

APPROVED MINUTES
COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING
CITY OF REHOBOTH BEACH
November 15, 2011

The Communications Committee Meeting of the City of Rehoboth Beach was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by Chairman Stan Mills on Monday, November 15, 2011 in the Commissioners Room in City Hall, 229 Rehoboth Avenue, Rehoboth Beach, DE.

Roll Call:

Committee present: Commissioner Stan Mills, Chair
 Dottie Cirelli
 Hoyte Decker

(No audience.)

The meeting was called to order at 1:05 p.m. by Stan Mills, Chair.

A quorum of the committee was present.

Agenda was approved with deletion of minutes not yet ready.

Correspondence.

- Multiple memos from Stan:
 - Stan's review of web site.
 - Stan's pre-meeting notes.
 - Compilation of web page changes with multiple attachments.

- From Dick Cleaveland re attending municipal web group in Dover.

- From Dick Cleaveland relative to visitor information citing examples of municipal web sites that list businesses (contrasting listings and advertising).

- From Commissioner Zellers to Stan conveying her support of web changes regarding city meeting schedules and records.

Old Business.

Discuss web site changes initiated by the committee.

Reference document: 10-21-11 revision to visitor information.

Stan met with the mayor and city manager separately and together, with representatives of the IT Department, Ann Womack, City Clerk, and Carol Everhart of the Chamber of Commerce (separately) to review committee recommendations for web changes and to garner feedback.

The city manager and mayor advised of policy of not endorsing any business.

Stan presented a revision to the design for Visitor Information which includes a double-sided arrow to direct those with interest in dining, accommodations, shopping and local activities to the Chamber of Commerce web site or the Rehoboth Beach Main Street web site.

Regarding Dick Cleaveland's correspondence comparing municipal web site treatments of listings of businesses:

- The City of Milford web site redirects the user to the local Chamber of Commerce web site.
- The Smyrna web site provides an A-Z listing of businesses.
- The South Bethany web site lists all businesses currently licensed by the town.
- The Dewey Beach web site lists all businesses currently licensed by the town.

Note some sites that list businesses with current business licenses include all licensed businesses regardless of location. Some businesses are located out of town, e.g. a plumber that might physically be located in Milford but has a business license to conduct business in the town.

Question posed: If RB decides to manage the list of businesses in-house, is the desire to list all licensed business or only ones located within city limits?

Dottie said she would do further research on business listings for RB.

Stan recommended identifying other municipal web sites that illustrate the committee desires.

Stan noted that there may be an opportunity in the future to list businesses by category depending on a redesign of parking and walking map under development by the city.

Commissioner Zellers had noted in an earlier phone call to Stan - why not alphabetize?
Committee answer: The pictures tell more of the story than wording.

Rehoboth Beach in the News.

Reference document: Original 10-17-11 changes to left navigation bar.
Provides for three potential layouts.

Also reference document: 10-21-11 revision to RB in the News.

This is the final selected layout based on feedback from Carol Everhart of the Chamber of Commerce. Carol had shared a general web design philosophy that web users only like to click a maximum of three times before moving on. Reinstating Rehoboth Beach in the News per this design is in the works in the IT Department.

City meeting schedules and records format changes.

Reference documents: 10-17-11 changes to city meeting schedules.

10-16-11 changes to web meeting calendar listings.

Delaware.net hosts and maintains our web site. They do the same for many other municipalities. They may make changes to all web sites (global) for no fee; changes for a single web site (custom) may cost additional.

Philosophy IT Department tries to do anything they can do in-house; otherwise they send it out to Delaware.net (taking budget considerations into account).

General web change requests developed by the committee.

Reference document: Web change requests from Communications Committee. 10-17-11

Many changes are being addressed.

Emergency information – address the changes when insert new map.

Discussion on use of forms on web site.

City manager receptive to committee doing research and making recommendations.

Objectives identified:

Make it easy for the user to fill out forms and get into hands of department quickly and online versus having to do via USPS mail.

Provide a readily available pdf directory – readily select forms.

Provide interactivity – ability to fill out form on the computer.

Questions raised to address in the future:

- Should site have master list of forms? Organization? Characterize by department?
- Ability to fill out online and submit?
- Payment if required may present complications:
 - Committee applications – no payment required = easy.
 - Other forms that require payment?
- What does this mean to person in department who receives the forms; how would it impact the city employees? How much of an additional burden or less is it to department?
- How do we create the mechanism to create the interactivity?
- Costs?
- Time commitment?
- Feasibility?

Stan reiterated the benefit of identifying multiple municipal web sites that do what we desire.

Assigned to Dottie who brought the topic forward initially.

Search Function.

Committee desire is ability to enter a key word or words and it should bring up all sections of *web pages* that use the word but also *bring up any pdf documents* – currently it does not do this. Stan and Dave Henderson met and identified Bethany Beach’s web site as a good example of a desirable search function that achieves the committee desires and has great organization of results. See Bethany Beach’s web site: www.townofbethanybeach.com. IT Department has forwarded the request to reflect functionality and organization of Bethany Beach’s search function to Delaware.net for implementation.

Stan re-emphasized the value in identifying web sites that illustrate our desires.

Google maps.

Reference Town of Dewey Beach web site: www.townofdeweybeach.com

Notice components of DB google maps:

- Map of area with scale.
- Symbols locating places, both standard and custom symbols.
- Language/description of location that accompanies each photo.

Going forward:

- Identify which existing web pages need maps.
- Determine content of each map, what symbols to use and which maps can be combined (to include multiple different type-of-site locations, e.g. library and post office could be on same map).
- Take photos.
- Create language to accompany photos.

Dottie and Stan will work together on advancing this project.

Discussion on concepts for redesigning convention center pages.

Stan would like for committee representatives to meet with convention hall representatives to convey committee visions and offer assistance.

Committee vision for convention hall web pages:

Web site is an opportunity to better market the convention hall.

- Exterior and interior photos.
- Photos of activities inside convention center.
- Floorplan(s).
- Listing of booked events.
- List of convention hall specifications (room sizes, kitchen information, amenities.
- Fees? (Or require contact with representative?)

- How to book. Contact information.
- Other marketing information: “tout the town,” photos/language touting the wonderful local stores and activities.
- Kitchen facilities – floorplan, amenities, photos.
- Amenities – e.g. sound systems (or where to go to acquire such amenities).

Hoyte and Stan to meet with Convention Hall representatives Chuck Snyder and Karen Zakarian.

Continue on web site maintenance – quarterly activity but currently an ongoing function.

Reference document: Stan’s notes relative to review of web site as at November 8, 2011.
Some committee web change requests are accomplished; some in the works.

Stan has two new items to introduce.

- 1) Create a bulletin board. Hurricane Irene notices inserted into web site identified a need for a special place on web site to post special notices. Reference document: Stan’s concept for bulletin board. Committee agreed of the need for an alert, flash news area on web site. Needs additional discussion, policy to avoid overuse, etc.
Stan to ask IT Department for feasibility of a “bulletin board.”
Put on future agenda; try to identify other municipal sites with similar features.
- 2) Questioning design of existing header on committee schedules: A) Why “suggest event?” and B) is it clear when it says calendar view day week month? Stan showed suggested design change for consideration. Reference document: Stan’s header changes.
Stan to send to distribute prior to next meeting for consideration.

Consideration of other web changes was deferred until some current changes are accomplished.

Web maintenance

Board of Adjustment page – information does not match current template/model for all commissions, boards and committees.

Stan distributed the original communication to the Board of Adjustment requesting template information desired and a sample model. Dottie will secure proper information from the chair of the Board of Adjustment.

Budget consideration

Stan explained. Current budget is approximately \$10K - goes to an outside vendor for hosting and general web maintenance (unless custom which translates into additional fee).

Methodology for web changes – IT Department wants to do in house if possible – lower costs.

If not able to facilitate changes in house, such as code re-formatting, then they forward changes to Delaware.net (our web host).

City manager indicated committee is not to deal with monies (contracts) with Delaware .net as it has in the past.

IT Department has a wide scope, police and city computer functions are top priority, web changes seldom at top of list so implementation takes some time.

Of the last change requests the city manager approved them in one day and forwarded to IT Department.

Nothing going to be done instantaneously unless city hires dedicated person.

IT Department facilitates changes and does it within their budget.

Stan met with Dave – he recognizes more changes might be coming forward and more might have to be sent to Delaware.net and which they may charge for (all or most all free so far). Dave suggests we recommend adding 15% to existing budget (of 10K approx) + monies for a facelift.

Dottie desires additional monies for changes the IT Department cannot do in house but also for things they can do in house but which would be quicker with additional help.

Hoyte expressed that from beginning it has been hard to get accomplishments on change requests.

Hoyte referenced Dick Cleaveland, webmaster for Dewey Beach and suggested hiring a similar consultant to give us the level of attention we desire, to get things accomplished quicker.

Stan believes we are making progress with new program; webmaster could be a good thing but there is a cost element.

Dottie recommended asking for \$5,000 additional in the budget

Rationale:

- To hire a webmaster to work on consultant basis to work on ongoing issues.
- To have input in to design and functionality and make changes in a more timely fashion.
- To attend meetings and advise on what changes are feasible.
- Main reasons for hiring of a part time webmaster. Design, functionality and timeliness.

Stan to report recommendations to the Board of Commissioners at Friday's meeting.

Discuss future agenda items

Stan would like to revisit support documents from beginning with newly appointed members.

Under web review: Consider evaluation of Enews. Frequency?

Scheduling the next meeting was deferred until new appointments are onboard.

Meeting adjourned at 3:04 p.m.

Minutes by Stan Mills