

TO: CHAIR AND MEMBERS
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

DATE: 2021 Feb 22

FROM: DIRECTOR PUBLIC SAFETY AND
COMMUNITY SERVICES

FILE: 23000-202
Reference: Mass Notification System

SUBJECT: MASS NOTIFICATION SYSTEM

PURPOSE: To provide the Committee with a status update on the progress of the Mass Notification System Project.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. **THAT** this report be received for information purposes.

REPORT

1.0 INTRODUCTION

A Mass Notification System (MNS) has been identified as an initiative as outlined in the Community Safety Plan (CSP) and is championed by the Public Safety and Community Services Department with the Emergency Management division designated as the project lead.

Understanding that mass notification affects all business lines of the City, the MNS project is being undertaken using an interdisciplinary approach. The approach includes engagement of all City departments along with consultation and input from the public.

The project has been divided into six (6) phases. The phased methodology ensures maximum benefits are realized from the system including: integration with existing city technological infrastructure and applications; appropriate and efficient new business processes design; optimization of budget allocation not only related to system acquisition but also system implementation coupled with mindfulness of long-term maintenance and operating costs; and, applicability and appropriateness to the identified, intended, anticipated and future needs for public notification.

2.0 POLICY SECTION

Goal

- A Safe Community

- Emergency preparedness – Enhance plans, procedures and services so that we are better prepared to respond to emergencies and are able to maintain City services
- Emergency services – Provide responsive emergency services
- A Connected Community
 - Partnership – Work collaboratively with businesses, educational institutions, associations, other communities and governments
- An Inclusive Community
 - Serve a diverse community – Ensure City services fully meet the needs of our dynamic community
- A Thriving Organization
 - Communication – Practice open and transparent communication among staff, Council and the community
 - Reliable services, technology and information – Protect the integrity and security of City information, services and assets
 - Technology and innovation – Support technology development and innovation to empower staff and to advance community objectives

3.0 BACKGROUND

The City is working towards implementing a MNS that will augment existing emergency and disaster notification methodologies through the use of existing and emerging technological-based communication interfaces to provide emergency alerting capability. It is expected the system will interface with mass notifications systems currently utilized by higher levels of government, including the BC Emergency Alerting System and the federal Alert Ready system.

The MNS initiative is championed by the Director Public Safety and Community Services with the Emergency Management division designated as project lead.

The approach is divided into six (6) phases:

- Phase 1 Input Gathering and Evaluation
- Phase 2 Scoping and Requirements
- Phase 3 Request for Proposal
- Phase 4 Installation and Implementation
- Phase 5 Testing, Evaluation and Modification
- Phase 6 System Launch and Go Live



This approach has been designed to ensure maximum benefits are realized including: the technology selected integrates with existing city technological infrastructure and applications; new business processes are appropriate and efficient; budget allocation is optimized for system acquisition and implementation while mindful of long-term application maintenance and operating costs; and, the system addresses and is applicable and appropriate to the identified, intended and anticipated needs for public notification.

Phase 1 – Input Gathering and Evaluation **COMPLETED - 2020**

Three input gathering methods – a survey of neighbouring municipalities and First Nations, internal stakeholder interviews, and a public engagement survey – were utilized to obtain information and perspectives from those who might be message initiators, messaging writers, message issuers, and message recipients.

Perspectives included potential uses, possible system integrations, concerns, feature recommendations, and message delivery methods.

Phase 2 – Scoping and Requirements

Technological, infrastructure and security requirements will be identified with potential supplemental needs determined or estimated. Information gathered in Phase 1 will be utilized to identify and prioritize key system features coupled with consequence rationale and evaluation for the features as well as assessment criterion to be used in system evaluations.

Phase 3 – Request for Proposals

The City's standard procurement methodology and processes will be used for both the selection of an MNS solution and any supplemental IT infrastructure or applications that may be required.

To: Public Safety Committee
From: Director Public Safety and Community Services
Re: Mass Notification System - Project Status Update
2021 Mar 17Page 4

Phase 4 – Implementation

The installation of network infrastructure, security and applications, technical system testing, and validation of cross-platform integrations or plug-ins will occur. Programming customizations may be necessary, depending on the simplicity or complexity of the solution selected.

Staff training modules will be developed for areas such as system back-end and maintenance, database administration, and system users. Resources, such as Quick Reference guides, will be developed. To ensure ongoing system familiarity, an annual training plan will be drafted.

Updates to Crisis Communication strategies, guidelines, processes and procedures will be necessary for user audiences such as message initiators, message writers, and message issuers.

In preparation for Phase 6, a public communication and marketing strategy for the MNS will be developed.

Phase 5 – Testing, Evaluation and Modification

The potential life-safety implications of MNS demand robust and thorough testing which may result in addition of or augmentation to programming customizations and data-sharing integrations between the MNS solution and existing applications.

A soft-launch of the MNS solution will occur through a disaster simulation exercise. The exercise will be an opportunity to validate new Crisis Communications guidelines and procedures related to system use triggers, message development and dissemination, and assessment of message timing and receiving audience understanding of the messages issued by a predefined test audience comprised of staff and the public. Exercise feedback will be used to inform system and procedural refinements prior to System Launch and Go Live.

During this phase, materials necessary to the MNS Public Communication and Marketing campaign will be prepared.

Phase 6 – System Launch and Go Live

The System Launch will be an introduction to Council of the system, its capabilities and features. The Go Live date will be the date the system is ready for use.

4.0 RECOMMENDATION

Similar to a single flower in a bouquet, a mass notification system (MNS) will be one of many tools available to the City to communicate to the intended audience in very short time frames.

To: Public Safety Committee
From: Director Public Safety and Community Services
Re: Mass Notification System - Project Status Update
2021 Mar 17Page 5

Notifications or alerts issued through the MNS will provide message recipients improved self-efficacy by allowing for the timely execution of life-saving or personal protective actions information. The MNS will rapidly disseminate critical information to City staff therein by increasing the implementation of the City's response actions to the hazard.

It is recommended that this report be received for information purposes.



Dave Critchley
Director Public Safety & Community Services

DC:cp

Copied to: Director Corporate Services
Director Information Technology
Manager Risk Insurance and Claims
Emergency Management Coordinator