

Communications Committee Meeting Minutes May 24, 2012

1. Call to Order: Meeting started at 2:00 pm.
2. Roll Call: Attending: Stan Mills, Chair; Hoyte Decker, and Janet Anderson, Members.
Dick Cleaveland (Dewey Beach Webmaster), Public.
3. Approval of Agenda — Meeting of February 10, 2012. Approved by consensus. Some items may be taken out of order.

4. Correspondence:

Letter from Rehoboth Beach resident Tom McGlone presenting a communications model. Committee discussion indicated that many of Tom's points were the purview of BOC and of those items that fall within the purview of the committee, some may have validity and so the committee will be attentive and may give consideration in the future. The committee also noted that of those items within the committee purview, some already were discussed in past meetings and tabled or deferred as low priority.

Memo from member Dottie Cirelli recommending content for Home Page News. This was sent to the chair relating to ongoing web changes. Committee discussion indicated that the content of Home Page News may be considered for a future agenda item.

Memo from member Dottie Cirelli resigning from the committee effective immediately citing time constraints. Chair Mills had sent a response thanking her for her service, that she had been a valuable player since the inception of the committee and also accepting her resignation. Chair Mills indicated that as a Commissioner he wants to standardize press releases to invite membership on boards, commissions and committees. He will seek to issue an invitation for membership.

Four support documents were distributed to the committee prior to the meeting:

- #1 General notes including correspondence.
- #2 Draft minutes February meeting.
- #3 Proposal for a "support documents" policy authored by Hoyte Decker.
- #4 Web review policy plus miscellaneous other documents.
- #5 Memo from City Manager relative to use of support documents online.

Committee discussion ensued. This memo censored committee use of putting support documents #1, 2 and 3 online for public viewing citing potentially inappropriate content (e.g. names, email addresses, etc). (Support document #4 had not been requested to be put online at that time.) From observation, it was found that additionally the city manager directed city personnel to remove a committee support document for our February 2012 meeting which was already posted online. Chair Mills suggested using his memo as a lesson learned and to react positively and learn from it, seek out policies from other towns and move forward.

Mr. Cleaveland indicated that some towns have an online sign up page inviting persons to sign up to volunteer for miscellaneous activities, such as watering plants, etc.

Discussion of correspondence in general led to discussion by member Decker of how does the city process communications? What is city's position on acknowledgement or responding to communications? He believes there should be a process that obligates one to respond and suggests that the committee points to this as issue. The Communications Committee should have a policy that if someone writes then we respond. Chair Mills said he already does that.

5. Approval of Minutes – February 10, 2012 Meeting: Approved by consensus with the following change:

1. New photo array on home page (Janet Anderson) – With the goal of obtaining more dynamic photos, for each season as well, Janet suggested we use a group of interested professional photographers; Tom McGlone suggested that the public be invited to submit pictures with possible incentives for their work. The committee could make selections for the website. The Chair said it would be useful to promote the City. Further work will be done; Member Cirelli offered to assist in this effort.

6. Old Business

6A. Consideration of making edits to the current Committee Mission Statement to recommend to the Board of Commissioners.

The chair believed a review of the current mission statement as posted online was warranted because 1) current language has been interpreted by some members of the public that the committee authors communications (it does not); and, 2) that the mission statement somehow deviated a bit from the original mission statement approved when the committee was formed by the Board of Commissioners. The committee proposed the following revision to the committee mission statement:

The Communications Committee examines communication issues and make recommendations on optimizing two-way communications between City government and the public including but not limited to utilization of City newsletters, City website and City email system. In particular, the Committee is continually working to refine the City's website as one of the main portals of communications with its residents, property owners, visitors and the business community.

The committee agreed to make recommendation to the Board of Commissioners on the proposed changes to the mission statement.

Because the committee chair has been seeking consensus instead of conducting formal votes to save time, member Decker suggested that as an administrative matter we go forward with garnering consensus on matters unless someone objects and requests that we proceed with a vote on a particular matter. This process will be quicker but still allows for all to speak up and still seek a formal vote. All agreed.

6B. Reports on city website.

1. Status of City website facelift project and next steps.
2. Web changes recommended by the Committee

Chair Mills reported that after multiple meetings which at times included Dave Henderson (IT Department supervisor), representatives of Delaware.net (web host), the city manager and mayor, a final "wish list" of items for incorporating into the new web site during its facelift is being developed and then will be forwarded to the web host. An approximately two month process is contemplated. Before energizing anything, the web host will incorporate the proposed ideas as they can. The web host will come to committee for a preview before energizing the facelift (making it publicly available). The

chair suggests that it is at that time when it would be best to look at what our expectations were, compare to what was realized and give critiques.

Stan reviewed facelift topics, many of which were generated by the committee.

- Googlemaps. All new; eliminate aerial photos; replace with standard google maps.
- Clean up Home Page. (will allow for Home Page News).
- News/Events on Home Page. Member Anderson indicated this might be the place for non-controversial news.
- Suggest event/header. Removal of an unneeded item.
- Contact & Questions. Clean up.
- Left Navigation. Clean up.
- Rehoboth in the News. This is for “feel good” articles touting Rehoboth Beach.
- Visitor Information Main Page. Clean up.
- Convention Center. Still awaiting receipt of content. Hoyte to meet with Stan to follow up with Chuck and Karen.
- Weddings/Civil Unions. To identify wedding/civil union venues associated with the City (beach and convention center).
- Local Links. City manager to develop policy. E.g. political entities included or excluded?
- Forms. Ability to fill out online.
- Search. Model after Bethany Beach and retroactive to all documents already on site; will search pdf’s (cannot do so currently).
- Emergency Notices. Ability to insert.
- Calendar/Meeting Listings. Organizes; provides second, quicker route to access agendas, minutes, etc.
- Ongoing Business/Archival documents/”Encyclopedia.” New category – unsure of proper title, “Encyclopedia” or “Library” or other title. For such information as “All about Rain Gardens” or “What can I do to maintain the health of our waterbodies?” Searchable. Table of Contents. Dick asked relative to archived documents “Should you keep documents labeled “draft” on there? If so to avoid confusion from differing versions they should be clearly marked as “draft.” Member Decker indicated that selective documents could be taken out of mainstream not directly available to the public but otherwise be available to city staff.
- Home page photo project. Committee project that sought timelier, seasonal photos to better market the city by utilizing a program to solicit photos for selection by the committee. Rejected by the city manager citing concerns about having the public furnish photos, the selection process and rejection of some photos/rejection of submitters. Instead the city manager was receptive to providing him with photo requests and he would have them taken. Chair will forward the already prepared list to the city manager.

6D. Review and discussion of current committee web review policy and of path forward for making web change recommendations.

Chair Mills suggested that 3-4 times a year we have a call to members for web review notes; the notes are compiled by the chair and sent to IT Department. Then the IT Dept. says they can or cannot address the items or IT sends back to committee for additional comment or additional instruction/refinement.

Member Decker will work on a revised policy to present at a future meeting.

Mr. Cleaveland suggested that we ask other committees or departments to review web site with respect to their committee or department. The committee agreed that when the new facelift is presented to the Board of

Commissioners that we invite committees and departments to review and give feedback to the committee as well as encourage greater use of the web site.

6C. 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.

Member Decker's position on his proposal for establishing a policy on use of support documents has evolved since his 2009 original proposal. The basic premise remains that the Board of Commissioners posts supporting documents when the agenda is posted. Earlier he had presented examples in the past when documents in front of the Board of Commissioners had changed so rapidly between meetings that all – the public and Commissioners -- found it hard to follow the changing document versions. There is an important relationship between the agenda and supporting documents available for each agenda topic. The agenda item must be specific and to the extent you have additional documentation then it should be posted and available to all including the public.

Member Anderson asked if lack of enough information prior to a meeting has been a problem? Chair Mills indicated that for him, yes it is a problem to receive information too short a time before a meeting; more time is necessary to allow for adequate consideration.

Member Decker recognizes that for some topics there may not be any support documents generated; but if there are they should be shared with the public (and other Commissioners). His original proposal evolved to now include a process for Commissioners to request an agenda item and better describe the potential line of discussion plus to provide an analysis of potential budget impacts of implementing the agenda topic. Reasoning for the evolution involves a benefit to public: it forces the presenter at the beginning to contemplate potential implications and consequences that their idea might have.

Chair Mills said he looked at Bethany Beach's use of supporting documents as a model: when the agenda goes out, supporting documents are posted in an electronic "briefing book" online. Chair Mills is a strong supporter of the use of supporting documents and of their timely availability. Chair Mills' analysis of member Decker's new version (evolution) is that it has become more complicated – in addition to the original support document proposal there are two new additional components. Thus now the three components are:

- 1) Support documents.
- 2) Analysis of costs, budget impact– valid but not sure it should be a part of the support document policy. Citing Bethany Beach that does something similar on analysis of budget impacts – he will research their process.
- 3) "Paperwork" and writing all this stuff. Referencing the form member Decker developed: More paper to manage – not sure this additional item is necessary to "sell" support documents to Commissioners. Adds more complexity than what is current process. By example, requesting a topic be put on an agenda might be via a phone call or email to the mayor who authors the agenda in its final format.

Member Anderson agrees that some potentially controversial topics warrant having support documents ahead of time. Member Decker agreed that his process does include more paperwork and is potentially more burdensome. That the mayor in past statements indicated we could do better, member Decker interprets the mayor's note as that the agenda topic provider should furnish at least a few very descriptive sentences that explain clearly what the topic is about/will encompass.

Discussion turned to an analysis of a memo from Greg Ferrese censoring use of our committee's latest support documents online. Chair Mills reiterated that we should learn from it- research the policies of other cities that

use support documents -- what types of documents are/are not used as support documents online by other cities. Look at real life use.

Member Decker voiced the need for a definition of “emergency” condition that provides for exceptions to providing support documents ahead of time. There is a need for policy and guidelines.

Chair Mills suggested the committee look at a number of past agendas and identify which topics have electronic documents already made ahead of time.

A benefit to providing supporting documents ahead of a meeting was identified as causing a reduction of time spent in the meetings.

The committee decided to defer moving forward until additional research and discussion is completed. Member Decker and Chair Mills will seek a meeting with a Bethany Beach representative to learn more about their briefing book program.

Mr. Cleaveland provided some insight in relating to some policies in another town, that he found that the more complicated and definitive you make a policy and the more pressure you put on people to do it, the quicker it will be ignored.

7. New Business.

7A. Call for new topics.

Chair Mills reviewed that the committee’s mission included two components: 1) communications methodologies and 2) web site. While the web site side has many successes by the committee; the side relative to methods of communications has few if any successes -- maybe the audio policy that was adopted by the Commissioners, if not authored by the committee, was endorsed by the committee. He reflects on “Where is the committee going?”

Chair Mills provided his thoughts and started with a review. The committee is all about communications; communications is all about information; information includes varied types of information – agendas, minutes, supporting documents, etc. Who are we communicating to – public but also Board of Commissioners – this is important as it relates to and validates use of supporting documents. Additionally we deal with methods of communication: Enews, web site, proposed home page news, hard copy newsletter, proposed support documents, opportunity for video (termed low priority in earlier meetings by the committee). Hard copy documents are increasingly put out for audience but not all documents. Commissioners are not utilizing projector as much as they could.

Chair Mills suggests the committee needs to look at whole picture rather than individual components.

- Formating documents policy – already approved and generally being used. Gives format for documents and also includes requirement of a synopsis.
- Preparing for a meeting – next in sequence is preparing the agenda.
- If desire to have clarifying synopses on the agenda – already developed through formatting policy for the document relative to the topic
- Next in sequence is posting the agenda – on bulletin board; but also online. With supporting documents policy in place then you add/include supporting documents at that time – (Not doing something new)

- If support documents are prepared then your topic documents are already prepared (and shared ahead of time).
- If not done ahead of time the (new) documents become archived under Ongoing business or if revised become support documents for next meeting.

All above classified as “before” meeting.

Then “during: meeting:

Handouts, presentations -- encourage projection. Advantage of using projectors – save paper; use as reference using laser pointer; all of audience can see what Commissioners are seeing; friendly; efficient; save time.

Example B&L report that is read in entirety at the meeting.

“After” meeting

Handouts, presentations feed into Ongoing Business. Ongoing Business already on web – very underutilized – need to get better buy-in and manage it.

When topic is brought to closure, transfer documents from Ongoing Business to Documents Archive which compiles, illustrates the legislative history of a topic. (Reminder that only Board of Commissioners’ business appears under Ongoing Business.)

Chair Mills suggests the committee look at communications methods holistically rather than as individual components. For what the committee may want to pursue and make recommendation on, some of the processes are already in place to help facilitate other proposed processes. Three themes in all of the above 1) Before, during, after; 2) Information is not just for public but also Commissioners; 3) Delivery methods vary: hard copy, electronic, projector, email. Consider developing a bigger package to pursue and sell to the Commissioners.

Member Decker suggested that the formatting policy could add a few lines to include his proposed budget considerations, etc.

7B. Update on anticipated hiring of additional person in IT Department.

(This item was overlooked. No discussion took place.)

8. Discuss and prioritize items for future agenda items.

Continuation of ongoing topics. Members are free to suggest topics.

9. Set next meeting. Next meeting to take place after meeting with Bethany Beach representative. Scheduled for either June 14 after 3PM or 15th at 10AM. To be confirmed after conversation with member Zellers.

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

11. Adjournment: 4:30 pm.

Minutes Approved at the Communications Committee Meeting of June 15, 2012