RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A COMPREHENSIVE INTEGRATED COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY FOR ANC3/4G

Statement of Purpose

The current ANC3/4G communications program with our constituents utilizes several different vehicles and is mostly done on an ad hoc basis. This is slowly changing with the introduction of a new (2 issues) monthly ANC3/4G newsletter via Mailchimp. However, there are still aspects of timeliness, comprehensiveness and efficiency that are less than adequate for our loftier goals and purposes. Ideally, we should be communicating with our constituents to: share information, receive input, and for us to be able to ask questions We need to create opportunities and mechanisms to communicate in both a structured format and on an as needed basis for these and other reasons.

Effective organizational strategies rely on messages being delivered multiple times in various ways to have the most impact. Not everybody receives information the same way and different messages require different methods of delivery. Using multiple channels (e.g. website, newsletters, social media, etc.) to communicate with constituents and others will increase the odds that information is received in a timely fashion and understood.

It is less than ideal to develop initiatives in a stovepipe manner. A well-conceived, comprehensive, and integrated communications infrastructure which leverages what we do and the platforms we use in a seamless manner is what we should strive for.

I. Driving Concepts

A. We need to be aware of who our audience is (demographics and characteristics) and choose engagement tactics that will resonate with them.
B. We can't just throw content out there to see if it sticks.
C. We need to be strategic about how, what and when we send/deliver.
D. We need to speak to our audience's needs, not simply our needs. Give constituents what they want and what they can use and they will come to expect it, appreciate it, and want more of it.
E. We should use language that will make our audience feel engaged.
F. We need to leverage all of our tools (and to eradicate unused tools (e.g. Instagram) to ensure our communications are being delivered and interacted with which will help to maximize impact. The best content in the world won't matter if our messages aren't being read by our audience.
G. We need to have a consistent branding of who we are.

II. Questions That Were Addressed

A. How are we communicating now? – See III below.
B. What are the characteristics of our community? One methodology based on available information relates to social media accounts of various local entities? This yielded the following results:
Local Facebook Accounts:@theavenuedc 1,136 likes, 1,213 followers; @LittleBeastDC 462 likes, 500 followers; @Blue44 1,277 likes, 1,276 followers; @capitalcrab 1,311

likes, 1,311 followers; @barstonschildsplay 1,071 likes, 1,318 followers; @ChevyChaseCitizensAssociation 124 likes, 132 followers; @HistoricChevyChaseDC 71 likes, 76 followers

Local Instagram Accounts: blue44dc 704 followers; capitalcrab 1,073 followers; theavenuedc 1,182 followers

Local Twitter Accounts: None found

C. How do community members prefer to receive communications? – See results of survey Question #1 in Appendix A
D. What are we communicating? Based on the tweets we have posted since starting our Twitter account all tweets have involved one of four things: Video availability, Minutes of meetings, agendas of forthcoming meetings and newsletter. Virtually all postings on the Chevy Chase Listerv, NextDoor and the Chevy Chase Google Groups do mostly the same thing.
E. What tools are we now using and how effective are they? (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, newsletters, website, Listserv) – See III below
F. What should we communicate? – See results of survey Question #2 in Appendix A

III.   ANC3/4G Current Communication Vehicles Used and Notable User Statistics (as of 6/20/2019)

A. Website – http://anc3g.org – no credible user statistics are available
B. Newsletter – ANC3/4G (Mailchimp) – First issue published 5/15/2019. We currently have 887 subscribers with an open rate of 38.6% in May and 39.4% in June
C. YouTube - ANC3G, 20 subscribers, 26 videos posted, the average number of views per video is 88 since its inception on 2/14/2018. Average viewing time by video varies greatly and ranges from 2:30 minutes to 18:40 minutes per video.
D. Twitter - @anc34g, 51 followers (including only 8 new ones over the past 10 weeks, additionally it appears about half of the followers are not ANC3/4G residents), 30 tweets since its inception on 1/22/2019. Only a total of 20 retweets over the 30 tweets posted resulting in lower than hoped for audience boost (retweets help boost the number of followers).
E. Facebook - @ANC3G, 429 likes, 435 followers, the last post occurred on 6/18/2018.
F. Instagram - Chevy Chase Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3/4G, never used.
G. Survey Tool (SurveyMonkey/QuestionPro) - We have used QuestionPro for 3 surveys so far: Community Center, Program Needs, and Communications but it is not necessarily better than SurveyMonkey. They both have free plans with limits of 10 questions per survey and 100 respondents per survey. They also have pricing plans for more extensive surveys (e.g. we paid to do the Community Center Survey).
H. Meeting Scheduler/Polls – many options available but Doodle is the most widely used and it is free.
I. Community discussion platforms - NextDoor for our area (10,858 subscribers including 3,422 (greatest growth rate, an increase of 166 subscribers since 4/26/2019) specific subscribers for our areas are: Hawthorne, 284, Barnaby Woods, 653, Upper Chevy Chase DC, 426, East Chevy Chase DC, 874 and West Chevy Chase DC, 1,185) Google Listserv (396 including only 21 new members since 1/1/2019), and the Chevy Chase Community Listserv with 5,355 members.

IV.   Outreach Questions

A. We don't currently have a strategy for engaging in a systematic way and enlarging our customer base. We have somewhat of a base of existing customers via Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and a Mailchimp mailing list culled from various sources. If possible how can we merge this information?

B. How do we get new members? There are about 15,000 residents in our ANC. We do not have an unduplicated count of how many subscribe to one of the above vehicles.

C. How do we reach others?

D. How would anyone know about the ANC if they are not already engaged?

E. How can we improve our methods of reaching them?

V.   Essential Characteristics for a Strong Responsive Website

A. Be Timely

B. Be Comprehensive

C. Be Simple (easy navigation and searchable)

D. Be Responsive (to audience needs and to respond promptly to questions and suggestions)

E. Be Consistent

F. Be Transparent

VI.   Recommendations:

A. Based on an examination of how our community uses social media, see III.I, and an analysis on Question #1 from our survey where 22.5% say they would like to get information via Facebook as opposed to only 9.4% who indicated Twitter, it is clear that Facebook is the preferred social media of choice within our ANC. This does not mean we should give up the option of also using Twitter but at the same time we should not neglect the over 400 followers we already have on Facebook. Instead, we should leverage the two platforms and link Facebook and Twitter accounts so that posting on one automatically populates a post on the other. This can be done via Facebook (see https://m.facebook.com/help/1547895645497795?helpref=uf_permalink). This can no longer be done from Twitter due to a recent update to the Facebook Platform Policies which ended the ability to automatically post Tweets to a Facebook profile or page.

B. We should not use any other social media accounts. Hardly any respondents to our survey indicated they would like to get information via LinkedIn or Instagram and no other platforms were even mentioned.

C. In regard to community discussion forums we should continue to use all 3 vehicles (Chevy Chase Listserv, NextDoor and Chevy Chase Google Groups). Even though we do not have an accurate count of how many people use the Listserv (of its 5,355 members there is no way to tell how many are in our ANC or in Maryland or other DC neighborhoods) it is the overwhelming vehicle of choice for the majority of our respondents 57.5%. Other downsides of the Listserv is that postings need to be approved by the moderator which sometimes takes several hours so there is a lag time for the information to be distributed. Additionally, rules for posting are fluid and are subject to unsanctioned editing and censorship. Still, it is popular and should continue to be used.

However, NextDoor continues to grow rapidly (and was selected by 39.4% of survey respondents) and now has almost twice the number of subscribers for the same general geographic area as does the Listserv. It is also linked to the address of the subscriber so specific areas are designated (e.g. Barnaby Woods, Hawthorne) which permits targeted messages when necessary. Additionally, posts (which go up immediately) can be designated as "Events" and as such show up in the feed separately for easy identification. And lastly, it is possible to see the names of neighbors (as well as sort by street name) in a designated geographic area (e.g. Upper Chevy Chase DC) so one knows exactly who might be receiving the message, and it shows a map to indicate the boundaries for each of these user sets and you can see which households (on a map) are members.

The Chevy Chase Google Group although the smallest of the 3 and the least mentioned in the survey (14.4%) should continue to be used. There are reportedly (by the organizer of this group) many users who joined this group in an attempt to move away from the Listserv. Here too it is possible to see who the members are either by name (when supplied) or by partial email address.

For all 3 though there should be uniform postings, with an identical branding that would then provide the greatest market penetration.

D. It is unusual in a survey for a category of "Other" to receive a greater percentage than 4 of the 7 categories provided as a response but that is what happened in this survey. Also surprising was that 23 of the 25 who selected "Other" all wrote in that direct email (e.g. newsletter) was something they preferred. This very much validates the decision to begin publishing an ANC3/4G wide monthly newsletter which will undoubtedly become more and more popular over time.

E. The type of information that people are interested based on the results of question #2 from the survey is interesting considering that we do not currently provide some of this information. The categories used for options for question 32 come from a combination of what is available on the ANC3/4G website and a sample content analysis of what other ANC's have on their websites. The #1 category people were interested in, 82.5% of respondents, was "Neighborhood Topics and Issues." We do not currently have anything on our website that addresses this specifically. For example, ANC3F has a page dedicated to what they consider to be neighborhood issues https://anc3f.com/issues/. Also 36.3% of our respondents asked for information on Task Force and Committees. We have some information but it is not current or kept up-to-date with the latest developments. This is simply an observation but given that these two categories sort of go hand-in-hand it is something to both consider for our website and also for other communication vehicles. "Calendar of Events" and "What's New" are two other categories of in-demand information. "What's New" should not be simply agendas and minutes but topical issues or concerns that align with the two categories previously mentioned. It is clear from looking at the responses that several categories are of more importance to respondents than others and this list can help us in future website redesign efforts.

F. We should consider printing several copies (10-12) of the ANC3/4G newsletter to have available on the table at our meetings. This does two things, it can provide a paper copy for those who don't use email (yes, there are still people that this applies to) and it also

serves as a marketing tool which encourages meeting attendees to sign up to receive the newsletter via email. This is similar to what Mayor Bowser and Brandon Todd do for many of our meetings.

G. Branding or a logo for ANC3/4G. We should consider a single logo for branding purposes so it is clear when we send something out that it is from ANC3/4G. For example, we use this on our website:

Or perhaps we might want to use something like this modified

Or anything else that over time will become synonymous with our communication efforts.

H. We need to leverage all of what we do so that the different tools and communication vehicles feed off of each other. For example, a newsletter archive should be front and center on our website. This introduces people to it who might never have seen it and promotes a greater likelihood that new potential readers will subscribe.

I. There is the potential prospect of a communications tool that will be available to all ANC's as a result of a $100,000 FY20 budget appropriation. It is possible that the money could be used for something like CitizenLab, https://www.citizenlab.co/, which is a citizen engagement platform for local governments. If the budget money is used to purchase a tool like this it could be an important part of an overall communications strategy that builds on the items discussed.

Appendix A: ANC3/4G Communication Strategies Survey

This two-question survey was initially publicized in the Jerry Malitz monthly newsletter which was sent out to subscribers on May 31. We received 122 responses from that initial release. As a result of when the ANC3/4G monthly newsletter was published and sent out to subscribers on June 15 we received another 20 responses. And finally, on June 18th a final reminder was posted on both NextDoor and the Chevy Chase Google Group from which we received another 18 responses for our final total of 160.

Here are some notes regarding the respondent pool (sample size). There are approximately 14,000 individuals in ANC3/4G (about 2,000 per SMD). Close to 24% of the population in our ANC is under 18 years old so we have about 10,600 adults. Our 160 respondents yields a Confidence Level of close to 85% (e.g. 270 equals 90% Confidence Level, 380 equals 95% Confidence Level)

Please note that an attempt was made to increase our respondent pool by posting an announcement on the Chevy Chase Listserv at 12:20 pm on June 18th. At 9:12 pm that evening an email was received from its moderator indicating:

"With regard to the first question, I'm not interested in promoting other email forums that don't have the following the Chevy Chase [Community] Listserv has. If you want to ask the question, please remove the other two group names…. If you're willing to revise the first survey question and exclude the other two email forums mentioned (except the Chevy Chase Community Listserv), then I'm fine with sending through your email."

In response to this censorship it was never posted on the Chevy Chase Listserv. Ironically, the Chevy Chase Listserv came in first in respondent's preferences.

Both questions asked on the survey allowed the respondent to check all that apply. The percentages reflect the number of responses we received for each option from our 160 respondents.

1. On which social media platforms or discussion vehicles would you prefer to receive information from ANC3/4G? Please check all that apply.

Answer	Count	Percent
Chevy Chase Listserv	92	57.5%
NextDoor	63	39.4%
Facebook	36	22.5%
Other (23 wrote in email)*	25	15.6%
Chevy Chase Google Group	23	14.4%
Twitter	15	9.4%
LinkedIn	8	5.0%
Instagram	7	4.4%

*NOTE- nobody ever mentioned platforms such as tumblr, snapchat, Reddit or any other social media platform.

2. Which current or new features would you most likely use on the ANC3/4G website (https://anc3g.org/)? Please check all that apply.

Answer	Count	Percent
Neighborhood Topics and Issues	132	82.5%
Calendar of Events	121	75.6%
Agendas of Upcoming and Past Meetings	108	67.5%
Community Resources	92	57.5%
What's New	89	55.6%
Commissioner Contact Information	81	50.6%
Minutes of Past Meetings	65	40.6%
Task Forces and Committees	58	36.3%
DC Wide Resources	55	34.4%
Blog	33	20.6%
Links to ANC3/4G Social Media Platforms	31	19.4%
Resolutions Passed Archive	30	18.8%
Video Archive	29	18.1%
Grant Guidelines and Applications	23	14.4%
Other	5	3.1%