



CITY OF WASHINGTON, ILLINOIS
Committee of the Whole Agenda Communication

Meeting Date: June 9, 2025

Prepared By: Dennis Carr – Interim City Administrator/City Engineer
Joanie Baxter – Finance Director

Agenda Item: Communications Specialist

Background: During the lead up to this election, Staff identified a need to prioritize unified external communication. Because of this, Staff communicated with both mayoral candidates what we felt was a need for a position to unify the communications, website, and social media under one position. Unlike the current situation where department heads have their own specialties, this position will have the appropriate education to thrive in this field and become a true asset to the citizens, Council, and Staff.

While we have assembled a draft job description laying out a multitude of responsibilities, we are truly looking for someone who will champion the goal of keeping everyone informed. Our residents have asked for enhanced communication and this position would allow us to provide that to the residents.

Fiscal Impact: Although the Communications Specialist position was not specifically budgeted in FY25-26, there are sufficient funds freed up from the City Engineer position not being filled during the tenure of the Interim City Administrator. There will also be funds freed up in the following year FY26-27 as the current year includes funds for two overlap positions due to retirements of the Finance Director and Planning & Zoning Coordinator.

FY 2025-26		
<i>As Proposed</i>		
6 mo. - thru 10/30	Interim City Administrator	83,330
6 mo. beginning 11/1	Permanent City Administrator	87,000
6 mo. beginning 11/1	City Engineer	72,500
9 mo. - beginning 8/1	Communications Specialist	56,250
		<hr/> 299,080
<i>As Budgeted</i>		
	City Administrator	174,000
	City Engineer	144,908
		<hr/> 318,908
FY 2026-27 partial offset		
	Finance Director overlap	43,329
	Building & Zoning overlap	11,900
		<hr/> 55,229

Action Requested: Staff is requesting discussion and direction to create this full-time position and begin recruitment with the intent to hire a Communications Specialist.

Job Title:	Communications Specialist	Grade/Range:	
Department:	City Administration	FLSA:	Non-exempt
Status:	Full-time	Supervisory:	No

JOB SUMMARY

Under the general administrative direction of the City Administrator, the Communications Specialist shall serve as an essential liaison, enhancing the relationship between the City of Washington administration and the general public by developing and implementing an effective and consistent communications strategy.

With a passion for multimedia content design and development, the Communications Specialist is comfortable and well-versed in meaningful content creation, brand development, photo and video editing, social media management and website maintenance, press releases and printed material, as well as other tasks necessary to implement the communications strategy and enhance the City's public relations.

ESSENTIAL JOB FUNCTIONS

Management reserves the right to add, modify, change, or rescind the work assignments of different positions and to make reasonable accommodation so that qualified employees can perform the essential functions of the job. Regular and consistent attendance for the assigned work schedule is essential.

COMMUNICATIONS

- Follows and assists in external communications policies and procedures for the City.
- Develops and designs outward facing multi-media content, to include videos, social media posts, written articles, and website updates, connecting the public to the many happenings within City of Washington.
- Enhances and performs maintenance on City websites, which includes preparing information and graphics, monitoring quality control, and maintaining usage report records.
- Creates and maintains consistent communications and messaging, synchronizing website and social media content.
- Evaluates communications resources, assesses effectiveness, and recommends adjustments as appropriate.
- Provides local media with articles about specific City programs or activities of general interest as well as periodic press releases to other media.
- Reviews engagement across various platforms to make data-driven communications and marketing decisions.
- Provides City Council updates using a variety of multi-media resources.
- Prepares staff reports for Council consideration, as needed.
- Provides input on strategy development and helps the management team with formalizing and communicating strategic approach and solutions.
- Perform other duties and projects as assigned.

ADDITIONAL JOB FUNCTIONS

MARKETING

- Designs and produces consistent and meaningful content for City residents and employees, including videos, social media, and digital and printed materials.
- Collaborates with City departments to plan, develop, and produce various targeted communications and marketing pieces for distribution to affected and/or interested audiences.
- Follows and promotes the City of Washington brand through marketing materials and communication resources. Helps communicate our vision and mission to stakeholders and residents.
- Develops prospect materials and proposals to support economic development.
- Builds and manages the City's social media profiles and presence, including Facebook, Instagram, and additional channels deemed relevant.
- Measures results of email engagement.
- Manages design needs such as presentations, signage, and collateral materials as needed.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH

- Participates in community events and engages in outreach programs, as well as internal City of Washington employee events.
- Works with diverse communities to establish and strengthen working relationships with community organizations, businesses, and the public, representing the City of Washington.
- Coordinates responses to resolve public complaints and criticisms received through social media or other web platforms.
- Coordinates and implements activities such as focus groups, surveys, education, informational presentations, and other forums that foster public input.
- Coordinates and assists in open house events for City projects and initiatives, sharing outcomes with the public.
- Manages various email campaigns, including the template designs, calls-to-action, and content used in our email sends.
- Grows email campaign engagement.
- Creates and manages City content calendar with engaging text, image and video content.

REQUIRED EDUCATION AND SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

Bachelor's Degree in Communications, Digital Media/Social Media, Journalism, Public Administration, Public Relations, or a closely related field.

Two plus years' experience in digital marketing and social media management. Municipal experience preferred.

Photography and video production/editing skills preferred.

A valid Illinois State motor vehicle operator's license.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES

- Strong familiarity with web site management, business applications of social media platforms and growing audience engagement.
- Professional, clear and effective communication skills, both verbally and in writing.
- Excellent customer service skills.
- Ability to enhance relations with coworkers and the public with a professional demeanor, sensitivity and tactfulness.
- Ability to apply common sense understanding to carry out detailed instructions, prioritize multiple tasks and work independently to meet deadlines.
- Ability to listen and summarize conversations with the public or in meetings.
- Strong sense of honesty, integrity, and credibility.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS AND WORKING CONDITIONS

The physical demands and working conditions described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodation may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

While performing the duties of this job, the employee is regularly required to sit for extended periods of time, possess average ordinary visual acuity necessary to prepare or inspect documents or operate office equipment, talk reach with hands and arms, walk, climb and descend stairs, bend, crouch, lift and/or move up to 25 pounds.

Frequent and regular movements are required using wrists, hands and fingers to feel, handle, or operate equipment, tools or controls. Effective audio-visual discrimination and perception to quickly and accurately make observations, correctly identify red, yellow, blue and green, distance and peripheral vision, depth perception and the ability to adjust focus are also required.

Hearing must be sufficient for average or normal conversations, to understand verbal direction, and to detect abnormal equipment operation and alarms.

Work activities are mostly conducted in a climate controlled open office environment and noise levels are usually quiet. This position routinely uses standard office equipment.

The weekly work schedule is approximately 40 hours in duration, Monday through Friday and may be extended in the event of an emergency, disaster, workload, or the need to complete time-sensitive work. Some attendance at evening meetings may occasionally be required, along with City events that take place outside typical office hours.

This job description is intended to indicate the kind of tasks and levels of difficulty that will be required of positions that are given this title and shall not be construed as declaring what the specific duties and responsibilities of any particular position shall be. It is not intended to limit or in any way modify the right of any supervisor to assign, direct and control the work of employees under their supervision. The use of a particular expression or illustration describing those duties shall not be held to exclude other essential functions, responsibilities, or duties not mentioned in this job description that are of similar kind or level. The policy of the City of Washington is to recruit, hire, promote and transfer employees for all job classifications without regard to race, religion, color, national origin, gender, age, marital status, disability (except where the disability cannot reasonably be accommodated) or any other characteristic protected by law.