SOUTH BAY CITIES COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Social Media Working Group

Thursday, January 14, 2016 Minutes

Attendees: Jeffrey Robinson (Area G Disaster Management), Bri Webber (Inglewood), Stephanie Kou and Kristin Yamauchi (Manhattan Beach), Kit Fox (Rancho Palos Verdes), Alexa Davis (Rolling Hills Estates), Alison Sherman (Torrance), Justine Fenwick (Nextdoor), Jacki Bacharach, Aaron Baum, Renee Daigneault, Grace Farwell, Marilyn Lyon and Chandler Sheilds (SBCCOG)

I. **Guest Speaker:**
- **Justine Fenwick –** Nextdoor, Senior City Strategist
    - Nextdoor is a private social network for neighborhoods
    - Started 5 years ago, currently with 100 staff members
    - About half of the neighborhoods in the U.S. use Nextdoor
    - Only verified residents (with legitimate first and last name) can participate/create accounts
    - Just beginning to launch internationally (Holland is first international market)
    - Over 1,400 public agencies are using Nextdoor
    - Filled the void in social media regarding discussions/interactions regarding "where we live"
    - The more people get to know each other in their neighborhood, the better and more close knit it becomes—guiding philosophy for Nextdoor
    - 28% of neighbors do not know any of their neighbors by name
    - Nextdoor's mission: Use technology to bring back a sense of community in a neighborhood
    - The more neighbors are engaged with each other online, the more engaged they tend to be "off"-line
    - Nextdoor receives positive feedback regularly from users
    - Lots of crime/suspicious activity gets reported on Nextdoor
    - 1,200 neighborhoods in the City of Los Angeles are active on Nextdoor
    - Growing at a rate of 25,000 – 30,000 members in the "L.A. region" per month
    - 5,000 neighborhoods, 56 cities currently covered in the "L.A. region"
    - Beginning to look into "communities of interest" as an area for further expansion for Nextdoor's coverage
    - 2 platforms: 1 for residents and the other for public agencies (3rd in the works for communities of interest)
    - Originally, Nextdoor only accommodated neighborhood members
        - Residents began requesting public agencies (police, fire, sanitation, etc.) presence in their neighborhood conversations
    - Public agencies want to be able to communicate with their residents about important safety issues and share success stories
        - E.g. Sharing "micro-successes" in their communities that are not big enough to get picked up by local publications
    - Nextdoor's plan to make money is to connect local businesses with residents:
        - Currently backed by private equity/venture capital
        - Request for home improvement recommendations
        - Local businesses listing services and products available to residents (an improved version of the "Yellow Pages")
        - Looking at a business model comparable to Yelp (based on reviews/ratings)
        - No plans to sell personal data of users or charge for membership
    - Nextdoor has established a "firewall" between residents and public agencies
    - Residents are concerned about public agency encroachment (Big Brother) into their conversations while public agencies cannot follow all of the neighborhoods' discussions in their service area (e.g. they lack the bandwidth)
    - Public agencies can see how many neighborhoods they have, how big each neighborhood is and resident responses to their posts

- o Residents can reach out privately to public agencies, but cannot necessarily get automatic "heads-up" updates about developing issues (e.g. street repair/closure) until the public agency posts about it
- o Nextdoor has moderators for each neighborhood/site
  - ▪ Chosen initially when they started a Nextdoor site
  - ▪ Volunteer position
  - ▪ Chosen by City officials and/or leaders of local community groups
  - ▪ Can chose other moderators
  - ▪ Can view "flagged" posts and remove them (rarely happens)
  - ▪ Neighborhoods vary in terms of what conversations/posts are acceptable (e.g. political, local business development, etc.)
- o Testing a new feature "Share with Police"—residents can share suspicious activity (grey areas where a resident is unsure/not directly in danger) with local police department
- o Top priorities this year for Nextdoor: going international and refining their revenue model (linking local businesses with residents)
- o How are "neighborhoods" defined/established:
  - ▪ Determined by residents
  - ▪ Residents can use a drawing tool (provided by Nextdoor) to define a new neighborhood and then 9 other verified Nextdoor users must verify the boundary drawn
  - ▪ "Boundary specialists" from Nextdoor help assist with the neighborhood boundaries proposed
  - ▪ Nextdoor worked with San Jose to redefine neighborhood boundaries by "crowdsourcing" the refinement process to residents, and then gave the feedback back to the City
  - ▪ Nextdoor recommends a neighborhood be composed of at least 100 households, maximum of 2,000
  - ▪ Neighbors can send notifications to other non-Nextdoor neighbors to invite them to join their Nextdoor neighborhood (e.g. email, postcard, etc.)
- o Nextdoor's product development list is looking into enabling users to schedule posts

III.   LinkedIn Group
- Report on usage
  - o Updates are continuing to be posted to the group on a regular basis

IV.   Other Issues of Interest
- General Assembly discussion: social media exhibit area?
  - o General Assembly is taking place on February 26th addressing the topic, "Governing in an Era of Disruptive Technology"

VI.   Next Meeting
- March 10th at 3:00 P.M.
  - o **Possible topics:**
    - ▪ **Alexa Davis –** Is anyone using social media platforms (e.g. Flikr) to store photos?