

Response to Questions on the FY 2006 Advertised Budget Plan

Request By: Chairman Connolly

Question: Please identify departments that print newsletters and the cost of each.

Response: Delivering effective, timely communication and information about County programs, events, and actions to both the public and County employees is important so that all are kept well-informed about the use of public funds and thus empowered to make informed choices. This communication is achieved using many different tools and strategies, including dozens of emailed or printed internal and external newsletters produced every week by County agencies.

Many of the County's newsletters are disseminated electronically via e-mail, i.e., Newslink or posted on the County Infoweb and County Internet. Electronic newsletters can be disseminated in a timelier manner using no paper and at less cost. When newsletters are provided via electronic mailing lists, distribution is also improved since readers can manage their own subscriptions, with the ability to unsubscribe or change address information at any time. While many County newsletters have been converted to electronic versions, concerns about the County's digital divide and the lack of access to a computer by some County employees has contributed to the retention of printed newsletters in many agencies.

Attached is a list of County agencies that produce newsletter publications for internal and external use based on a survey by the Office of Public Affairs. For hard copy newsletters, costs cover printing and production as well as postage if distribution is external. In some cases, resources are conserved through the use of volunteer assistance, sale of advertisements or by mailing with other required mailings.

The Office of Public Affairs and the Department of Cable Communications and Consumer Protection were asked by the County Executive to guide the process of developing a Countywide communication strategy with the goal of creating and maintaining a unified look, feel and message to County communications. This coordinated approach to communicating with both the public and County staff will create a stronger identity for the County and public confidence that the County is integrating its programs, services and resources. It will also align all communications with one of the County vision elements.

Components of the communications strategy will include developing and consolidating countywide policies and standards for print and electronic communications, as well as developing one-stop shopping for mail services, printing, and e-government applications. This will ensure that newsletters and other printed materials in the future will be coordinated countywide so that they not only meet demonstrated communication needs, but also build a cohesive look and feel for County communications through the use of standardized elements for print and electronic communication products so that County information dissemination will be as efficient and effective as possible.