
INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: CITY COUNCIL

FROM: MIKE APPEGARTH

SUBJECT: COMMUNITY CONNECTOR PROGRAM FOLLOW UP

DATE: 1/7/21

CC:

Background:

On October 20, 2020 Council Member Houseman proposed the Community Connector program. Essentially the program seeks to establish a core group of engaged citizens to serve as additional conduits of communication from and to the City Council Members. The City Council motion was to, “approve the Community Connectors program concept and to direct Council Staff to work with Council Member Houseman to produce a finalized program for Council review and implementation.” This memo addresses the suggestions the Council raised during its initial program concept review.

Issues & Suggestions:

1. The Council expressed a concern about Community Connectors becoming a politicized entity or a platform for personal policy agendas. As emphasized during the October presentation, the Council Office is committed to managing the program neutrally as a piece of our overall communications and outreach. At the Council’s suggestion a newly developed Community Connector position description notes that volunteers:
 - Must demonstrate good moral character as determined by a background investigation.
 - Should be well connected to a broad spectrum of residents within their local community.
 - Should NOT be motivated by using their position as a platform to campaign for a personal agenda.
 - Should be highly motivated to provide education/information on important City issues to their neighbors, and then gathering their feedback.
 - Should be highly motivated and skilled in gathering feedback from their local community on important and timely City issues.

In addition, the position description states explicitly that, “Community Connectors have no decision-making authority, nor do they serve in an advisory role to the City Council.

Instead, they serve as an integral part of the Sandy City Council two-way communications strategy.”

The position description also clarifies that Community Connectors serve under the general supervision of, and can be dismissed by the City Council Executive Director. While a goal of the program is to connect highly engaged individuals directly with Council Members, all recruitment, training, and requests of Connectors will come through the Director or designee to help ensure all tasks serve the interests of the Council as a whole.

Finally, Connectors must complete a “Government Volunteer Application” through Human Resources. The application ensures that Connectors are covered under the City’s worker’s compensation policy, clarifies the position is non-compensatory, mandates accountability to a direct supervisor, and calls for safety and proper conduct as a volunteer representative of the city.

2. The Council expressed concern about the capacity of the Council Office to manage the program. Community Connectors is an additional responsibility, but the Council staff asserts that it can manage the program efficiently without letting it consume a disproportionate amount of staff time. As mentioned in the original proposal, the Council Office intends to utilize, to the maximum extent feasible, existing City resources for the initial Connector training “bootcamps” and any ongoing training needs. Examples include information previously assembled for the Council’s Citizen Academy, our existing city information packet, and communication tools. In the intervening weeks since the initial Connectors program proposal, Council Member Houseman and staff have identified additional training and content material with which to equip Connectors. While the initial program ramp-up will demand increased staff attention, we are confident that the program can run semi-autonomously as Connectors become more familiar with City Council content, communication and feedback channels, and build relationships with staff and Members.
3. The Council expressed interest in the participation of residents who have served the City in other capacities or as a previous “Community Coordinator.” The recruitment plan does call for initial outreach to previous Coordinators. Council Member Houseman and staff have already contacted several past Coordinators for their interest and program suggestions. However, we do hope to begin recruitment on a community-wide scale through social media announcements and e-mails to those who have already subscribed to City Council updates. Council Office staff will collectively serve as the “hiring” panel but plan to invite participation from a representative of the Administrative staff.

Conclusion:

Thank you for your interest in this program. The Council Office is prepared to launch and requests the consent of the Council to move forward with the Community Connectors program. Unless the Council would like to agendize further discussion and review, the Council Office plans to formally announce the program within the next couple of weeks. Exact dates of the Connector training “bootcamps” will depend on recruitment success but we hope to have our first round of Connector selections near end of January 2021.