



ORANGE WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY

*A public, non-profit agency providing water, sewer and reclaimed water services
to the Carrboro-Chapel Hill community.*

Agenda

Work Session of the OWASA Board of Directors

Thursday, February 28, 2019, 6:00 P.M.

OWASA Board Room

The Board of Directors appreciates and invites the public to attend and observe its meetings. For the Board's Work Session, public comments are invited on only items appearing on this agenda. Speakers are invited to submit more detailed comments via written materials, ideally submitted at least three days in advance of the meeting to the Clerk to the Board via email or US Postal Service (aorbich@owasa.org/400 Jones Ferry Road, Carrboro, NC 27510).

For items on the agenda, public speakers are encouraged to organize their remarks for delivery within a four-minute time frame allowed each speaker, unless otherwise determined by the Board of Directors.

The Board may take action on any item on the agenda.

Announcements

- a. Announcements by the Chair
 - Any Board Member who knows of a conflict of interest or potential conflict of interest with respect to any item on the agenda tonight is asked to disclose the same at this time.
- b. Announcements by Board Members
 - OWASA's Annual Update to the Orange County Board of County Commissioners on Tuesday, February 19, 2019 (Jody Eimers)
 - Update on the Chatham-Orange Joint Planning Task Force Meeting on Thursday, February 21, 2019 (John Young)
 - Community Engagement Committee Meeting on Tuesday, March 5, 2019 at 9:00 A.M. in the OWASA Boardroom to discuss Agua Vista Web Portal (Ruchir Vora)
 - Chapel Hill Town Council OWASA Committee and Chapel Hill Appointees to the OWASA Board of Directors Meeting on Thursday, March 14, 2019 at 8:30 a.m. in OWASA's Boardroom (Ruchir Vora)
 - Human Resources Committee Meeting on Monday, March 18, 2019 at 8:00 a.m. in the OWASA Boardroom to discuss 457 deferred compensation (Robert Morgan)
- c. Announcements by Staff
- d. Additional Comments, Suggestions, and Information Items by Board Members (Yinka Ayankoya)

Consent Agenda

Information and Reports

1. 12 Month Board Meeting Schedule (Yinka Ayankoya/Ed Kerwin)

Action

2. Minutes of the January 10, 2019 Meeting of the Board of Directors (Andrea Orbich)

3. Minutes of the February 14, 2019 Closed Session of the Board of Directors to Discuss a Personnel Matter (Robert Morgan)

Regular Agenda

Discussion and Action

4. Resolution Honoring the Service of Jeff Danner to the Chapel Hill-Carrboro-Orange County Community as a Member of the Orange Water and Sewer Authority's Board of Directors (John Young)
5. Nomination and Election of the Vice Chair (Yinka Ayankoya)

Discussion

6. Discuss Draft Communications and Community Engagement Plan (Linda Low)

Summary of Work Session Items

7. Executive Director will summarize the key staff action items from the Work Session

Closed Session

8. The Board of Directors will convene in a Closed Session for the Purpose of Discussing a Personnel Matter (Robert Morgan)

Agenda Item 1

OWASA Board of Directors – 12 Month Board Meeting Schedule (February 22, 2019)

Month	Board Meetings		Committee & Other Meetings
	Work Session	Business Meeting	
February 2019	<p>Community Engagement Approach for Forestry Management</p> <p>Review Scope of Water Distribution System Replacement Prioritization Model</p> <p>Award the University Lake Raw Water Pump Station Improvements Construction Contract</p> <p>Sole Source Procurement of Grit Removal Equipment for the Mason Farm Wastewater Treatment Plant</p> <p>Resolution Accepting NC Division of Water Infrastructure Loan Offer and Acceptance Documents</p> <p>Options for Accelerating Valve Maintenance</p> <p>CS – Prepare for General Counsel Interim Review (C)</p> <p style="text-align: right;">2/14/2019</p>	<p>This meeting will be a Work Session at 6 PM (at OWASA)</p> <p>Discuss Draft Communications and Community Engagement Plan</p> <p>Resolution of Appreciation to Jeff Danner</p> <p>Nominate and Elect new Vice Chair</p> <p>CS – General Counsel Interim Review (C)</p> <p style="text-align: right;">2/28/2019</p>	<p>HR Committee Meeting to discuss retiree health and 457 deferred compensation (2/5/2019)</p> <p>OWASA's Annual Update to the Orange County BOCC (2/19/2019)</p> <p>Chatham-Orange Joint Planning Task Force Meeting (2/21/2019)</p>
March 2019	<p>LRWSP Final Demands and Yield</p> <p>FY 20 Draft Budget & Rates (C)</p> <p>Review AMI Manual Read</p> <p>(Tentative) Authorize Applying for SRF Loans</p> <p>Resolution Honoring Randy Horton</p> <p>Diversity and Inclusion Update</p> <p>Sole Source Procurement of Solids Dewatering Equipment for the Jones Ferry Road Water Treatment Plant</p> <p>Draft Conceptual Approaches to Access OWASA's Jordan Lake Allocation</p> <p>CS – Prepare for ED Interim Review (C)</p> <p style="text-align: right;">3/14/2019</p>	<p>Annual Update of the Energy Management Plan (C)</p> <p>Award the WWTP Solids Thickening Improvements and Headworks Rehabilitation Construction Contract</p> <p>Award the Manning and Country Club Water Main Replacement Construction Contract</p> <p>FY 20 Draft Budget & Rates and Proposed Staff Rate Adjustment Recommendation (C)</p> <p>Set date for Public Hearings – FY 20 Budget & Rates (C)</p> <p>CS – ED Interim Review (C)</p> <p style="text-align: right;">3/28/2019</p>	<p>Community Engagement Committee Meeting to discuss Agua Vista Web Portal (3/5/2019)</p> <p>Chapel Hill OWASA Board Members meet with TOCH OWASA Committee (3/14/2019)</p> <p>HR Committee Meeting to complete discussion of 457 deferred compensation (3/18/2019)</p>
April 2019	<p>Review Employee Health and Dental Insurance Renewals (C)</p> <p>FY 20 Draft Budget and Rate Adjustment Information (C)</p> <p>(Tentative) LRWSP – Discuss Water Supply and Demand Management Alternatives</p> <p>Award the Mason Farm Wastewater Treatment Plant Secondary Clarifier Rehabilitation Construction Contract</p> <p>(Tentative) Update on Potential Western Intake Partnership to access Jordan Lake</p> <p>Forestry Management – Draft Community Engagement Plan</p> <p>Propose Amendments to Bylaws</p> <p>Appointment of the Nominating Committee (C)</p> <p style="text-align: right;">4/11/2019</p>	<p>Q3 Financial Report (C)</p> <p>FY 20 Budget and Rates Discussion and Authorize Staff to Publish Proposed Rates</p> <p>Update on Managing Taste and Odor in Drinking Water</p> <p>Demonstration of Agua Vista Web Portal</p> <p style="text-align: right;">4/25/2019</p>	<p>OC Appointees to the OWASA Board meet with Members of Orange County BOCC (4/25/2019)</p>
May 2019	<p>Approve Employee Health and Dental Insurance Renewals (C)</p> <p>Discuss Employee Merit Pay for FY 2020 (C)</p> <p style="text-align: right;">5/9/2019</p>	<p>Public Hearings – FY 20 Budget and Rates (Tentative) Approve New Banking Services Provider (C)</p> <p>Approve Employee Health and Dental Insurance Renewals (if needed)</p> <p style="text-align: right;">5/23/2019</p>	
June 2019	<p>Approve FY 20 Budget and Rates, including merit pay decision (C)</p>	<p>Award Kensington Drive Water Main Replacement Construction Contract</p> <p>Diversity and Inclusion Update</p>	

OWASA Board of Directors – 12 Month Board Meeting Schedule (February 22, 2019)

Month	Board Meetings		Committee & Other Meetings
	Work Session	Business Meeting	
	(Tentative) LRWSP – Final Water Supply and Demand Management Alternatives Award the Dobbins Drive Water and Sewer Replacement Construction Contract Election of Officers 6/13/2019 (C)	6/27/2019	
July 2019	TBD 7/11/2019	TBD 7/25/2019	
August 2019	TBD 8/8/2019	Preliminary 12 Month Financial Report (C) CIP Semiannual Report (C) CS – Prepare for General Counsel Review (C) 8/22/2019	
September 2019	EEO/Affirmative Action Report (C) Annual Report on Disposal of Surplus (C) Personal Property AMI Low-Flow Leak Alerts CS – General Counsel Review (C) 9/12/2019	Annual Report and Financial Audit (C) Approve General Counsel Engagement (C) CS – Prepare for ED Review (C) 9/26/2019	
October 2019	Diversity and Inclusion Update (C) CS – ED Review (C) 10/10/2019	Q1 Financial Report (C) Strategic Trends Report and Strategic Plan Update (C) 10/24/2019	
November 2019	TBD 11/14/2019	<i>Holiday – no meeting</i>	
December 2019	TBD 12/12/2019	<i>Holiday – no meeting</i>	
January 2020	Appoint Audit Firm (C) Employee Health and Dental Insurance (C) Update for FY21 Affordability Outreach Program Update 1/9/2020	Annual Lakes Recreation Report (C) CIP Semiannual Report (C) Q2 Financial Report (C) FY 21 Budget Calendar and Assumptions (C) 1/23/2020	

Note: Additional Board Meetings will include matters related to improving reliability and resiliency on OWASA’s services.

The 12 Month Board Meeting Schedule shows Strategic Plan initiatives and other priority efforts that the Board and staff plan to give greatest consideration to during the next twelve months. The schedule also shows major recurring agenda items that require Board action, or items that have been scheduled in response to the Board's prior standing request. This schedule does not show all the items the Board may consider in a work session or business meeting. It also does not reflect meetings at which the Board will discuss and act on the update of the Strategic Plan.

The 12 Month Board Meeting Schedule will be reviewed and updated at each monthly work session and may also be discussed and updated at the Board’s business meetings.

In addition to the initiatives shown in this schedule, staff will be working on other Strategic Plan and organizational priorities that are not expected to require major additional discussion with the Board except as part of budget deliberations.

The schedule implies that the following Strategic Plan initiatives would be addressed beyond the 12-month period. The Board may conclude that one or more of the following initiatives are higher priority. The schedule will be revised as needed to reflect the Board's priorities, and any additional initiatives that the Board may decide to address.

OWASA Board of Directors – 12 Month Board Meeting Schedule (February 22, 2019)

- Development of a plan and policy framework for OWASA lands is considered a longer-term priority. The NRTS Committee discussed this issue in September 2017 and determined it was lower priority than Forestry Management.
- Water Conservation Plan will be prepared concurrent with update of the Long-Range Water Supply Plan.
- Update of Strategic Plan. On November 15, 2018, the Board and staff agreed to defer update of the Strategic Plan to a date to be determined.

The OWASA Board determines which topics it wants to explore as a full Board (potentially in a work session format) and which topics it wants to assign to Board committees or committee chairs for further analysis and development of recommendations. Board also determines priorities and desired timeframes for addressing topics. Committee meetings will be updated on the schedule routinely.

Abbreviations Used in Draft Schedule:

(C)	Recurring agenda item (generally these are “required” items)	JLP	Jordan Lake Partnership
AMI	Advanced Metering Infrastructure	KPI	Key Performance Indicator
BOCC	Board of County Commissioners	LRWSP	Long-Range Water Supply Plan
CBOA	Carrboro Board of Aldermen	MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
CE	Community Engagement	MST	Mountains-to-Sea Trail
CEP	Community Engagement Plan	MFMM	Multi-Family Master Meter
CHTC	Chapel Hill Town Council	NCDOT	North Carolina Department of Transportation
CIP	Capital Improvements Program	NRTS	Natural Resources and Technical Services
COLA	Cost of Labor Adjustment	OC	Orange County
CS	Closed Session of the Board	Q	Quarter
CY	Calendar Year	RFP	Request for Proposals
D&I	Diversity and Inclusion	SRF	State Revolving Fund
ED	Executive Director	SOW	Scope of Work
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity	TBD	To Be Determined
FY	Fiscal Year	WTP	Water Treatment Plant
HR	Human Resources	WWTP	Wastewater Treatment Plant

Agenda Item 2

Orange Water and Sewer Authority

Meeting of the Board of Directors

January 10, 2019

The Board of Directors of the Orange Water and Sewer Authority (OWASA) met in a work session on Thursday, January 10, 2019, at 6:00 p.m. in OWASA's Community Room, 400 Jones Ferry Road, Carrboro.

Board Members present: Yinka Ayankoya (Chair), Jeff Danner (Vice Chair), Ray DuBose (Secretary), Bruce Boehm, Jody Eimers, Robert Morgan, John N. Morris, Ruchir Vora and John A. Young.

OWASA staff present: Mary Darr, Robert Epting, Esq., (Epting and Hackney), Vishnu Gangadharan, Stephanie Glasgow, Ed Kerwin, Simon Lobdell, Linda Low, Andrea Orbich, Dan Przybyl, Johnny Riley, Ruth Rouse, Kelly Satterfield, Todd Taylor, Mary Tiger, Stephen Winters and Richard Wyatt.

Others present: Meg Holton (UNC Water Resources Manager), Ellen Tucker (Hill Chesson & Woody) and Jim Warren.

Motions

1. BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Board of Directors of the Orange Water and Sewer Authority adopts the Resolution Approving and Awarding Audit Contract to Martin Starnes & Associates, CPAs, P.A. and Authorizing Chair of the Board of Directors and the Finance Officer to Execute Said Contract. (Motion by Ruchir Vora, second by Ray DuBose and unanimously approved.)
2. BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Board of Directors of the Orange Water and Sewer Authority adopts the Resolution Amending the Fiscal Year 2019 Annual Budget for Capital Equipment. (Motion by John Young, second by Robert Morgan and unanimously approved.)
3. John Young made a motion to approve the additional operating expenses estimated to be \$609,700 with the understanding that staff will seek and consider opportunities to reduce costs and will request a budget amendment if it is determined that expense reductions in other budgeted items are not sufficient to offset the amount of the additional expenses; second by Robert Morgan and unanimously approved.

* * * * *

Announcements

Yinka Ayankoya asked if any Board Member knows of a conflict of interest or potential conflict of interest with respect to any item on the agenda tonight to disclose the same at this time; none were disclosed.

Ms. Ayankoya said that on January 9, 2019, the Board held a session with the consultant regarding Diversity and Inclusion and that she would follow up with Ed Kerwin regarding action plans, new Board Member orientation and future updates to the Board.

Ray DuBose announced a meeting of Members of the Orange County Board of Commissioners (Penny Rich and Mark Marcoplos) and the Orange County Appointees to the OWASA Board on Wednesday, January 30, 2019 at 8:30 a.m. in the OWASA Boardroom to discuss items of mutual interest.

Mr. DuBose announced that Jody Eimers, Yinka Ayankoya and he will provide OWASA's Annual Update to the Orange County Board of County Commissioners on Tuesday, February 19, 2019, at 7:00 p.m. at Southern Human Services Center in Chapel Hill.

Jeff Danner said he is moving out of Chapel Hill and his last meeting Board meeting will February 28, 2019.

John Morris suggested developing a volunteer committee, made up of employees and/or Board Members, to help capture historical OWASA documents, materials, stories, etc.

Item One: Quarterly Report on Attendance at Board and Committee Meetings

The Board received the Quarterly Report on Attendance at Board and Committee Meetings as an information item.

Item Two: Purchase of Solids Thickening Equipment for the Mason Farm Wastewater Treatment Plant

The Board received the memorandum regarding the selection and procurement of solids thickening equipment for the Mason Farm Wastewater Treatment Plant as an information item.

Item Three: Appoint Audit Firm

Ruchir Vora made a motion to approve the Resolution Approving and Awarding Audit Contract to Martin Starnes & Associates, CPAs, P.A. and Authorizing Chair of the Board of Directors and the Finance Officer to Execute Said Contract; second by Ray DuBose and unanimously approved. Please see Motion 1 above.

Item Four: Update on Employee Health and Dental Insurance for Next Fiscal Year

The Board received and discussed a timeline, utilization data and other information related to renewing employee health and dental insurance effective July 1, 2019. OWASA has engaged a consultant (Hill Chesson & Woody) who will review the insurance cost proposal to be submitted later this year by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina.

Item Five: Budget Amendment for Fiscal Year 2019

The Board discussed amending the Fiscal Year 2019 Annual Budget for the purchase of valve maintenance equipment as well as additional operating expenses related to communications, biosolids recycling, and OWASA's diversity and inclusion program consulting expenses.

The Board requested additional information about staff's proposed expenses related to communications as well as a breakdown by fiscal year of the diversity and inclusion expenses.

John Young made a motion to approve the Resolution Amending the Fiscal Year 2019 Annual Budget for Capital Equipment; second by Robert Morgan and unanimously approved. Please see Motion 2 above.

John Young made a motion to approve the additional operating expenses estimated to be \$609,700 with the understanding that staff will seek and consider opportunities to reduce costs and will request a budget amendment if it is determined that expense reductions in other budgeted items are not sufficient to offset the amount of the additional expenses; second by Robert Morgan and unanimously approved. Please see Motion 3 above.

Item Six: Discuss Consultant Analysis of November 5, 2018 Water Main Break and OWASA Response

The Board received and discussed the consultant's report of the November 5, 2018 Water Main Break Root Cause Analysis and After Action Review and requested progress reports on action items addressing opportunities for the improvements identified.

The Board also requested option(s) for consideration at a future Board meeting to significantly accelerate the valve exercising and maintenance program for the water distribution system.

Item Seven: Approach for Developing a Forestry Management Program

Jim Warren, neighbor in Cane Creek area, said the outlined process to develop a forestry management program is good and requested the Board also consider the risk of wildfires, use of fire mitigation, pine beetle infestations in Virginia pine, transparent communication and community involvement.

The Board reviewed and discussed the Natural Resources and Technical Services (NRTS) Committee's proposed approach to develop a forestry management program including draft Guiding Principles.

The Board agreed to support the NRTS Committee recommended approach to develop a forestry management program and will review a proposed approach to engage the community around the program on February 14, 2019 prior to moving forward with next steps. The Board also agreed that a January 2019 NRTS Committee meeting is not necessary.

Item Eight: Review Board Work Schedule

The Board agreed to relocate the February 28, 2019 meeting to the OWASA Boardroom at 6:00 p.m. for a work session to discuss a draft Communications and Community Engagement Plan and brief presentation to award a construction contract for the Mason Farm Wastewater Treatment Plant Solids Thickening Improvements and Headworks Rehabilitation project.

The Board agreed to schedule a closed session on January 24, 2019 for the purpose of discussing a personnel matter; add a Resolution Accepting North Carolina Division of Water Infrastructure's Loan Offer and Acceptance Documents for Four Projects and Authorizing Executive Director to Execute and Administer Loan Offer and Acceptance Documents at the February 14, 2019 meeting; and schedule a Community Engagement Committee meeting in late February or early March to discuss Agua Vista web porta.

Item Nine: Executive Director Will Summarize the Key Staff Action Items from the Work Session

Ed Kerwin noted the following items for staff follow-up:

- Ed Kerwin will follow up with Yinka Ayankoya regarding the Board's January 9, 2019 diversity and inclusion session as it pertains to action plans and future updates.
- Provide via email information regarding proposed expenses related to communications and diversity and inclusion.
- Proactively look for and consider opportunities for savings in the Fiscal Year 2019 Operating budget.
- Provide progress reports on action items identified in the November 5, 2018 Water Main Break Root Cause Analysis and After Action Review.
- Provide option(s) for consideration to greatly accelerate valve exercising and maintenance program for water distribution system.

Item Ten: Closed Session

Without objection, the Board continued in Closed Session to discuss confidential information regarding security measures in place to protect OWASA customers, personnel and assets.

The Board meeting was adjourned at 9:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Andrea Orbich
Executive Assistant/Clerk to the Board

Attachments

Agenda Item 3

Orange Water and Sewer Authority

Closed Session of the Board of Directors

February 14, 2019

The Board of Directors of Orange Water and Sewer Authority met in Closed Session in on Thursday, February 14, 2019, following the Board meeting.

Board Members present: Yinka Ayankoya (Chair), Jeff Danner (Vice Chair), Ray DuBose (Secretary), Bruce Boehm, Jody Eimers, Robert Morgan, John Morris, Ruchir Vora and John A. Young.

Staff present: none.

ITEM ONE

The Board of Directors met in Closed Session to evaluate General Counsel's semiannual performance review.

No official action was taken at the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Robert Morgan, Chair
Human Resources Committee

Agenda Item 4:

Resolution Honoring the Service of Jeff Danner to the Chapel Hill-Carrboro-Orange County Community as a Member of the Orange Water and Sewer Authority's Board of Directors

Background:

Since inception of Orange Water and Sewer Authority, the Board of Directors has adopted Resolutions of Appreciation for the service of a retiring member of the Board.

The adopted resolution would be specially printed for presentation to Jeff Danner.

Staff Recommendation:

Adopt the Resolution Honoring the Service of Jeff Danner to the Chapel Hill-Carrboro-Orange County Community as a Member of the Orange Water and Sewer Authority's Board of Directors.

February 28, 2019

**Resolution Honoring the Service of Jeff Danner to the
Chapel Hill-Carrboro-Orange County Community as a Member of the
Orange Water and Sewer Authority's Board of Directors**

Whereas, on June 8, 2015, the Chapel Hill Town Council appointed Jeff Danner to serve on the Board of Directors of the Orange Water and Sewer Authority (OWASA); and

Whereas, Mr. Danner served on the OWASA Board from July 1, 2015, through February 28, 2019, including service as Vice Chair of the Board of Directors from July 1, 2016, to June 30, 2017, and July 1, 2018, to February 28, 2019, as Chair of the Finance Committee from July 2016 through July 2018, and as a Member of the Finance and Human Resources Committees; and

Whereas, as a Board Member, Mr. Danner served with unselfish dedication as a public steward of the community's environmental resources and services, always mindful of his fiduciary responsibilities, and of OWASA's essential role in the health and prosperity of our service community; and

Whereas, Mr. Danner's exceptional professional and technical expertise, experience, analytical skills, and energy have been of great value in the Board's deliberations and decisions, and OWASA has benefitted greatly from his special energy and interest in environmental, financial, employee compensation, and community engagement matters;

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved by the Orange Water and Sewer Authority Board of Directors:

1. That the Board expresses its sincere appreciation and deep gratitude to Jeff Danner for his outstanding service, leadership and stewardship as a Member of the OWASA Board of Directors; and the Board wishes for him much happiness in the years ahead.
2. That this resolution be recorded in the minutes of the OWASA Board of Directors and be part of the permanent records of OWASA, and that a copy of this resolution be transmitted to the Town of Chapel Hill.

Adopted and presented this 28th day of February 2019.

Yinka Ayankoya, Chair

ATTEST:

Raymond E. DuBose, Secretary

Agenda Item 5:

Nomination and Election of the Vice Chair

Purpose:

Take and discuss nominations for a new Vice Chair and elect the Vice Chair for Board.

Background:

Jeff Danner has served as Vice Chair of the Board since July 1, 2018. On January 11, 2019, he submitted his resignation as an OWASA Board Member and as Vice Chair effective as of the end of the February 28, 2019 meeting.

At the February 14, 2019 Board Work Session, the Board agreed that it would accept nominations and elect a new Vice Chair on February 28, 2019.

Action Needed:

Take nominations and elect a new Vice Chair of the Board.

February 28, 2019

Agenda Item 6:

Discuss Draft Communications and Community Engagement Plan

Purpose:

OWASA seeks to formalize a communications and community engagement plan for 2019, one that aligns external outreach across the organization and is responsive to customer needs.

To inform the development of the plan, the Communications and Community Relations Officer (CCRO) conducted a communications assessment. It included a review of OWASA's communications tools and processes; interviews with internal and external stakeholders to understand perceptions of OWASA; and facilitated dialogue with management, staff, and the Board (including a work session with the Board on December 19, 2018); to ensure the plan represents OWASA's organizational needs.

At the Board meeting, the CCRO will share OWASA's draft Communications and Community Engagement Plan for 2019. The plan includes supporting objectives, messages, a situational analysis, and strategies to increase the effectiveness of OWASA's external communications and community engagement throughout the year. It also includes a summary of financial resources required to implement the plan, and human resources to support its implementation plus daily operational communications needs.

Action Needed:

Discussion and feedback from the Board on the draft Communications and Community Engagement Plan.

Information:

Draft Communications and Community Engagement Plan attached.

February 28, 2019



Draft Communications & Community Engagement Plan January to December 2019

1. Overview

OWASA seeks to formalize a communications and community engagement plan for 2019, one that aligns external outreach across the organization and is responsive to customer needs.

To inform the development of the plan, the Communications and Community Relations Officer (CCRO) conducted a communications assessment. It included a review of OWASA's communications tools and processes; interviews with internal and external stakeholders to understand perceptions of OWASA; and facilitated dialogue with management, staff, and the Board, to ensure the plan represents OWASA's organizational needs.

What follows is a plan – with supporting objectives, messages, situational analysis, and strategies – to increase the effectiveness of OWASA's external communications and community engagement in 2019.

2. Objectives

Throughout the communications assessment, the goals listed below were universally expressed by staff and Board regarding OWASA's communications and community engagement objectives:

- Provide people with timely, relevant, and accessible information
- Participate in community dialogue to understand local priorities and inform decision making
- Provide public education about the comprehensive process of sourcing, treating, delivering, protecting – and investing in – water, to maintain resilient water and wastewater systems
- Foster water conservation and protection among all community members
- Be recognized as a trusted community partner

3. Core key messages

Based on experiences shared by staff during the communications assessment, it is understood that OWASA communicates with customers daily on an array of topics. These range from customer service queries such as billing and service connections; to distribution and collection topics such as easements, line breaks, fats, oils, and grease; to engineering activities such as construction updates and traffic impacts; to items of governance such as rates, and other regulatory policies.

Emergency events, such as inclement weather and major water incidents, require OWASA to communicate with customers on complex issues in real-time. Topics of special interest to some

customers, such as water quality and land management, also require OWASA to respond factually and thoughtfully to public inquiries.

While all of these topics are interconnected parts of OWASA’s water and wastewater system, there is an absence of an overarching narrative that links all of these pieces together in OWASA’s external communications. For example, one interviewee asked “why is OWASA managing forests, what does that have to do with water?” Some asked if OWASA is a private company and expressed views that rates are high; they also asked why pipes break often. This indicates a lack of understanding about the need to invest in infrastructure.

Throughout its public outreach, OWASA should strive to communicate an overarching narrative so that when OWASA implements publicly visible activities, they are understood to be part of managing the community’s integrated water/wastewater system. In shaping this narrative, and to help people understand what OWASA is and does, the organization should consistently highlight three main factors: its non-profit public service, vital community investment, and sustainable stewardship. Keeping these three factors in mind, OWASA’s core key messages should be:

- OWASA is Carrboro-Chapel Hill’s not-for-profit public service agency delivering high quality water, reclaimed water, and wastewater services. On the lake, in the field, at the lab and in the office, our diverse team manages the community’s water system.
- Investing in water and wastewater infrastructure is investing in the community. Each year, OWASA invests about \$20 million in capital improvement projects – upgrading pipes, pumps, equipment, and more – to increase system resiliency. Nearly 50% of customer rates fund these critical projects.
- Water is vital for everything – wellness, business, community services, and more. Be a sustainer. Everyone has a role to play in conserving, protecting, and sustaining this vital resource.

This narrative should be incorporated into OWASA’s communications wherever possible. While it may not be practical to always include these three key messages, it is likely possible to include a summary paragraph at the close of most communications. For example:

About OWASA

OWASA is Carrboro-Chapel Hill’s not-for-profit public service agency. Our diverse team works across the community to deliver high quality water, reclaimed water, and wastewater services. We invest regularly to upgrade infrastructure and increase system resiliency. Together, with the community, we conserve, protect, and sustain this vital resource. Learn more at owasa.org.

Additionally, OWASA can consider incorporating a representative tagline into its logo. A couple of draft examples are:



Providing vital water & wastewater services
to the Carrboro-Chapel Hill community



Carrboro-Chapel Hill’s not for profit community agency
providing sustainable water & wastewater services

The CCRO is currently in the process of evaluating OWASA’s external communications with the goal of standardizing OWASA’s visual presentation and tone – and projecting a common narrative – across the organization. This topic is visited in more detail in the situational analysis below.

4. Situational analysis

Sections 2 and 3 of this document presented OWASA’s communications and engagement objectives, and supporting key messages. What follows is an analysis of OWASA’s audiences and their perceptions of OWASA, as well as opportunities and challenges for OWASA to consider as it continues to progress towards achieving its stated objectives.

4.1 Service users, perceptions, and opportunities

Water and wastewater: undervalued resource

How does water get to homes, schools, and businesses? Where does it all go when the toilet is flushed? What does it take to maintain water and wastewater infrastructure? These questions are rarely asked; water and wastewater in general is taken for granted – except when it’s not available.

This presents an opportunity for OWASA to elevate the relevance of water, plus the value people attach to it – and by association to OWASA – among customers. OWASA should also promote its capital improvement projects and their importance to system resiliency. This could help foster greater tolerance for disruptions, so that when a commuter experiences a traffic delay because we’ve dug up a road, or when we raise rates to fund increased costs of service, customers may understand the reasons why, i.e., the importance of investing in system infrastructure.

Organizational perceptions: more appreciation than mistrust, lingering questions of competence

Based on interviews with internal and external stakeholders, it is understood that OWASA is generally considered to be a responsive and customer-service oriented agency. People like seeing OWASA crews in the community; some wave when OWASA trucks drive by. Yet it seems OWASA has limited mindshare among customers – coming to mind once a month when people have to pay their bill (indicating a transactional relationship) – or during a water emergency (impacting OWASA’s reputation).

On the topic of emergencies, some customers lost trust in OWASA following the 2017 water incident. They expressed concern about the safety of the water and local businesses were frustrated with the level of information they received (as water availability affected their operations). Businesses were particularly frustrated in 2017 when Orange County Health required them to close during a “do not use” order as this affected their revenue opportunities.

Stakeholders interviewed expressed a common belief that as time passed following the 2017 incident, most of the community had “forgiven” OWASA and considered the incident to be a one-time event. However, when another major water incident occurred in November 2018, concerns were heightened in the community – this time about OWASA’s ability to deliver water reliably. Partners also expressed fear about the impact of recent water incidents on the community’s reputation, economy, and ability to deliver critical services.

Over time, the memory of the 2018 incident will recede. However, future water incidents will likely trigger lingering questions of OWASA's competency. Given this context, OWASA must project competence. It must listen to what community partners need to be assured that their water and wastewater system is resilient, act on these needs, and communicate these actions. In other words, OWASA should provide proof points to customers on what it's doing to increase system resilience, in a way that is relevant, relatable, and engaging.

Informed, underinformed, and misinformed customers

More than 72% of residents in Chapel Hill and Carrboro have a Bachelors degree or higher.¹ Many work or have worked at UNC or Duke, some with a focus on natural resources. As a result, there is a segment of customers that is very informed about water and wastewater, to the point where they study OWASA's published documents and provide feedback directly to staff.

There is also a segment of customers, educators, and parents, who are somewhat informed about OWASA's work and express interest in it as an educational tool for young people. These are the customers that do ask questions like the ones posed at the top of this Situational Analysis, for example, "Where does our water come from, and how does it get to our homes?" OWASA should develop structured methods, or programs, to engage more consistently with such customers – to stay top of mind, harness their natural interest, and nurture their potential as community water ambassadors.

While the latter two groups of customers are interested and invested (at varying degrees) in what OWASA does, it's important to note that they do not represent the majority. Instead, based on information garnered through the communications assessment, it's understood that the majority of customers are underinformed about their community water and wastewater system. They have little knowledge of where their water comes from or the process it takes to get it to their homes, schools, and places of work. Meanwhile, wastewater is generally not considered. Little thought is given to where it goes. Very few know that some of it becomes reclaimed water delivered to UNC for operational purposes, and that the rest gets treated and released as clean water back into local waterways, to be used by communities downstream.

There is also a segment of customers that are misinformed. They have expressed concerns that OWASA is putting unsafe substances into the water, mismanaging watershed lands, or are profit-driven with higher rates than most other utilities. None of these statements are factual.

OWASA should make a concerted effort to connect with the latter two customer groups: the underinformed and misinformed. The organization should develop strategies to engage with and educate customers on the comprehensive process of protecting, sourcing, and delivering water and wastewater, and ways they can be involved. When someone owns part of a process, they take more pride in the result, in this case, the stewardship and delivery of the community's water and wastewater systems.

Capturing customer mindshare is challenging

OWASA makes contact with account holders through monthly bill statements – either via hard copy in the mail or e-bill (approximately 50%). The bill statements include a text box in their templates that

¹ 2018 State of the Community Report, Chapel Hill Carrboro Chamber of Commerce

allow for a customized message or update to be included. However, OWASA’s experience is that customers don’t generally take time to read these updates.

OWASA also has the ability to include an insert in bills that get sent by mail, and a hyperlink to a website (or PDF) in the e-bills. Based on insights garnered during the communications assessment, it is understood that the hyperlinks in e-bills generally do not get viewed, and inserts sent in the mail have low readership (though some interviewees stated that they recall skimming the Blue Thumb newsletter when it accompanied their bill before).

Even though OWASA has a direct method of contacting account holders monthly, customers generally do not pay attention to what they receive from OWASA beyond their account balance. This is not surprising given how busy people are, and the mass of information they sort through on a daily-basis.

Knowing this, it’s important for OWASA to schedule its public-facing “calls to action” and awareness campaigns during windows of opportunity when there is already topical momentum in the marketplace – so customers are primed to receive and integrate OWASA’s message. For example, it is understood that OWASA wants to ask customers to update their contact information. As September is peak hurricane season in North Carolina, this is an ideal time to ask customers to update their information so OWASA can share service updates that people will need, in case of a hurricane. In this example, OWASA’s call to action is timely and immediately relevant to customers.

Some service users have less access to OWASA information

Some community groups have less access to information due to language, access, or technology barriers, mainly groups that speak English as-a-second language, renters, and elderly residents. OWASA should continue to reach out to local organizations that represent and serve these groups, as a conduit through which to share vital information with these populations, and as a resource to solicit feedback from them on their needs linked to information and system resiliency.

OWASA publishes its external communications primarily in English. In reviewing the language practices of community partners, we see that the Town of Chapel Hill publishes some of its reports in Spanish, Karen, Burmese, and Mandarin – in service to the minority groups residing in the community (16.5% of Chapel Hill residents²). Similarly, OWASA should offer a translation function on its website. It can also invest in translating critical information, such as standard emergency messages.

People who commute to Carrboro and Chapel Hill for work are not OWASA account holders yet they use OWASA’s services. As we do not have contact information for these users, we are unable to share vital water information with them directly. Instead, they generally rely on word-of-mouth and media for their local information.

Similarly, Carrboro and Chapel Hill renters who reside in apartment complexes and rental homes are not OWASA account holders. Thus, we are unable to share vital updates with them directly because we do not have their contact information. Instead, we share information with property managers, and rely on the managers to distribute the information onward to residents. Property managers are typically busy and understaffed, so water service and conservation is low on their list of priorities. There is also a lot of

² Building Integrated Communities in Chapel Hill, Town of Chapel Hill, August 2018

turnover in property management staffing. OWASA's experience is that information does not always make it to the right contact person, or, it does not always get passed onto renters.

There are approximately 13,000 residential units served by these properties, which we refer to as "multi-family master meter accounts". They are managed by approximately 200 owners/property managers; there is no centralized mechanism through which to communicate with all of these property managers. Residents of about 1/3 of these locations (served by a multi-family master meter) are sub-metered and rebilled for their water use by a third-party. The remaining 2/3rds of these residents do not receive a water bill at all because their water charges are incorporated directly into their monthly rental invoice.

To understand better the opportunities and challenges of collaborating with multi-family master metered complexes, it is recommended that OWASA develop a pilot program targeting the top five apartment complexes that use the most water, from which learnings can be scaled in the future. It is also recommended that OWASA become a member of the [Triangle Apartment Association](#). Not all property managers in Carrboro and Chapel Hill will belong to the association, but it is one vehicle through which to start to network within this community and understand better what outreach strategies would have the most impact.

Students seeking knowledge can become local water ambassadors

The Chapel Hill-Carrboro City School (CHCCS) District runs 20 schools serving 12,000 students – all of whom use OWASA's water and wastewater services every school day. How does OWASA get water to all of these schools? Some parents and educators are asking this same question. OWASA receives regular inquiries from teachers, parents, and student clubs asking for information about water, conservation, and tours of the treatment plants (water more so than wastewater). OWASA also receives calls from youth groups such as the Girl Guides for similar information.

From an educational perspective, OWASA's talented team of planners, mechanics, engineers, operators, construction crews, scientists, administrative staff and more has formidable knowledge to share with young people – knowledge that is directly relevant to their areas of study. OWASA has had exploratory conversations with CHCCS and its non-profit Foundation and both are open to collaborating in an OWASA youth education program, to encourage learning about water and wastewater systems, and through association, topics in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math). OWASA has submitted a proposal to CHCCS for a pilot water education program (targeting students from Grade 1 to 12), which was developed by OWASA's internal education advisory committee (comprised of staff across OWASA's departments).

If implemented, the outcomes of the pilot program would be numerous: the knowledge that OWASA shares with young people will empower them to become local water ambassadors, now and into the future. It will also enable them to explore new study tracks and career paths. Learnings from the pilot program can inform the development of an annual OWASA youth education program. Finally, the water and wastewater education that we share with young people will trickle back to their families and the larger community, this being a very positive form of community engagement.

Moving from grade school to college: the University of North Carolina (UNC) at Chapel Hill has 30,000 students who all are consumers of OWASA's water and wastewater services (they either live in residence or come to campus for class). Herein lies a unique opportunity: 30,000 students represent

nearly 40% of the population that uses OWASA's services. OWASA collaborates effectively with UNC's communications team during times of emergency, and at UNC's annual Three Zeros event. OWASA also presents to classrooms and meets with UNC researchers to discuss opportunities to collaborate. If capacity allows, OWASA can consider more consistent engagement with young people on campus.

As the student population is relatively mobile, OWASA must evaluate whether focusing on engagement with this user segment will yield effective results. 20,000 of UNC's students are undergraduates. If we start to engage with them in their first-year of arrival, assuming they will remain at UNC for the duration of their undergraduate experience, this provides OWASA with a 4-year window in which to engage with this audience. During this time, we could play a part in influencing their water consumption to support local sustainability, and plant seeds for them to be responsible stewards in the long-term.

It is understood that campus life is quite consuming, leaving little time for students to engage in activities off-campus. As such, OWASA should aim to identify water champions on campus that it can collaborate with, for example, faculty, staff and student clubs that have an affinity for sustainability; disciplines that OWASA's water and wastewater systems have direct relevance to such as environmental sciences; and UNC's Three Zeros staff. UNC also hosts 11,000 graduate and professional students, the majority of whom live off-campus. UNC's Office of Off-Campus Student Life could be a medium of communication with this segment. As an efficient means of engagement at UNC, OWASA can also consider forming a campus advisory committee comprised of representatives across disciplines, students, and staff to foster deeper engagement within the UNC community. An intern from the UNC Institute for the Environment has joined OWASA's communications team for 9 hours per week, from January to April. One of her priorities is to explore opportunities to foster engagement and partnership opportunities for OWASA on campus.

Finally, engaging with students in water education at all ages, from elementary school through to college, may open new opportunities for young people to consider as they pursue subjects to study and future careers. The water sector is critical to community and can benefit from an increasingly diverse workforce, as can OWASA.

4.2 Priority focus areas

OWASA's mission is to provide customers with high quality and reliable water, wastewater, and reclaimed water services through responsible and creative stewardship of the resources it manages.

In delivering this mission, as referenced earlier, OWASA communicates with customers and partners in multiple ways on any given day; for example, through a bill statement, construction update, public notice, press release, and more. Beyond these forms of "push communication" (which tend to be transactional and unidirectional), there was consensus among interviewees (in the communications assessment) for the need for OWASA to engage more substantively with the community in two-way dialogue – about its water system and the function of water in the well-being of the community.

In addition to these high-level aspirations, specific focus areas were identified which could benefit from heightened communications and engagement – either because they are topics of community concern, or are important for OWASA's operations or reputation, the latter being critical to enabling public trust in and support for OWASA's mission. These focus areas include:

- System resiliency
- Agua Vista portal
- Affordability outreach
- Water quality
- Forest management
- Care to Share
- Presence in the community
- Sustainability and conservation

On system resiliency, OWASA should feature its capital improvement projects (CIP) and innovative operational activities (such as its valve maintenance program) in external communications, for example, on a radio program that has a high level of local listeners. OWASA should also create unique ways for customers to learn about projects and their personal relevance; for example, a behind-the-scenes construction tour that will improve water reliability in their neighborhood. Such activities would demonstrate, in a very real way, how OWASA is investing in local infrastructure to bolster system resiliency. Recommended feature projects are:

- Country Club water main (May-August) – targeting engagement with locally impacted residents.
- Dobbins Drive water and sewer main (September-November) – targeting engagement with locally impacted residents, commuters coming in from across the Triangle as this project will disrupt commuter traffic, and businesses given the high visibility of the project. OWASA can consider engaging businesses specifically through a partnership with the Chamber of Commerce.
- Kensington Drive water main (October-January) – target engagement with locally impacted residents.

The Agua Vista portal, which will enable customers to track their water use online, will be launched in March and heavily promoted throughout April and beyond. A separate communications plan has been developed by the OWASA team to promote registration and usage of the portal. The plan consists of direct mail, promotion in OWASA communications channels and at community events, magnets on OWASA vehicles and more. Affordability outreach has also been identified as an important focus area for OWASA to communicate about. The Agua Vista portal will empower customers to manage their water use better, and with this, potentially decrease water bills and support affordability. Agua Vista will be a main message that is communicated throughout all affordability outreach efforts in 2019.

On water quality, customers have expressed their desire to learn more about (or have concerns about) lead, pharmaceuticals, herbicides, dezincification, biosolids land application, fluoride, and per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). The latter two have the potential to peak in local discourse in 2019 for two reasons. On the topic of fluoride, Orange County Health Department will invite online feedback from the public during 2019, with the goal of providing guidance to water utility providers in the County on the utilization of fluoride for dental health. As this is the County's consultation process, OWASA will not be involved in organizing it, but we can help raise awareness of it to ensure that the community is aware of, and can participate, in the process.

On PFAS, the North Carolina Policy Collaboratory (based out of UNC and established by the state legislature) will publish a study this year that includes data on PFAS levels in state-wide water sources. It

is anticipated that this report will generate many questions from the public about the safety of public drinking water. The EPA has also announced its intention to propose a PFAS regulatory determination.

As OWASA has detected PFAS in its raw water sources, and drinking water at levels below existing regulatory limits, OWASA should strive to educate the community on PFAS before the Collaboratory publishes its report. Starting this conversation early may help allay fears or concerns, and assure customers that OWASA is staying on top of this issue. During its outreach, it will be important for OWASA to communicate that PFAS is an emerging science, that the research on PFAS which informs decision making is still unfolding, and that OWASA is monitoring the situation and abiding by regulations. OWASA is currently in discussions with the UNC Institute for the Environment to potentially collaborate on ways to communicate about PFAS together. For example, the hosting of a joint consumer focus group, or a session with local leaders to understand their concerns, to inform our collective public communications process.

Community engagement to support OWASA's sustainable forest management in Cane Creek watershed has also been identified as a priority (as it is understood that actions and communications implemented in 2010 were not well-received). This year, as OWASA introduces a new forest management plan, it will be important to communicate with stakeholders that the new plan is exactly that: new, and not the plan from 2010. In line with OWASA's community engagement goals (as noted by staff and Board members during the communications assessment), OWASA should welcome community insight for consideration in its plans, and where appropriate incorporate this insight to demonstrate that OWASA is actively listening to and partnering with the community. Key to OWASA's engagement will be fostering respectful community conversations and mitigating conflict. It is recommended that OWASA incorporate a mix of traditional communications outreach and contemporary dialogue processes enabled by professional facilitators throughout its engagement.

Care to Share is also a program that has been identified as a priority for communications and engagement, both for its support to low-income families and the leadership opportunity it affords OWASA. Inviting the community to support the program – to ensure continued access to water for all – is a common goal that most everyone can mobilize around. OWASA can consider creating a Care to Share Day, inviting community leaders, partners, and customers to rally together to raise funds for this program. A communications toolkit to empower people to invite friends and family to contribute can be created, to amplify participant impact and fundraising outcomes.

The need for OWASA to heighten its presence in the community was also noted as a priority, through increased branding and direct human interaction. We want customers to know that we are committed to always being present and available for the community. Opportunities to interact with community members and share engaging information in positive settings should be leveraged; for example, continued participation in Chapel Hill's and Carrboro's People's Academies, as well as at community events with the Water Wagon. Where appropriate, messages that communicate OWASA's overarching narrative can also be included on physical assets such as signs or visible equipment.

On sustainability and conservation, these topics already are and should continue to be embedded in OWASA's public education and calls to action. This includes sharing information in a relevant and engaging way about what individuals and the community can do collectively to sustain the community's water resources, and reinforcing OWASA's role as steward of the community's water and wastewater system.

4.3 Communications approach and tools

Approach

The communications assessment revealed that OWASA has tended to reach out to customers and partners mostly on an as-needed, project-driven basis. This project-driven and operational communications approach has resulted at times in the sharing of highly technical and operational language, which audiences can find hard to understand or relate to. The visual presentation of communications also varies from department to department, leaving audiences with inconsistent visual interaction with OWASA.

On timing, daily communications to multiple audiences are required for the functional needs of the organization. However, programs and topics that do not require daily communications should initiate community outreach during highly relevant windows of opportunity. For example, the month of Thanksgiving would be an ideal time to promote Care to Share Day: when people express thanks for what they have and compassion towards others. Also, working with partners and amplifying messages through their communications channels will ensure greater impact. For example, on Care to Share Day, if community leaders such as locally elected officials tweet their support, then OWASA will reach their dedicated audiences with our Care to Share message, in addition to our own audiences. Developing an annual communications and engagement plan will also help guide OWASA's outreach more strategically and with consistency.

One of the first questions most people ask when discussing communications is: "how will we get our information out to the public?" Identifying distribution channels is important, but more important is the message. An effective message is the most powerful communications medium. A message that is not technical, is easy-to-understand, and which demonstrates personal relevance is a message that people will be receptive to. Framing key messages in value statements, where possible, is also ideal. For example, does the topic at hand support local sustainability, the economy, get water to your home reliably, etc.? OWASA must clearly communicate why the topic at hand should matter to the person receiving the message.

OWASA must also interact with audiences in today's preferred vernacular. This ranges from two extremes: quick soundbites and visuals requiring little or no time on one hand, and on the other hand substantive dialogue or unique customer experiences which require dedicated time commitment.

For the former (quick soundbites/compelling images), the power of video, beautiful photos, and the 280-character social media post are most effective. For the latter, creating opportunities for dialogue in small groups enables people to participate in meaningful conversations with OWASA and others. Similarly, unique experiences, for example, a behind-the-scenes tour of a CIP project can have high impact in terms of moving the needle on an individual's understanding of, and appreciation for, the local water system.

For maximum impact on high priority projects, it is recommended that OWASA incorporate a mix of both approaches in its outreach. For example, on a CIP project that will be visible or disruptive in the community, OWASA can provide concise and timely information with short videos and social media posts, while also organizing a behind-the-scenes construction tour for interested residents/businesses nearby. Another example could be linked to forest management. OWASA can consider providing

information about the watershed protection cycle via an infographic, supplemented by a forest walk educational tour for local residents.

Finally, though there is only one Communications Officer at OWASA, every employee is an OWASA ambassador by virtue of the good work they do every day. We can offer communications training to employees and Board members who are interested in learning more about communicating effectively, internally and externally. This could include communications for better collaboration, social media training, and media interview training.

Tools

A review of all of OWASA's printed materials, which range from educational brochures to newsletters to construction updates, reveal that there is inconsistent design application in templates and promotional materials across the departments. While most documents incorporate blue and green colors, the shades are different, fonts are different, and tone of voice varies.

During the communications assessment, internal stakeholders were asked to describe OWASA's personality, because knowing this can help guide OWASA in delivering consistent communications with respect to presentation, language, and tone. For example, if interviewees had listed attributes such as "academic" and "research-oriented", they would be advised to communicate in technical language with supporting visuals such as graphs and charts. In OWASA's case, staff and Board listed the following types of attributes as describing OWASA's personality: helpful, humble, responsible, efficient and productive. This implies the need for OWASA to communicate with language and visuals that are easy to understand: concise and consistent, professional yet accessible.

OWASA should also work to communicate in simple language, and as concisely as possible. For example, OWASA currently has 41 educational brochures and other promotional collateral that it distributes. The titles of these materials range from "What is a p-trap" to "How low can you flow" to "Taste, Odor, Color and Sediment in Drinking Water". Some materials are easy to understand. Others are highly technical or overly descriptive. Where appropriate, OWASA should condense these materials into fewer, thematic pieces, so as not to overwhelm customers with too much information. For example, can information about meters, water bills, and account adjustments be collated into one document instead of three separate documents?

In terms of direct mail, each year, OWASA has traditionally sent customers: a newsletter every quarter, 2 report cards (water and wastewater), and an invitation to support Care to Share. It is recommended that the quarterly newsletter be discontinued and replaced with direct mail pieces to support special campaigns which have a singular focus / call to action. For example, "Track your water use with Agua Vista" plus supporting information, or "Support Care to Share Day" with supporting information. A singularly focused direct mailer will have greater impact – in terms of the message being received and processed by the recipient – than a text heavy newsletter which offers too many messages for the short attention span of most consumers.

Throughout OWASA's outreach, whether via printed materials or online or at community events, compelling images can be powerful tools in which to communicate messages efficiently. It is recommended that wherever possible, all OWASA communications include images. For example, construction updates, news releases, web stories, and so on.

To drive consistency in OWASA's visual communication, the CCRO is currently in the process of working with a designer to develop consistent design guidelines for OWASA, and to standardize its visual presentation across organizational templates and external-facing publications.

Beyond images and printed materials, we now live in a video world where many people search online in YouTube before they search in Google (YouTube is currently ranked as the world's second largest search engine). OWASA should leverage this consumer preference for receiving information by incorporating short videos in its communications to highlight special projects and priorities. These videos, and other communications, should push viewers to OWASA's website where more substantive and supporting content is available.

On social media, OWASA should continue to organically grow its followers on Twitter by populating its Twitter handle with relevant content on timely topics. Recent experiences with water incidents show that when OWASA posts relevant information that people need, more people follow OWASA on Twitter. Where possible, tweets should invite viewers to OWASA's website where they can access more substantive content, beyond what can be conveyed in a 240-character tweet. OWASA should also create its own Facebook page and update it with timely content. Again, posts should aim to push viewers to OWASA's website for more substantive content. OWASA can also consider creating an Instagram account (photo-specific social media site). OWASA manages assets that are visually beautiful and compelling, for example, forests and lakes that would appeal to the nature lover, and massive trucks and equipment that would appeal to the lover of machines. If OWASA could create a library of high-quality, compelling images, we could post these across OWASA's social media accounts throughout the year.

Once all of these social media channels are in place, OWASA should develop a strategy to grow its followers. This strategy would include identifying and following topical social media influencers, cross-promoting content across ours and partner channels, and inviting and promoting user-generated content. For example, encouraging community members to take selfies at the Water Wagon along with event specific hashtags such as #OWASA and #WaterWagon, or #OWASA and #WonderfulWater. The more that customers generate their own content (with linkages to OWASA) and publish to their own channels, the more these customers will help increase OWASA's reach. When OWASA becomes more proactive on social media, the organization should also develop a social media policy, to mitigate for potentially inappropriate content posted by either internal or external audiences.

As mentioned above, the majority of OWASA's social media posts should push users to OWASA's website where they can access more substantive and personally relevant information. With this comes the need to improve OWASA's website. The current site is not efficient nor intuitive to navigate. Over the years, OWASA has published a vast amount of information on its website, to the point where there is now too much information – leaving visitors unclear on where to go to look for what. Some language on the site is quite technical (due in part to the scientific and regulatory nature of public water) or verbose. Some content is also posted multiple places. OWASA's web content should be simplified and streamlined (for example, enabling linked posts, rather than replicating posts across multiple pages). With respect to visuals, given the beautiful assets that OWASA has access to, we can populate the website with more compelling images (if we can dedicate time to capture these images).

In short, the website needs a relaunch to improve navigation, functionality, and visitor appeal. Content must be reshaped to be relevant, concise, and engaging. Visuals should include pictures, videos and maps that reinforce main messages. Language translation options (perhaps via Google translate) should also be available. Finally, the content management system on the back-end must be updated and easier

to use. This would enable OWASA to train more team members to have the capabilities to self-publish content. The site should also incorporate opportunities for visitor interaction and feedback. OWASA is in the process of developing a request for qualifications from potential web providers to support relaunch.

To ensure that OWASA communicates consistently about who it is and what it does, OWASA should continue to strive to share its overarching narrative as suggested earlier in section 3 of this document, mainly: non-profit public agency, vital community investment, and sustainable steward. In addition, a key message bank should also be developed and updated annually on key/emerging issues and frequently visited topics.

4.4 Media outreach

Earned media

Based on the CCRO's experience in recent emergencies, it's clear that Triangle-based media know where to go when they need information from OWASA. During the water incident of November 2018, a number of reporters expressed appreciation for the timely updates OWASA posted on its website and Twitter handle, and they called the CCRO directly if they needed more information. Providing timely information to reporters through these channels is the most efficient method of disseminating information intended for the mass public, via earned news reports.

However, trying to earn media coverage about OWASA's services and programs during non-emergency times will not likely yield news reports, as reporters typically seek stories with drama and crisis. The exception would be when OWASA has unique insight or information to share on a trending or sensitive topic. Though such topics may seem like opportunities for OWASA to generate positive media coverage, the organization should consider carefully whether it wants to be seen as the expert voice on a particular subject or issue. For example, water conservation, a timely topic linked to sustainability, is a subject that OWASA can speak to with confidence based on historical experience and the academic community's collective research. Whereas PFASs is a topic where the science and regulatory guidelines are still emerging, and which OWASA, as with all other utilities, does not have a deep bench of research from which to draw upon. At the same time, OWASA must balance the need to help provide education on such topics – to mitigate unnecessary public fear and empower people with information.

Paid media

Where OWASA can maximize its reach is through modest allocations in paid media programs. Investing in this medium would enable OWASA to share relevant, timely, and educational water and wastewater information on topics and projects people will find value in. For example, a monthly water feature on a popular local radio program would enable OWASA to inform the community about where its water comes from, how customers can better conserve, and what projects are in process to ensure that water is delivered reliably to their homes.

Another time OWASA can maximize the public service value of its paid media investments would be during a CIP project that significantly disrupts commuter traffic. For example, short announcements during drive time on a radio station serving the Triangle could inform commuters of potential delays so they can plan accordingly. OWASA can also share information as to why the project is important to the community, thereby providing context for the impacted driver as to why there is a disruption.

4.5 Emergency communications

Continuing to improve communications in times of emergency is a stated priority at OWASA, and numerous good practices have been defined and implemented during recent emergencies (i.e., Hurricane Florence, Hurricane Michael, Jones Ferry Road Water Main Break).

Processes that have been put in place include collaborating with Public Information Officers (PIO) from partner agencies in a centralized Joint Information Center, coordinating messages for consistency, increasing reach and impact through cross-promotion and amplification of messages on partner channels, and timely dissemination of updates to ensure people have the information they need as soon as it's available. Key to these processes has been developing and maintaining collaborative working relationships with PIO counterparts at partner organizations.

4.6 Community partnerships

Much like collaborating with partner agencies in times of emergency has proven to be effective, OWASA should develop partnerships during times of regular business to amplify its communications and engagement reach. Local organizations such as the Chapel Hill Public Library and Chamber of Commerce have expressed interest in collaborating.

For example, OWASA is exploring opportunities with the Chapel Hill library to co-host a water education series in the Fall of 2019 which could include three sessions on timely topics: 1) the community's water system and how it gets to homes and schools, 2) water quality focused on PFASs, and 3) how people can protect and conserve water. Through such a partnership, OWASA can support its own community education goals, while adding value to the library's educational programming.

With the Chamber of Commerce, OWASA can consider co-hosting an infrastructure session, highlighting the role of water and wastewater infrastructure in enabling healthy communities and economic development. OWASA can also consider offering a behind-the-scenes tour of a capital improvement project to Chamber members.

The Towns of Carrboro and Chapel Hill have also expressed interest in collaborating in community engagement initiatives such as a Mayors' Water Conservation Challenge, and celebration of the completion of the Historic Rogers Road sewer project. As mentioned earlier, OWASA is also in the process of exploring educational opportunities with the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City School district.

Additionally, OWASA regularly engages with over 20 social service agencies through its Affordability Outreach Program. These partners are vital in helping OWASA engage with low-income customers in the service area. OWASA contributes content to the newsletters of these partners and participates in their events to share information about OWASA and our programs.

5. Summary of OWASA's core audiences

A number of OWASA's stakeholders have been discussed throughout this document with a special focus on customers and partners. The list below outlines the main audiences OWASA should intentionally engage with, in Carrboro and Chapel Hill, as it implements its communications and engagement plan. These audiences may require ongoing or event-specific information from OWASA, and/or can be strategic partners with which to amplify common goals and messaging.

- OWASA representatives
 - Staff
 - Board
 - Former Board members
- OWASA customers
 - Residential account holders
 - Users of OWASA services that are hard-to-reach
 - Renters and MFMM (apartment) residents without an OWASA account
 - English as a second language communities
 - People who work but do not live in the service area
 - Business account holders
 - Large account holders:
 - UNC
 - UNC Healthcare
 - Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools
- Local governments
 - Town of Chapel Hill
 - Town of Carrboro
 - Orange County
 - Orange County Health Department
 - Orange County Emergency Management
- Community organizations, associations, and education
 - Chamber of Commerce
 - Chapel Hill Public Library
 - UNC Institute for the Environment
 - Triangle Apartment Association
 - Non-profit organizations that support minority and vulnerable groups, including partners in affordability outreach
- Industry organizations
 - Suppliers to OWASA
 - Providers of water and sewer related services, i.e., plumbers
 - Property developers
- Watershed neighbors
- Local media – print, radio, TV, and online

6. Guiding principles for communications and community engagement

The objectives stated in section two of this document can inform OWASA’s guiding principles for decision making as it develops its activities, and partnerships, for effective communications and engagement. In alignment with the stated objectives, OWASA should consider these questions as it proactively develops activities, or reviews proposals from external parties:

- Does the initiative support OWASA’s goal of providing people with timely, relevant, and accessible information?
- Does the initiative enable OWASA to participate in community dialogue to understand local priorities and inform decision making?

- Does the initiative provide public education about the comprehensive process of sourcing, treating, delivering, protecting – and investing in – water, to maintain resilient water and wastewater systems?
- Does the initiative foster water conservation and protection among all community members?
- Does the initiative enable OWASA to be recognized as a trusted community partner?

An additional guiding principle to inform OWASA’s decision making should be the effectiveness of each initiative considered, mindful of budget, accessibility to the community, impact, and audience reach.

7. Strategies and supporting tactics

A large amount of information has been presented, and in turn processed, by readers of this document. What follows is a summary of the key communications and engagement strategies that have been discussed throughout this plan, and which align with the guiding principles. Supporting tactics for the strategies are also identified.

Strategy 1: Communicate an overarching narrative so that OWASA’s diverse activities are understood to be connected parts of managing the community’s water/wastewater system. Empower employees to help communicate this narrative.

Supporting tactics:

- Consistently communicate 3 core key messages: non-profit public service, vital community investment, sustainable stewardship.
- Use concise, easy-to-understand, non-technical language.
- Standardize visual presentation and tone across organizational templates.
- Include a compelling image in all external communications; i.e., construction updates, etc.
- Condense OWASA’s 40+ educational materials into fewer thematic pieces so as not to overwhelm customers with too much information.
- Use tools that resonate with audiences such as social media, compelling images, and video. Create an official Facebook page and possibly Instagram account. Develop a social media policy.
- Improve OWASA’s website and content.
- Offer optional communications training for employees.

Strategy 2: Design unique and engaging educational activities that get people interested in, and invested in, the process of protecting, sourcing, treating, and delivering water and wastewater. Foster interest in careers in water. Develop partnerships that help amplify OWASA’s communications and engagement reach.

Supporting tactics:

- Implement a pilot school program offering four components (led by OWASA’s talented and diverse team): a Youth Water Academy, tours of the water and wastewater plants, class speakers, and data analysis with Agua Vista.
- Partner with the Chapel Hill Library on a Wonderful Water educational series. A proposal is currently in development.

- Host a communications intern from UNC throughout the year to help champion campus engagement.
- Interact with the community in positive settings, for example, at community events with engaging educational activities at the Water Wagon.
- Continue to engage with organizations that represent and serve groups that have less access to information due to language, technology, or other barriers.
- Implement a pilot project targeting the top 5 MFMM (apartment) complexes to promote water conservation and identify best practices in communicating with MFMM residents.

Strategy 3: Project competence and provide proof points on what OWASA is doing to increase system resilience, in a way that is relevant, relatable and engaging. Promote OWASA’s Capital Improvements Projects and operations, how they benefit local residents and businesses, and their importance to system resiliency. Maximize educational reach through modest allocations in paid media programs.

Supporting tactics:

- Offer behind-the-scenes tours of select CIP projects to impacted neighbors/businesses
- Host a Wonderful Water series on local radio featuring compelling CIP stories: neat facts, economics, system resiliency, projects across the community such as the valve maintenance program, staff and customer profiles, etc.
- Partner with the Chamber of Commerce to co-host an infrastructure session, highlighting the role of water and wastewater infrastructure in enabling healthy communities and economic development. Include a behind-the-scenes tour of a relevant CIP project for local businesses (limited number of participants in the latter)

Strategy 4: Schedule external calls to action to leverage topical momentum in the marketplace – so customers are primed to receive OWASA’s message. Provide extra communications support for priority focus areas: system resiliency, Agua Vista portal, Affordability Outreach, water quality, forest management, community presence, and Care to Share.

Supporting tactics:

- Promote the use of Agua Vista in the Mayors water conservation challenge in April, and in affordability outreach efforts throughout the year.
- Implement a “Care to Share Day” campaign near Thanksgiving inviting community leaders, partners, and customers to rally to raise funds – to ensure continued access to water for all.
- Partner with the UNC Institute for the Environment to identify public communications needs and opportunities in the lead up to the publication of the North Carolina Policy Collaboratory’s PFASs research in December.
- Facilitate community dialogue and information sharing for OWASA’s new approach to forest management.
- Develop and update a key message bank annually on the priority focus areas and other frequently visited topics.

Strategy 5: Continue to improve good practices in emergency communications.

Supporting tactics:

- Continue to collaborate with Public Information Officers from public agencies, UNC, and UNC Hospital to coordinate/amplify messaging.

- Continue to provide timely and relevant information to media.
- Document emergency communications processes.
- Consider carefully whether OWASA wants to be viewed as the expert voice on a particular topic, especially on subjects where science and regulatory guidelines are still emerging.

Note that the tactics listed throughout this section do not include communications needs and opportunities that arise throughout the year. For example, news releases on timely events, reports to local governments, milestones such as the completion of the historic Rogers Road project, water quality and wastewater quality report card, and more. Where possible to anticipate, these activities have been incorporated into the 2019 timeline below under the heading “Regular Business”.

8. Timeline of activities

Activity	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Strategy 1: Communicate overarching OWASA narrative												
Standardize visual presentation & tone across organizational templates		x										
Assess and condense 40+ educational materials into fewer thematic pieces		x	x	x	x	x	x	x				
Relaunch OWASA website			x	x	x	x						
Update OWASA's social media suite and develop a social media policy			x	x	x							
Develop short videos to support communications for priority projects			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
Identify opportunities to include narrative messages on OWASA assets visible in the community, i.e., signs, trucks, equipment, lake boards, etc.							x	x	x	x		
Offer optional communications training for employees									x	x	X	X
Strategy 2: Deliver unique educational experiences to get people interested and invested in the water/wastewater system. Foster interest in careers in water. Develop partnerships to amplify message and reach.												
Implement a school pilot program			x	x	x	x						
Partner with Chapel Hill Library on a water education series w 3 segments: resilient system, water quality (PFASs), conservation/protection							x	x	x	x	x	
Host a communications intern from UNC throughout the year to champion campus engagement	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	X
Engage with community organizations serving groups that have less access to information due to language, technology, or other barriers	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	X
Research and implement a pilot project targeting top 5 MFMM (apartment) complexes, join Triangle Apartment Association			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	X
Water Wagon with engaging educational activities at community events <i>UNC Oral Cancer Run (Mar), UNC Science Expo (April), Carrboro Day (May 5) Carrboro National Night Out (Aug), Rogers Road Back to School (Aug), Latin American Festival (Aug), Big Book Sale Chapel Hill Library (Sep), Festifall (Oct), school district events, farmers market, etc.</i>			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		

Activity	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Strategy 3: Project competence and provide proof of OWASA action to increase system resiliency. Promote CIP and operations projects and local benefits.												
Offer a behind the scenes tour of CIP projects to affected residents/businesses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Country Club water main (May-Aug) – targeting residents Dobbins Dr water and sewer main (Sep-Nov) – targeting commuters, residents, businesses, Chamber Kensington Dr water main (Oct-Jan) – targeting residents 					x	x	x	x	x	x	x	X
Host a Wonderful Water series on local radio featuring compelling CIP stories, neat facts, local benefits, economic contribution, staff & customer profiles, etc. Launch this series during Infrastructure Week (May)					x	x	x	x	x	x	x	X
Partner with the Chamber on co-hosting an infrastructure session, highlighting the role of water/wastewater infrastructure in enabling healthy communities and economic development (target Infrastructure Week in May)					x							
Strategy 4: Leverage market momentum; provide focused communications support for: system resiliency, Agua Vista portal, Affordability Outreach, water quality, forest management, community presence, Care to Share												
Agua Vista portal launch; promote the use of Agua Vista in the Carrboro-Chapel Hill Mayors’ water conservation challenge in April		x	x	x								
Develop and implement a “Care to Share Day” campaign at Thanksgiving inviting community leaders, partners & customers to contribute								x	x	x	x	
Partner with UNC Institute for the Environment to identify public communications needs/opportunities in lead up to the publication of the state-wide PFASs report				x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Foster community engagement (dialogue, shared knowledge & information) to support OWASA’s new forest management approach		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Develop key message bank on OWASA focus areas and frequently visited topics				x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

Activity	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Strategy 5: Continue to improve emergency communications												
Continue to collaborate w other PIOs to coordinate/amplify messages – as needed and in preparatory simulations												
Continue to provide timely and relevant information to media – as needed												
Consider carefully whether OWASA wants to be viewed as the expert voice on a particular topic, especially where science is still emerging – as needed												
Regular business												
News releases <i>Burnout (Mar), rates (July), CIP (year-round) operational events (year-round), etc.</i>												
Water Quality Report Card		x	x	x	x							
Wastewater Quality Report Card					x	x	x					
Historic Rogers Road project completion				x								
Hurricane season, emergency preparedness								x	x	x		
Quarterly reports to local governments	x	x		x	x			x	x	x	x	

Note: the timeline above has been developed with best estimates available and assuming business as usual. In the event of a major incident or emergency, it’s possible that the CCRO will have to reprioritize and change deliverables and timelines. The timeline also assumes that the partnerships mentioned throughout the document will develop as planned. Exploratory discussions have been had with most partners referenced in this document.

9. Measurement

Activities outlined throughout this plan are intended to be pilot projects that OWASA can implement and learn from in order to improve its communication reach and effectiveness moving forward. Therefore, measuring the impact of the initiatives will be key to understanding what works, what doesn't work, what to scale, and what to pull back in future plans.

Methods of measurement should be incorporated into all activities. This can include:

- Quantity
 - Number of participants in engagement activities
 - Number of WTP and WWTP tours year-over-year
 - Referrals from participants/partners
 - Web visits/page views
 - Social media followers/reach
 - Requests for OWASA speakers
 - Invitations to OWASA to fulfil community leadership roles
- Quality
 - Post-activity participant surveys
 - Year-over-year survey of subsets of customers
 - Testimonials

Where possible, OWASA should incorporate real-time measurement to incorporate learnings into programs in a timely manner.

OWASA should also create a tracking tool to document community engagement across the organization. For example, can a SharePoint calendar be created that all teams update regularly with their community-facing activities (ranging from presentations at schools to tours at the water/wastewater treatment plants, to community events with the Water Wagon)? This is an internal process discussion for further consideration.

10. Resources required

OWASA's communications and engagement function adds value to the organization by being able to dedicate time to provide strategic communications counsel, foster unique community engagement initiatives with peers and community partners, nurture external relationships, and write strategic messaging and content. The writing function is particularly time intensive.

The plan outlined in this document represents an ambitious approach for OWASA given that the organization has not established an annual communications and engagement plan before.

To be able to maintain a high-level of strategic counsel and writing services for OWASA while implementing this plan, the following resources will be required:

- \$70,000 for the last half of fiscal year 2019 – this has been approved by the Board, primarily to support OWASA's web relaunch, brand refresh, professional design services, and public education

- \$100,000 in the fiscal year 2020 budget – to support tactical implementation of the communications and engagement plan throughout fiscal year 2020
- \$75,000 in the fiscal year 2020 budget – for an unfunded full-time position to support coordination and implementation of the communications and engagement plan, as well as daily operational communication needs, throughout fiscal year 2020

It's important to note that staff are currently evaluating the resources required to support OWASA's daily, operational communications needs. For example, ongoing community engagement to support OWASA's Capital Improvement Projects, operations bulletins, water advisories, etc. Updates on resource requirements will be provided to the Board at future meetings.

11. Next Steps

- Board feedback and guidance on draft plan (at the February 28 Board meeting, or at future meetings if needed)
- Considering Board feedback and guidance, discuss with OWASA staff and finalize the plan (for approval at a future meeting if necessary)