

# Chapter XX:

## Communications and Community Engagement Department (CCED)

This document is a proposal to the Plymouth Charter Commission for the creation and management of a Department of Communications and Community Engagement.

Communication with citizens is a basic obligation of government and an essential component of the democratic process and is essential to fostering transparency in government and taxpayer satisfaction.

Effective public communication should be an integral part of achieving success in every aspect of town governance in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Section 1 suggests Charter language for establishing a Department and Director for communications functions in Plymouth.

Section 2 suggests concepts, data, and descriptions for use in Bylaw and HR Job Descriptions language.

# Section 1: Suggested Charter Language

## ***DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT***

Communications & Community Engagement shall be a full-service municipal department, providing strategic and tactical communication solutions for town-wide and department-level initiatives.

Plymouth's Department of Communications and Community Engagement professionals will develop and maintain community and media relations and present municipal information to the public. Using a variety of multiple media outlets, the department will develop and implement strategies that positively promote civic engagement, internal communication and municipal transparency through the delivery of accurate, consistent and timely information about and for the Town of Plymouth.

## ***COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR***

The Department will be managed by a Communications Director responsible for coordination with Data Visualization & Analytics Specialists, PACTV Coordinator, and executive branch officials, i.e. Town Manager & Assistant Town Manager, department directors and designated staff representatives, all Town boards, commissions, and committees.

Key Responsibilities of the Communications Director include planning, implementing, promoting, and supporting town activities and events across all departments and divisions of Town government.

## **Section 2: Communications Bylaw/HR Content**

### **Vision**

Plymouth will be a community that balances urban & rural living with safe, sustainable, livable neighborhoods that are well-connected; a community to be proud of, with a vibrant workforce and resources that are preserved and protected; a unique town that offers quality education and bold economic, recreation, and housing opportunities.

### **Mission**

Communication with citizens is a basic obligation of government and an essential component of the democratic process. Effective public communication should be an integral part of achieving success in every aspect of town governance.

The Communications & Community Engagement Department supports the town government and each town department/division through marketing, graphic design, print production, social media, website management, event planning, media strategy and response, photography, video production, and emergency communications.

The Communications & Community Engagement Department (CCED) supports the town government and each town department/division through marketing, graphic design, print production, social media, website management, event planning, media strategy and response, photography, video production, and emergency communications.

### **Goals**

The goals of the Communications and Community Engagement Department are to:

- Demonstrate to Plymouth citizens, business communities, corporations, all of the Commonwealth and all visitors, that Plymouth is forward-looking, public-facing, open, and transparent;
- Demonstrate that Plymouth Town Government is an open, fair, and positive force in the lives of the town in terms of communications and outreach;

- Provide a positive window to the work of town government;
- to provide an outbound focus on the services that our government provides.
- As the town’s vision and goals evolve and technology advances, CCED will focus on:

***TELLING THE STORY OF PLYMOUTH***

- Define the messaging and communication/engagement tools the town of Plymouth will use
- Ensure that engagement between the town and our residents, visitors, businesses, and community partners is implemented in a timely, effective, and reliable manner
- Monitor brand usage to ensure consistency throughout the town
- Ensure that communications align with Plymouth’s comprehensive Master Plan vision and goals
- Work to advance the town’s mission and enhance community pride

***ENGAGING ALL OF PLYMOUTH***

Effective communication means improving our stakeholders’ access to timely, accurate, and helpful information about the town and its services; providing accessible, meaningful ways to engage; and promoting transparency in our decision-making process. CCED will:

- Encourage informed participation in local government
- Demonstrate the value and importance of town services
- Improve our decision-making
- Build trust in local government
- Encourage community participation in programs and events
- Inspire and recruit future municipal leaders
- Attract & retain skilled, happy employees, and

**Communications & Engagement Team**

Everyone who represents the town of Plymouth in any official capacity can be considered a “communicator” for the town. Plymouth defines its core communications team as follows:

***COMMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT DEPARTMENT***

- Communications Director
- Communications Assistant
- Data, Visualization & Analytics Specialist

- PACTV Coordinator

### **GOVERNMENT STAKEHOLDERS**

- Executive Branch Officials
- Town Manager & Assistant Town Manager
- Department directors and designated staff representatives
- All Town boards, commissions, and committees

### **Key Responsibilities**

- Planning, implementing, promoting, and supporting town activities and events across all departments and divisions of Town government.
- Communicating clearly, concisely, openly, and proactively
- Ensuring opportunity for public participation and gathering public feedback
- Leading and supporting town staff in their efforts to keep community members informed
- Partnering with community leaders to inform and engage the public

### **OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Serving as trusted advisors to town leadership and staff and providing insight during decision-making processes and incidents
- Planning, developing, implementing, and evaluating internal communications strategies to provide accurate and timely information
- Providing staff with the tools and templates they need to share key messages and maintain brand consistency
- Developing and implementing key messages and brand standards for the town of Plymouth and the departments within, including consistent logo usage, fonts, and colors
- Planning, developing, implementing, and evaluating digital communications strategies including the town's website, social media accounts, and email messaging
- Maintaining relationships with local media outlets, providing them with timely, newsworthy information, and monitoring media coverage
- Serving as the town spokesperson and/or providing guidance and training to the appropriate town staff members to serve in this role

- Developing and using branding tactics to support a vibrant economy, attract and retain skilled employees and highlight town services and government business.

## **Community Engagement**

A key component of the work of CCED is to identify partners in telling the Story of Plymouth, “the conversation.”

Through strategic, credible communications, Plymouth’s stakeholders will become more engaged with the town; develop stronger connections to the town built on trust and credibility; and become increasingly aware - and supportive - of town operations, programs, and goals.

### ***STAKEHOLDERS***

With a commitment to telling Plymouth’s story – continuously, comprehensively, and enthusiastically, the town has identified the following key stakeholders:

- Residents/citizens
- Visitors
- Business leaders
- Community organizations/partners
- Schools
- Media
- Executive departments & town government
- Employees (current and potential)

### ***Outreach & messaging***

- Paid advertising: usually only for large events, recruitment or to support community partners
- Staff training and assistance: most town employees receive basic communications training as part of onboarding. This includes review of the communications policy, and, if appropriate, website training

## **Communications Tools**

CCED manages the use of multiple tools to reach its stakeholders with the town’s key messages and brand:

### ***DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS***

Most of Plymouth’s municipal communications tools are digital:

- Town website: plymouth-ma.gov (including government calendar)
- Library, Center for Active Living, other Community Resources, websites, and mailings
- Economic Development website: goPlymouth-ma.gov
- Facebook (town, police, fire, recreation, public works, Plymouth 400, SeePlymouth)
- Twitter (town and police)
- Instagram (town, fire, and police)
- LinkedIn (town only)
- YouTube (town only, PACTV)
- AccessPlymouth (GIS/mapping portal) PACTV??
- Electronic reporting (such as annual reports, Budget Books, Budget Tools, recreation program books, others??)
- RAIDS online (crime mapping through police department)

***eMail and Text Tools***

- Internal email
- “Alert Me” email and text subscriptions
- Project Lifesaver (through police department)
- CodeRed (through 911 communications)

***Special Events (subject to change)***

- Plymouth 400
- Thanksgiving Parade
- 4th of July

**Measuring Success**

To help the town determine the effectiveness of its communications & engagement efforts, staff will regularly evaluate:

- Are we communicating as much as we should?
- Are we communicating the right information?
- Are we using the most effective tools to communicate?
- Are we communicating in a timely manner?
- How can we communicate more consistently?
- Are our communications accessible to all of our stakeholders?

The Communications & Engagement Department will work to measure success through:

- Website analytics
- “Alert Me” subscribers
- Tracking the reach of social media messages
- Tracking “followers” and subscribers
- Estimating and tracking attendance at events, forums, and meetings
- Tracking the level of participation on town boards and committees
- Tracking participation in town-driven polls and surveys
- Media coverage (positive, negative, neutral)

### ***Collecting experiences and opinions***

Feedback directly from constituents can be difficult to compile and analyze in a way that provides actionable data. However, collecting comments and feedback from various sources and evaluating the general tone of the comments can be helpful. The communications team will compile these comments by:

- Making “How Are We Doing?” surveys available online and at larger events
- Collecting user ratings/reviews on social media
- Tracking and responding to social media mentions and inbox comments
- Tracking the number of fans/subscribers/followers; and
- Tracking the “tone” of town-specific comments on other sites (local media, etc.)



## Thanks to ...

**Liz Allen**

**Director of Communications & Community Outreach**

**Auburn, Maine**

[LAllen@auburnmaine.gov](mailto:LAllen@auburnmaine.gov)

Liz has created in Auburn a model for 21st Century use of electronic and information management and distribution tools for municipalities.

You can see on her site pages that are examples showing the the use of communications tools to connect with, inform and make use of public data.

In a separate mailing, I will include the job descriptions she generously shared with us.

You can find the Model Website that inspired this document at:

<https://www.auburnmaine.gov/Pages/Government/Government-Home>

Of particular interest are dashboards based on readily available municipal, state, and federal data. These include Online Town Hall, Services to Residents, More Active Residents, Transparent Government, Businesses Attracted, Tourism, Future Residents, and more:

<https://access.auburn-auburnme.hub.arcgis.com/>