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To: Council President Mary Sheffield
From: Linda Vinyard, Director of Media Services
Date: March 27, 2023
Re: Responses to Questions on Media Services' FY 2024 Budget

Please find below responses to your questions sent on March 22, 2023, regarding the proposed Fiscal Year 2024 Proposed Budget for Media Services.

- 1. According to the proposed budget, the Administration is proposing Media Services' budget be reduced from the FY 23 total of \$1,695,645 to \$1,480,094 for FY 24 which represents, approximately, a 13% decrease. What does this decrease represent? If approved, how will this reduction impact the services you provide and staffing levels?**

The budget decrease is mostly due to budget right-sizing and consolidation efforts that apply to all departments, including a decrease in employee benefits because of a change in the general city fringe rate, as well as consolidation of rent and employee parking out of Media Services' general fund budget. These budget changes will not affect Media Services' operations. Additionally, the FY24 budget includes funding for one more FTE than Media Services has currently.

- 2. Since the advent of virtual meetings and even before, City Council, Boards and Commissions meetings have had technological issues. What is needed from a technological and/or budgetary standpoint to resolve some of the problems the City faces when hosting and attempting to broadcast meetings? How does our technology compare to industry standards with respect to produce audio/visual material for public consumption?**

Keeping the City of Detroit residents at the forefront of everything we do requires diligent people, using state of the art technology. The residents deserve the highest quality of service from this department. There are 3 categories the Media Services Department falls behind industry standards for local community-based media productions; Post Production Media management, Live mobile video switching and live graphics for all meetings. The City of Detroit has an opportunity to lead with the technology it uses to create, organize and distribute media to the public.

Postproduction Media Management - The industry standard among teams of content creators is to utilize Media Asset Management (MAM) to distribute and share media. The City of Detroit does not currently employ a MAM tool to organize, distribute, and edit media assets. Media assets often are very large in data size and difficult to move, share or distribute. The current media management structure requires a great deal of time and resources spent preparing content for sharing.

Live Mobile Video Switching - The addition of virtual meetings while conducting public meetings has created a level of complexity. The current video platform is no longer supported by the manufacturer and does not easily support internet or virtual contributions. Industry standard technology has improved to include tools to better support virtual meetings, multiple remote contributions and cloud recording. Replacing the current live video switching platform would allow for more up to date meetings and the public will gain better experiences from its public meetings. Additional and improved audio equipment would allow for special meetings outside normal public meetings. Concerts, talent acts, or panel discussions could be written into a workflow to allow for a more prepared execution.

Live Graphics - The graphics system used to support live public meetings both at CAYMC and in the public are not within current standards for live television graphics. On screen visual information can be improved with additional software and computer video hardware interfaces.



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Budgetary - Media Services AV equipment and operations from CAYMC should be considered. We must maintain a growing inventory of equipment in a closet space of around 8ft x 25ft.

- 3. As evidenced by the graphics shared in the Media Services Department's slide deck for this year's budget hearing, the department receives a lot of requests for services. How many staff members does the Media Services Department currently employ? In general, how do current staffing levels mesh with the amount of media requests received annually and the services provided on a regular basis? If more staff is needed has that request been made during the budget preparation process?**

The Department currently have 8 CCSD employees covering print communications, 8 Media Services Employees and 24 employees in PEG covering, video productions, special event permits, telecommunication permits, web-editor, photography and social media. We are meeting the demand with as much advance planning and scheduling as possible. In this hybrid environment it requires additional human and equipment resources at each public meeting. We went from 3-4 employees per meeting to now 4-5 per meeting.

We have increased the graphic designer team to 3 as of today with the fourth position to be filled within the next 30 days. One graphic designer will be dedicated solely to City Council graphic design needs. Because social media is the newest form used to reach our residents, we are looking at ways to grow this team with cross training within the department. During the budget preparation process we are given a budget baseline to manage and we work to remain within those guidelines.

- 4. Due to the lack of adequate staffing and presumably equipment, the Media Services Department contracts out a significant portion of the City's A/V services. How much is spent annually contracting out A/V services? Could the City be more effective and save money in the long-run by doing more of this work in-house?**

Media Services entered into a 2-year contractual agreement with Creative Day Technologies for over \$600K, which expires in April 2023. This contract is currently out for bids. The current A/V equipment we have on hand allows us to accommodate 2 full set-ups and 1 small set-up during the same time frame of the day. We utilize the A/V vendor for any and all special equipment requests/needs that we do not have on hand and don't have the required vehicle to transport.

Yes, the city could be more effective and save money by adding an audio/visual division that would include equipment, vehicles and human resources. This division would not only support the content creators in getting their job done more efficiently but could also support the auditorium and departments with the internal A/V service requests.

- 5. The City spends an inordinate amount of funding on the printing of materials and mail-house services primarily due to the lack of the requisite equipment necessary to perform the functions in-house. What would it take for the City to perform the majority of these services and jobs in-house in an effort to be better stewards of taxpayer funds?**

With additional human resources and specialized printing equipment added to the copy center, we would be able to manage and process larger print jobs and volume requests in-house. In-house mail services would require specialized equipment as well but would require a cost analysis to be performed to determine efficiencies.



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6. **City Council has been under pressure to utilize the Erma Henderson Auditorium for Formal Session in which a significant number of residents are in attendance. In that vein, attempts to host meetings in that space have been wrought with audio and technical issues especially related to sound and the virtual portion of the meetings. What role does media services play in addressing the issues in the auditorium both in the short and long-terms? How many members of media services are assigned to assist with Council Formal sessions on a weekly basis? What else is needed to resolve the audio/visual issues in the Erma Henderson Auditorium?**

Long-term, the Erma Henderson Auditorium needs a dedicated audio/visual person to service all meetings held in the auditorium. Short-term, Media Services will continue to be there to assist.

We have two members of our team assigned daily (Broadcast Engineer & Chief Engineer) assisting with City Council meetings in the COW and/or auditorium. Media Services have an indirect role in the auditorium A/V upgrades. Our Chief Engineer is a member of the team being led by DoIT to complete the A/V upgrades in the auditorium.

7. **In my opinion, the Media Services Department has lost some talented and dedicated employees over the last several years. How does the compensation package for employees in the Media Services Department compare to compensation for similar media professionals in both the public and private sector? In what ways does the department invest in its employees to increase retention?**

Due to the high level of exposure at the City of Detroit and the quality of our visual productions, our employees are gaining not only greater experiences, but greater promotional opportunities boosting their careers in the industry.

The Compensation & Analysis department ensures that the City of Detroit's salary ranges are comparable with the industry.