprehensive report could be provided with the information requested by Councilmember Laliberte.

Councilmember Laliberte noted previous discussion had also been held about the response tie and an assessment of how city staff was responding to questions, with each Department Head responsible for specific responses to relevant topics. Whether or not it was a valid statement, Councilmember Laliberte noted she had heard anecdotally that those responses were not consistent even though that had been the expectation of the City Council.

City Manager Trudgeon duly noted these information requests.

At the request of Councilmember Laliberte, Mr. Bowman clarified that the Granicus module protocol didn't allow for manipulation of the site to ask people how they found the site when logging into the profile. Councilmember Laliberte opined that would be nice to know, while recognizing the limitations of this site.

Councilmember Willmus observed it was interesting to find out that the city was using Facebook and Twitter to alert people to the Speak Up! Roseville tool.

Councilmember McGehee noted she had gone along with this tool with the same reservations expressed by Councilmember Willmus, thinking it was worth a try. However, with the length of time the site had been available, and only resulting in 126 members and 210 comments to-date, with a monthly cost of \$400 excluding staff time, Councilmember McGehee opined this was a very expensive experiment, and found nothing that would warrant putting any more time or effort into it. As acknowledged by Councilmember Laliberte, Councilmember McGehee staff had done everything reasonable expected of them, and based on the community surveys from 2014 and 2016, she noted this type of Internet interaction was not very much a part of the community.

While some residents may look to Twitter or Facebook from time to time, Councilmember McGehee opined that if the city was going to spend \$400 per month based on available community survey responses, it would be money better spent to add an additional page to the *City News* quarterly newsletter or provide a separate portion or separate one-page mailing that brought out relevant topics seeking public input before decision-making was done, by whatever tool was preferred by the public. However, Councilmember McGehee stated she didn't find this tool impressive from her perspective.

Councilmember Willmus stated he was in complete agreement, and as far as he was concerned, the plug on Speak Up! Roseville could be pulled today.

Mayor Roe noted the city was committed to the term of the contract through the end of March 2017. As an alternative, Mayor Roe suggested receiving a measurement from staff to analyze information requested by Councilmember Laliberte, including staff time, and then be prepared to make an informed decision at the end of the current contract term.

Public Comment

Cynthia White, Roseville Resident

Ms. White opined this tool is a black hole; with the public unable to determine you whether or not their input has been read by staff or if any city decisions had been privy to that input. With only 126 users to-date over the last 18 months, as a taxpayer, Ms. White questioned why the site would be continued, opining it was a waste of money.

Mayor Roe suggested staff provide a report sooner than February of 2017 on topic generation.

Discussion ensued regarding how to get relevant information to and from residents in a timelier manner; how responses were fielded by staff and those lacking a response if staff was not in a position to respond; and how the public was notified of other responses.

d. City Newsletter Discussion

As detailed in the RCA of today's date, Communications Manager Bowman sought feedback from the City Council on the frequency and format of the current *City News* newsletter.

Discussion included lead time for newsletter processing and relevant topics before City Council decision-making; potential interest in outside advertising – with parameters – if the newsletter were monthly versus the current frequency, or in a different format (e.g. magazine format); and staffing or outside staffing to sell ads.

Councilmember Etten arrived at this time, approximately 7:49 pm..

Councilmember Laliberte stated she found the current frequency for the newsletter sufficient, and well done; and based on her experience with newsletter processing and publication, stated she was very aware of the major task in moving to a monthly edition. If the newsletter was published more frequently, Councilmember Laliberte opined its content may become frivolous and not paid the attention it currently received from the public. If the majority decided on a slicker, more magazine-like publication, Councilmember Laliberte noted there were third party groups that performed those services, and if that was the conclusion, suggested a Request for Proposals (RFP) be undertaken to solicit ideas from custom published in the immediate area that could perform that task and sell ads. However, Councilmember Laliberte reiterated her support for the current publication schedule, opining she was hesitant to go monthly without more forethought and cost considerations.

Councilmember McGehee agreed with Councilmember Laliberte that the current publication schedule was done well and well-received by the community. However, Councilmember McGehee noted her preference for an additional mechanism to get quicker responses to the City Council from the public on timely issues coming before them, whether a one-sheet bi-fold on those pertinent topics considered during the month. If the desire was to receive more citizen input, Councilmember McGehee opined that the city needed to give them more notice; and opined there was evidence supporting a piece of paper received in a mailbox was what the public responded to best. Councilmember McGehee spoke in support of an experiment with a one-page notice to residents to gain that public feedback.