

**To the Mayor and Members of the City Council****December 1, 2015**

Page 1 of 2

**SUBJECT: ROBOCALL PROCEDURES UPDATE**

The City's Community Engagement Office has historically provided a robocall service for Mayor and City Council. This service allowed Mayor and Council Members to record messages to contact residents in our database. The database contained all City of Fort Worth water customers. The service was used to notify residents about upcoming events and also provide information that was of interest to the community. This service was provided using current staff and an existing computer program. There was no additional cost for the service.

In the past, the City has used the robocall service to notify residents of the 2014 Bond election, rolling town halls, walking town halls and various public meetings.

For the past year, the system has continued to experience many technical problems. The company that designed the program is no longer in business and there is no technical support for the service. The service is also very cumbersome when it is operational and can take an entire week to call the numbers in our database. As a result, we have discontinued the availability of our in-house system. Replacement of the in-house system is estimated to cost approximately \$65,000 and would continue to require technical support with the same limitations of line volume.

As a result, early this year, staff began looking for alternatives to replace the current system. Based on recommendations from other municipalities and staff, we have tested two different services to replace our previous system.

Both of these systems allow Mayor and Council to call into a number to record their phone call message. The company then schedules the phone call to go out to a designated list. We currently use the City of Fort Worth water customer list. We also have the option of purchasing a list of all registered voters (\$ .03 per name/number). In order for us to use the water list, the companies had to sign a non-disclosure agreement and provided adequate security for the information. In addition, the City can remove customers from the list if they notify they City at the number provided in the robocall.

The calls go through quickly (usually in one hour) and a report is provided after the call to identify the number of calls answered. Depending on the vendor used, the cost for the service is between \$.01 and \$.03 per connect for a 30 second message. There is no charge for non-connected calls. There is an additional charge if the call goes over the 30 second limit. A cost estimate is provided before each call is scheduled and made.

The Community Engagement Office can assist with coordinating the phone calls with the vendors. They can also assist with identifying neighborhoods to be included in each call. Following is an estimated cost for a call covering certain geographic areas. This does not include a list purchase which would add three cents for each completed call.

**To the Mayor and Members of the City Council**

**December 1, 2015**

Page 2 of 2



**SUBJECT: ROBOCALL PROCEDURES UPDATE**

**Estimated Costs:**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| • Neighborhood of 200 households        | \$2 - 5.00 plus an admin charge of \$30 |
| • Council District of 50,000 households | \$500 - 1,250.00                        |
| • City-wide (400,000 households)        | \$4,000 - 10,000.00                     |

Because of the expense of this service and the desire to not inundate residents with calls, staff is evaluating the effectiveness of the outreach and the range of Council Member interest in using the tool. As a result, between now and March, we will deploy the service on a limited basis and will poll meeting attendees to determine how they learned of an event. **To identify the best opportunities, we ask that each of you provide feedback regarding your interest in this service and potential events occurring between now and March that you propose to be included in the evaluation. This will allow us to determine your interest as well as identify funding for a select list in order to complete the review and evaluate the per participant cost.** We will continue to use other ways to notify the public including: social media, traditional media, emails, postcards and flyers.

Based on the results of this review, staff will make a funding recommendation for the FY2017 budget process to limit, continue, or expand the service.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Michelle Gutt, Director of Communication and Public Engagement, at 817-392-6248.

**David Cooke**  
**City Manager**