

## Agenda Report

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**FROM:** James D. Herberg, General Manager

**SUBJECT:**

### **PUBLIC AFFAIRS UPDATE FOR THE MONTHS OF MARCH THROUGH JUNE 2020**

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

##### RECOMMENDATION:

Receive and file the Public Affairs Update for the months of March through June 2020.

#### **BACKGROUND**

Staff will provide an update on recent public affairs activities.

#### **RELEVANT STANDARDS**

- Maintain influential legislative advocacy and a public outreach program
- Build brand, trust, and support with policy makers and community leaders
- Maintain collaborative and cooperative relationships with regulators, stakeholders, and neighboring communities
- Listen to and seriously consider community input on environmental concerns

#### **PROBLEM**

The Orange County Sanitation District (Sanitation District) is well-recognized within the water/wastewater industry; however, within our service area there is limited knowledge by our customers of the important work we do to protect public health and the environment. In general, the customers we serve do not realize that when they improperly dispose of waste into the sanitation system, it can negatively affect our sewer lines, our treatment plants, and the quality of water we supply for the Groundwater Replenishment System.

#### **PROPOSED SOLUTION**

By providing tours, community outreach, education, and general communication via the Sanitation District's website, social media outlets, and direct mailings, we have the ability to educate the community, local agencies, and businesses on our messaging such as the What2Flush program, energy production, water recycling, biosolids, and our source control program. This, in turn, helps improve the quality of wastewater that is recycled or released to the ocean.

## **TIMING CONCERNS**

N/A

## **RAMIFICATIONS OF NOT TAKING ACTION**

If we do not educate the community, local agencies, and area businesses about the Sanitation District, we may not have the support necessary to deliver our mission.

## **PRIOR COMMITTEE/BOARD ACTIONS**

N/A

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

### **March Tours\***

<u>Activity</u>	<u>#</u>	<u># of Guests</u>
OCSD/OCWD Tours	3	61
OCSD Tours	6	89
Speaking Engagements	4	250

\*On March 19 all tours of the facility and external events were canceled in response to COVID-19.

## **Current Activities - March- June 2020**

### **COVID-19 Response**

The Sanitation District's Emergency Operations Center was activated to address the growing concerns of COVID-19. As decisions were being made, the Public Affairs Office (PAO) was communicating with our internal and external audience to keep all informed. A webpage on our intranet site was created to have one consolidated place for staff to find information and updates on the Sanitation District's action and response efforts. An extranet site was also created to give employees on COVID-19 administrative leave the same opportunity to stay informed. Both sites are updated regularly with the most recent information available. The PAO team has also been monitoring the conversations taking place locally, statewide, and federally regarding action plans and response efforts.

To safeguard the safety of employees, all tours and participation in external physical events have been cancelled for the remainder of the year.

### **Social Media**

Social Media has been heavily used as a means of connecting with our stakeholders during the last few months. The Sanitation District has continued to share information about the Sanitation District being an essential service, promoting the What2Flush campaign, and the Sanitation District's normal operations during the pandemic.

### **Virtual Tour**

To continue with our educational efforts, a virtual tour of Plant No. 1 has been created. With plant tours suspended, this provides a safe alternative to learn about our process and efforts. This virtual tour will give the Sanitation District the capability to reach different organizations/groups/schools and allow them to still get the tour experience although not physically onsite. Virtual tours will also allow our reach to expand beyond our service area.

### **Presentations**

In June, General Manager Jim Herberg, participated in a virtual presentation to the Orange County Business Council (OCBC) to discuss the Sanitation District's plan for resiliency which included our response to COVID-19. The presentation also highlighted the Capital Improvement Program and some large-scale projects that will be advertising for construction in the coming months. He also participated in the Water Environment Federation (WEF) Coronavirus Roundtable series in May. The event was hosted by leaders from across the water sector to discuss how the coronavirus pandemic is affecting operations, business, and people.

Lan Wiborg, Director of Environmental Services, participated in a COVID-19 webinar for the California Water Environment Association (CWEA) and California Association of Sanitation Agencies (CASA) to discuss wastewater surveillance and the Sanitation District's action to safeguard the safety of staff while maintaining operations.

### **CEQA**

N/A

### **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

N/A

### **ATTACHMENTS**

*The following attachment(s) may be viewed on-line at the OCSD website ([www.ocsd.com](http://www.ocsd.com)) with the complete agenda package:*

- Outreach and Media Summary Report, March - June 2020