

Cost-Effective Communication for Small Cities

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SPECIAL GUEST:
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AIRWAY HEIGHTS

Class Outline

- Communications Planning Overview
- Assets and Liabilities
- Key Messages
- Communications Plan and Cost-Effective Options
- What is possible with your resources?

Introduction

Liz Loomis, CEO/Founder, *Liz Loomis Public Affairs*

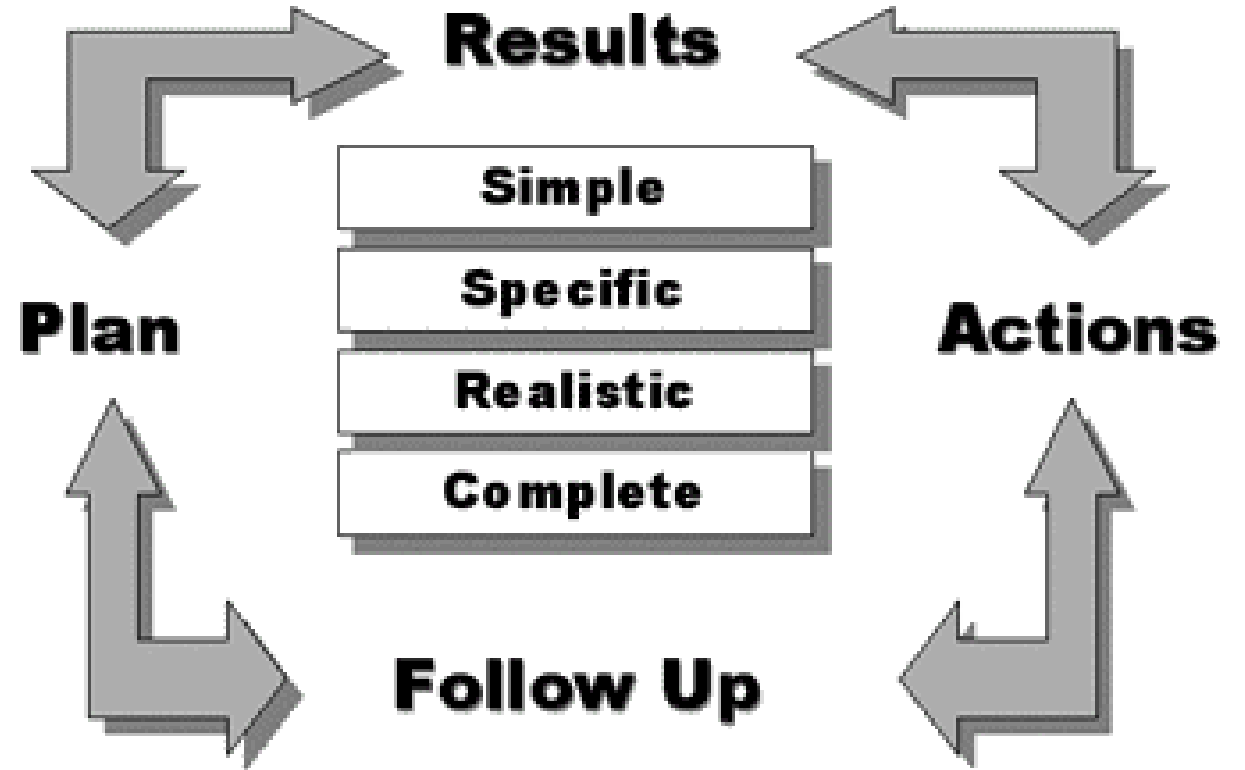
- 30 years strategic communications, government and elections
 - Cities, public hospitals, schools, ambulance, aquatics, parks, and fire districts
- Professional services
 - Bonds, levy increases, new and excess levies, mergers, annexations
 - 93% win record
- General communications
- Public relations
- Crisis communications

Albert Tripp, City Manager, *City of Airway Heights*

- BA in criminal justice, Masters in Public Admin and in Urban and Regional Planning
- 20 years in local government services
 - City Manager, 17 years
 - Public Works Director, 3 years
- Began public outreach and engagement with residents
 - Four successful ballot measures in three years

Communications Planning

- Update community planning documents
- Identify city assets and liabilities
- Develop key messages and communications plan
- Integrate messages into plan and disseminate





Examples: City **Assets**

- Updated community planning documents
- Printed or e-newsletter
- Communicating with news media
- Coalition partners that will share information
- Website
- Social media presence
- Regular public outreach

Examples: City **Liabilities**



- No focused message
- Polarized relationships
- Hostile news media
- Organized opposition to government and taxes
- Outstanding public relations issues

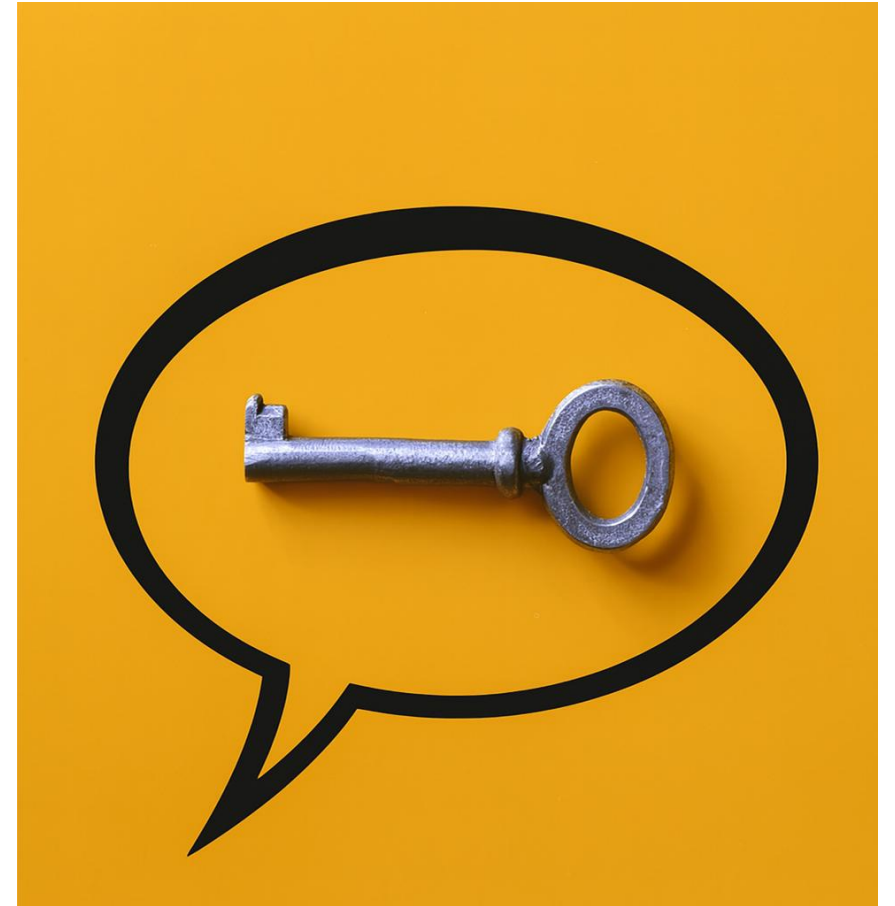


Let's
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1. What is an **asset** that you have in your city?
1. What might some identify as a **liability** in your city?

Key Messages

- *Communicate strategically*
- Compelling, factual statements that drive your agenda
- Foundation for all communication with public and news media
- Control the discussion and focus audience attention
- Organize all city employees



What Do **Key Messages** Contain?

1. Who you are and what you do: location, population, what makes your city unique
2. Why your city is deserving: balanced budget, clean audits, grants, etc.
3. Your vision for the future
4. Challenges to get there: be realistic about what is possible within budget
5. Solutions and benefits

Example: Who we are, what we do, and why we are deserving

Welcome to Airway Heights.

The City of Airway Heights, Wash. (pop. 11,280) was named after its location between Fairchild Air Force Base and the Spokane International Airport in Spokane County, Wash. Airway Heights is a full-service city with its own police, fire department and municipal court system. The city operates under a balanced budget, and has passed all its independent audits by the state. More information on Airway Heights can be found at www.cawh.org.



Example: Your vision for the future



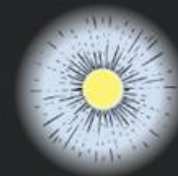
We are building “community.”

Airway Heights used to be a “pass through” city, but things are changing for the better. Our city is attracting young families looking for affordable housing, good schools, safe streets, recreation opportunities, and a community that prioritizes public safety. In 2022, residents identified their top three priorities as traffic, fire/EMS and our police department. City voters renewed a Transportation Benefit District to improve traffic congestion and pedestrian safety. They also approved hiring additional firefighters and renovating a building to be a fire station. The next step is to adequately fund our police department.



THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

Spokane, Washington Est. May 19, 1883



82°F
Clear
sky

OPINION > GUEST OPINION

Albert Tripp: Airway Heights needs community's support to extend to public buildings

Thu., Sept. 15, 2022

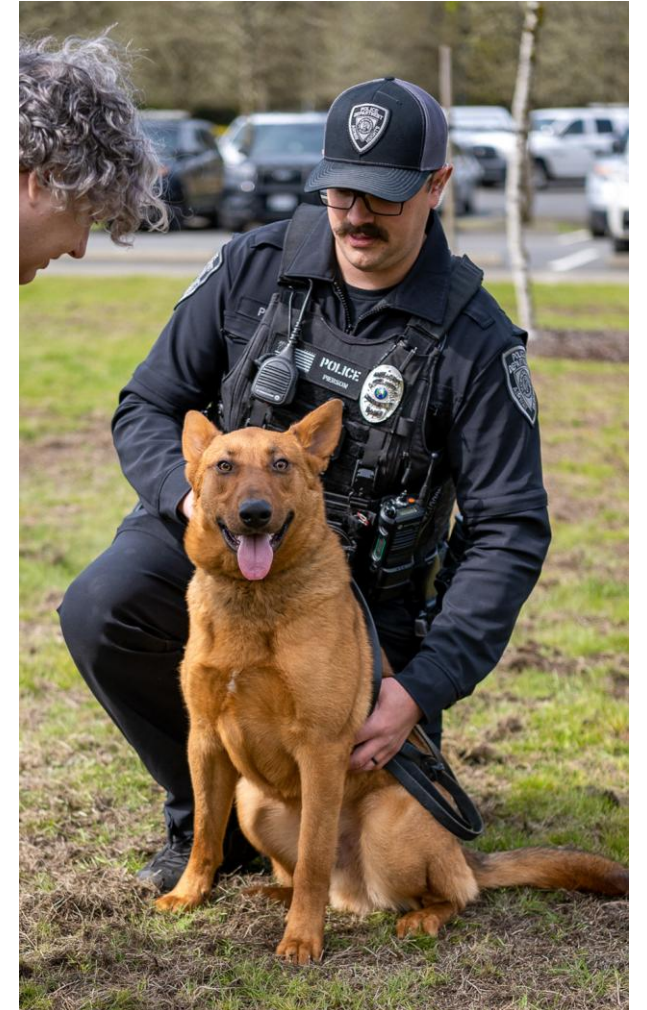
*Scan this code to view or
download the article.*



Example: Challenges to get there

Call volumes for our police department have increased 133% in five years.

Calls for police service have skyrocketed due to growth, economic development and two 24-hour casinos. However, the Airway Heights Police Department has the lowest staffing levels in relation to calls for service. The city has just 14 patrol officers and each officer responds to approximately 1,500 calls per year. Our police department has to prioritize 911 calls and many non-violent crimes – stolen property, auto theft, vandalism or traffic violations – go unanswered until an officer is available. Patrol cars have aged out of service and are costing more in maintenance/repairs than they are worth. These costs for service exceed the amount the city has to provide them.



Example: Solutions and benefits



We have a plan to reduce crime and improve public safety.

The city is asking voters to approve a levy of \$1.00 per \$1,000 of assessed property value to hire and equip more police officers, replace patrol cars to have an increased police presence on the roads and neighborhoods and update technology and equipment to help identify and locate criminals. Funding also would allow the city to focus on lethal drug trafficking (fentanyl) and go after the dealers who are killing people in our community. The cost for these improvements would be approximately \$25 per month for the average homeowner (defined at \$300,000). This is the first funding request for the police department in the history of the city. If approved by voters, the city's general property tax rate would still be lower than neighboring areas.



On what significant issue do you want to **engage** your community?

Developing a *Strategic* **Communications Plan**



- **PAID MEDIA:** Projects you pay to produce
 - Newsletters, direct mail, advertising
- **EARNED MEDIA:** Relying on a third party for coverage
 - Press releases, letters to the editor, editorial board visits
- **SHARED MEDIA:** Messaging shared by your city and others
 - Public outreach
 - Social media
- **OWNED MEDIA:** City-owned and controlled
 - Website, signage, internal briefings/updates

Paid Media: Newsletter

PROS

- **Control message, timing and delivery**
- **Less invasive than email**

CONS

- **Costs money**

- 2-3 per year
- Branded and memorable
- Two or four-color
- Brief articles
- Photos/graphic that connect
- Too expensive? Get creative:
 - Insert in local paper
 - Monthly or quarterly column
 - E-news

Earned Media: Press Release

PROS

- **Cost-effective**
- **Third-party credibility**
- **Builds relationships**

CONS

- **Limited control over message and delivery**
- **Labor intensive to monitor responses**

- 1-2 per month
- Use *strategically* with content that supports your vision
- Develops regular communication with audience
- Need media list that includes coalition/community groups



NEWS > LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Airway Heights voters approve tax increase for roads

Nov. 8, 2022 | Updated Tue., Nov. 8, 2022 at 11:11 p.m.



There will be a vote in Airway Heights in November to raise the local sales tax from 0.02% to 0.03% to pay for road improvements. The project at the top of the list to be built with the tax money is congestion improvements along U.S. 2 between Garfield and Hayford. (COLIN MULVANY/THE SPOKESMAN-REVI)

☰ **KXLY.COM** NEWS WEATHER SPORTS OBITUARIES NEWSLETTERS WATCH KXLY+ Spokane 2 PM Radar | Forecast 95°F Resize:

Local news coverage from KXLY+
Live updates all day, breaking news as it happens and weather every 10 ...

Airway Heights proposing property tax increase to support police department

Allison Martinez Jul 25, 2024 Updated Aug 26, 2024



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Shared Media: Public Outreach via Presentation

PROS

- **Reach target audience**
- **Make personal connections**
- **Transparent/accountable**
- **Control delivery of message**

CONS

- **Can lose control of audience**
- **Labor intensive for turnout**

- Develop brief slide deck (e.g., PowerPoint)
- 15 minutes, 1-2 times per year to community groups
- Leave printed material behind
- Invite public into “your house” through town halls and special events

Shared Media: Social Media

PROS

- **Control message, timing, and deliver**
- **Creates community**
- **Shares provide third party validation**

CONS

- **Can lose control of message**
- **Labor intensive to monitor**

- 2-3 times per week
- Communicate strategically—content that supports your vision
- Direct traffic to your website for more detail

Owned Media: Website

PROS

- **Provide very detailed info**
- **Control delivery of message**
- **Use social media to direct traffic to website**

CONS

- **Must keep content updated**
- **Delivery must be accessible to page visitors**

- Create page dedicated to your vision
- Establish short, easy URL
- Choose impactful images
- Promote the page on all other platforms



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Consider what your city does to communicate with residents.

What is one more thing you would like to do to communicate – budget and time permitting?

What is possible with your resources?

When communicating strategically to share your city's vision and key messages

LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Column in local paper 2x year• Brief news article to share with coalition/ community groups 2x year• Social media to share vision content above• Verbal update to community groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Column in local paper 2x year or e-newsletter• Brief news article to share with coalition/ community groups 3x year• Strategic press release monthly• Social media as needed• Add vision page to website• Presentation for community groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Printed and mailed newsletter 3 x year• Vision column in local paper 3x year• Brief news article to share with coalition/community groups 3x year• Strategic press release monthly• Editorial board visits• Social media as needed• Add vision page to website• Presentation for community groups• Open House to share vision content

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Conclusion: Q&A

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