Request for City Council Committee Action from the Department of Communications

Date: Sept. 17, 2007

To: Council Vice President Robert Lilligren, chair, Committee of the Whole

Subject: Approval of a process to re-brand Minneapolis City government

Recommendation: Approve the process for the Communications Department to research and develop a new brand identity for Minneapolis City government.

Previous Directives: The Ways and Means Committee directed Communications department staff, under the oversight of the City Coordinator, to research options and costs associated with development of a new City of Minneapolis logo and report back to the City Council.

Prepared by: Sara Dietrich, Communications Director _____
Approved by: Steven Bosacker, City Coordinator _____
Presenters in Committee: S. Bosacker; S. Dietrich

Reviews

- Permanent Review Committee (PRC): Approval ___ Date _____
- Policy Review Group (PRG): Approval ___ Date _____

Financial Impact

x No financial impact
- Action requires an appropriation increase to the ___ Capital Budget or ___ Operating Budget
- Action provides increased revenue for appropriation increase
- Action requires use of contingency or reserves
- Action is within the Business Plan
- Action requires a change to the Business Plan

x Other financial impact
- Request provided to the Finance Department when provided to the Committee Coordinator

Supporting Information

Background / Staff Direction

A logo is the single most important element of an organization's corporate identity. For the City of Minneapolis our logo is our identity locally, nationally and internationally, and should reflect and enhance the image of our community.

In 2006 the City Council approved staff direction that the Coordinator (Communications Department) research and facilitate the development of a new City of Minneapolis logo and branding. The Council further directed that the process utilize the support of private sector expertise, and do so at no cost to the City.

Proposed Re-Branding Process:

Re-branding overview

A logo and tagline are the heart of a branding effort. But a clear and consistent brand identity is more than that. A brand reflects the look, feel and voice of an organization. By tapping into what is perhaps the best creative/design communities in the nation and utilizing extensive foundational market research that already exists, the City of Minneapolis has the opportunity to create and institutionalize a lasting and effective brand identity built on our core values and strengths.

This re-branding process would include developing a logo and tagline, as well a style guide and usage protocols that can allow the City to manage its brand identity to provide clear and consistent communications to the people of Minneapolis.

Leverage investments

Launching a re-branding campaign, including the market and other research required, can cost an organization hundreds of thousands of dollars. The City of Minneapolis is fortunate that there is timely and relevant research available for this effort. Over the past several years Meet Minneapolis (then GMCVA) facilitated an extensive research effort as part of its overall re-branding effort.

- The Communications Department is **using findings** from Meet Minneapolis research as a foundation for creating a City of Minneapolis theme (which may or may not be used as a tag line) which will be used to create a new logo and related branding.

Enlist private sector expertise

- The Communications Department will engage a **small team of creatives** from the private sector (branding and graphic design professionals), who would like to collaborate (on a pro-bono basis) with our team to improve enhance and refine the creative work that has begun. Communications staff will reach out to contacts they have in the field to create the team.

Approval process

The Communications Department has discussed with our colleagues in other public and private agencies the process for gaining approval for a new corporate identity (logo, etc.) and the consensus is that design by committee is unworkable. Throughout the creative process there will be refinements and adjustments to ensure that the City of Minneapolis has a fresh, modern design that reflects the vibrancy and charm of our community.

- Proposed approval process: The City Communications Department will bring a (one) final logo design and tagline to the City Council for approval.

Timing

- Time the official launch of the new City of Minneapolis corporate identity and branding to coincide with the 150th anniversary/celebration (Summer 2008). This offers the ability to leverage existing events, gatherings, materials and other public celebration opportunities to garner publicity for the City's new brand.

- Use the launch of a new corporate brand as an opportunity for the City to change its public Web URL (from www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us) (and consideration for associated e-mail address depending on technical realities).

Associated costs

A corporation launching a new brand identity would invest significant dollars in promoting its new brand, and immediately repackaging all its associated products, printed materials and visual representations to reflect the new identity. Unlike corporate launches, public entities frequently use a "soft entry," which is a phased approach to minimize the cost of implementing a new brand identity.

Other than staff time, there are no additional costs associated with implementing a new City of Minneapolis brand identity because the soft entry would simply be to replace existing branded materials as they are exhausted (or at the end of their useful lives). This includes building and other Minneapolis signage, printed materials (letterhead, business cards, envelopes), and vehicle decals. Essentially the City would use existing supplies of materials, and replace signs and decals when new supplies are needed. In that scenario, new brand stationary and other printed materials would be transitioned within 18 months, with longer-life materials (vehicle decals, signage) transitioned within eight years.

In comparison, implementing a corporate-style (immediate) transition where all existing materials, vehicle decals, signage and other collateral would be immediately replaced could run as high as $400,000.

- It is recommended that the City take a soft launch approach to a new brand identity to keep costs to a minimum. Some signage and electronic templates could be changed over immediately. It is anticipated that soft launch would outlay no additional City resources other than City staff time.