

Making Citizen Engagement Work in Our Communities

Presented by:
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Who are we?





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Who are you?

What are your roles
& responsibilities in government?

How do you view the importance
of what you do?

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Why are you here?

Tell me what interested you in this class?

What do you hope to learn or take away?

How would you judge this a meaningful use of your time?



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Why are we here?



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Learning Objectives

- Understand what Civic Engagement is and its value to governance.
- Understand the government's role in the engagement process.
- Exchange best practices to encourage and increase constituent participation.
- Learn to apply concepts to practical situations.

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Ground Rules

Break the Rules



GMA
@GaCities

CVIOG
@CVIOG_UGA

Tweet and post pictures from this presentation...

Tag GMA, CVIOG, & us in Tweets/IG posts to expand reach.

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Break the Rules

- Stop us.
- Ask questions.
- Question what we tell you.
- Give us YOUR experience and thoughts.

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Table Talk

What are two questions related to citizen engagement your table would like answered by the end of the day?

?

?

?

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Table Talk

Share examples of when your city engaged citizens to address a challenge?

What worked well?



What did not work well?

?

?

?

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Civic Engagement Definition

“Civic engagement means working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes.”

Thomas Ehrlich (Ed.) Civic Responsibility and Higher Education. Phoenix: Oryx Press, 2000.

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Civic Engagement Definition

- Community members working together to address concerns, protect public values, or make a change in a community.
- Promoting and improving quality of life.
- Includes a combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation.
- Can take many forms, from individual voluntarism to organizational involvement to electoral participation.



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Civic Engagement Purpose

- Give people, groups a voice in decisions that affect them.
- Promote sustainable decisions by providing information needed to involve people in a meaningful way.
- Attain successful outcomes on difficult issues.
- Communicate to people how their input was used.
- Educate people.
- Ownership of the decision & outcomes.
- Identify future leaders.



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Why Civic Engagement?

- Builds a better government, community.
- Essential to fulfilling your purpose as representative of community.
- Opportunity to work collaboratively with people.
- Public policy alone cannot solve community problems.
- Shows people *why* things are happening.
- You need a seat at *their* table because they will find solutions with or without you.

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Local Government Reality

- Problems are complex and difficult to solve.
- No one agency, office, or group can solve all the problems.
- Local government does not have the resources to solve problems.
- Citizens have lost public confidence in all institutions.
- Everything takes an exponentially longer period of time to accomplish.

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Shout out

In what ways do your citizens engage in your community and why?

What do you see as some of the challenges of having citizens involved?

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Engagement Challenges

People often think local government officials:

- Have better access to knowledge to make decisions and solve problems.
- Have ignored us in the past.
- Are selectively deaf and unscrupulous.
- Have already made up their minds what they want to do.
- Will not be influenced by the views of the community.

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Engagement Challenges

Local government officials often think people:

- Cannot grasp complex issues.
- Are easily influenced by media & social media.
- Have views shaped by narrow interests.
- Are mostly apathetic.
- Don't appreciate public processes constraints.
- Would rather blame than problem-solve.

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Engagement Challenges

Birds of a feather
The voluntary associations people are most likely to join are decidedly homogeneous.

Avoid it like the plague
Civic participation in some circumstances actually turns people off of politics.

WIIFM & NIMBY
Many groups do not pursue the kinds of goals that would be necessary for promoting democratic citizenship.

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Engagement Levels

Inform
Telling people what's happening.

Educate
Asking and answering questions about what could happen & should happen, is happening, and happened.

Activate
People involved in the solution and celebrating involvement and progress.

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Communication is the foundation of Engagement

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What is Local Government Communications?



- Strategic communication
- Media relations
- Partner, government, & community relations
- Online and social media
- Video & photography
- Customer service
- Crisis communication
- "Other jobs as assigned..."

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Table Talk

Which of the engagement tools are you:

- *most* experienced with?
- *least* experienced with?
- *most* comfortable with?
- *least* comfortable with?
 - *most effective?*
 - *least effective?*

And **WHY** for all of these.



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What is Local Government Communications?



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Should you have a plan?





"A very wise Jedi once said
nothing happens by accident."

Anakin Skywalker

The single biggest problem in
communication is the illusion
that it has taken place.


George Bernard Shaw

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Should you have a plan?

- If you don't tell your story, someone else will!
- People will get answers to their questions, whether it's from the right place or not.
- Solve issues and better respond.
- Improve public safety.



"The danger is not
to know the truth."


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Communication Planning

Three key components

Strategic Plan
Communication Plan
Ability to implement



"A plan is only as good as those who see it through."
Star Wars, The Clone Wars (Season 1, Ep 4)

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What do you communicate?

How do you decide?

Must identify what people need & want you want them to know.

Want
Schools closed?

Need
Always be prepared!

Need a two-way communication model to both distribute and collect information.

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How do you communicate?

How do you reach people and how do they reach you?



"Send a press release & post it on the website."

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How do you communicate?

How do you reach people and how do they reach you?



Results

Maybe coverage.
Written by *someone else*.
Maybe someone saw or read about it.
Pat on the back.

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How *should* you communicate?

Before
During
After

Consistently and constantly

Across all useful channels.



"Tell the audience what you're going to say, say it; then tell them what you've said."
Dale Carnegie*

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Traditional Media

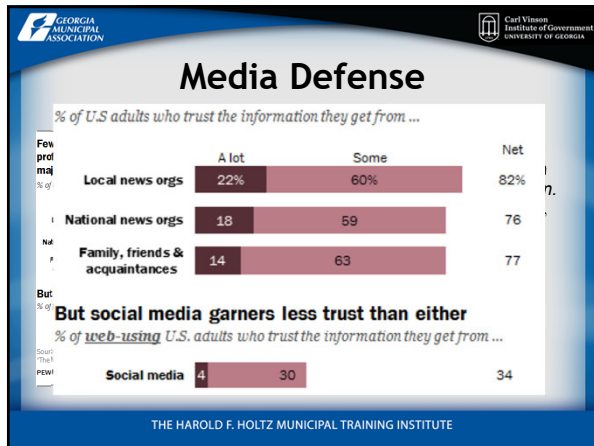
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Media Criticism

FAKE NEWS!!!!

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Media Tips

Working with Reporters

- It's about **relationships!!**
- Always be ready with stories to pitch to help them out.
 - Can even be stories for other organizations.
- Don't let a bad story be the first time you've talked to a reporter.
- Be as ready to talk for a bad story as you are a good one, if not more so.



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Media Tips

Working with Reporters

- Mentor younger reporters on how government operates.
- Recognize they are humans & individuals trying to do their job.
- They have to recognize newsworthiness and importance of story to successfully pitch to bosses.



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Media Tips



Giving Interviews

- Discuss ahead of the camera rolling what you'll be talking about.
- Conversation can help explain the topic better.
- Keep on-camera answers short and to the point.

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Media Tips

Story Follow-up

- Thank reporter for good coverage.
- If correction needed, call and explain.
- DON'T assume it's an attack piece or done with malice.



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Social Media



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Why be social?

If you don't tell your story, someone else will!

People will get answers to their questions, whether it's from the right place or not.

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Why be social?

- Provides forum for people to ask questions about topics.
- Drives traffic to your website, increasing your ranking on search engines.

Macon-Bibb Coverage CY2018	
# of stories	725
Days Covered	264/365
Daily Coverage	72%

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Social Media Engagement Tip

Headed to the [Magnolia Soap Box Derby](#) this weekend and bringing your children? Check out the new playground we recently installed. Here's Parks & Beautification Director [Sam Kitchens](#) talking about how they upgraded some older equipment and put in a little landscaping to reactivate an unused corner of Washington Park.

- Video views – 1,402
- Unique viewers – 1,216
- Minutes viewed – 293
- People reached – 3,197
- Post engagement – 95
 - 65 likes, 6 loves
 - 15 comments, 9 shares

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Social Media Engagement Tip

Liz Jarvis Fabian, 13WMAZ News, 41NBC / WMGT-DT and 7 others

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Facebook Live

FB Live Events	Hours Watched	Views
79	8,883.5	203,887

Meetings Streamed Online	Hours Watched	Views
24	1,047.73	3,138

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By the numbers

	Macon-Bibb	EMA
Facebook	8,242	7,673
	9,908	8,266
Twitter	6,349	2,529
Instagram	2,015	461

Facebook	Twitter	Instagram
33	7	3

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Direct Communication

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Newsletters/E-Newsletters

- Already have material.
 - Website postings
 - Press releases
 - Commission agenda items
 - Events
- Use e-newsletters to distribute directly to the public.
- Try to publish regularly at about the same day/time.
- Begin building your communication list NOW before you need it.



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Public Forums

- Have an agenda.
 - Information you need them to have.
 - Information you think they want to know.
 - Interactive session.
 - Wrap-up/Summary.
 - Call to action.



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Public Forums




- Schedule regularly.
- Lets people know you're committed to communication.
- Schedule as needed for bigger issues.
- Hold followup forum to discuss decisions & outcomes.
- Show video.
- Talk about specific feedback. points used in decision-making process.

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City of Decatur Better Together Initiative

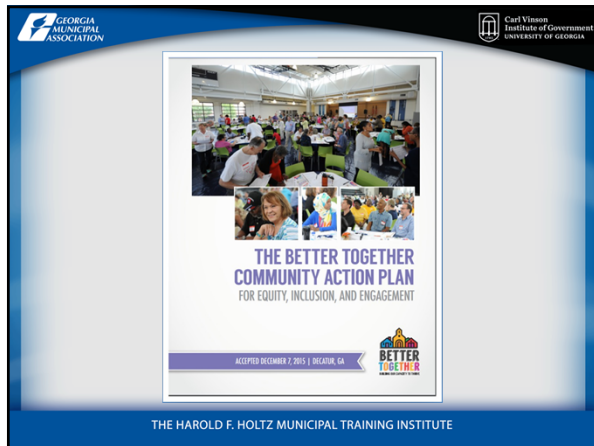


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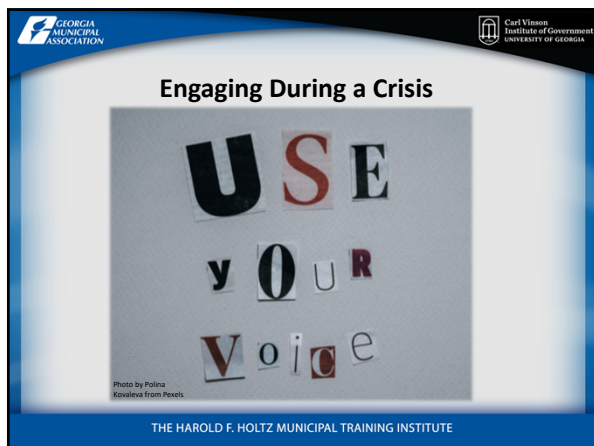


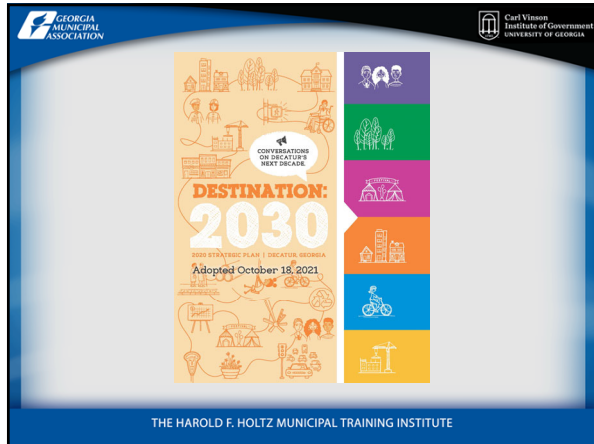


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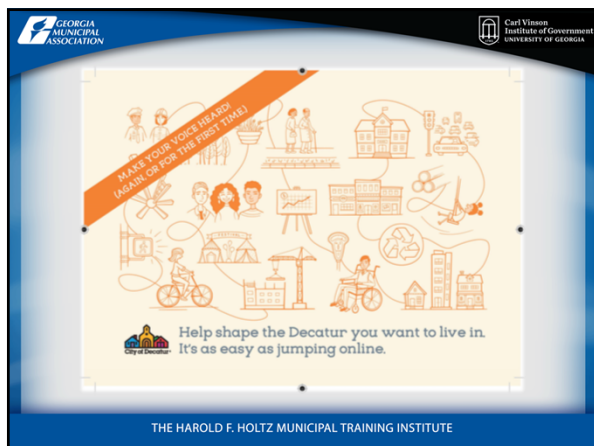



























Brookdale Warming Center





- Two men experiencing homelessness died on Christmas.
- Within a week, stood up the Warming Center to provide 24/7 shelter.
- Used our existing communication network to tell compelling stories of how people were helping.

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Brookdale Warming Center




- 40+ stories by media
- 12+ stories and videos published by MBC
- 5 press conferences

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Brookdale Warming Center

- Served more than 500 people
- 40 people have housing
- 16 people got bus tickets home
- 12+ people have jobs
- Weekly mental health & drug addiction counseling
- Bi-weekly haircuts
- Provided people with identification, social security cards, benefits, and birth certificates
- \$170,000+ raised for operations and support
- Countless donations
- Hundreds of volunteers gave thousands of hours





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Summary

- Develop a communication network.
 - Understand the issue at hand.
- Identify who needs to know, wants to know, has expertise about it.
 - Make direct contact with all involved or affected.
 - Make larger public appeal to catch those you didn't know about.

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Summary

- Create deliverables in meeting to use in decision-making process.
 - Use the feedback.
- Return to people and *show* them their feedback mattered and was used.
 - Communicate throughout.
 - Build trust.
 - Rinse. Repeat.

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What's something you want your city to do *differently* to engage the community?

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