

MEMORANDUM

May 4, 2021

TO: Government Operations and Fiscal Policy Committee

FROM: Carolyn Chen, Legislative Analyst *CJC*

SUBJECT: **Office of Public Information (PIO) FY22 Operating Budget Review**

PURPOSE: Make Committee recommendations for Council consideration

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**Expected Participants:**

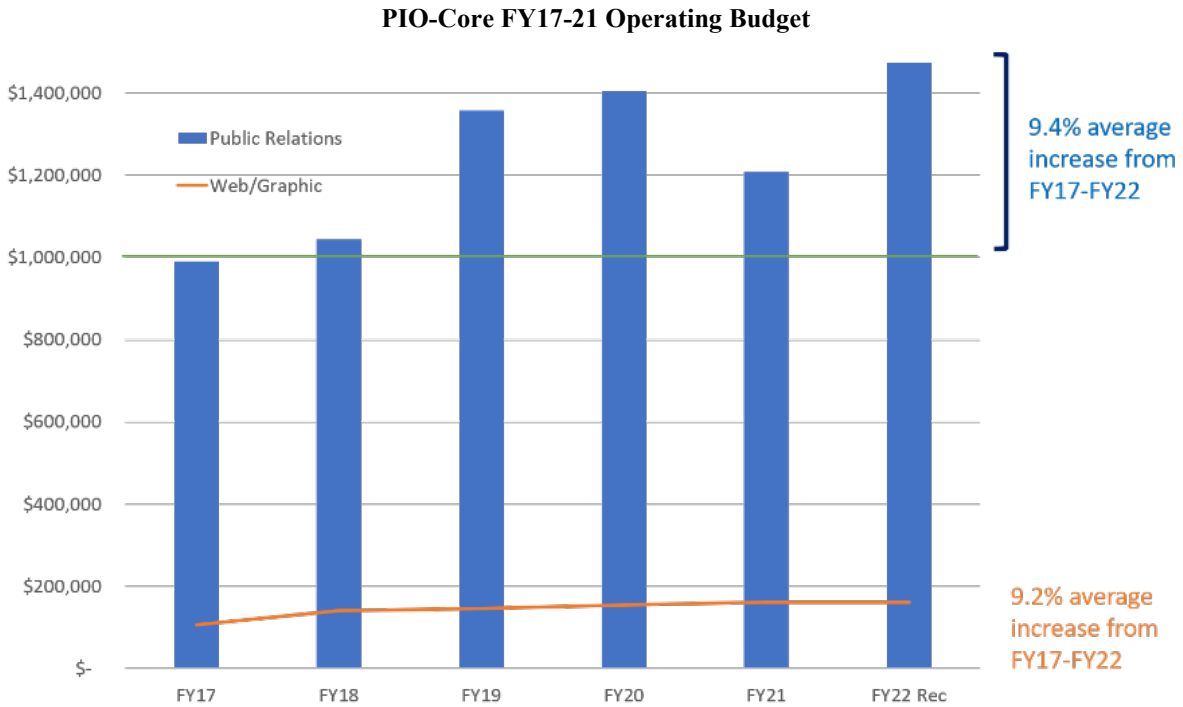
- Barry Hudson, Director, Public Information Office (PIO)
  - Brian Roberts, Director, MC311 (PIO)
  - Gail Roper, Director, Technology and Enterprise Business Solutions (TEBS)
  - Jane Mukira, Fiscal and Policy Analyst, Office of Management and Budget (OMB)
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**Summary of FY22 Recommended Budget and Key Discussion Issues**

Office of Public Information	FY21 Approved	FY22 CE Recommended	Change from FY21 Approved
<b>General Fund – Public Information Core</b>	<b>\$1,368,966</b>	<b>\$1,634,116</b>	<b>19.37%</b>
Personnel Costs	\$1,175,415 9.75 FTEs	\$1,170,964 9.75 FTEs	(0.38%) --
Operating Costs	\$193,551	\$463,152	139.0%
<b>General Fund – MC311</b>	<b>\$4,095,802</b>	<b>\$ 4,322,078</b>	<b>5.5%</b>
Personnel Costs	\$4,095,802 42.95 FTEs	\$4,322,078 43.95 FTEs	5.5% 1.00 FTE
<b>Total Expenditures (All Funds)</b>	<b>\$5,464,768</b> <b>52.70 FTEs</b>	<b>\$5,956,194</b> <b>53.70 FTEs</b>	<b>9.0%</b> <b>1.9%</b>

**Council staff recommends approval of the Office of the Public Information (PIO) FY22 Operating Budget as submitted by the County Executive. [Please reference detailed staff report and analysis on GO agenda item #3: MC311 FY22 Operating Budget Review.](#)**

Summary of FY22 Recommended Budget for Office of Public Information © 1-5



- **Public Relations.** Key functional areas include educating and informing County residents through media advisories, news and public events, managing press relations, website, e-newsletters and social media content management.
  - Multi-program adjustments, including negotiated compensation changes, employee benefit changes, changes due to staff turnover, reorganizations, and other budget changes. Increase of \$199,281.
  - Technical adjustment to FTE count and mid-year action for Manager II term position. Net increase of \$65,875.
  
- **Web Content and Graphic Management.** Key function is providing creative and technical support to Public Relations, Cable Programming, MC311 and County departments. Production of artwork and design services for publications,
  - Minor multi-program adjustment of (\$6) to \$161,577 with one FTE.

Key Discussion Issues – PIO Core: Policy Management & Operations © 6-12

- Post-pandemic public expectations for immediate and frequent communication from its government, pressure to align with a 24/7 news cycle and a proliferation of social media and communication platforms to effectively disseminate information has changed the core skills and function of the Office of Public Information.
- Community outreach and digital media campaigns have been executed in department silos and has resulted in duplication of core tools and platforms in each department silo:
  - E-newsletters (English & Spanish) and mass email lists
  - Press releases and press conferences
  - Traditional media outreach and media relationships
  - Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube accounts
  - County website with event calendar, content and graphic creation
  - Department phone number / call center
  - Public Information Act (PIA) requests
- Explore a Office of Legislative Oversight report on open government best practices in communication, digital strategy, public affairs and community outreach to reimagine the next generation model to increase County government responsiveness.

**This report contains:**

County Executive FY22 Recommended Budget for Office of Public Information  
PIO Core: Policy, Management & Operations Information

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# Public Information

## RECOMMENDED FY22 BUDGET

\$5,956,194

## FULL TIME EQUIVALENTS

53.70

✧ BARRY HUDSON, DIRECTOR

## MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Office of Public Information (PIO) is to provide timely, accurate, and effective communication with the public. PIO works with the County Executive, departments and agencies, media, County employees, the County Council and other elected officials, businesses, civic groups, and every other segment of the Montgomery County community. PIO provides information through the mass media, social media, internet, presentations, publications and graphics, cable television programming, and telephone and electronic requests for information and assistance via the MC311 Customer Service Center.

## BUDGET OVERVIEW

The total recommended FY22 Operating Budget for the Office of Public Information is \$5,956,194, an increase of \$491,426 or 8.99 percent from the FY21 Approved Budget of \$5,464,768. Personnel Costs comprise 92.22 percent of the budget for 71 full-time position(s) and one part-time position(s), and a total of 53.70 FTEs. Total FTEs may include seasonal or temporary positions and may also reflect workforce charged to or from other departments or funds. Operating Expenses account for the remaining 7.78 percent of the FY22 budget.

## COUNTY PRIORITY OUTCOMES

While this program area supports all seven of the County Executive's Priority Outcomes, the following is emphasized:

✦ **Effective, Sustainable Government**

## INITIATIVES

- ★ Progression of MC311's customer-centric business approach for improving service delivery. Plans focus on deepening the collaboration with multiple business units within the departments of Permitting Services, Health and Human Services, Finance, and Human Resources to: reduce call handling complexities by streamlining the database of information about County services (Knowledge Based Articles - KBA - reduction); eliminate internal call transfers within MC311 and non-value additional contacts with the customer (abolish Tier II's and transfers to Department voicemail); change Department websites to be more self-service oriented (IT involvement); and increase CSR's ability to recognize calls that need to be answered by departmental experts (training).  
Measurable Goal: 20% reduction in call handling time for these departments.

## INNOVATIONS AND PRODUCTIVITY IMPROVEMENTS

- ✧ MC311 moved all business functions and approximately 50 employees to 100% telework status on March 17, 2020. This seamless transition at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic was only possible due to prior years of emergency preparedness planning and simulations that mirrored public safety agency readiness/contingency planning. This process included redesigning the Customer Service Representative (CSR) training program and implementing new technologies.

- ✱ In early 2021, MC311 implemented early in 2021 a phone-based messaging option that informs callers inquiring about Medicaid and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) information about online resources. This self-service feature on MC311's welcome message diverted more than 750 calls from the queue during the first month.
- ✱ MC311 early in 2021 implemented an online chatbot pilot to answer the top 24 services requested at MC311.com. This feature will soon be multi-lingual. Usage is starting at roughly 50 interactions a week, and this number is expected to increase.
- ✱ Service requests handled via MC311.com increased 22% per month so far in FY21 (from 7,600 to 9,250) and an upward trend is expected to continue.
- ✱ FY22 Recommended Budget provides for one new Merit Full-Time Customer Service Representative I (Grade 13) position; and funding for temporary contractors for six months. MC311 Management plans to hire multi-lingual candidates with an emphasis on Spanish speaking call takers. These personnel hours are expected to decrease the average call wait time, increase the number of answered calls, and decrease the call abandonment rate.

## PROGRAM CONTACTS

Contact Ohene Gyapong of the Office of Public Information at 240.777.6537 or Jane Mukira of the Office of Management and Budget at 240.777.2754 for more information regarding this department's operating budget.

## PROGRAM PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Performance measures for this department are included below (where applicable), with multi-program measures displayed at the front of this section and program-specific measures shown with the relevant program. The FY21 estimates reflect funding based on the FY21 Approved Budget. The FY22 and FY23 figures are performance targets based on the FY22 Recommended Budget and funding for comparable service levels in FY23.

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

### ✱ MC311 Customer Service Center

MC311 is a key strategic, enterprise-wide initiative that provides the public with a single three-digit number (311) to call for County information and service. In addition, it provides the County with a sophisticated ability to count, track, and respond to resident requests. MC311 provides the general public with a higher quality of service delivery and accountability, while helping the government achieve operational efficiencies.

Program Performance Measures	Actual FY19	Actual FY20	Estimated FY21	Target FY22	Target FY23
Average amount of time it takes to reach an MC311 Customer Service Representative after welcome announcement (in seconds) <sup>1</sup>	94	267	230	40	40
Percent of MC311 survey respondents reporting satisfaction	83%	85%	85%	85%	85%
Cost per customer contact (in dollars) (salary expenditures divided by the total number of customer contacts by phone, web portal, mobile-enabled portal, Twitter) <sup>2</sup>	\$3.72	N/A	\$5.44	\$5.44	\$5.44
Average rate of Service Requests created on the MC311 website and the mobile enabled portal	37.41%	37.53%	40.00%	40.00%	40.00%
Total number of Fulfillment Service Requests created <sup>3</sup>	233,941	242,792	245,000	250,000	255,000
Total number of General Information Service Requests created <sup>4</sup>	352,409	355,104	366,000	366,000	366,000
Percent of calls classified as General Information	73.93%	71.90%	72.00%	72.00%	72.00%
Average rate of calls that come into 311, but are not answered by a Customer Service Representative (CSR) <sup>5</sup>	9.90%	6.15%	18.00%	10.00%	10.00%
Average percent of callers requesting to speak Spanish	3.54%	6.68%	8.00%	8.00%	8.00%

<sup>1</sup> A surge of lengthy social services calls in FY20 and 21 related to COVID-19 is driving this number up.

<sup>2</sup> For FY19 there were 564,778 customer contacts where source equals phone, web, and Twitter. Actual salary costs were: \$2,098,582.

<sup>3</sup> Fulfillment Service Requests are those that are forwarded to departments for handling and completion. The numbers and types of service requests are driven by many factors including seasonal events such as tax notices, mass mailings, weather events, and global pandemics.

<sup>4</sup> General Information Service Requests are those created, handled and closed in the Customer Service Center.

<sup>5</sup> Target is 5%. Unable to meet target due to staffing shortage and COVID-19 call surge. This is also supported by Erlang, which is a tool that assists call centers with staffing requirements.

<b>FY22 Recommended Changes</b>	<b>Expenditures</b>	<b>FTEs</b>
<b>FY21 Approved</b>	<b>4,095,802</b>	<b>42.95</b>
Increase Cost: Customer Service Representative and Funding for Temporary Staff for Six Months	341,431	1.00
Multi-program adjustments, including negotiated compensation changes, employee benefit changes, changes due to staff turnover, reorganizations, and other budget changes affecting multiple programs.	(115,155)	0.00
<b>FY22 Recommended</b>	<b>4,322,078</b>	<b>43.95</b>

## ☀ Public Relations

Under this program, the Public Information Office:

- Educates and informs residents about County issues, programs, and services through press releases, media advisories, news, public events, the County website, e-mail and online newsletters, YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter;
- Works directly with media organizations to ensure that reporters and editors have accurate and timely information about County issues, programs, and services; and
- Develops promotional campaigns to increase awareness of critical issues such as pedestrian safety and emergency preparedness.

<b>Program Performance Measures</b>	<b>Actual FY19</b>	<b>Actual FY20</b>	<b>Estimated FY21</b>	<b>Target FY22</b>	<b>Target FY23</b>
Number of press events	41	64	50	45	45
Total attendance at press conferences and press events	6,279	3,520	4,000	4,000	4,000
Internal County staff satisfaction with PIO services (scale of 1-4)	3.30	3.14	3.20	3.20	3.30
Total utilization of direct resident communication systems - web, YouTube, video, podcasts, Facebook, Twitter (in millions) <sup>1</sup>	58.9	83.9	62.4	64.1	65.8

<sup>1</sup> FY20 was an anomaly because of COVID-19. Impressions from communications expected to go back to normal.

<b>FY22 Recommended Changes</b>	<b>Expenditures</b>	<b>FTEs</b>
<b>FY21 Approved</b>	<b>1,207,383</b>	<b>8.75</b>
Increase Cost: Mid-Year Action - Create Manager II Term Position	65,938	1.00
Technical Adj: Workforce Adjustment	0	(1.00)
Decrease Cost: Motor Pool Adjustment	(15)	0.00
Decrease Cost: Print and Mail Adjustment	(48)	0.00
Multi-program adjustments, including negotiated compensation changes, employee benefit changes, changes due to staff turnover, reorganizations, and other budget changes affecting multiple programs.	199,281	0.00
<b>FY22 Recommended</b>	<b>1,472,539</b>	<b>8.75</b>

## ☀ Web Content and Graphic Management

The Web Content and Graphic Development Program has four major functions.

- Providing creative and technical support to Public Relations, Cable Programming, MC311, and to departments.
- Developing and overseeing the County's graphic identity program to ensure consistency in the County's printed communication for the public. The program develops printing guidelines for departments in accordance with Administrative Procedure 1-7, Use of the Montgomery County Coat of Arms, Logotype and Emblem, and Public Communication Guide.
- Managing the growth and activity on the County's website and the MC311 web portal, which involves the development of policies and procedures for adding information to the website, as well as providing a leadership role in internet management.
- Producing artwork and design services for publications, fliers, decals, exhibits, charts, maps, and other promotional and educational products. Graphic artists provide advice to departments in cost-effective and attractive ways to meet project requirements and objectives.

<b>Program Performance Measures</b>	<b>Actual FY19</b>	<b>Actual FY20</b>	<b>Estimated FY21</b>	<b>Target FY22</b>	<b>Target FY23</b>
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Program Performance Measures	Actual FY19	Actual FY20	Estimated FY21	Target FY22	Target FY23
Number of press releases and media advisories posted on website	718	756	710	710	710
Number of subscribers to county communications <sup>1</sup>	8,471	203,552	205,000	205,000	205,000
Average open rate for email communications	20.4%	20.4%	20.5%	20.5%	20.5%

<sup>1</sup> FY20 was unprecedented which contributed to the specific set of circumstances, increasing the demand for information.

FY22 Recommended Changes	Expenditures	FTEs
<b>FY21 Approved</b>	<b>161,583</b>	<b>1.00</b>
Multi-program adjustments, including negotiated compensation changes, employee benefit changes, changes due to staff turnover, reorganizations, and other budget changes affecting multiple programs.	(6)	0.00
<b>FY22 Recommended</b>	<b>161,577</b>	<b>1.00</b>

### BUDGET SUMMARY

	Actual FY20	Budget FY21	Estimate FY21	Recommended FY22	%Chg Bud/Rec
<b>COUNTY GENERAL FUND</b>					
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>					
Salaries and Wages	4,109,340	3,994,815	4,032,200	4,178,667	4.6 %
Employee Benefits	1,348,618	1,276,402	1,296,875	1,314,375	3.0 %
<b>County General Fund Personnel Costs</b>	<b>5,457,958</b>	<b>5,271,217</b>	<b>5,329,075</b>	<b>5,493,042</b>	<b>4.2 %</b>
Operating Expenses	184,474	193,551	238,084	463,152	139.3 %
<b>County General Fund Expenditures</b>	<b>5,642,432</b>	<b>5,464,768</b>	<b>5,567,159</b>	<b>5,956,194</b>	<b>9.0 %</b>
<b>PERSONNEL</b>					
Full-Time	70	70	70	71	1.4 %
Part-Time	1	1	1	1	---
FTEs	52.60	52.70	52.70	53.70	1.9 %
<b>County General Fund Revenues</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>---</b>

### FY22 RECOMMENDED CHANGES

	Expenditures	FTEs
<b>COUNTY GENERAL FUND</b>		
<b>FY21 ORIGINAL APPROPRIATION</b>	<b>5,464,768</b>	<b>52.70</b>
<b>Other Adjustments (with no service impacts)</b>		
Increase Cost: Customer Service Representative and Funding for Temporary Staff for Six Months [MC311 Customer Service Center]	341,431	1.00
Increase Cost: FY21 Compensation Adjustment	134,662	0.00
Increase Cost: Mid-Year Action - Create Manager II Term Position [Public Relations]	65,938	1.00
Increase Cost: FY22 Compensation Adjustment	58,767	0.00
Increase Cost: Retirement Adjustment	4,968	0.00
Technical Adj: Workforce Adjustment [Public Relations]	0	(1.00)
Decrease Cost: Motor Pool Adjustment [Public Relations]	(15)	0.00
Decrease Cost: Print and Mail Adjustment [Public Relations]	(48)	0.00
Decrease Cost: Annualization of FY21 Personnel Costs	(114,277)	0.00
<b>FY22 RECOMMENDED</b>	<b>5,956,194</b>	<b>53.70</b>

### PROGRAM SUMMARY

Program Name	FY21 APPR Expenditures	FY21 APPR FTEs	FY22 REC Expenditures	FY22 REC FTEs
MC311 Customer Service Center	4,095,802	42.95	4,322,078	43.95
Public Relations	1,207,383	8.75	1,472,539	8.75
Web Content and Graphic Management	161,583	1.00	161,577	1.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,464,768</b>	<b>52.70</b>	<b>5,956,194</b>	<b>53.70</b>

**CHARGES TO OTHER DEPARTMENTS**

Charged Department	Charged Fund	FY21 Total\$	FY21 FTEs	FY22 Total\$	FY22 FTEs
<b>COUNTY GENERAL FUND</b>					
Human Resources	Employee Health Self Insurance	0	0.00	0	0.00
Health and Human Services	General Fund	145,611	1.50	144,613	1.50
Permitting Services	Permitting Services	272,832	2.90	275,558	2.90
Housing and Community Affairs	Montgomery Housing Initiative	69,262	0.90	69,408	0.90
Recycling and Resource Management	Solid Waste Disposal	412,048	4.75	415,289	4.75
Recycling and Resource Management	Solid Waste Collection	106,883	1.25	107,552	1.25
Cable Television Communications Plan	Cable TV	832,128	6.50	798,744	6.50
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,838,764</b>	<b>17.80</b>	<b>1,811,164</b>	<b>17.80</b>

**FUNDING PARAMETER ITEMS**

CE RECOMMENDED (\$000S)

Title	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27
<b>COUNTY GENERAL FUND</b>						
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>						
<b>FY22 Recommended</b>	<b>5,956</b>	<b>5,956</b>	<b>5,956</b>	<b>5,956</b>	<b>5,956</b>	<b>5,956</b>
No inflation or compensation change is included in outyear projections.						
<b>Elimination of One-Time Items Recommended in FY22</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(270)</b>	<b>(270)</b>	<b>(270)</b>	<b>(270)</b>	<b>(270)</b>
Items recommended for one-time funding in FY22, including funding for 10 temporary staff for six months and operating expenses for one new staff, will be eliminated from the base in the outyears.						
<b>Labor Contracts</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>112</b>
These figures represent the estimated annualized cost of general wage adjustments, service increments, and other negotiated items.						
<b>Subtotal Expenditures</b>	<b>5,956</b>	<b>5,798</b>	<b>5,798</b>	<b>5,798</b>	<b>5,798</b>	<b>5,798</b>



## **PIO Core: Policy, Management & Operations**

### **What are the core professional skills expected of PIO Core staff before and during/after the pandemic? How does this integrate with current professional development plans?**

In order for the Office of Public Information (PIO) to meet its goal of providing information about the programs, services and activities of the Montgomery County Government (MCG) to the public, it requires staff with a variety of skills and functions. The skills and functions needed in the PIO Core have not changed. However, as a result of the pandemic, residents are expecting:

- Information and updates are provided quickly and frequently, and on an expanded schedule from the pre-COVID “9 to 5 / Monday-Friday” workday routine.
- Messages are provided through multiple channels and tailored towards a variety of communities and cultures.

In response to these new expectations and changing situations, PIO Core has adjusted by utilizing the skills of Public Information Officers throughout MCG to better address the communication challenges created by the pandemic.

The key functions that PIO Core needs to be successful now and into the future impact each of our business areas. Adjusting how we deliver services will require a larger review of functional areas throughout the government to determine what enhancements, partnerships, and modernizations are needed to best move PIO Core’s mission and performance forward with greater momentum and results. These key functional areas currently are:

- **Media and Press Relations** – handles media inquiries, develops press releases and media advisories, and coordinates with appropriate subject matter experts to be interviewed or to develop responses.
- **Web and Digital Services** – supports the technical aspects of websites, newsletter, podcast and other digital products used to produce information to be distributed to the public. Supports other departments with their digital platforms, initiatives, and programs.
- **Video and Event Production** – provides video, audio, and lighting for live and pre-taped events and comprehensive post-production and broadcasting work.
- **Graphic Design** – responsible for the development of typographical and image design used for messaging that is presented in all mediums (web, social media, print, other digital channels).
- **Social Media** – creates and develops content that is posted to social media. Monitors community engagement and responds to inquiries while determining the effectiveness of the messaging and making necessary adjustments.
- **Content Management** – responsible for managing content for MCG’s channels of communications (such as social media, video, podcast, website, press releases, and newsletters, etc.). This content is developed, translated, and communicated with a focus on multi-cultural and multi-lingual needs.

- **Community Outreach** – responsible for working with community groups to find ways to get information out to key groups. This includes organizing events, identifying unique channels of communications, and developing methods of communications that enhance the engagement of hard to reach communities.

Within these functional areas, the PIO staff need to have the following core skills to be effective:

- Reporting
- Creating and developing narratives and stories
- Writing, editing, messaging/branding
- Video production, editing, and broadcasting
- Social media and digital content development
- Graphic design
- Media relations
- Organizational skills – scheduling, prioritizing, multi-tasking, flexibility, communication

**Does the expansion in scope of responsibilities align with the current vision of PIO? Or the future vision of PIO? [e.g., MPIA, film permit requests]**

Yes. The current responsibilities of PIO and the need to rethink our role and functions align well with the vision for PIO. The COVID pandemic has taught us that outreach and communications can and should be coordinated and not executed in silos. For the last year, we made improvements in integrating our communications and outreach efforts to ensure that messages are getting to as many people as possible. We have expanded our communications channels and utilized tools and strategies that have enabled us to more effectively get information out to the public. Going forward, the County needs to consider the following to communicate more effectively:



Although PIO does not have oversight of all these areas, it will require more of a workgroup or collaborative approach across multiple departments. We have utilized a workgroup approach

throughout the pandemic, and it is a model that we should work to refine going forward. This approach has enabled us to integrate cultural outreach, community relations and communications.

### **What is the digital and social media strategy for PIO?**

The digital and social media strategy for the last few years has been to increase our footprint by focusing on growing the number of people who follow and engage with MCG on social media platforms. Over the last five to ten years, social media has grown as a channel for people to get news and information as well as entertainment. As a result, our strategy has been to become a trusted source for information and expand the overall number of people we reach. Through social media we promote:

- Events, activities, or meetings that the government is hosting or planning
- News about the County, residents, or events that people may have missed
- Key dates or timeframes that residents need to be aware of
- Emergency management information
- Changes to normal government operations (for holidays, weather, etc.)

Since the pandemic, our number of followers and their engagement level has grown significantly across all accounts. In addition, we are posting frequently, and our Twitter and Facebook accounts have been a place where people are coming to get information. This is a practice that we believe will need to continue post pandemic.

Today, we are active on the following social and digital media channels:

- Facebook Over 28,000 followers and 21,000 likes
- Twitter Over 89,000 followers
- Nextdoor Over 231,000 members
- YouTube Over 527,000 views
- CE Weekly Newsletter Over 495,000 recipients

We are planning to introduce Instagram and LinkedIn accounts later in 2021. Based on research and the demographics of the County, these platforms will enable us to expand our reach and connect with more people.

When comparing Montgomery County to other jurisdictions in the region and around the state of Maryland, the number of people following MCG is higher than most. And, we are one of the few that use Nextdoor as a communications channel. In fact, we were awarded the Nextdoor Golden Post Award in 2020 for our activity on their platform.

An overlooked aspect of our social media reach is the variety of accounts managed directly by MCG departments. From Police and Fire Rescue to Libraries and Recreation, thousands of residents are engaged directly with departments on social media. PIO Core has partnered with other departments to disseminate information during the pandemic and we will continue these

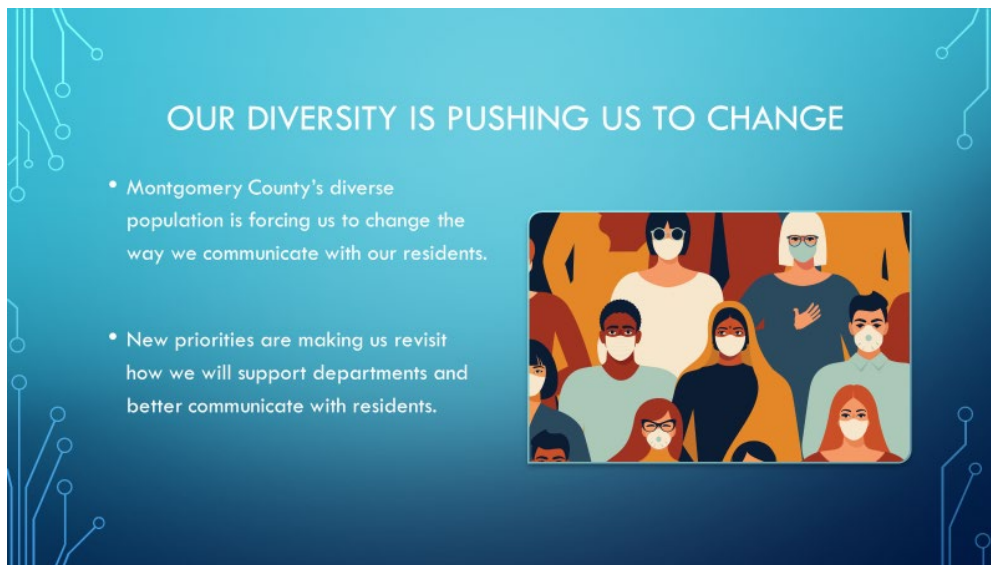
partnerships in the future. It is our plan to start aggregating the social media activities of all the departments so that we have a comprehensive view of the impact of our efforts, and to find ways to integrate our activities across departments and including entities such as EDC (Economic Development Corporation) and Visit Montgomery.

There is no doubt that there is a growing demand for social media as a source for information. This means that PIO Core will need to marshal and coordinate more resources across departments to address this need. We have historically had two Public Information Officers (PIOs) working on social media as a part of their primary responsibilities and have asked other PIOs to post and monitor content based on the beat structure that we have used over the years. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have dedicated a Public Information Officer to social media full-time, and as we move out of the pandemic, we are evaluating our current structure (personnel and workflow) to ensure that we have the necessary resources to maintain and enhance our social media activity.

In addition to social media, we have grown our digital newsletter audience. We now send the newsletter on a weekly basis to nearly over 500,000 address (email and cellphones). And we have an open rate over 33% (which is very high based on industry standards).

**If you had a chance to wipe the slate clean ☒ What would PIO look like?**

To build a twenty-first century communications operation, we need to consider changes in how we communicate and who we are communicating with.



This means that the government understands and embraces that it needs to connect with residents in a new and different way, and PIO would be one of the departments responsible for connecting residents with the government by providing information about programs, initiatives and activities.

To accomplish this, an office of public information needs to be knowledgeable and staffed to appropriate levels with people that are knowledgeable and experienced in the following areas:

- Marketing and Advertising
- Public Relations and Journalism
- Community Outreach and Diverse Populations

These three areas should drive the staffing, strategies, and tactics of the department. With this expertise, the PIO would work with departments throughout MCG and help them to plan and execute their websites, marketing, communications, and outreach efforts. This would apply to short-term campaigns directed by each department and long-term marketing and communications efforts. By centralizing these functions and having PIO provide more support to departments, it would help to reduce duplication of work and breakdown the silos.

Modern public relations and communications work have become dependent on data. To target messages and communications, organizations need better data to help them understand who they are communicating with. Data will drive the content on channels we use to communicate, and the tactics we employ to get our messages out in the community.

With better data and stronger analytics tools, PIO would be able to help the government better connect with the people it serves and better support departments.

**Describe the internal management/working relationship between PIO – MC311, CEC, CEX, Council PIO and PIO departments/staff in each County department. Where are there efficiencies? Redundancies? And are there explicit linkages to the Connect Montgomery Alliance (CMA) communication channel?**

PIO has essentially has two divisions: PIO Core and MC 311. The Director oversees both divisions and works closely with each daily. This approach has enabled both divisions to benefit from information that each division is dealing with.

Since PIO Core works very closely with many MCG departments to support their communications needs, MC 311 is included in those conversations so that they are aware of the messaging distributed via press release, social media, or other channels. In addition, MC 311 can make the appropriate adjustments to knowledge based articles (KBAs), etc. so that the Customer Service Representatives are well equipped to process calls from the public. PIO Core and MC 311 also team up on addressing inquiries that are received via social media each day. And as messages are sent out by PIO Core or other departments, MC 311 is usually an immediate source of feedback that can gauge the success of messages that the County has pushed out.

PIO serves as the communications support for most departments within the government. If a department has a Public Information Officer, there is frequently, and often daily,

communications with PIO on press releases, media inquiries, graphic design, video production and event management.

PIO works with the County Executive's Office to coordinate activities, news inquiries, special events, talking points and a variety of other activities. Most of this activity is coordinated through the OPI Director. In addition, the Manager of Media Relations and Communications Strategies serves as a liaison between PIO and the County Executive's Office. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, PIO and Council Communications have coordinated a lot more over the last year. This is an area we can improve in, but we work together on statements, quotes, press events, etc.

PIO is very involved with CMA and their activities. Although the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted a lot of the work that was planned, there is a lot of potential to enhance the linkage going forward. We believe that FY22 will be an important year for CMA, and PIO will be working closely with the group to enhance communications opportunities.

**Describe the external management/working relationship between PIO and media outlets.**

PIO has a good working relationship with the traditional media outlets of television and radio. We communicate with local reporters who cover the County regularly and we added a new Manger II position in mid-FY21 to enhance that relationship. Our approach with the media is to be as responsive and transparent as possible, and to assist the media with their inquiries. We understand that they shape the news and it is imperative that we work them so that our message and stories are communicated effectively and accurately.

We coordinate with local news desk and assignment editors who are working on story development and connect them with the appropriate person within MCG to address their need for information. With the addition of the Manager II position (Media Relations and Communications Strategies), we have added skill and expertise to enhance our ability to pitch ideas and narratives about the County to reporters as well as partner with them more closely on their own stories. We will be better positioned to focus on coordinating with the media to craft stories and narratives that better support County missions and initiatives.

Local television news coverage of Montgomery County has increased over the last few years and we have adjusted to address this trend.

**What resources are needed/provided for the short-term vision of PIO compared to the long-term vision?**

The short-term needs for PIO are in three areas:

- Social media and content development
- Funding for marketing and advertising
- Staffing to support County and departmental level needs

As we come out of the pandemic and departments return to their traditional programs and activities, the PIO Core will need to support their work and provide communications support. Due to the pandemic, we need to adjust some of the strategies and tactics we used prior to the pandemic. PIO Core has not historically been funded to purchase advertising or marketing support. Those dollars have generally been placed in other departments. PIO Core should help communicate Countywide messages that are important for residents to receive. We will continue to support departments as they develop new and improved communications strategies and tactics.

**What would the metrics look like for success at PIO? Are the current CountyStat PIO dashboard metrics relevant since COVID?**

We have spent a significant amount of time thinking through the metrics for success for OPI and it is difficult to determine other metrics we could use with the tools we currently have to measure activity. The dashboard metrics are still relevant, but going into FY 23, we will need to revisit the metrics to see if there is a need to add or change the current metrics for measuring success.

**Are there any changes/improvements that need to happen in other County departments that would improve productivity/efficiency in operations at PIO?**

The most significant change that departments could make that would help improve the productivity and efficiency of operations would be to consider OPI less as a group to complete as task and more as a partner in the planning stages of an activity, initiative or program. OPI can assist with message development and help to develop strategies and tactics that will improve outcomes. The more involved PIO Core and MC 311 are involved at the beginning of efforts the better.