Communications Strategy: Town of Glastonbury
7.2 Provide Effective Community Communications
*To Submit: **A copy of your communications strategy***

Description of submission requirement: Engage community stakeholders in the process of developing a communications strategy to target audiences across your community. Outline how, when, and where you will make info. publicly available. Describe how you will create & manage an accessible website and social media pages, an easily updatable community events calendar, and consider establishing a two-way communication channel for citizens to post content. Describe what type of info you will convey via printed or electronic brochures and booklets and why this is the best channel for such information.

DISCLAIMER! Municipalities are required to distribute certain information in accordance with local and federal regulations as outlined in the following sources: The Town Charter; Town Code of Ordinances; Statutory Regulations (e.g. Freedom of Information (FOI) Act); NIGP Code of Ethics (procurement related activities), rules and guidelines established by the Glastonbury Boards, Commissions, Councils, and Committees; and Roberts Rules of Order, (e.g. regulations concerning public meeting conduct, document filing requirements, etc.). Content governed by these sources includes, but is not limited to, public notices/hearings, budgetary information, requests for proposals, Board/Commission meetings and documentation. Glastonbury communicates information in accordance with the associated requirements and uses its discretion to leverage additional platforms as deemed appropriate on a case-by-case basis.

The communication strategy outlined herein is applicable only to Town content NOT subject to the aforementioned mandates and regulations.

MISSION

Provide an integrated, multi-dimensional communications strategy that enables Glastonbury to effectively communicate information to all members of the community in a professional, transparent, and timely manner.

GOALS

1. Communicate information to the public in a clear, timely, transparent, professional, and consistent manner.
2. Use the most effective and timely platform(s) available to reach the general public and/or desired population(s) in all communications efforts.
3. Establish effective relationships with media and local interest groups and leverage their communications platforms for further expanded reach among target population groups.
4. Create forums to engage community members and develop two-way communication platforms for soliciting citizen feedback.
5. Evaluate existing communications platforms on an ongoing basis to determine effectiveness in reaching desired population segment(s). Continue to seek new platforms that adapt to changing needs, technologies, and/or community demographics.

AUDIENCE SEGMENTS

- General Public
- Property Owners
- Youth

- Seniors
- Disabled Residents
- Residents in need (food insecurity, housing, etc.)
- Minorities
- Religious groups
- Businesses and Nonprofit Organizations

COMMUNICATIONS ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

To formally structure the Town's communications processes, Glastonbury established a dedicated Marketing & Communications Specialist (MCS) position in 2014. This position is responsible for the integration, management, implementation, and ongoing improvement of the Town's communications strategy, as well as management of the Town website, social media, public relations activity, and authored content.

While the MCS provides oversight of the town website, Glastonbury has a structured process for how website content is posted organization-wide. To ensure all departments/divisions keep website content up-to-date, a minimum of one staff member from each department/division is assigned the role of Website Administrator. In this role, he/she is responsible for maintaining their respective departmental content on the town website, including page updates, news and event information, and documentation. Each administrator receives initial and ongoing training on publishing activities, including how to effectively integrate Glastonbury's communications objectives, and the MCS monitors content regularly to ensure compliance with Town standards. The MCS assists all departments with website updates as needed and is available to distribute content through additional communication channels as applicable.

Additional Town communications roles include the Police Department's designated Public Information Officer, who issues press releases, manages the Police Facebook page, and acts as the Department's Public Relations liaison when major events occur, and the Communications Coordinator for the Board of Education, who manages the Schools' website, electronic and print communications, public relations activities, and overall content.

HOW, WHEN, AND WHERE INFORMATION IS MADE AVAILABLE:

Glastonbury uses an extensive scope of print and electronic platforms to communicate information in the most timely and efficient manner (see **Communications Inventory document** for a complete list). The Town's communications platforms are designed to effectively reach all population groups and are used based on the intended audience(s), urgency, and complexity of the pertinent information. Among the many channels used, the four primary platforms used to communicate information to the public are:
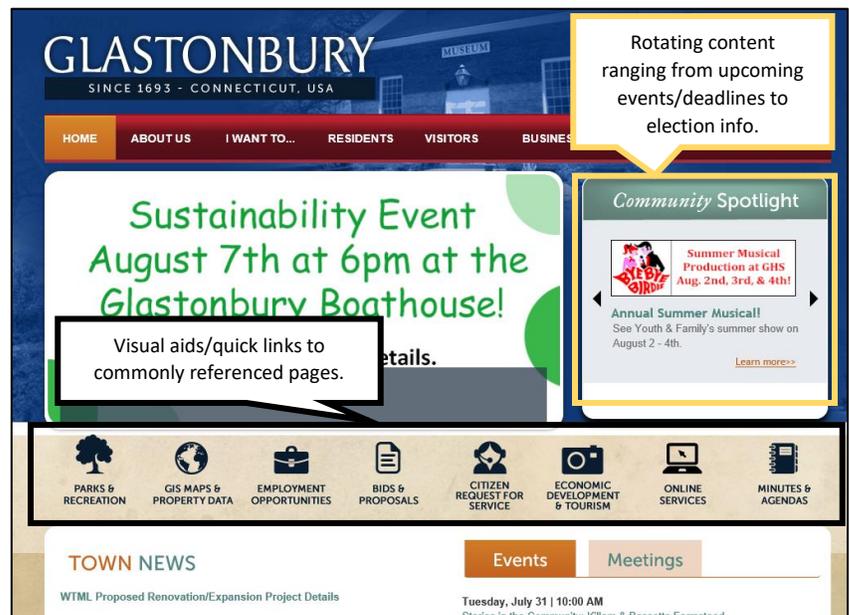
1. Town website (electronic)
2. Cyclical publications (print & electronic)
3. Local media outlets (print and electronic)
4. Facebook (electronic)

The four primary platforms are outlined in greater detail below. While these channels are used in nearly all communications activity, additional platforms are integrated when doing so is necessary to reach the intended audience(s). This includes, but is not limited to, informational meetings, collaborative

workgroups, informational phone lines, direct mailers, signage, and inclusion in communication channels managed by third parties, such as the Chamber of Commerce. Glastonbury continuously analyzes its communications platforms to ensure they effectively reach all members of the public and provide opportunities for community engagement.

1) Accessible Town Website

As the primary platform for communicating information to the public, Glastonbury makes a concerted effort to provide an accessible, accurate, timely, useful, and easy to navigate website.[1] Most recently updated in January of 2015, the website was designed with the goal of improving navigation, content, accessibility, Search Engine Optimization (SEO), organizational structure, and overall quality.[2] During the design process, the Town reviewed website analytics to determine which pages were most frequently referenced. This influenced the implementation of 8 user-friendly icons along the center ribbon of the

homepage, which offer a one-click link to commonly referenced information (pictured at right). The website homepage features a Community Spotlight to showcase timely content ranging from approaching deadlines to social services programs (pictured at right), and several embedded features help make information more accessible for the public. These include the Community Events Calendar, News section, Job Opportunities, and the Town's eNotification system. (See expanded detail below). Lastly, an Rich Site Summary (RSS) feed embedded within the website allows for automated feature integration with the Town Facebook page.

> **Website Features Overview:**
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> **Easily-Updatable Community Events Calendar -** Glastonbury's website has an Events Calendar which is updated on an ongoing basis to reflect town programs. The calendar can be sorted by department or category (e.g. "teens and youth", "activities for residents age 50+") to suit citizen interests and is accessible through a variety of ways on the website. The calendar displays the 5 soonest approaching events in the bottom right hand corner of the homepage and all events are accessible through the Events Calendar link under the About Us Menu and the "Calendar" link at the very top of the homepage. Through an RSS feed, the Calendar integrates with the Town Facebook page, and through the eNotification feature, Calendar updates are automatically

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[1] *In 2018, Glastonbury invested in a website management tool called SiteImprove, which will be implemented over the coming months and will assist in further enhancing the site's navigation, content, quality, and accessibility.*

[2] *As smart phones become the primary source of internet searches, the website was also designed to be responsive, meaning it adjusts to fit the screen size of any computer or mobile device.*

distributed to subscribing residents. (See **eNotification** section below). To ensure two-way communication with the public, the Marketing & Communication Specialist (MCS) will post community events to the calendar upon request, provided they will be held in Town and/or benefit a town organization. By supporting local organizations in their efforts, the Town gains a more comprehensive understanding of the various special interest groups and population subsets, and demonstrates the Town's commitment to supporting community initiatives.

News - The News section enables staff to publish timely updates that arise on a daily basis. Announcements can range from an upcoming musical production within the Youth & Family Services Department to information about a proposed capital project pending referendum. News items integrate with Facebook and are distributed to subscribing residents through the eNotification feature. (See additional detail below). News items display on the bottom left hand corner of the website homepage with the 5 most recently posted items shown. The MCS will post news items to the website on behalf of Glastonbury organizations, provided they are relevant to, and/or serve to benefit the Glastonbury community.

eNotifications - The eNotification feature of the town website augments the Calendar and News features by synching each update with a subscription-based email system. Residents can subscribe to as many, or as few categories as they wish within the Calendar, News, Job Opportunities, and Request for Proposals features. Upon subscribing, residents receive automated email updates any time content is published that meets their established criteria. This system is particularly useful in disseminating timely updates such as reminders for dog license renewals and roadwork/construction.[3] It creates a convenient, personalized notification system and saves citizens' time in seeking updates on topics of personal interest. Glastonbury promotes the eNotification system throughout all of its communications platforms via www.glastonbury-ct.gov/enotify, and is constantly growing its subscription base.

Job Posts – The Human Resources department uses the "Job Posts" feature to publicize open positions within the organization. The website homepage has a convenient icon, (pictured at right), to quickly access this feature and it's also accessible via the URL www.glastonbury-ct.gov/employment or through the Human Resources department section. Residents can sort jobs by category (full time, part time, seasonal, etc.), and subscribe to receive eNotifications when jobs are posted. Depending on the position, staff also post jobs on the Town's various social media platforms (Facebook and LinkedIn) or place ads in local, regional, and national news publications to expand reach and inform potential candidates of opportunities to join the organization. Facebook is particularly useful for communicating job opportunities because it's free to use and Followers often share posts with friends/family they feel would be interested or qualified.

Friendly URLs – "Friendly URLs" are quick links that connect a user with a specific web page. They're used for pages that are accessed year-round as well as to assist in promoting Town campaigns or initiatives. Examples include www.glastonbury-ct.gov/employment and www.glastonbury-ct.gov/foodbank. Friendly URLs are easy to remember and convenient for

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[3] *For a complete list of eNotification categories, visit www.glastonbury-ct.gov/enotify.*

residents therefore they are "promoted" constantly throughout the town's communications platforms to encourage use.

The Library and Fire Department maintain independent websites for their respective content and the town website is linked with both for citizen convenience. Both departments still use the Town's events calendar, news, and eNotification system to present a centralized information portal for citizens.

2) Cyclical Publications

Glastonbury delivers information to the public on a continuous basis however a sizable portion of Town content occurs on a cyclical schedule. To ensure timely communications of recurring content, the town publishes a variety of cyclical publications through a multi-channel approach. Many publications are distributed as printed brochures or flyers via direct mail as well as electronically to mailing lists of subscribing citizens. An example of a cyclical publication is the Parks & Recreation brochure, a seasonal brochure of programs mailed to town households three times per year. The brochure is also posted on the town website and promoted through the Facebook pages, however citizens have commented that they prefer to receive this document in printed format. Generally speaking, the Town uses printed brochures for disseminating information that residents will reference on an ongoing basis in their family life, (e.g. recycling programs, youth and senior programs), whereas electronic platforms are used for time sensitive content, static content, and information referenced less frequently. Supplemental channels are evaluated on a case by case basis and incorporated as deemed appropriate.

A group of Town departments are heavily structured in public programming (e.g. Library, Senior Services), therefore their cyclical content occurs at a much higher frequency. To accommodate the higher volume, these departments distribute weekly and monthly newsletters to subscribing mailing lists. The Library's weekly newsletter is issued via email to a subscription base and the Senior Services' monthly newsletter, the Sharing Tree, is mailed in printed format to in-town residents, sent via email to subscribing residents, and made available in printed format at the Senior/Community Center for citizens who reside in neighboring towns and/or do not have internet access.

3) Local Media - print and electronic

Glastonbury uses the local news outlets to communicate a high volume of information to the public. Many town residents read the Glastonbury Citizen (print only) and Community edition of the Harford Courant (print & electronic) regularly, therefore the publications are an effective channel to reach community members. Both media sources are cooperative in sharing town news and Glastonbury occasionally supplements articles with paid advertisements. Glastonbury's population over the age of 65+ is projected to increase by 8% between 2020 and 2030[4] and, with a significant population over the age of 50, these channels are useful in reaching those community members, as well as residents who prefer traditional news outlets.

4) Facebook (electronic)

Glastonbury manages several Facebook pages for distributing information to the public (see **Communications Inventory** for a complete list). As mentioned previously, information published to the town website automatically posts to the general Facebook page through an RSS feed, further expanding

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[4] *Source: partnership for Strong Communities Housing Data Profiles 2018*

the Town's overall reach on an ongoing basis. Facebook is an effective platform for sharing updates in real-time and is particularly useful for posting information that arises outside of standard office hours. Although only about 4% of residents follow Glastonbury's Facebook pages, the platform is a useful forum for engaging with community members and establishing two-way communications on a variety of topics. Residents often engage with town staff members through the comments and messaging features to ask questions, report concerns in town, and even send photos of events or concerns.   The Town's departmental Facebook pages broaden their reach to prospective program participants and provide a form to engage with their niche community members in a more direct way. The Library and Parks & Recreation departments have had great success with Facebook, and the Police Department successfully uses Facebook to engage the community in identifying criminals from camera or video footage as well as in helping residents locate lost pets. Glastonbury makes a concerted effort to respond to Facebook comments in a timely and thorough manner, and it serves as an effective platform for gleaning community perspective on a variety of issues.

TWO-WAY COMMUNICATIONS: ENGAGING WITH THE COMMUNITY

Glastonbury continuously seeks opportunities for two-way communication between staff and community members. Platforms used on an ongoing basis include the Citizen Request System, Website Forms, Workgroups, and Facebook. (See the **Communications Inventory** for a more detailed description of each). The Town also creates unique engagement opportunities when doing so would provide added benefit to community members. This is particularly valuable in communicating sensitive or potentially controversial information. For example, the Town issues surveys periodically to gather public feedback on projects, town programs/services, customer satisfaction with town departments, and similar matters. When issued, surveys are made available in both print and electronic format to accommodate residents without internet or printer access. Printed surveys are typically offered in Town Hall, the Library and Senior/Community Center, all of which are easily accessible via the local bus system and sidewalk/bike networks for residents who use alternate transportation methods. Survey feedback is reviewed and analyzed by the associated department(s) and incorporated into town operations as applicable. Past surveys have included a community health assessment and Police Department Satisfaction Survey.

Glastonbury's Marketing & Communications Specialist (MCS) serves as a point of contact for community members looking to share program and event information. Upon request, the MCS shares programs, events, and opportunities that benefit the Glastonbury community through the town website, Facebook, and additional platforms as deemed appropriate. The MCS also dedicates time each week to gathering insight on citizen perspectives towards topical issues. By reviewing 'Letters to the Editor' and following community Facebook pages, the Town identifies opportunities to engage in real-time conversations with citizens, connect citizens to town resources, and provide additional information in response to questions or concerns. Glastonbury assesses community feedback on an ongoing basis and incorporates feedback into the overall strategy when feasible.

CLOSING SUMMARY

Technology and community needs are constantly evolving therefore this document represents a fluid strategy which is subject to ongoing review and revision. Glastonbury's communications goals will continue to drive communications efforts and new platforms will continue to be explored to enhance communications capabilities and foster ongoing interaction between staff and community members.

Glastonbury is committed to sustaining the community's status as a great place to live, learn, work, play, and do business and recognizes the substantial influence successful communications can have on achieving this objective.