

SENIOR TASK FORCE – INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS – JAN. 26, 2022, MEETING

Present: Sharlan Douglas, Cindy Goodaker, Janice Wagman, Ilene Orlanski, Mary Mills, Michael Lawrence, Robert Sidelinger, Richard Wilson (guest)

Dissemination of information remains the problem

There's no consensus on how people like to receive information. Seniors range from large numbers who are still in the workforce, to retired people who are active in the community, to "withdrawn" seniors with little social contact.

There also is a wide range of digital literacy. This will change over the coming years, but in the meantime, many seniors are not comfortable searching for services and activities online. According to an Area Agency on Aging survey, one in three seniors is digitally illiterate. (1995 seems to have been the breakout year for the Internet. Subscriptions to consumer online services went from 5 million in late 1994 to 12 million by mid-1995. AOL became a thing.)

To add to that, information about aging in place is widely strewn. You need to know where to look for it, but you don't know what you don't know.

Do we need to amend our goal statement?

There was some feeling that our goal statement should be amended to include resources and activities outside the city. That raises the question of how comprehensive is it desirable or possible to be. Keeping resources current can be time-consuming. More discussion is needed.

Current goal statement: We envision that all residents will have the ability to be informed, through multiple channels, about the services offered and the activities in our city.

Considerations/discussion

- How much effort is it to publish and who is doing it? Review the resources we put into dissemination and aim for COPE – create once, publish everywhere. Who are fact sources? Link to those.
- Lots of resources available – the county sent a lot through the mail when the pandemic started. AARP has weekly magazines.
- How can people filter information? Some is from commercial sources.
- Judy Davids has put quite a bit online, but vetting was an issue.
- Multiple agencies and businesses are pumping out information. How do we vet that?
- What information should Royal Oak own vs. what resources people should be pointed to?
- Can artificial intelligence play a role?
- Links to other providers could be an action step.
- Is there a way we can streamline the work and/or self-fund? Review what resources we're using.
- What should Royal Oak own vs. what is owned by someone else? Federal government, churches, Oakland County.
- What are the personas of people who we might serve? Especially those less connected.
- Consider push vs. pull channels
- Ask print media what they think.

- How do we keep the city website updated? Each department updates its own pages if they think to do it, but not systematically done.
- Can AI be used to structure the website to function more intuitively?
- What does creating our content cost (the time of the relevant agencies)? What is the cost to deliver it?

Expert insight – Richard Wilson, Royal Oak TV director (WROK)

About 90-95% of the content I get is from Insight Magazine. There was a lot more before COVID. The biggest problem I have at getting and keeping information is the lifespan of the information. It's extremely useful to have one person to collate the information from various sources, but verifying down the road that your evergreen information is still good is difficult. It's a process I do once a year. A lot of the programs I advertise come and go pretty frequently.

Cable TV is old-school broadcasting – information scrolls and it's literally a matter of catching it at a time when the information is being displayed. The station takes PSAs.

WROK is a government access channel – is available online through romi.gov and also through cable providers. Funding has been affected because in 2019 the FCC allowed cable providers to deduct in-kind services and equipment from the fees that they pay to municipalities.

The number of people viewing is hard to know – those numbers are proprietary to the cable company – but probably lucky to be in the 5,000 range. WOW has been great to work with, Comcast not so much. It seems like AT&T doesn't have many subscribers.

WROK has an electronic bulletin board that includes the basic who/what/when/where/why of each event. Each flashes up for 15-16 seconds. Scroll of announcements runs between programs. Senior center information is not updated as often as the library, which sends regular info.

Retention: Required to keep meetings for three months but no requirement for other content. It's a matter of interest level. Since the station is now HD, a lot of old programming doesn't work. Bulletin items are deleted.

Richard is the only staff. There are volunteers for things that require more than one person, but the economy is such that a lot of people don't want to work for free. The job has gotten technical enough that it requires something more than just a person with an interest in video.

He does hire people occasionally for things like concerts, etc. Richard is a contractor to the city, so those hires fall within his contract with the city.

Additional experts

Experts give an overview of content they disseminate, though what channels to what audiences. Talk about how their tools serve aging populations and how they might be improved. What are challenges and successes?

Carolyn Marsh, senior center.

Kristen Nelson, county commissioner, District 5

Penny Luebs, county commissioner, District 16

Area Agency on Aging 1B