



# STEERING COMMITTEE

## Agenda Report

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**File #:** 2024-3681

**Agenda Date:** 6/26/2024

**Agenda Item No:** 20.

**FROM:** Robert Thompson, General Manager

**SUBJECT:**

### **PUBLIC AFFAIRS STRATEGIC PLAN FOR FISCAL YEARS 2022-2024 SUMMARY**

### **GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION**

#### RECOMMENDATION:

Receive and file the Proposed Public Affairs Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2022- 2024 Summary.

### **BACKGROUND**

The Orange County Sanitation District's (OC San) Public Affairs Office is responsible for creating, organizing, and disseminating all internal and external communication. The primary objective of the Public Affairs team is to deliver messages that are accurate, transparent, and designed to foster trust and confidence. An integrated Public Affairs Strategic Plan is essential to effectively manage the variety of audiences served.

### **RELEVANT STANDARDS**

- Build brand, trust, and support with policy makers and community leaders
- Maintain collaborative and cooperative relationships with regulators, stakeholders, and neighboring communities
- Make it easy for people to understand OC San's roles and value to the community
- Maintain influential legislative advocacy and a public outreach program

### **PROBLEM**

There are various initiatives and messages that the Public Affairs Office must share with internal and external stakeholders for continued operation and efficiency of OC San. The messaging must be consistent, concise, and thoroughly planned to be efficient and effective.

### **PROPOSED SOLUTION**

The Public Affairs Strategic Plan includes goals, objectives, strategies, and tactics to execute the various messages and efforts set forth by OC San. The two-year plan was in place from July 2022 until June 2024, with updates provided to the Steering Committee every six months.

## **PRIOR COMMITTEE/BOARD ACTIONS**

January 2024 - Board and Steering Committee received and filed the Public Affairs Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2022-2024 Mid-Year Update.

June 2023 - Board and Steering Committee received and filed the Public Affairs Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2022-2024 Year-End Report.

February 2023 - Board and Steering Committee received and filed the Public Affairs Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2022-2024 Mid-Year Update.

July 2022 - Board and Legislative and Public Affairs Committee received and filed the Public Affairs Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2022-2024.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

OC San's Public Affairs Office Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2022-2024 (Plan) was developed based upon the principles of OC San's mission of protecting public health and the environment and to support the implementation of OC San's Strategic Plan. This Plan offered a vision to unify communication efforts and focus resources to achieve the greatest impact and greatest results. The Plan consisted of 11 categories. Below is a summary of the two-year plan.

- **Employee Communications**  
Goal: Optimize communication with internal audience including those operating in the field.
  - Over 1,700 *The San Box* posts (intranet)
  - 104 *Three Things to Know* emails (weekly email)
  - 12 *Pipeline* Employee Newsletter issues (including a Special Yearbook Edition)
- **Industry Experts**  
Goal: Establish and solidify OC San's reputation as infrastructure leaders in the wastewater and resource recovery industry.
  - 25 awards received
  - 57 speaking engagements reaching almost 4,000 people
- **Media Relations**  
Goal: Cultivate relationships with traditional and social media journalists and influencers.
  - 19 press releases issued
  - 1,460 social media posts across five platforms with average reach of 5k
  - 1,795 new followers
  - OC Register Supplemental Water Educational Issue
- **Agency Branding and Messaging**  
Goal: Enhance OC San's image and branding by utilizing proper messaging in external communication pieces such as OC San's website, presentations, digital media, advertising, which includes maintaining a positive experience for OC San visitors.

- Eight (8) issues of the Neighborhood Newsletter reaching an average of 4,500 per issue
  - 172 articles published on the OC San website
  - Website RFP issued, contract awarded, and development 50 percent complete
  - Development of Headquarters educational display
  - Launched permittee award program
  - Completed more than 350 graphic design projects
- **Educational Outreach**  
Goal: Identify and implement avenues for education and outreach within OC San's service area to promote OC San's mission and vision.
    - 140 tours reaching over 1,800 people
    - Continued supporting the Heritage Museum of Orange County with their virtual and in-person teachings reaching more than 16,000 people
    - Participated in 19 community events reaching over 7,000 people
    - Hosted a 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Open House with approximately 1,300 attendees
    - Hosted two sessions of Wastewater 101 Citizens Academy with a total of 52 graduates
- **Capital and Maintenance Outreach**  
Goal: Develop and implement outreach programs that will engage the communities affected by OC San construction and maintenance activities.
    - 33 printed notifications distributed reaching over 79,000 people
    - 142 electronic messages issued
    - Held individual meetings with project stakeholders and presentations to City Councils
- **Legislative Affairs**  
Goal: Proactive engagement in legislative advocacy efforts that could impact OC San and the wastewater industry.
    - Created annual Legislative Plan for each fiscal year
    - Issued seven (38) State position letters, and two (15) Federal position letters
    - Hosted Congressman Lou Correa visit and tour
- **Grant Coordination**  
Goal: Monitor, track, and apply for grants available to OC San.
    - Approved for \$3.45 million in community project funding
    - Received \$40,000 grant for Headquarters Building educational display
- **Local Government Affairs**  
Goal: Ensure that local elected officials, member agencies, stakeholders, and OC San Board Members are actively engaged in the work of OC San.
    - Board Member Speaking Points issued monthly
    - Developed OC San's Annual Report for each fiscal year
    - Hosted a virtual and an in-person State of OC San with 150 participants, respectively
    - 24 "Five Minutes Per Month" published
    - Eight (8) member-agency outreach toolkits produced and distributed

- Developed outreach program for inflow and infiltration issues within sewer service area
- Hosted Headquarters Ribbon Cutting event with 150 guests
- Issued Local Lobbyist Contract
  
- **Crisis Management**  
Goal: Ensure the Public Affairs Office serves as the primary spokesperson for OC San during normal business and crisis scenarios and facilitates the dissemination of information.
  - Updated Integrated Emergency Response Plan areas pertaining to the Public Affairs Office
  - Updated the Public Affairs Office's Continuity of Operations Plan
  
- **General Manager Support**  
Goal: Ensure the General Manager and Assistant General Managers are supported with information necessary to communicate to the varied OC San audiences.
  - Strategic Plan support and development
  - 24 General Manager Monthly Reports
  - Monthly talking points preparation
  - Preparation of GM Work Plan, mid-year and year-end updates for each fiscal year
  - Developed material for speaking engagements and presentations

## **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

All items included in the Public Affairs Strategic Plan FY 2022-2024 are budgeted in the FY 2022-2024 Budget.

## **ATTACHMENT**

*The following attachment(s) may be viewed on-line at the OC San website ([www.ocsan.gov](http://www.ocsan.gov)) with the complete agenda package:*

- Public Affairs Strategic Plan, FY 2022-2024
- Public Affairs Portfolio, FY 2022-2024