

**Arizona
City / County Management Association**

Voter Information Programs

July 2018

Alan E. Maguire



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Voter Information Programs

- **Types of Voter Referenda**
- **Overview of the Process**
- **Polling and Focus Groups**
- **Informational Messaging**
- **Messaging Guidelines**



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Types of Voter Referenda

- **Bond Issuance Questions**
- **Tax Increase and Extension Questions**
- **Expenditure Authority Questions**
- **General Plan Approval Questions**



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Voter Information Programs

Overview of the Process

- **Citizens' Review Process**
- **City Council /BOS Deliberations**
- **City Council / BOS Actions**
- **Legal Information Requirements**
- **Information / Outreach Process**



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Voter Information Programs

Overview of the Process

- **Citizens' Review Process ✓**
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Citizens' Review Process

- **Early in Process – 12 months before Election**
 - ***Committee versus Commission***
 - ***Manager versus Council / BOS Appointed***
 - *Open Discussion versus Open Meeting*
 - ***Fair Representation***
 - ***Similar to Focus Group but More Time and Depth***
 - ***Practice Run***



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Citizens' Review Process

- **Review Topics and Procedure**
 - *Background and History*
 - *Current and Future Challenges*
 - *Potential Opportunities / Challenges*
 - *Unbounded Prioritization*
 - *Finances*
 - *Bounded Prioritization*
 - *Fixed Meeting Times & Set Schedule*



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City Council /BOS Deliberations

- **Spring before Election**
 - *Citizens' Review Recommendations*
 - *Baseline Polling Results*
 - *Council / BOS Feedback*
 - *Staff Recommendation*
 - *Direction to Proceed – or Not*



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Voter Information Programs
City Council / BOS Actions

- **June / July before Election**
 - *Review Draft Ballot Language*
 - *Review Draft Resolution Language*
 - *Council / BOS Feedback*
 - *Staff Recommendation*
 - *Direction to Proceed – or Not*
 - *Council / BOS Calls Election – Formal Action*



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Legal Information Requirements *July / August before Election*

- **Publicity Pamphlet** *(Continued)*
 - *Basic Election / Voter Information*
 - *Frequently Asked Questions*
 - *Discussion of Basis / Rationale / Need*
 - *Discussion of Proposal / Program*
 - *Pro and Con Statements*



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Legal Information Requirements *July / August before Election*

- **Publicity Pamphlet** *(Continued)*
 - *Discussion of Proposal / Program*
 - *Purpose of Referendum*
 - *Presentation of Specific Problem*
 - *Proposed Solution*
 - *Proposed Tax Impact*



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Legal Information Requirements *July / August before Election*

- **Publicity Pamphlet** *(Continued)*
 - **Bond and Tax Questions**
 - *Very Prescriptive Requirements*
 - *State Law*
 - *Work with Legal Counsel & Advisors*
 - *Tax Information Requirements*



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Overview of the Process

- **Citizens' Review Process** ✓
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- **City Council / BOS Actions** ✓
- **Legal Information Requirements** ✓
- **Information / Outreach Process** ✓




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Information / Outreach Process

- **August to October before Election**
 - *Messaging Poll / Focus Groups*
 - *Community Open Houses*
 - *Community Group Meetings*
 - *Earned Media*
 - *Paid Advertising*
 - *Materials*




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Information / Outreach Process

August to October before Election

- **Community Open Houses**
 - *Event Timing*
 - *Consideration of Early Balloting*
 - *High Contact / Low Formality Format*
 - *Information Stations*
 - *Topics follow Citizens' Review Topics*



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Information / Outreach Process *August to October before Election*

- **Community Group Meetings**
 - *Know Your Time Limit*
 - *PowerPoint Presentation*
 - *Tight Timing!!*
 - *Direct Messaging*
 - *Informational Materials*
 - *Time for Questions*



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Information / Outreach Process *August to October before Election*

- **Earned Media**
 - *Whenever Possible*
 - *Citizens' Review Recommendations*
 - *City Council / BOS Activity*
 - *Publicity Pamphlet Mailing*
 - *Open Houses Schedules*
 - *Council Updates Throughout Process*



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Information / Outreach Process *August to October before Election*

- **Paid Advertising**
 - *Publicity Pamphlet Mailing*
 - *Open Houses Schedules*



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Polling and Focus Groups

- **Baseline Poll**
 - *Spring before Election*
 - *Statistically Reliable*
 - *Overall Impression of Topic / Issue*
 - *Initial Likely-Voter Response*
 - *“Right Direction / Wrong Direction”*



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Polling and Focus Groups

- **Messaging Poll**
 - *Late June / Early July – Likely Voters*
 - *Awareness of Issue*
 - *Emphasis on Effective Language*
 - *Pro and Con Messages*
 - *Information Sources*
 - *Less Focus on “Horse Race”*



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Polling and Focus Groups

- **In-Person Focus Groups (optional)**
 - *Late June / Early July – Likely Voters*
 - *In Depth Variation of Messaging Poll*
 - *Formulated Based On Messaging Poll*
 - *Emphasis on Effective Language*
 - *Pro and Con Messages*
 - *Information Sources*



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Polling and Focus Groups

- **Late Horse Race Poll**
 - *Mid Course Correction Poll*
 - *Mid – Late September*
 - *Statistically Reliable*
 - *Voter Understanding of Topic / Issue*
 - *Message Re-Testing*
 - *Breakdown by Voter Groups*



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Informational Messaging

- **All Materials**
 - ***Consistency!!***
 - ***Simple, Direct Writing Style***
 - ***Appropriate Graphics***
 - ***Professional, but Appropriate Design & Production***
 - ***Variety of Formats***



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Informational Messaging

- **Multiple Formats**
 - *PowerPoint (several length versions)*
 - *Accompanying Talking Points / Script*
 - *One Page Handout*
 - *Mailable Brochure*
 - *Water Bill / Check Insert*
 - *Council / BOS Talking Points*



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Messaging Guidelines

- **Education versus Advocacy**
 - *“Just the Facts”*
 - *Avoid Adjectives and Superlatives*
 - *Be Aware of Where You Are and Who You Are*
 - *Be Professional but Restrained*
 - *Be Direct – “I Can’t Comment on That”*



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Messaging Guidelines

- **Education versus Advocacy**
 - *Staff Faces ALL Downside Risk*
 - *Practice Baiting Responses*
 - *Be Direct – “I Can’t Comment on That”*
 - *Smile and Move On*

*Remember: You are Responsible for What You Say
Not for Their Conclusions!*



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ACMA
Voter Information Programs

Questions?

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