

Ronald Wastewater District and City of Shoreline

RONALD ASSUMPTION COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

1. Communications Plan Purpose

The purpose of this Communications Plan is to provide a strategic approach to communicating with Ronald Wastewater District Board of Commissioners and Shoreline City Council; staffs of both the District and the City; ratepayers and residents; and partners of the District and the City during the assumption process, which includes planning, transition, and post assumption phases.

2. Project Overview

Assumption will occur as outlined in the 2002 Interlocal Operating Agreement and the Transition Plan currently being developed by the Committee of Elected Officials (CEO).

The assumption process can be broken into three separate phases, each requiring different messages for the different stakeholders. The three phases for assumption are:

- a. **Planning Phase** - During the planning phase, the CEO, with support from a staff committee, will develop the Transition Plan for the assumption of the District by the City. Communication during this phase will primarily be focused internally, but will also have external components.
- b. **Transition Phase** - Once the Board and Council have accepted the Transition Plan, District and City staff will implement it. Communications during this phase will be focused both internally and externally.
- c. **Post Assumption Phase** - After the assumption has occurred, the City will begin rebranding the wastewater utility and complete the assumption process. Communication during this phase will focus primarily on external stakeholders.

3. Communications Objectives

This Communications Plan provides a guide for communicating assumption information to stakeholders. The activities and tools listed in this plan are intended to help meet the following communications objectives:

- Inform stakeholders of the progress, status, and key policy discussions throughout the assumption process.
- Build trust by providing timely and accurate information.
- Acknowledge the input on issues and concerns received from stakeholders and provide responses in a clear and timely manner.

4. Key Audiences/Stakeholders

In order for the assumption process to be successful, the District and the City must ensure their respective stakeholders are informed in a clear, timely, and transparent manner. The following are the primary stakeholders that will need to be targeted:

- a. **Internal**
 - i. **District Board of Commissioners and City Council**
 - ii. **District and City Employees**
- b. **External**
 - i. **District Ratepayers/City Residents**

ii. **District and City Partners (contractors and consultants, other utilities, WASWD, etc.)**

5. **Key Messages and Communication Methods**

Key messages agreed to by the CEO will represent a unified voice for the District and the City. Stakeholders will be looking for clear, transparent, and timely messages through each of the three phases of the assumption process.

- a. **Planning Phase** - Messages will primarily focus on keeping stakeholders informed about the planning process. CEO meeting materials will be made available online and the City and District will keep ratepayers and residents informed about how and when to provide input when the Transition Plan is considered by the Board and the Council.

i. **Internal**

1. **Board of Commissioners and City Council** - Members of the CEO will keep their colleagues on the Board of Commissioners and the City Council informed about the work of the CEO and the planning process. This will be done through regular reports of Councilmembers and Commissioners at Council and Board meetings.
2. **District Employees** - The CEO will develop a Statement of Intent (SOI) regarding retention of District employees beyond the one-year employment guaranteed in the Interlocal Operating Agreement. District employees will each receive a copy of the SOI and the City Manager and the District General Manager will meet with District employees to answer any questions. Key messages will be:
 - The CEO, with support from the staff committee, is working on developing a Transition Plan that will guide both the District and the City through the assumption process.
 - Integration of District employees into City operations will be an integral part of the Transition Plan.
 - Your contributions to the District are valued and will continue to be valued when you become City employees.
3. **City Employees** - During an all city staff meeting, the City Manager will provide City employees with an update on the SOI and the planning process. Key messages will be:
 - No City employee will lose their job as a result of the assumption and integration of District employees into the City.

ii. **External**

1. **Ratepayers and residents** - Through *Currents* and the District's newsletter, and by making CEO meeting materials available online, ratepayers and residents will be kept informed about assumption planning. Key messages will be:
 - A committee of elected officials from both the District and the City, with support from their respective staff, is working to develop a transition plan to guide the assumption process.

2. Partners

- Elected officials from both the District and the City, with support from District and City staff, are developing a transition plan to ensure the assumption occurs smoothly.

b. Transition Phase - Communicating with District and City staff will be most critical during this phase of the assumption process. The Project Manager and support staff at both the District and the City will need to anticipate and provide answers to staff questions in a clear and timely manner.

i. Internal

1. Board of Commissioners and City Council - It will be the responsibility of the City Manager and General Manager to work together to ensure any issues that arise during the transition phase are communicated to the Council and Board. There will be an expectation that the City Manager and the General Manager will meet and/or communicate on a regular basis and provide the Council and Board with consistent information about transition activities and issues.

2. District Employees - The City's HR Department will create a personalized transition plan for each District employee that will be transitioning to City employment. Six months to a year before the assumption date, HR staff will meet with each District employee to go over their individualized transition plan. Key messages will be:

- The City's Human Resources Department is available to address any questions or concerns District staff may have regarding the process of transitioning to City employment, including issues related to benefits or concerns about positions and titles.
- If District staff have any concerns/questions about the transition of District operations into City operations, they are encouraged to bring them up immediately so they can be addressed.

3. City Employees - While the Public Works and Administrative Services Departments will be the ones primarily impacted by the assumption and the integration of District employees into the City, all departments will need to be included in communication efforts and participate in discussions. Key messages will be:

- District employees are now part of the City; they should be welcomed into the organization and staff should help foster a cohesive team environment for these new City employees.
- If City staff have any concerns/questions about the transition of District operations into City operations, they are encouraged to bring them up immediately so they can be addressed.

ii. External

1. Ratepayers and Residents - *Currents* and the District's newsletter will be used to communicate to ratepayers and residents about the

transition. Ensuring the same quality service continues during the transition period is key to a smooth transition.

- Both the City and the District are committed to continuing to provide ratepayers with the great service they have enjoyed for years with the District.
- During the transition phase, the District is still the primary point of contact if ratepayers have any issues regarding their wastewater service, wastewater bill, etc.

2. Partners - At the beginning of the Transition Phase, the District and the City will jointly communicate with District partners about the assumption and what to expect from the City after the assumption date. Key messages will be:

- During the transition phase, the District is still the primary point of contact if partners have any issues or concerns regarding operations and/or administration.
- Any questions about the utility after the assumption date will be answered by the City.

c. Post Assumption Phase - The City will rebrand the wastewater utility and ensure ratepayers know that the City operates the utility and that all questions and concerns regarding the utility should be directed to the City.

i. Internal

1. City Council - The City Manager and City staff will provide Council updates on wastewater operations and post assumption issues via the City Manager's weekly report and through periodic updates to Council at Council meetings.

2. City Employees - Key messages will be:

- We are all City employees now and part of the Shoreline family.
- Any issues or concerns should immediately be brought up with direct supervisors or with the Human Resources Department.

ii. External

1. Ratepayers - Key messages will be:

- The City is now the wastewater utility provider for all of Shoreline and a few areas outside of Shoreline.
- Questions and concerns regarding wastewater service should be directed to the wastewater utility, which is now housed in the City's Public Works Department.

2. Partners - Key messages will be:

- The City of Shoreline is now the wastewater utility provider for all of Shoreline and a few areas outside of Shoreline.