

NIPOMO COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT

MONDAY, August 2, 2010

1:30 P. M.

SPECIAL MEETING NOTICE & AGENDA **SUPPLEMENTAL WATER PROJECT** **PUBLIC OUTREACH COMMITTEE**

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

ED EBY, CHAIR
MICHAEL WINN, MEMBER

PRINCIPAL STAFF

DON SPAGNOLO, GENERAL MANAGER
LISA BOGNUDA, ASSIST. GENERAL MANAGER
DONNA JOHNSON, BOARD SECRETARY
JON SEITZ, GENERAL COUNSEL
PETER SEVCIK, DISTRICT ENGINEER

MEETING LOCATION

District Board Room, 148 S. Wilson Street, Nipomo, California

1. **CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL AND FLAG SALUTE**

2. **PRESENTATION BY TRUE NORTH REGARDING THE WORK PLAN AND PUBLIC OUTREACH FOR THE WATERLINE INTERTIE PROJECT**

ACTION RECOMMENDED: Conduct Presentation

3. **SET NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING**

ACTION RECOMMENDED: Set Time/Date for Next Committee Meeting

4. **ADJOURN**

*** End Special Meeting Notice ***

TO: COMMITTEE MEMBERS
FROM: DON SPAGNOLO
GENERAL MANAGER
DATE: JULY 30, 2010



**PRESENTATION BY TRUE NORTH REGARDING THE WORK PLAN AND PUBLIC
OUTREACH FOR THE WATERLINE INTERTIE PROJECT**

ITEM

Review presentation of the work plan and outreach for the Waterline Intertie Project [CONDUCT PRESENTATION].

BACKGROUND

District retained True North to execute an integrated outreach and education strategy for the Waterline Intertie Project aimed at providing a fair and impartial presentation of facts related to the project and the pending assessments. They have developed an outreach and education plan to include strategies for the development of informational messages, support materials, an integrated media strategy, outreach campaign, exhibit and display materials and a tracking, monitoring and evaluation plan. They will also conduct market research and/or provide other services to gather consumer input necessary to develop and evaluate outreach and education efforts.

True North will make a presentation of their work plan to for the public outreach and education for the Waterline Intertie Project.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Committee conduct the presentation by True North and ask questions as appropriate.

ATTACHMENT

- True North Work Plan and Schedule

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WORK PLAN

Creating Prop. 218 measures that are ultimately approved by the necessary percentage of property owners is difficult. Successful measures require insightful research, careful packaging, and a well-orchestrated community engagement and communications plan. The following paragraphs describe our recommended scope of work for the project given the stated objectives in the RFP, as well as our experience working on similar assessment projects.

SURVEY RESEARCH Benefit assessments are very different than special taxes. Unlike a special tax, a benefit assessment requires that those who participate own property in the District. In addition to residential property owners, owners of other types of properties (i.e., commercial, industrial, apartments, etc.) as well as absentee owners are eligible to participate. Whereas in special tax elections each vote is weighted equally in determining the outcome, in assessment ballot proceedings the higher the amount of a property owner's fee, the greater the weight of their vote in determining the outcome of the election. A majority of the weighted votes is required for a measure to pass. Assessment ballot proceedings also employ different voting procedures, as all property owners are typically mailed a ballot that includes an information sheet, but does not include arguments in support or opposition as is the case with a special tax.

Because the legal, logistical, and campaign environments for benefit assessments differ on so many dimensions that ultimately affect whether a measure will win or lose, it is critically important that the research methodology take these differences into account to ensure statistically reliable results for a benefit assessment. True North has spent more than a decade developing, testing and refining a proprietary two-phased survey methodology that is tailored to the unique opportunities and challenges presented by mail ballot Prop. 218 benefit assessments. Although we will be happy to discuss the details of our proprietary methodology with the District, some of the advantages of our methodology include better identification of owners who are likely to cast ballots, more accurate fee sensitivity analysis, the ability to test the impact of ballot design and information pieces, statistically accurate results *within property class categories*, as well as analysis that considers the *weight* of each respondents' survey (ballot).

Scope of Work Briefly, our two-phased survey work plan includes:

- Meet with the District to thoroughly discuss the research objectives and methodology for the study, as well as discuss potential challenges, concerns and issues that may surround the study.
- Merge voter and demographic data onto the District's property owner file for sampling, analysis, strategy development, and communications purposes.
- Working with the District's chosen Assessment Engineering Consultant, conduct a property owner analysis for the District which will play an important role in understanding the 'political landscape' within the District's boundaries given the fee methodology proposed by the engineer. This task will shape how the sample will be selected and guide the strategic discussions we have once the survey is complete.
- Using our proprietary Prop. 218 sampling methodology, develop a random stratified and clustered sample of property owners that takes into consideration property type, location, voting propensity, and proposed fee amount.
- Working closely with the District, develop an initial telephone survey of residential property owners to estimate their level of awareness, understanding and support for the proposed

measure, and gauge the impact that additional information, facts and possible tax rates have on their willingness to support a measure.

- Pre-test and CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) program the finalized survey instrument to ensure accurate and reliable data collection using live telephone interviewers.
- Collect quality telephone interviews according to a strict interviewing protocol. It is expected that the average interview will be 15 minutes in length.
- Process the data, which includes conducting validity checks, cleaning, recoding, coding any open-end responses, and adjusting for strategic oversampling (if used) through a statistical procedure known as 'weighting'.
- Prepare an initial topline report which presents the overall findings of the survey.
- Prepare a thorough report on the survey findings, including a detailed question-by-question analysis, description of the methodology, an executive summary of the key findings and conclusions/recommendations, as well as a comprehensive set of crosstabulations showing how the answers varied by subgroups of respondents. The report will include extensive full-color graphics displaying the findings, as well as insightful narrative discussion of the results and their implications for the District's revenue measure planning efforts.
- Prepare three (3) full-color hard copies of the final report, as well as an electronic copy to allow the District to reproduce the report as needed.
- Prepare a PowerPoint presentation of the results and recommendations, and present the results to the District. Provide a CD that includes the report, final PowerPoint presentation, and all data and documentation associated with the study.
- Phase 2: If the District elects to move forward with a measure based on the initial telephone survey, we strongly recommend conducting a short mail-based tracking survey *after* the public outreach and communication stages but *prior* to the Board taking official action to place a measure on the ballot. The tracking survey will be administered to all property ownership classes, will gauge the effectiveness of the District's communication efforts to date, and will simulate a "dry run" on the actual ballot proceeding. The tracking survey will allow the District to make last-minute refinements to the ballot and accompanying information piece, and will determine whether the District is indeed well-positioned to be successful or if additional outreach is needed.

REVENUE MEASURE PLANNING AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH Assuming the initial survey results are promising and the District chooses to move forward with a measure, we will work closely with the District on all aspects of preparing the mailed-ballot measure and associated communications resources, developing a strategic communications plan, and implementing the plan to build awareness, understanding, and support for the assessment.

Winning Without Crossing the Line In preparing and implementing the District's outreach plan, we will use our keen understanding of the line between appropriate publicly funded impartial information efforts and advocacy communication that cannot be funded by local public agencies. There are firms in this industry that encourage their clients to take unnecessary risks, which has prompted scrutiny and recent decisions from the California Supreme Court and the Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) that impact public information campaigns related to ballot measures. Not only will the inappropriate use of public funds place a public agency in legal jeopardy, the mere *suggestion* that an agency may be crossing the line with its communications is often enough to turn voter opinion solidly against a measure regardless of whether the agency actually crossed the legal line. Tramutola has been at the forefront in establishing clear stan-

dards and best practices to ensure our clients are compliant with the law and pass the "sniff" test with voters.

Scope of Work Our careful review of the District's needs and the survey results produced during the feasibility phase will drive the strategy and the budget for the subsequent outreach and communications components of the project. Simply put, the *evidence* will tell us how steep the hill is that we need to climb, the best path for doing so, and ultimately the strategies that we will need to employ for the measure to be successful.

Given that the optimal strategies for the District will depend on the outcomes of the research and feasibility analysis (yet to be conducted), we are naturally not in a position *at this point* to suggest a particular set of strategies for the communications plan. Note, however, that Tramu-tola and Terrain are **full-service public communications and public relations firms**, experienced in providing an array of marketing strategies and approaches including direct mail, web and e-marketing, TV, social networking, stakeholder engagement, community organizing, traditional advertising and earned media (press) to position the District and your measure for electoral success. As is typical for local government-sponsored public information initiatives, we will likely recommend a mix of direct mail, web, email, earned media, direct stakeholder outreach and possibly cable TV for your project.

Relative to implementation, our team will adapt our communications work to a time line reflecting the best "election date" that emerges for your project—keeping in mind that the target date is currently November 2010. Our primary communications goals will be to: 1) raise awareness among local property owners regarding the District's compelling needs and plan to address those needs; 2) work with you to implement an effective strategy to engage priority key stakeholders; and 3) identify and address communications challenges early to minimize future opposition and accelerate the process of getting the District "election ready".

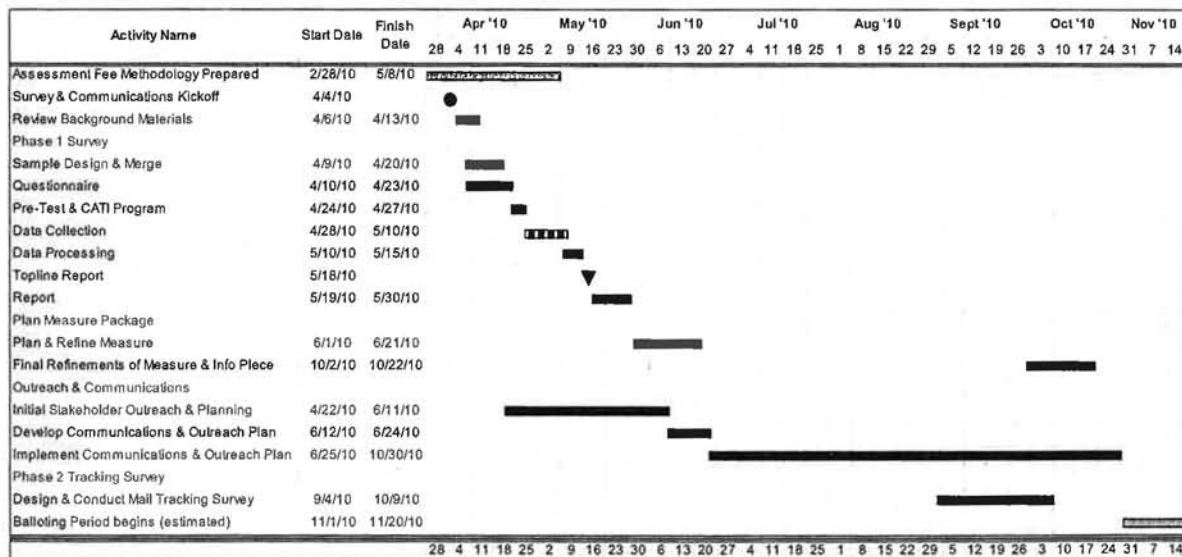
Given the need for prudent use of public funds throughout the process, we will make every effort to rely first and foremost on free media and other cost-effective forms of communication to keep the project budget to a minimum. In this tough economy and tight budget climate, you don't have extra resources to spend on expensive communications—and a slick public relations effort will backfire when you are trying to convince the community of your need for additional local funding. Nevertheless, print communications and/or electronic/video/cable TV may prove to be key to your success. If so, our team will drive development of all copywriting services and coordinate the graphic design and video production to prepare communications work products for client review and approval. We do not employ in-house graphic designers, printers, mailing and/or video production personnel. However, our full time Production Manager will solicit bids from a small set of proven and experienced vendors familiar with public information campaigns for local public agencies.

We will work with you to develop and refine an appropriate budget for these services based on a number of factors including but not limited to: available District resources, project research, election date, and other factors. Ultimately, it will be our job to build an effective, defensible public communications program that presents a compelling story and to ensure that actual project costs come in at (or under) budget while presenting an appropriate look and feel for your community.

SCHEDULE, CONFLICTS & INSURANCE

Through a combination of regular in-person meetings, conference calls and email, our team is committed to working closely and collaboratively with the District, the County, and the District's assessment engineering firm throughout the project to ensure that all parties are on the same page. We understand that the District is in the process of working with an Assessment Engineering Firm to assist the District in developing a fee methodology for the assessment that is defensible under Prop. 218, and that the engineering work is expected to be completed May 2010. We will collaborate with the engineering firm to develop a clear understanding of how the fees will vary by property class (and ultimately by parcel) so that we can reliably test the feasibility of the proposed assessment in the survey using fees that are consistent with what property owners will encounter on the actual ballot. Based on our experience with more than 40 assessments in the past, we expect that the engineering firm should be able to provide preliminary estimates of the fees suitable for testing several weeks prior to the completion of the Assessment Report. Under this assumption and understanding that the District is targeting a measure for November 2010, the following schedule outlines our recommended time line for the project. Our team has the availability and resources needed to meet the project schedule shown below, as well as the flexibility to adjust this schedule, as needed, to best meet the District's needs.

FIGURE 2 PROPOSED PROJECT SCHEDULE



True North, Tramutola and Terrain do not perceive or foresee any conflicts of interest between our work for other clients and the Nipomo Community Services District. If selected for this contract and for the duration of our relationship, we commit to not performing services for any clients or projects that are deemed by the District to be in conflict with the District's interests.

If selected for this project, we will provide the District with an Acord insurance form that demonstrates our insurance coverages meet (or exceed) the District's requirements and contains the appropriate endorsements and special language.

TO: COMMITTEE MEMBERS
FROM: DON SPAGNOLO
GENERAL MANAGER
DATE: JULY 30, 2010



SET NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING

ITEM

Set next committee meeting [Set Date/Time].

BACKGROUND

This is the first meeting of the Outreach Committee. The Committee may want to establish a regular meeting schedule for future meetings based today's presentation.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Committee set the next Committee meeting.

ATTACHMENT

NONE

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