



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

**Communications/SCGTV Office**

2725 Judge Fran Jamieson Way  
Building C, Room 301  
Viera, Florida 32940

**Inter-Office Memo**

**TO:** Frank B. Abbate, County Manager

**FROM:** Don Walker, Communications/SCGTV Director

**SUBJ:** Citizen Efficiency and Effectiveness Recommendation #2024003

**DATE:** 04/01/2024

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CEER #2024003 was received by the County from Kristin Lortie that described the following Problem and Recommendation.

**Citizen Statement:**

In 2022 Brevard County received only (1) submission for Speak Up Brevard, and which was a statement opposing a local development. This submission was voted on during the non-discussed consent agenda, making the process invisible to county residents. This is unacceptable for a county of over 600,00 residents.

- In 2023, as of December 13th, despite receiving an emailed citizen request from me on December 3rd and 4th, Brevard County has declined to put out a press release or to post the event to Facebook or other social media channels that are readily available to county personnel. The request was sent directly to the county manager, the assistant county manager, with follow-up with the communications director (copied to all commissioners), yet the county has declined to initiate any publicity for the event.
- The county Speak Up Brevard website currently has no open or close dates for the event, so residents who do locate the event are unaware of the one-month timeline. I was recently contacted by a confused resident asking if I happened to know the timelines.
- I have had to personally notify other residents of the event and personally request media attention from Florida Today to write the article that was just released today. Residents should not need to work this hard to publicize a county event whose purpose is to solicit resident input.

**Citizen Recommendation:**

- 1) Immediately update the Speak Up Brevard website with the beginning and ending dates of the program so that residents are notified of the deadline to submit for the annual program.

- 2) Immediately publicize the event through posting on the county Facebook page, the county main webpage, and other social media channels by submitting a press release similar to other county press releases;
- 3) Announce the event at the county's public meetings in December this year (and November and December of subsequent years) so that those attending or watching the meetings are aware of the event.

What are the benefits of implementing my suggestions?

The benefits that publicizing and informing the public would provide are to offer the public an opportunity to participate in the event and to easily see the deadline parameters. Residents cannot participate in an event they are unaware of. Resident participation has the potential to result in receiving the cost and efficiency saving suggestions the program is intended for. The current invisibility of the event sends the message to residents that the county is not interested in our participation or our ideas, and that the process is only a token process required by the county charter.

Attached are:

- 1) The county press release from 2019 showing that the county has previously publicized this event;
- 2) My suggestions submitted to the county manager's office by email on December 3rd, and re-sent on December 4th (copied to all 5 commissioners) after receiving Mr. Walker's response which declined to adopt any of the suggestions submitted.

#### **Staff Analysis:**

Section 2.9.10 of the County Charter provides for an annual filing date for a citizen or a group of citizens to submit a formal written formal recommendation for the enhancement of the effectiveness and efficiency of County government to the County Commission on an annual basis. Under BCC-95, the annual filing date for submission date is January 1 of each year. County staff has annually extended the submission date from the January 1<sup>st</sup> date to include the entire month of December. Additionally, while the Charter provides for "a citizen or a group of citizens to submit a formal written formal recommendation for the enhancement of the effectiveness and efficiency of County government to the County Commission on an annual basis" staff has historically accepted multiple recommendations from a single citizen or group of citizens to maximize recommendations that are eligible for review and consideration.

As in previous years, this program was initiated and posted on the County website under the e-**Government** tab on December 1, 2023. In the future, as recommended in this CEER, the specific timeframe for accepting a formal written recommendation for the enhancement of the effectiveness and efficiency of County government to the County Commission will be posted online and will include any CEER recommendation received during the posted timeframe, including January 1st.

During 2023, 59 CEERs were received for review. Significant staff time has been utilized to carefully review and consider each recommendation received. Staff recommends that during 2024, the Board update and consider any revisions to BCC-95 it deems appropriate.



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Additionally, staff will continue to publicize how citizens can submit CEER recommendations under the **e-Government** tab as well as publicize other ways how citizens can provide feedback and recommendations throughout the year to the Board by using a **Provide Feedback** link that's available 24/7 on the County website, by requesting a Commissioner to sponsor an agenda item, or by attending and speaking during the public comment period during a Board of County Commissioner's meeting and requesting the Board to consider a specific recommendation the citizen is seeking the Board to consider.

In an article published and posted on the Florida Today website on December 13, 2023, under the headline, **County seeks resident suggestions through annual Speak up Brevard program**, the County's Public Information Office provided information consistent with the various ways citizen input and recommendations can be provided to the Board as outlined above. Staff recommends continuing a similar course of action in the future.

**Staff Recommended Action:**

Staff recommends CEER #20024003 be accepted with revisions as outlined above.

## Recommendation Details

### Contact Information

Full Name:	Kristin Lortie	Email Address:	kristin.lortie@gmail.com
Mailing Address:	5524 Brilliance Circle Cocoa fl 32926	Alt Email Address:	
		Phone Number	720-935-8780
Group/Organization	N/A	Recommendation Information	

Recommendation Title:	Publicize the Speak Up Brevard event to Brevard Residents
Areas Affected:	Communications

Department:	COUNTY MANAGERS OFFICE
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### Current issue and concern:

- In 2022 Brevard County received only (1) submission for Speak Up Brevard, and which was a statement opposing a local development. This submission was voted on during the non-discussed consent agenda, making the process invisible to county residents. This is unacceptable for a county of over 600,00 residents.

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- I have had to personally notify other residents of the event and personally request media attention from Florida Today to write the article that was just released today. Residents should not need to work this hard to publicize a county event whose purpose is to solicit resident input.

### Problem Description:

My recommendations are the following:

Recommendation  
Description

- 1) Immediately update the Speak Up Brevard website with the beginning and ending dates of the program so that residents are notified of the deadline to submit for the annual program.
- 2) Immediately publicize the event through posting on the county Facebook page, the county main webpage, and other social media channels by submitting a press release similar to other county press releases;
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What are the benefits of implementing my suggestions?

The benefits that publicizing and informing the public would provide are to offer the public an opportunity to participate in the event and to easily see the deadline parameters. Residents cannot participate in an event they are unaware of. Resident participation has the potential to result in receiving the cost and efficiency saving suggestions the program is intended for. The current invisibility of the event sends the message to residents that the county is not interested in our participation or our ideas, and that the process is only a token process required by the county charter.

Attached are:

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Attachments

**No. Type Name**

- | No. | Type  | Name   |
|-----|---|--|
| 1   |    | 2019 Speak Up Brevard County Press Release.jpg                                     |
| 2   |   | 2023.12.13 Lack of Publicity for Speak Up Brevard - Correspondence with County.pdf |
| 3   |  | SBI.jpg  |

Administrative Action

Evaluation

Recommendation Timeline

User	Status	Date	Remarks
CEER WebUser	Citizen Submitted	Dec 13, 2023	
Karen Conde	Department Assigned	Dec 20, 2023	SCGTV/COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE Assigned

Awaiting action from department director





**Brevard County Government**

Dec 1, 2019 · 🌐



**#PressRelease** | 11/30/19

Brevard County seeks citizen input through 'Speak Up Brevard'

Source: <https://sites.brevardcounty.us/PIRA/PIRA/ViewRelease.aspx?ID=3734>  
<https://sites.brevardcounty.us/PIRA/PIRA/ViewRelease.aspx?ID=3734>



**PRESS  
RELEASE**



1



1



2



Write a comment...







Kristin Lortie <kristin.lortie@gmail.com>

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## Re: Speak Up Brevard - Lack of Publicity - Citizen Inquiry

1 message

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Kristin Lortie <kristin.lortie@gmail.com>

Mon, Dec 4, 2023 at 6:25 PM

To: "Walker, Don" <Don.Walker@brevardfl.gov>

Cc: "Abbate, Frank B" <frank.abbate@brevardfl.gov>, "Liesenfelt, Jim" <Jim.Liesenfelt@brevardfl.gov>, Rachel.horst@brevardfl.gov, "Commissioner, D1" <D1.Commissioner@brevardfl.gov>, "Commissioner, D2" <d2.commissioner@brevardfl.gov>, "Commissioner, D3" <d3.commissioner@brevardfl.gov>, d4.commissioner@brevardfl.gov, "Commissioner, D5" <D5.commissioner@brevardfl.gov>

Mr. Walker,

Thank you for your response and for listing the ways that residents can interact with the county throughout the year. As noted in my email, my current inquiry is limited to the annual Speak Up Brevard event which just opened on December 1st.

Regarding your responses to my (3) inquiries, I noted the following:

- December 31st is the cutoff day for the Speak Up Brevard process. The county will not be updating the website with this date so that residents the view the website are aware of the cutoff date. This leaves residents uninformed.

My request is for the county to add the December 31st cutoff date to the Speak Up Brevard website page.

- the county does not intend to publicize this annual event on its Facebook page, social media channels, press releases, newsletter, announcing it at county meetings, etc.

Thus, the only way a citizen can actually locate the information is by locating the information on the specific portion on the county website dedicated to this topic. I did just go to the main website page and there is no information noted on the main county page.

In my opinion this isolated action does not meet a basic definition of "soliciting public comments/suggestions/concerns."

My request is for the county to publicize the event through the counties publicity channels noted above.

- the county does not have any specific areas identified to solicit public input on, and that could perhaps result in more relevant citizen suggestions being submitted this year.

My suggestion is for the county to identify and share any current areas of interest and opportunity that may result in more relevant feedback being obtained from citizens for the commissioners review.

I am disappointed that the county is unwilling to do more to promote this annual event and to actively encourage and solicit citizen participation. If I recall correctly, for the 2022 year there was a single citizen email that made up a 2023 consent agenda item for the entire Speak Up Brevard annual event.

Based on the current invisibility of the 2023 Speak Up Brevard program it does not appear that the county values citizen input in this important annual process required by the county charter. Adopting the above reasonable and pragmatic suggestions may help to shift that perspective.

Regards,

Kristin Lortie, local advocate for citizen engagement

On Monday, December 4, 2023, Walker, Don <Don.Walker@brevardfl.gov> wrote:

Ms. Lortie,

Thank you for reaching out to the County Manager's Office concerning Speak Up Brevard. As the County's Public Information Officer and the County Manager's ombudsman, I'm responsible for reviewing and addressing your inquiry. Speak Up Brevard, as provided for on the Brevard County Charter, solicits public comments/suggestions/concerns during the month of December. As you know, each item of correspondence received through Speak Up Brevard is reviewed and brought before the Commission for input and direction. The Board reviews each and every item submitted to the County through Speak Up Brevard and, as you noted, many of the items brought to light require little to no action because they are either already in progress, they are beyond the scope of County services (although we do provide the information received through Speak Up Brevard to other governmental agencies that would be responsible to take any necessary action,) or the resident's requested item isn't fiscally feasible or prudent.

Beyond Speak Up Brevard, there are many additional ways throughout the year to interact with the County to share one's concerns or suggestions. For example, on our website, [www.brevardfl.gov](http://www.brevardfl.gov), and under the e-Government tab, and under the title of "**Provide Feedback**" there are options to provide feedback directly to County Departments, to provide input on the County budget, feedback on Space Coast Area Transit, to "**Provide Feedback - Any Subject**," and to comment or raise issues related to various other County services, including Parks and Preserves, Public Safety, the Sheriff's Office and other departments, agencies or charter offices. All of the suggestions, comments, complaints received through these channels are reviewed by County staff and are responded to in a timely manner.

Residents also have other avenues to communicate issues to the County, including during **Public Comments**, which are entertained at every Board of County Commissioner meeting. Alternatively, any resident can interact with their District Commissioner or any other Commissioner to ask them to sponsor an agenda item they would like to have the Commissioner consider. Our website also includes contact information for each County department and each Commissioner office. As provided for by Charter, Speak Up Brevard is posted on the County website from Dec. 1 through the end of the month.

Sincerely,

**Don Walker** | Director of Communications/SCGTV

[don.walker@brevardfl.gov](mailto:don.walker@brevardfl.gov)

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Cell: (321) 795-4858

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 twitter logo@BrevardCo\_FL

 instagram logo@BrevardCountyGovt



@SCGTV499





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**Don Walker** | Director of Communications/SCGTV

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Speak up Brevard Inquiry



Kristin Lortie

to Abbate,, Liesenfelt,

1 day ago

[Details](#)

Mr. Abbate and Mr. Liesenfelt,

I'm reaching out with a few questions on the opening of Speak Up Brevard:

1) Can either of you advise me on the Speak Up Brevard suggestion deadline and could it be added to the website? I did not see it on the website.

2) Will Brevard be publishing the opening of Speak Up Brevard on its Facebook page and via county email notice alerts? I just checked the Facebook page and don't see it.

Attached is an example of Cocoa's graphic when they are soliciting public feedback. I hope Brevard has something similar to push out the notice of this annual event?

3) I've previously researched the prior year citizen suggestions to see if any/many of them were adopted. Many (if not most) of the prior

suggestions are either declined or state that they are already being implemented.

Are there any particular areas the county may be more receptive to feedback on? For example Mr. Abbate mentions e-government access on the county manager website page (attached).

Regards,  
Kristin Lortie

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## 2 attachments



**Screenshot\_20231203-130432-612.png**  
230K



**Screenshot\_20231203-125415.png**  
707K



