TO: HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL
FROM: CITY MANAGER
DEPARTMENT: ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES
DATE: DECEMBER 8, 2008
CMR: 456:08
REPORT TYPE: INFORMATIONAL REPORT
SUBJECT: Website Advisory Committee Update

This is an informational report and no Council action is required.

OVERVIEW
In its ongoing effort to improve the City of Palo Alto website, the City has sought input from website users in the form of a volunteer committee. Staff has formed a website committee, comprised of voluntary community members who will review and provide recommendations to improve the City of Palo Alto web site. These members include those with technical expertise in web functionality, user interface, and design. The members also include regular users of the City web site who can provide valuable feedback on content, organization, and performance of existing features. The group will meet regularly over the course of several months to prepare recommendations, which staff will bring to the Council in mid 2009. Council will be updated during the process.

BACKGROUND
The City of Palo Alto launched its new website in August 2007. The new website met current accessibility standards and contained all new features, structure and design. Following the launch, community members and web users raised concerns about the ability to search the site and the user-friendliness of the new site. As part of its ongoing effort to enhance the City's website and further the goal of the Council's civic engagement priority, staff has solicited and chosen a group of community volunteers to serve on a review team to provide staff with initial recommendations on how to improve the City website.
DISCUSSION
The City of Palo Alto is committed to continuing improvements to its internet presence as a vital source of information for those within the community, as well as the face of Palo Alto for those outside.

This fall, staff solicited community volunteers for a website committee. On October 29, 2008, staff held the first meeting with potential committee members representing both technical experts as well as users who access the City of Palo Alto web site regularly for information. This composition allows for interaction between regular users who can provide valuable feedback on content, organization, and performance of existing features and those capable of programming the functionality, user interface, and design to make it most amenable to the user. Staff representing all City departments will participate in committee meetings throughout the process to collaborate on ideas about the website.

At this first meeting City staff and committee members discussed initial ideas for improving the website and laid the groundwork for further discussion. Based on comments and ideas provided it is evident that viable options are available to improve the City’s website. In the short term, there are opportunities to implement additional functionality.

NEXT STEPS
The next meeting of the committee is scheduled for December 4. The committee composition will be finalized by that point, and meetings will continue in the form of work sessions. Staff will also be implementing collaboration tools for members of the committee and staff to share ideas, collect and share information, and review draft recommendations.
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