



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

R-21-80
Meeting 21-18
June 9, 2021

SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA ITEM 2

AGENDA ITEM

Informational Presentation on the Social Media Program

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION *den*

Receive a staff report on the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District's social media program. No Board action required.

SUMMARY

During the Board Self-Evaluation Retreat on February 8, 2021, the Board of Directors expressed interest in receiving regular reports regarding the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District's (District) usage of social media and the results of that usage, both quantitative and qualitative. This presentation is in response to that request and includes additional background information.

DISCUSSION

The District has utilized social media platforms for more than a decade as one of several communication channels to keep the public informed of District activities and events. The District's social media use increased in late 2013 in tandem with the District's 40th anniversary and robust public outreach and engagement during the Vision Plan process.

In 2019, as part of the current strategic communications plan, staff began to refocus social media activities in support of a strategy to leverage additional opportunities to increase the reach and frequency of District communications. This strategy was further supported by the January 2020 Benchmark Survey results showing a significant gap in awareness about the agency among adults under age 40.

Efforts to grow the District's social media reach were boosted in 2020 as COVID-19 public health orders shut down traditional outreach activities, allowing the District to redirect staff capacity to creating a wide variety of social media posts that were well received with so many more people spending higher levels of time on social media channels. The rapidly changing orders, especially early in the pandemic, also fit well within social media's real-time functionality, giving staff a fast and flexible way to disseminate up-to-date information.

To manage a basic level of posting across the five platforms on which the District publishes (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube), the public affairs department allocates about one-third of a full-time equivalent position across the team. Half of that time is assigned to a social media communications lead who coordinates the scheduling and conducts the metric/use analysis. Though the public affairs team handles the technical aspects of post creation using a

social media management tool called Fanbooster, staff in the field and across other departments regularly contribute photos and videos or share ideas for content from their networks.

Due to resource constraints, staff generally limits platform activity to publishing content rather than consistently interacting with followers. In addition, because of the implications regarding government speech and public forums, Section G of Board Policy 6.01 - Electronic Communications and Social Media (Attachment 1), states that “the District will generally not answer questions or respond to comments made in Internet forums.”

The core goal of the District’s use of social media is to increase awareness of the District’s mission, work, programs, and preserves. The overall strategy to achieve this awareness balances the following types of content: (1) posts (information, photos, and videos) about the District; (2) preserve updates, including about wildlife and plants; (3) public meeting notifications and other event invitations; (4) project and program updates and accomplishments; and (5) information from partners with a nexus with the District’s mission.

To encourage others to share District information, links to select posts are shared via email with District staff (such as links to job postings) and with community partners, (such as links to event invitations and video presentations).

Because the overall goal is awareness, success is best measured by an increasing trend in overall reach, which is most easily compared to other communications channels. Each channel (e.g. social, web, email, direct mail, outreach, media, and advertising) carries strengths that combine to create a robust communications strategy designed to touch a wide spectrum of the District’s constituency. Overall growth in followers is another success metric tracked, because as the District’s social network grows, so too does the reach of its online communications.

At this time, staff is experimenting with achieving reach goals primarily through organic growth, using paid promotion sparingly. The 50th Anniversary Celebration communications plan is expected to allocate budget to expanding paid promotion for specific events and activities.

As of April 30, 2021, the District had a total audience of 23,088 consistent followers across all platforms. Last calendar year (2020), the District’s posts and videos were viewed nearly 2.6 million times, approximately double that of 2019 (an estimated 1.3 million times).

	Total	Facebook	Instagram	Twitter	LinkedIn	YouTube ¹
Followers as of May 2021	23,088	11,516	5,193	4,315	1,686	378

2020 Calendar Year Metrics						
Follower growth (Jan. 1 – Dec. 31, 2020)	33%	13%	143%	22%	45%	96%
Total post reach	2,562,411	934,120	768,976	711,154	138,597	11,679
Avg. reach per post	939	1,171	1,406	1,032	221	141

¹ For comparison with the other platforms, it is useful to note that YouTube videos have greater longevity than other platforms, so "total post reach" and "average reach per post" for YouTube has been limited to the views (from January 1, 2020 – December 31, 2020) of videos posted between January 1, 2020 and December 31, 2020.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with the recommendation.

BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW

This presentation was requested during the Board Self-Evaluation Retreat on February 8, 2021 and is being provided to the full Board for their information.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

This item is not a project subject to the California Environmental Quality Act.

NEXT STEPS

Public affairs staff will report on social media program results semiannually, following the close of each fiscal year and as part of the annual budget planning process.

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