



Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

R-22-95  
Meeting 22-19  
August 10, 2022

## AGENDA ITEM 8

### AGENDA ITEM

Informational Presentation on Social Media Program

### GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION *denk*

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. The Board of Directors first received a report on District social media on June 9, 2021. The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations to date have given staff the opportunity to experiment with new techniques and strategies for expanding the District's social media reach. The social media program in fiscal year 2022 surpassed the goals for reach and shares, garnering nearly 2.9 million organic impressions (with an additional 1.7 million advertising impressions) and 5,253 shares. Follower growth fell just short of the goal with 2,624 new (26,075 total) followers across the District's social media accounts. This report provides an update on social media and its results in fiscal year 2022.

### BACKGROUND

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. Until recently, social media channel use was sporadic and fairly limited due to staffing constraints, with an isolated increase in activity in 2013 as part of the Vision Plan process outreach.

In 2019, as part of the current strategic communications plan, staff began to refocus on 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, a demographic largely attuned to social channels.

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 divert staff capacity to creating a wide variety of social media posts. Notably, rapidly changing health 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.

This success, reported to the Board on June 9, 2021, led staff to resource load about 20% of a full-time equivalent position to maintain priority social media channels as a core public affairs function for fiscal year 2022, covering the time with additional capacity from a limited-term staff person retained to assist with 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration activities. This allocation of time has allowed for a basic level of posting across the five main platforms on which the District publishes (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube) and monthly analysis of basic metrics and trends. Top-performing social media posts are collected and reported in the biweekly update.

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
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). Additionally, partners were provided a social media toolkit to promote events and activities for the District's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. This toolkit included graphics and prewritten text so that our partners could easily share information about the District's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and events.

## **DISCUSSION**

During the June 9, 2021 report to the Board, staff set goals for the social media program in fiscal year 2022 regarding reach (number of impressions) and engagement as measured by follower count and number of shares. The prior fiscal year (2021), the District's posts and videos were viewed nearly 2.6 million times, the District had 23,451 followers across all platforms, and the District's posts were shared 3,811 times. For fiscal year 2022 (FY22), staff set baseline goals to garner 2 million impressions, increase sharing of the District's posts and videos by 10% to 4,250 shares and grow total followers by 15% to 26,500 (note that goals were set prior to the end of FY21 and impressions were expected to decrease 15% due to fewer COVID-related postings).

Rather than the 15% decrease in reach predicted, the District's posts and videos garnered nearly 2.9 million impressions, an 11% increase over FY21. Additionally, paid advertising in support of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration boosted the number of impressions by 1.7 million, for a total of more than 4.6 million impressions in FY22 (78% increase over FY21). Follower growth was slower than expected, increasing just 11% to 26,075 and the District's posts and videos were shared 5,253 times, a 38% increase over FY21 and 24% over goal.

To achieve these results, staff focused on solidifying social media as a mainstream communication channel, ensuring efficient use of resources and creating novel and interesting content across all platforms. Additionally, the District's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations gave staff the opportunity to experiment with new techniques and strategies for expanding the District's social media reach, including paid promotion, partner social media outreach and toolkits, a social media photo contest and several social media series. The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary paid media budget (\$30,000) and additional staff resources (the limited-term Public Affairs Specialist position

added to support 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary activities) allowed for this enhancement of the social media program.

### Social Media Management Tools

Since 2019, Public Affairs staff had used Fanbooster by Traject (formerly Social Report) to manage social media, specifically to make posts on and collect metrics from Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube. In 2021, that service was discontinued, so staff researched and compared options, choosing *Sendible* as a service with similar features and pricing (which parent company ASG/Traject acquired in March of 2021) for three primary reasons:

1. An export tool was developed to transfer previous content from Fanbooster, allowing for continuity of metrics and history
2. A special price (40% discount) was available to those who migrated before November 1, 2021
3. High customer satisfaction ratings and reviews

Staff migrated social media posting, monitoring and metric-collecting activities to Sendible in October 2021.

As the District's communications database technologies evolve with the implementation of Hubspot as our new customer relationship management (CRM) platform, social media tools will likely transition again as efficiencies can be improved with integrated technology.

### Staff Resources

Though Public Affairs staff manages the District's social media as part of an overall communications plan, other staff, primarily rangers and natural resource specialists, sometimes contribute photos or share ideas for content.

Staff generally limits platform activity to publishing content rather than interacting with followers because of the implications regarding government speech and public forums. In addition, 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."

### Video Content

Following the success of TikTok and other video sharing apps, many platforms have reportedly geared their algorithms to favor video content over image or text content. Video content continues to perform well on Facebook (Facebook videos) and Instagram (Instagram Reels). Because novel video content takes significant time to create (a well-produced educational video can take about four hours to script, film, edit and post, even if the final video product is only a minute long), staff is generally using short clips of existing video to maximize efficiency and conserve resources for higher priority work.

For FY22, staff experimented with some lower effort video content on Instagram Reels, including vista shots of the preserves with music in the background, reposts of shorter clips that were previously posted on YouTube and short live videos on-site with staff. Overall, these video clips had significantly higher reach (5,063 impressions on average per Instagram video post, versus the average 2,520 impressions on average per Instagram post).

Filming is the most time-consuming part of generating video content, so this lower-effort video content is only lower-effort if there are previously created video resources available to staff. Public Affairs staff is currently coordinating with Visitor Services staff to obtain raw video footage, as well as short, social-media ready videos as a part of ranger staff's interpretive content requirements.

In April 2022, staff created a TikTok account for the purpose of running paid media in support of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Staff reposted two Instagram Reels to the District's TikTok account, but neither performed particularly well, as the TikTok algorithm tends to favor content that is either relevant to current trends, or novel and highly engaging (e.g., well-crafted educational content, beautifully filmed wilderness content or exciting news content). Creating consistent novel and engaging video content for the TikTok platform is not sustainable for Public Affairs staff given current staffing resources.

### Advertising

As noted, the District's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration created the opportunity and budget to expand paid promotion on social media. With assistance from our professional consultants, the District employed social media advertising on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and TikTok. Advertising was displayed in three languages: English, Spanish and Chinese (Mandarin) to reach new audiences and meet community inclusion goals for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary outreach and events. The paid media campaign has delivered 1.7 million post and video views across all District social media platforms between April and June 2022. In April, the District used a form of paid social media advertising called "boosted" posts to promote the Bayside Family Festival, which did increase monthly followers gained by nearly 50% for the month of April over the average of similar months (243 vs. 162). Similarly, analytics on YouTube show that 99% of all impressions and video views were from paid advertising in April through June.

While paid media is a proven way to increase reach, followers and engagement, staff recommends setting goals that remain attainable through organic growth as the best use of public resources.

### Metrics

Because the overall goal of the District's use of social media remains increased 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.

### Summary of FY22 Metrics

|                               | Target metrics | Total     | Facebook  | Instagram | Twitter | LinkedIn | YouTube | TikTok <sup>1</sup> |
|-------------------------------|----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------|----------|---------|---------------------|
| FY21 total organic post reach | N/A            | 2,598,103 | 730,995   | 851,488   | 744,526 | 131,368  | 130,726 | N/A                 |
| FY22 total organic post reach | 2,000,000      | 2,882,804 | 1,140,004 | 1,262,240 | 368,800 | 95,144   | 88,484  | N/A                 |
| Percent change FY22           | -15%           | 11.3%     | 35.8%     | 32.5%     | -101.9% | -38.1%   | -47.7%  | N/A                 |

|   |        |           |           |         |       |       |                  |         |
|---|--------|-----------|-----------|---------|-------|-------|------------------|---------|
| Avg. organic reach per post                         | N/A    | 1,422     | 2,294     | 2,004   | 583   | 366   | N/A <sup>2</sup> | N/A     |
| Additional reach from paid social media advertising | N/A    | 1,721,492 | 1,279,210 | 143,782 | N/A   | N/A   | 298,500          | 368,963 |
| Total followers as of June 30, 2022                 | 26,500 | 26,075    | 12,696    | 6,223   | 4,619 | 2,023 | 505              | 5       |
| New followers FY22                                  | 3,049  | 2,624     | 1,099     | 896     | 259   | 286   | 111              | 5       |
| Percent follower growth FY22                        | 15%    | 11.2%     | 9.5%      | 16.2%   | 5.9%  | 15.2% | 22.0%            | N/A     |

<sup>1</sup> TikTok video views are not yet counted in the total reach numbers, as staff has not yet posted consistently on the platform, or created any TikTok-specific content. TikTok views are not counted in FY21 reach because the District did not yet have a TikTok account.

<sup>2</sup> YouTube analytics count impressions across all videos rather than just new posts, which makes reach per post less useful as a metric.

In summary, the social program in fiscal year 2022 surpassed the goals for reach and shares, garnering nearly 2.9 million organic impressions (with an additional 1.7 million advertising impressions) and 5,253 shares. Follower growth fell just short of goal with 2,624 new (26,075 total) followers across the District's social media accounts.

For FY23, staff aims to continue this success by focusing available resources on creating engaging content, experimenting with ways to gain followers (including limited paid media) and experimenting with video content to the extent that it is feasible given available resources. For FY23, staff expects overall impressions to dip following the close of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration, to 2.3 million. Total followers are expected to increase by 10% to 28,683 and total post shares are expected to increase by 15% to 6,040.

## **FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no fiscal impact associated with the recommendation.

## **BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW**

There was no committee review of this informational presentation.

The previous annual update was provided to the full Board on [June 9, 2021](#).

## **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 annually as part of a total communications update, following the close of each fiscal year and as part of the annual budget planning process.

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Prepared by:  
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Board Policy Manual

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Electronic Communications &amp;<br/>Social Media</b> | <b>Policy 6.01<br/>Chapter 6 – General</b> |
| Effective Date: 8/24/05                                 | Revised Date: 11/13/13                     |
| Prior Versions: 8/24/05                                 |  |

I. **Purpose:** Use of electronic media is necessary and useful for District Board members and staff in order to improve communication and efficiently perform their District duties. The purpose of this policy is to ensure the proper use of District electronic media and to set out the policy the District and Board members will follow when using electronic media and the District’s electronic communication system. This policy will also ensure that use of District Electronic media complies with applicable law, including the California Public Records Act and the Ralph M. Brown Act.

This policy shall be observed and administered by District staff in compliance with the District Electronic Communications Systems Use and Access Policy. This policy is applicable to all users of the District’s electronic communication system.

II. **Definitions**

- A. **District’s Electronic Communication System Devices**– District-owned devices or products designed to electronically process, transmit, or store information such as computers, tablets (for example, iPads, Kindles, etc.), printers, modems, USB flash drives, and compact discs.
- B. **User** – a Board member, employee, contractor, consultant, volunteer or any other person who uses the District’s electronic communication system.
- C. **E-mail** – electronic text or visual communication, including its attachments.
- D. **Electronic Media** – a method for processing or transmitting information in electronic form, including e-mail, software programs, and the Internet.
- E. **Electronic Communication (or E-Communication)**– electronic text or visual communication and attachments distributed via e-mail, websites, instant messaging, text messaging, social media (for example, Facebook, Twitter, etc.), online forums, listservs or similar services.

III. **General Procedures**

- A. **Protocol for Electronic Communications.** E-mail sent via the District’s Electronic Communication System represents and reflects upon the District’s public image and

integrity. All Electronic Communications must be respectful, professional, and consistent with District policies. E-mail must be written in the same professional and respectful manner as communications sent or received in writing.

- B. No Use of Personal E-Mail.** District Board members and employees should refrain from using their home or business E-mail accounts or addresses for any communication pertaining to District business unless absolutely necessary. District Board members and employees should communicate with the public and staff solely via their designated District e-mail addresses. District Board members and employees shall not commingle e-mail pertaining to District business with their home or business e-mail.
- C. Electronic Communications between Board Members Concerning District Business.** Communications from a Board member to another Board member or members concerning District business should be “one way” and marked “For Information Only—Do Not Reply.”
- D. Electronic Communication by a Quorum of the Board or a Board Standing Committee.** A majority of the members of the Board (or, in the case of a Board Standing Committee regarding matters within the Committee’s jurisdiction) shall not engage in discussions regarding District issues via any Electronic Communication.
- E. District Staff Response to Electronic Communications from the Public.** The District will answer all questions received at its designated e-mail address ([info@openspace.org](mailto:info@openspace.org)). Correspondence received at [info@openspace.org](mailto:info@openspace.org) will be checked each business day and questions routed by a designated Public Affairs Department staff member to the appropriate department for an answer. Questions will be answered in a timely manner. If the District’s answers to a constituent’s question(s) are relevant to and impact a larger group of constituents, the District may post the question(s) (without naming the author) and answer on the District’s Web site in the Q&A section at [www.openspace.org/about\\_us/faqs.asp](http://www.openspace.org/about_us/faqs.asp). E-mail addressed to individual staff members or to a department should be treated as written business correspondence.
- F. Board Electronic Communications with the Public.** The public may communicate with the Board electronically through the District’s Web site at: [www.openspace.org/about\\_us/board\\_of\\_directors.asp](http://www.openspace.org/about_us/board_of_directors.asp). E-mail from the public addressed to the District in general or to the Board of Directors will be treated as a written communication pursuant to Section 1.48 of the District’s Rules of Procedure. E-mails addressed to the Board of Directors will be forwarded to the District Clerk and a draft response will be prepared for Board consideration.

E-mails addressed to one Board member may, at the recipient Board member’s discretion: 1) consider it an individual communication to which he or she may respond; 2) submit it to be treated as a “written communication” to be presented to the full board during a public meeting; 3) inform the Board of it during the Informational Reports portion of the Board public meeting; 4) request that it be forwarded to the full Board as part of its information packet at the next available Board meeting; or 5) forward such E-mail to staff for response as set out in



Section G. When a Board member responds to individual E-mail from the public, and desires to forward his or her response to such E-mail to the Board, he or she may forward the response and the initial E-mail to the District Clerk for inclusion in the Board's informational packet at the next available Board meeting.

- G. District Electronic Communications with the Public.** District staff will post official information on upcoming and prior District meetings, workshops and events on the District Website, including agendas, minutes and staff reports. Prior agendas, minutes and staff reports will be posted for the current and prior calendar year.

The District will generally not answer questions or respond to comments made in Internet forums. The District may post answers to such questions on its Website as determined by a Board member or by District staff.

If a Board member desires staff to prepare a response to a question or comment received by E-mail or made in an Internet forum, the Board member may forward the question to the General Manager and request that staff prepare an appropriate response in a reasonable period of time. If preparation of a response will require significant staff time to research or draft the response, an interim response to the questioner or commenter will be sent as soon as possible acknowledging receipt of the inquiry and informing the sender that a response is being prepared.

#### IV. **Web Site**

- A. District Web Site.** The District uses the Web site to disseminate information to the public about the District, official business of the District's Board of Directors, and District preserves. This information shall be published and maintained by District staff in the appropriate department relevant to the information presented. Files made available through the District Web site shall be consistent with the District Web publishing templates, and the Privacy and Terms of Use Policy. The Public Affairs Department is the primary point of contact for inquiries regarding District information disseminated through the Web site, in addition to being the point of contact for any media inquiries through the Web site. The Web site should be maintained in conformity with the District's "Web Strategy and Maintenance Plan."
- B. Web Site and Internet Services—For District Business Purposes Only.** The District's Web site and Internet connection exists solely for the purpose of conducting District business and is not intended for personal use.
- C. Prohibited Uses.** Electronic communications systems of the District are not to be used in any way that violates any District policy, including this Electronic Communications Policy.

#### V. **Specific Procedures**

- A. Distribution of Agenda Packets.** The distribution of agenda packets to the Board of Directors, Committee members, and staff may be in hardcopy or through electronic media. Board of Directors, Committee members, and staff may also access agendas and agenda packets via the District's Electronic Communication System Devices to view during public hearings and public meetings.
- B. Retention of E-Mail.** E-mail is intended to be a temporary medium of transmission of communication and should not be used for permanent storage of records. Because E-mail should not be used for permanent storage, E-mail is deemed to constitute preliminary drafts, notes, or intra-agency or interagency memoranda that are not retained by the District in the ordinary course of business. If a District Board member or employee desires to retain information received by E-mail, the information should either be printed as a hard copy and then deleted from E-mail, or transferred to an electronic file specifically designated and used solely for District business purposes. The District Clerk and General Counsel are available to assist users in determining how to address questions concerning the application of these procedures.
- C. Public Records Act.** District records, whether paper or electronic, are governed by the public disclosure requirements of the California Public Records Act. Disclosure may be required regardless of who sends or receives a communication or document. In the event that the District receives a request for disclosure of District records that includes E-mail, the person responsible for the requested records must then use his or her best efforts to preserve all retained District E-mail covered by the request until it is determined whether the E-mail is subject to any exemptions under the California Public Records Act. The District Clerk and/or General Counsel must be contacted concerning any request for disclosure of any District records applicable to E-mail or other electronic records of any user subject to this policy.
- D. Confidentiality.**
- 1) California law requires that certain information be treated as confidential and not be distributed to others inside or outside the District who do not have authorization to view such information. District Board members and employees may occasionally receive confidential electronic information. Some examples of confidential information are: personnel records, internal investigations, information relating to litigation or potential litigation, attorney-client communication, information relating to labor negotiations, or information relating to confidential real estate negotiations. When District Board members or employees receive confidential information, it should be marked "Confidential Information" so that Board members and employees are alerted to the nature of the information. For example, the subject line of an E-mail to Board members that contains confidential information should state: "CONFIDENTIAL."
  - 2) Confidential information should not be sent or forwarded to individuals or entities not authorized to receive such information and should not be sent or forwarded to District employees not authorized to view such information.

- 3) District Board members and employees shall exercise caution in sending confidential information by E-mail and are encouraged to transmit such information via written memoranda, letters or phone calls, because of the ease with which such information transmitted via e-mail can lose confidentiality by inadvertent or intentional diversion or re-transmission by others. Any email containing confidential information should be read and deleted in a timely manner.
- 4) The District's General Counsel should be contacted concerning any questions regarding whether a communication is confidential.

**VI. Compliance with this Policy**

It is the responsibility of every user to ensure that he or she is in compliance with this Electronic Communications Policy.