

## Communications Committee Meeting Minutes January 7, 2013

A meeting of the Communications Committee of the City of Rehoboth Beach was called to order at 1:32 p.m. by Committee Chair Commissioner Stan Mills on Monday, January 7, 2013, in the Commissioners' Room in City Hall, 229 Rehoboth Avenue, Rehoboth Beach, DE.

Chair Mills advised that the meeting is being recorded and that current committee policy is to allow for public comment throughout the meeting.

### **ROLL CALL.**

Present: Commissioner Stan Mills, Chair  
Janet Anderson  
Toni Sharp  
Commissioner Lorraine Zellers

Absent: Hoyte Decker

Members of the public present: None.

### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

The agenda was approved noting some items may be taken out of sequence.

### **CORRESPONDENCE**

There was no correspondence other than internal distribution of supporting documents relative to agenda topics.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Minutes of the committee meeting held on December 10, 2012 were distributed prior to the meeting. Commissioner Zellers motioned for approval of the minutes; seconded by Janet Anderson. The minutes were approved.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

#### **Review on Committee report re: Home Page News to the Board of Commissioners at its January 7, 2013 workshop.**

Chair Mills used the Home Page News support document as the basis for his report on topic to the Board of Commissioners.

Committee comments on receptivity.

Committee members Sharp and Zellers thought the commissioners were receptive for most part all said yes plus there were some constructive comments from the audience. The objective is to get the Commissioners to say press on and that was accomplished.

Committee comments on report.

Too lengthy. Put multiple illustrations on the same page.

Member Anderson advised of a philosophy when using electronic media is that 1) the presenter should avoid reading what is on the slides, 2) content on the slides should be consolidated into the simplest form and, 3) the presenter is provides verbal clarity.

**Discussion on accessibility of Commissioners' agenda related documents via printed materials or the City website. Consider finalizing a recommended practice which provides that all available supporting documents relevant to agenda items are available to City officials and the public in advance of a meeting.**

The revised version of the support document for "Supporting Documents" includes edits of first draft as a memo to the Board of Commissioners. A draft PowerPoint presentation was also revised.

It was decided to critique and finesse the memo first and then hone PowerPoint into a more crisp presentation.

Comments were made relative to the current drafts of the memo and the PowerPoint presentation as both being (way) too long.

Besides condensing, resequencing was recommended:

1. Explain why committee is presenting it a second time – acknowledge first go around. The problems have persisted, the public is out of loop, etc. Looking at it because of comments received.
2. Purpose
3. Define terms.
4. Examples

Big selling point that other communities do a good job of this and we want to show some examples.

Additional edits **in red** and notes follow.

P6: how work in Rehoboth – condense – make bullets.

1. When appropriate, supporting documents are **developed by the person(s) sponsoring** an agenda topic utilizing a standardized formatting template to identify the document appropriately.
2. Optimally **seven days** or more **in advance**, or as soon as possible, the agenda sponsor distributes supporting document(s) that pertains to subjects that they are requesting be placed on a meeting agenda.  
to the mayor and city clerk.
3. Optimally, support documents would be disseminated in the same manner and at the same time the **when meeting agenda is published** or as soon as possible.
4. Electronic material would be posted online as directed by the Mayor and/or City Manager. The Agenda link (Attachments 1a), which is a sub-set of City Boards/Commissions/Committees (Attachments 1b) and under the Agendas, Minutes and Media is easily expandable to post supporting documents specific to agenda items (Attachments 1c). **posted online**
5. **Hard copies** of documents for the Commissioners would be handled, as now, by placing them in individual Commissioners' folders although utilizing electronic documents could present the opportunity to go "paperless." Hard copies of support documents for the public also would be handled, as now, by placing them on the table in the Commissioners' Room at the time of the meeting.

Miscellaneous notes.

Too wordy = complicated

Want to sell concept on 5 easy steps

If we go this way value/benefit added

More informed commissioners.

More informed public; better relationship with public.

Boil down to questions commissioners would have.

Prepare q&a to be able to respond but not include in memo.

### **Benefits.**

Accessibility of background materials supporting an agenda item prior to the meeting date will contribute to conducting more efficient meetings through dissemination of background information.

**More informed commissioners, public.**

### **Recommended Policy for Implementation in Rehoboth Beach.** Edits shown in red.

- The Communications Committee recognizes that ~~this practice~~ **providing support documents** will not apply to all agenda items, but encourages the Commissioners ~~and other participants to adopt this practice~~ **provide relevant supporting documents** whenever possible.
- The Communications Committee recognizes that some Commissioners or agencies making introductory presentations may desire to have a “first shot” at making the presentation before disseminating their presentation to the public. ~~Therefore the Communications Committee recommends that~~ **Thus, introductory documents in support of the initial presentation of proposals or other initiatives** by members of the Board of Commissioners or third party participants in City meetings ~~may or may not be provided in advance as support documents at the discretion of the presenter.~~
- The Communications Committee recognizes that some supporting documents may not be available ahead of a meeting in which case the documents would be posted as available and at the discretion of the submitter.
- **(After a trial period, written policy for this practice should be developed** ~~through meetings with the chair of the Communications Committee, the city manager, the mayor and city staff.~~

### **Recommendations of the Communications Committee to better facilitate use of and availability of Supporting Documents.**

The Communications Committee recommends that the Board of Commissioners ~~(endorse or) adopt and implement~~ a Supporting Documents Program **as a best practice** which:

- Encourages development of supporting materials prior to the discussion of an agenda topic.

- Provides accessibility for the public and the Commissioners to documents that are available in advance of a meeting.

~~The Communications Committee further recommends that the Board of Commissioners charge the Chair of the Communications Committee to work with the City Management, Staff and the Mayor on the logistics of facilitating such a program.~~

Conclusion:

Why are we here?

What does it accomplish?

How does it work?

Pilot program is a few easy steps.

Critique summarized:

Wordsmith.

Condensed.

Try to include attachments at point of discussion – can insert PowerPoint slides that show relationship of agenda to support documents

Resequencing.

Timing for presentation is yet to be determined; could be at the March or April Commissioners' workshop meeting.

### **Discuss timelines and related programs for presenting, discussing and acting on agenda items.**

Chair Mills reflected after last discussion and suggested we hold on pursuing a formal 1<sup>st</sup> reading-2<sup>nd</sup> reading ordinance, but instead go with a simple message. The committee agreed and thought a single sentence might suffice: Avoid voting on agenda items the same day they are introduced.

#### **Identify problems**

Commissioners do not get things far enough in advance.

Community members get no advance notice on something that might impact them.

Don't act on first opportunity being vetted – excludes those not in attendance.

Disenfranchises the public much of the time.

Excludes thoughtful reflection or engagement

No time to discuss (components of the agenda item) with constituents.

Can lead to inefficient meeting process.

No opportunity to get any background or to gather research no benefit, no thoughtful reflection on behalf of public but also commissioners.

#### **Recommendation.**

The committee recommends the Commissioners develop a policy in this area

**Benefits**

More efficient meeting

More opportunity for public involvement in discussion

Notice in papers

Opportunity to inform the public

Allows time for more reflection and engagement

If introduced the first time then likely in papers, media coverage before being on agenda again

Time to review agenda item prior to action

**ID documents that fall under this but also exceptions.**

Exceptions

Emergency situations as designated by the city manager and/or commission

Awarding small contracts for purchase of equipment

No exceptions

Awarding of large contracts that warrant public discussion

Omit discussion of 1<sup>st</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> unless they bring it up

Seek to put on February workshop meeting for discussion.

**Discuss how to optimize communications from the perspective of the public in attendance at a meeting.**

Better/clarifying descriptor of topic: Visually and auditorally enhance communications during meetings.

Have supporting documents available in advance of the meeting.

Better audio enhancements – recommendations already passed on to the city manager.

Better use of the projector/screen.

Use of projector allows the presenter to highlight portions/lines of the document being discussed.

Consider best practice:

Allow public to see documents that the Commissioners see.

Whenever a visual aid is available utilize it -- project documents on screen. E.g. B&L reports.

Utilize support documents.

Allow public to hear what the Commissioners hear - in meeting room and on audio recording (reference recommended audio enhancements).

Timing of presentation? Because this relies heavily on supporting documents, suggest wait for supporting document recommendations to be presented first.

Reiteration of audio enhancements

Adequate amplification in meeting room.

Adequate microphone system to capture the audience on the recording.

Optimize the type of microphone at the podium to eliminate paper shuffling and static.

The city manager said he would look into remedies.

**Discussion about communications plan and steps to advance individual concepts including outline of content and how and when to make presentations to the Commissioners. Discuss and prioritize items for future agendas.** ( The two agenda items merged.)

See poster, attached.

Web overhaul – on hold.

Home page news – presentation complete; awaiting implementation – Chair Mills to follow up.

Optimize audience experience – defer on presentation as noted above.

Support document policy – more revisions needed. March workshop earliest.

Audio recording retention extension – no priority at this time.

Form submittal agenda items – deferred.

Addressing timeline for voting on issues – February workshop.

Agendas clear language– four related issues. February Communications Committee meeting agenda item.

Next meeting:

Review revised support documents memo.

Agenda clarity, etc.

Future – meeting with Max to report on status. There was also discussion demonstrating frustration with lack of forward movement in the web overhaul.

**Schedule next meeting.**

February 1, 2013 at 9:30 or 1:30 p.m. in the Commissioners’ Room (time dependent on availability of room).

**Committee Member Comment.**

Call to fill vacancy on committee.

**Public Comment.**

None.

**Adjournment.**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:35 p.m.

- Stan Mills, Chair, Communications Committee \_\_\_\_\_