

Approved Communications Committee Meeting Minutes  
June 15, 2012

1. Call to Order: Meeting started at 10:00 a.m.
2. Roll Call: Attending: Commissioner Stan Mills, Chair; Hoyte Decker, Commissioner Lorraine Zellers and Janet Anderson — Members.  
Toni Sharp, resident, and Susan Slye of the Dewey Beach Marketing Committee — Audience.
3. Approval of Agenda —Approved by consensus. Some items may be taken out of order.
4. Correspondence:

Telephone call from resident Tom McGlone to the chair as a reminder of his interest in applying for a position on the committee.

Internal correspondence/support documents distributed prior to the meeting:

1. Draft minutes of the committee's May 24, 2012 meeting.
2. Compilation of copies of communications sent by the chair to Tom McGlone, Dottie Cirelli and Lew Kilmer.
3. Current and proposed revisions to the web review policy.
4. Stan's analysis/flowchart of communications issues.
5. Proposed Mission Statement Changes for Consideration at the June 15, 2012 Board of Commissioners' Meeting

5. Approval of Minutes – May 24, 2012 Meeting: Approved by consensus; member Zellers abstained.
6. Old Business
- 6A. Report on report to Board of Commissioners on June 4, 2012 including presenting recommendations regarding edits to the current Committee Mission Statement.

Three highlights of the report:

- Recommended changes as developed by the committee to the current posted committee mission statement.
- Change in membership –Member Dottie Cirelli resigned. Call for a new member.
- Web facelift status.

See attached:

- Written report to Commissioners for June 4 meeting.
- Memo of June 11 from Chair to Board of Commissioners relative to BOC meeting of June 15 reiterating the committee's desire for approval to committee's mission statement.

6B. Continue discussion on revisions to current committee web review policy.

Changes were approved to the language of the purpose clause of the policy and to the summary primarily changing from a quarterly review to biannual. See revised approved policy attached.

6C. Continue discussion of a proposed policy that if adopted ensures that available supporting documents relevant to agenda items are available to City officials and the public in advance of a meeting.

Chair Mills clarified that this is specific to Board of Commissioners and reviewed how Bethany Beach uses a “briefing book” of documents to support certain agenda items and which is available prior to the meeting.

Discussion items included:

- Looking at past Board of Commissioners’ agendas, some items can be online in advance of a meeting.
- Hesitancy was expressed about one more form/one more piece of paper to fill out; that maybe informally, when sending in an agenda request, Commissioners could include one or more lines to better clarify an agenda item. Some agendas might not have formal paperwork.
- Need to recognize time constraints that can be a burden with providing something in advance.
- Chair Mills reiterated that the Communications Committee is trying to conduct itself as a model with regard to putting support documents online and timed to coincide with posting the agenda when possible. The most recent set of supporting documents compiled by Chair Mills however included correspondence with some names and email addresses. The city manager disapproved of such supporting documents being put online referencing the use of names and email addresses as well as politically charged content. Resultantly the city manager disallowed all supporting documents from the committee to be put online including retroactively removing support documents from its February meeting. Chair Mills indicated rather than a setback that we should look at this as a lesson learned and better articulate what kinds of documents can be considered for supporting documents. Need to establish criteria.
- Chair Mills reviewed six months of BOC agendas to illustrate which agenda topics had documents available prior to the meeting and so which could be utilized as supporting documents. See attachment. Yellow highlights documents that were distributed to the BOC at some time prior to the meeting (could be day before or longer before). Pink highlights documents handed out during the meeting. This exercise was intended to reinforce that the intent is not to mandate creation of new documents to serve as supporting documents, but rather that many of the documents are already created and available to serve as supporting documents in the public view prior to a meeting.
- Still need to identify kinds of documents to be considered as supporting documents (e.g. amendments to ordinances? Engineer’s recommendations for awarding bids? Etc.)
- How to present to Board of Commissioners? Show possibilities of what can be done; what other towns do. Say “let’s try it” and seek buy-in, then city manager allows support doc online under certain conditions.
- Issue of whether or not author should make public an idea before introductory presentation. I.e. should certain agenda supporting documents be available prior to a meeting versus after an introductory presentation?

The author might prefer to offer introductory presentations with accompanying explanations rather than offering it publicly without. Presentations often present bulleted items. If the public sees an introduction to a new topic on web they may not be getting the benefit of the author’s explanation of what those bullet points mean. Public can misconstrue or enter into meeting with mind made up

already. Not that the author might not want it out there in the public just that the author might like to present it first.

- Need to determine how supporting documents apply to outside agencies making reports/presentations.
- Goal in briefest terms: If documents are available to the Commissioners, then they should be made available to the public and in a timely fashion at some reasonable time prior to the meeting.
- In Bethany Beach use of briefing materials is not mandatory but voluntary. Our committee could create a guideline rather than a standard.
- A goal could be to strive for improved opportunity for public to be informed about what is going at the meetings and to the extent a document is in the hands of the commissioners and is not an initial presentation make it available to the public. Key is keeping public informed.
- Efficiencies can be gained by giving advanced notice of documents to the Commissioners.
- Make it voluntary.
- Create a model and say this is how we'd like to do it. Encourage others to follow suit. Strive to continue to do it as a committee. Place suggested policy and accompanying support documents into communication model as part of a whole plan versus a standalone item.
- Continue to discuss to bring to conclusion. Bullet point benefits and cons, outline suggested procedures, present examples, illustrate by using past agendas that some documents already were available prior to a meeting. Define types of documents.
- Use illustrations including Bethany Beach briefing books.
- Hoyte reported on a meeting with Councilman Lew Kilmer of Bethany Beach and Stan and himself. Hoyte identified a Bethany Beach policy handout for use of supporting documents (in their briefing book). See attached. Chair Mills indicated that Hoyte's desire for similar analysis, e.g. budget impacts, was more an adjunct to formatting policy rather than to support document policy; further discussion of this should be a separate future agenda item.
- Member Zellers reported on research into a Bethany Beach ordinance about adopting ordinances which includes rules and a timeline. Utilization of first reading/second reading [by the Rehoboth Beach Commissioners] might be a way to ensure a timeline that allows for the public to see city business before it is acted on. Chair Mills indicated that further discussion of this should be a separate future agenda item.

Hoyte will revise supporting document policy incorporating comments of this and last meeting.

#### 6D. Continued discussion on draft ideas for overall communications plan.

Chair Mills provided a draft flowchart to illustrate the many different issues raised during committee meetings and how a more holistic approach may be warranted. The topics illustrated included:

- Formatting policy
- Clarifying language on agendas
- Adding synopses to agendas
- First Reading/Second Reading process
- Supporting documents policy
- Ongoing Business on city web site
- Document archives on city web site

Not all are new concepts to the Commissioners; some are already in place but not well utilized - may need to highlight the processes and encourage use of the concepts.

Committee recommended creating a condensed, easier to read (and understand) version of illustration. Also use real life examples, e.g. showing “Ongoing Business” live on web. Chair Mills to rework as noted.

It was suggested that the title “Formatting” policy suggests addressing formatting styles such as fonts or when to bullet and that another descriptor such as “document identifier” or “document template” might be better to entitle how documents are presented.

All topics warrant more discussion as separate future agenda items.

6E. Update on anticipated hiring of additional person in IT Department.

A man was offered the position about a week ago; not sure of his start date. Chair will follow up with IT Dept supervisor to determine job scope of new employee to report back to the committee.

7. New Business.

7A. Call for new topics.

Web Facelift items were updated:

- Online forms status – upcoming meeting with city manager, department heads, IT Department and Communications Committee chair to review intent of program and solicit feedback including soliciting desired edits to the forms.
- Web facelift goals reiterated:
  - Not a total redo from scratch
  - Eliminate redundancies
  - Make architecture of it more understandable
  - More useful (e.g by use of online forms)
- Reiterated steps – to come before Communications Committee for critique and revisions if needed before going to Commissioners before getting energized.

8. Discuss and prioritize items for future agendas.  
(Incorporated into earlier discussions.)

9. Set next meeting. Monday, July 9 at 1:30 PM.

10. Public Comment: No further public comments. (The public is permitted to interject comment during the meeting.)

11. Adjournment: 11:56 am.