

**TOWN OF
APPLE VALLEY, CALIFORNIA**

AGENDA MATTER

Subject Item:

SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE FOR THE TOWN OF APPLE VALLEY

Summary Statement:

BACKGROUND

Over the last several years the use of social media has exploded, becoming a major source of news and public information. Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are just a few examples, each of which will be briefly addressed below. While the private sector led the way, many public agencies have made effective use of social media platforms to communicate more openly and efficiently with residents.

As public sector use has increased, especially in the past twelve months, appropriate policies have evolved. Many organizations for government communicators have offered training and resources to agencies looking to establish a social media presence.

For these reasons, staff believes this is the appropriate time for the Town of Apple Valley to enter the social media arena.

PURPOSE

While we have our traditional website presence and print media (i.e. newsletters, pamphlets), social media has become an expected and necessary additional outlet for sharing information with the public. According to alexa.com, a leading website ranking tool, Facebook is the second most visited website in the world. YouTube is third, and Twitter – founded just three years ago – is twelfth. We can no longer just expect people to be willing to come to us; we need to go to where they spend their time online.

(Continued)

Recommended Action:

Receive and file.

Proposed by Kathie Martin, Marketing and Public Affairs Officer Item Number _____

T. M. Approval: _____ Budgeted Item Yes No N/A

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In addition to pushing information out to our citizens, social media is an important tool in monitoring the conversations that others are having about the Town of Apple Valley. This will allow us to develop and refine our communication efforts, and to jump in, when appropriate, and be part of the conversation.

PROPOSAL

Prior to launch, a formal policy will be developed by staff to govern appropriate usage, and to cover situations that may arise. Three social media outlets are being recommended. Facebook and Twitter would be implemented first, with a projected start date of March 1. YouTube would follow a few months later, as well as a possible photo sharing site.

Facebook is a free-access social networking site. Agencies can create “fan pages” that allow for easy sharing of information, photos and links. The Town’s Facebook page would be used to post information about programs and events, notices, photo galleries and more. Posts could also link back to the Town’s website. The public will be able to ask questions and make comments on the page and redistribute information on their page. The Town can monitor and screen public comments as well.

Twitter is a social networking and micro-blogging service that allows the sending of short text messages of 140 characters or less to “followers”. Content initially will be similar to the Facebook page, however it is also a useful tool in times of emergencies, as postings can be sent and redistributed just like a text message.

YouTube is a video sharing website. Many agencies create their own YouTube channel for posting informational videos, footage from events and other marketing pieces. As our foray into social media expands, photos from events and other important Town occurrences can be made public on photo-sharing websites such as Flickr.

Initially there will be one Facebook and one Twitter account monitored by Kathie Martin, Marketing and Public Affairs Officer. However, once the pages and policies are established and working as intended there are also opportunities for specialized pages within the Town. Animal Control and Recreation in particular could have a set of fans unique to their department functions. Separate accounts could be used to push out information on the latest recreation classes or to feature animals available to adopt.

Based on the experience of other municipalities, monitoring social media is estimated to take 15 to 30 minutes per day, or less, once the accounts are established.