

2013-14 Board of Freeholders: Communications Plan

People want to have a voice in their government. They will particularly want to have their voice heard when a small group like a Board of Freeholders (“BOF”) is convening to design their form of county government from the ground up.

This communications plan is intended to facilitate effective listening to the public’s voice so that BOF can maximize citizen participation and input. Respecting the legal issues faced by any elected official when it comes to such things as e-mail, telephone, social media communications, etc., the BOF will be fully briefed in these matters by staff from the Prosecuting Attorney’s office during their first meeting. Any questions about this communications plan should be directed to Kelly Sills, Clark County, at 360/397-2232 or by e-mail at kelly.sills@clark.wa.gov.

Public Meetings

By law, every meeting of the BOF with a quorum shall be an open public meeting. Though it is not required to do so by Washington law, the county strongly encourages the BOF to allow public comments during every public meeting. The BOF may establish time limitations on public comments in order to ensure full and fair participation by the public within the context of meeting efficiency and effectiveness.

Website

The county will provide a web page for items pertinent to BOF meetings. The county web page will include BOF agendas, minutes, press releases, the 2013 resolution which established the BOF, copies of existing county charters in Washington, a copy of the 2002 charter that was developed by the 2000-2002 Clark County BOF, ongoing drafts of the 2014 county charter, FAQ, list of the 15 Freeholders comprising the BOF, contact information, and any other information selected by the county for inclusion on the web page.

E-mails

The county will provide individual county e-mail addresses to each of the 15 freeholders. Freeholders will be given extensive training by the Prosecuting Attorney’s office regarding how to properly use, and not misuse, public e-mail as elected officials and with considerations of quorum. The county will also develop an automatic meeting alert e-mail distribution list for the purposes of notifying any member of the public about upcoming BOF meetings who has requested such notification.

Facebook

The county will establish an open public Facebook account for the BOF, but not for each Freeholder. Most if not all of the same information provided on the county’s BOF website will also be included on the county’s BOF Facebook. The county will not engage in blog responses on Facebook and will not ask individual or groups of Freeholders to engage in same (although Freeholders will have that individual opportunity if that is a choice they make on their own). Freeholders will be given extensive training by the Prosecuting Attorney’s office regarding personal Facebook accounts as elected officials, with a particular focus on the Washington Public Records Act and public access to their personal Facebook information if it has anything to do with BOF business. It should be noted that failure of a Freeholder to provide public information from an individual Facebook account, and the resulting penalties, will be the individual liability of the Freeholder, not the county.

Written Comments

Copies of all written correspondence directed to the BOF as received from the public shall be provided by staff to each Freeholder during their next regular meeting. The public may direct written comments to the BOF through the following contact:

Kelly Sills
Staff to the Board of Freeholders
P.O. Box 5000
Vancouver, WA 98666-5000

Telephone Communications

Any member of the public may communicate by telephone with a Freeholder directly to the extent a Freeholder chooses to make his or her telephone contact information available to the public. Any member of the public wishing to leave verbal comments via telephone with BOF staff may do so through the following contact, who shall summarize such comments at the next regular BOF meeting:

Kelly Sills
Staff to the Board of Freeholders
360/397-2232

Teleconferencing/Videoconferencing

The BOF shall determine through its bylaws whether it shall allow its own members, or the public, to participate in its meetings through teleconferencing or videoconferencing. Likewise, the BOF shall determine through its bylaws whether participation of a Freeholder by teleconferencing or videoconferencing is counted as present for purposes of establishing a quorum.

News Releases

The county may periodically issue press releases about ongoing BOF activities in order to keep the public informed as to BOF progress. It shall do so following consultation with the BOF chair and assigned staff as available. BOF may issue its own press releases if it so chooses, and it is recommended that it consult with county prior to such issuance.

Interviews

The BOF may receive periodic requests from radio, television, internet, magazine, newspaper, or other outlets to conduct an interview. The responsibility to fulfill that function, as specified in the BOF bylaws, shall be assigned by the BOF Chair. County staff to the BOF shall not speak on behalf of the BOF.

Speakers Bureau

The BOF may receive periodic request from organizations within and outside Clark County to speak about BOF activities before an audience. The responsibility to fulfill that function, as specified in the BOF bylaws, shall be assigned by the BOF Chair. County staff to the BOF shall not speak on behalf of the BOF.

ADA Accommodations

The county and BOF will comply to the extent feasible with the public's need to communicate with the BOF in accordance with this plan under the ADA and WLAD. Please note that, under the ADA

and WLAD, when an individual qualifies for reasonable accommodation the service provider is free to choose among effective accommodations and may choose one that is less expensive or easier to provide. A medical examination may be required to determine if an individual has a covered disability and is entitled to accommodation, and if so, to help identify an effective accommodation.

Disclaimer

This communications plan is subject to change at any time by either the county or the BOF. Clark County is not responsible for the content of any information made available or acquired from or by third parties, including errors by the County in reproducing such information. The County (a) does not make any warranty, express or implied, with respect to the accuracy, completeness, usefulness or adequacy of any information accessed via media referenced in this communications plan and, (b) is not responsible for any errors or omissions in the information accessed via media referenced in this communications plan, or for the results obtained from the use of such information. The county is not responsible for any comments made by the public during a BOF meeting, on the BOF web site, on individual Freeholder e-mails, or the BOF Facebook account.