

APPROVED
Minutes of the Communications Committee
July 20, 2011

The City of Rehoboth Beach Communications Committee held a meeting on July 20, at 1:00 p.m. in the Commissioner's Room at City Hall.

Roll Call:

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

Others present: Dick Cleaveland

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

A quorum of the committee was present.

The agenda was approved unanimously.

The minutes of the Communications Committee meeting of October 6, 2010 were approved unanimously with the insertion of an attribute to Dottie.

The minutes of the Communications Committee meeting of November 17, 2010 were approved unanimously.

Old Business.

Review/discuss status of past committee actions and agenda items, including but not limited to support documents policy and website update recommendations. (Defer website update recommendations to New Business.)

Items identified (plus committee notes in bold) included:

- Email bulletin system still not up and running.
- Calendar listings not changed per recommendations of last meeting.
- FOIA training recommended to Board of Commissioners.
- Support document policy. **Ongoing – still active.**
- Email newsletter –aborted. **Yes, revisit. Additional discussion: Go all email? Make sending a hard copy of newsletter by request only?**

- Convention center marketing manager to be invited to meeting. **Incorporate this into web site review. Think tank with marketing manager- include floorplans, amenities, etc. Low priority.**
- Discussion ensued concerning a policy of a recommendation to make agendas, draft minutes, approved minutes and audio available on the website as soon as practical.
- Discuss changing the format of the agenda to include a synopsis of an agenda item. **Incorporate into support documents discussion.**
- Discussion on policy for live-streaming of video of City meetings. **Low priority.**
- Recommendation made to BOC re upgrading existing audio system in Commissioners' Room. **Follow up on.**
- Draft a recommendation to the City Manager that a policy be put in place to establish procedures for training new employees and periodic updating of training given to current employees in the use of TeamLogic. **Forward to City Manager. Expand to training for ALL employees. Retraining/recurrent training.**
- Policy charges the Communications Committee with the responsibility of reviewing the website for updates on a quarterly basis. **Ongoing.**
- John McGowen of Delaware.net noted he has disclaimer policy types from other cities in three categories: 1) Acceptable use; 2) waiver on content may change and not be accurate; and 3) privacy. He will forward them to us. **Chair to request.**
- Solicit an amended proposal for web maintenance from Delaware.net. **Ongoing.**
- Communications committee needs to be disciplined and start using supporting documents when issuing agenda items. **Create the model. Ongoing.**
- Agenda formatting and associated topics including when citizenry is allowed to talk, e.g. noticing the additional citizen comment during workshops; use of synopsizes, etc. **YES.**

Besides identifying past and agenda items, some accomplishments were noted:

Postcard developed and sent to alert citizens of E-News.

Policy developed for recording of meetings and adopted by Board of Commissioners.

Internal Policy of reviewing web site developed/ adopted by Communications Committee.

Website development and updates.

Hoyte suggested we establish priorities to address past incomplete issues. He also wanted to review earlier correspondence from him to the committee to see if there are further future agenda items.

New Business

New committee chair Stan Mills indicated that former chair Commissioner Pat Coluzzi had contacted him about her desire to step down as chair and off the committee to devote more time to the City Street and Transportation Committee. Stan was sure we all wanted to thank her for her participation on the committee.

As the committee had not met in eight months, Stan reread the mission statement from Home web page of Communications Committee meeting:

The Communications Committee examines issues related to the communications between the City of Rehoboth Beach and its residents and property owners. The Committee was formed to ensure that property owners are kept informed of important issues that face the City of Rehoboth Beach. In particular, the Committee is continually working to refine the City's website as one of the main portals of communications with its residents and property owners.

The Communications Committee is advisory to the Board of Commissioners.

Membership is by appointment by the Board of Commissioners.

Eligible members include property and business owners, residents.

Terms of office are indefinite.

The Committee meets on an "as needed" basis at City Hall.

Current Members:

Commissioner Stan Mills, Chairperson

Dorothy Cirelli

Hoyte Decker

Stan indicated that Dave Henderson of the IT Department indicated he wanted to withdraw from the committee; that he would be glad to participate in any required presentations but wanted to bow out of coming regularly to meetings. Recommendations coming from committee are to be directed to the city manager to then be forwarded by the city manager to Dave to be acted on. Stan noted that this is a different dynamic from the past where we sent recommendations directly to the IT Department. Dottie and Hoyte expressed discomfort with this change in chain of command relative to potential delays in acting on recommendations or changes; Stan was comfortable as he has been using that process to update the Ongoing Business web page.

Stan indicated that with both Pat and Dave Henderson's withdrawals the committee was down to three members and that we would want to put out feelers out at some point to solicit more members. Stan thought we might want to weigh the committee more heavy on citizens versus commissioners. Hoyte and Dottie suggested the make-up be an odd number – 5 or 7 maximum.

Stan noted that the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) is not lengthy but can be complicated. He wanted to note two important rules:

- 1) Seven days notice of our meetings is required with some exceptions which would seldom, if ever, apply to us. We meet that obligation by posting on bulletin board. It will also be posted on the city web site.
- 2) Three is a quorum for this committee. Thus three or more members assembling is a public body. Stan requests when emailing that we reply individually rather than reply all to avoid inadvertently conducting an email serial meeting.

Discuss committee path forward – covered under past issues.

Identify potential future agenda items.

Dottie desires to examine the ability to conduct surveys of citizenry and businesses. (Other items were identified in Old Business.)

Discuss City website and make recommendations for updates.

Discussion pursued on how to best approach a review. Hoyte suggested identifying broad categories of items needing attention. Stan thought we needed to look at individual items on web on screen to discuss and debate.

Dottie referenced the web's deficiencies identified in the committee's October minutes – none have been addressed.

Hoyte suggested we share our personal notes on web updates in advance of a meeting and discussion. Stan thought that would be permissible if we did not discuss notes between ourselves per FOIA.

Discussion pursued on frequency and duration of meetings to review the web site. Hoyte did not want to meet more than 1 ½ hours at a time; he preferred more meetings ½ hour each. Stan disagreed to short meetings with greater frequency and would rather commit to another longer meeting of say 3 hours to start – he doesn't believe ½ hour meetings over 6 months would be justice for the website – lots of easy fixes could be effected sooner. All suggested that the next meeting be only web site review. Dottie suggested that additional input (from those outside the committee) would be beneficial. Stan suggested that the committee first try to resolve the major deficiencies then ask for feedback from broader audience.

The committee would share notes, review on own (no discussion between ourselves) then come to next meeting ready to discuss.

Discussion turned to the status of implementing E-News bulletins. Hoyte questioned the process for formalizing an E-News policy. Stan explained the process.

In response to agenda posted for July 6 Communications Committee, the IT Department sent a test email to all that had signed up to receive city email bulletins rather than just to a select group such as the Communications Committee and city manager. The bad news is that the message sent had incorrect email “sent from” email address, inappropriate message for testing and incorrect formatting. The good news – it precipitated getting it back on track.

Mr. Ferrese, city manager, received notes provided from Stan that were developed by the Communications Committee and Mr. Ferrese worked with the City Secretary and IT Department to formalize the policy for use of E-News. That policy was distributed earlier to members of the Communications Committee. Stan reviewed E-News policy developed by the city manager. (See attached.)

Greg sent a memo to the Board of Commissioners indicating the E-News program would start August 1 with its first message; he attached the E-News policy.

Hoyte asked if there is a standard format for the E-News messages? Stan indicated that they would be based on a template: 1) Receive email; 2) open email to introduction of why receiving the email and if in error how to unsubscribe; and, 3) message/document (e.g. press release or agenda) which is to open automatically, not through having to click on a link. Stan will ask for Communications Committee to receive a test email to see standard format of messages going out. Stan indicated that with this system each email will have only one document; multiple documents (e.g. a press release, then an agenda) will require separate emails.

Dottie questioned that as we are advisory to the Board of Commissioners and city manager, what is to be our interaction with the city manager and what /where does he see the committee in terms of issues we should be involved in? Hoyte added “What is to be relationship with the city manager? Issues of concern to him may not be any of our business and this might be one of them.” Stan suggested we invite the city manager to our next meeting. All agreed.

Dick Cleaveland noted that in regard to the E-News reply address, the Dewey Beach web site indicates that its site is a no-reply site, that if you want to reply use the “Contact Us” feature on the web site: This mailbox is not monitored. If you want to respond use the contact us on the website. Not doing so could inundate the city manager’s email box.

Dick also made note that anyone can sign up anyone else [besides themselves] with our system. Same for unsubscribe. Dewey Beach uses a system to avoid others from unsubscribing others – their system sends an email back to the person unsubscribing to confirm they are requesting to unsubscribe.

The next meeting of the Communications Committee was set for Wednesday, August 3 at 1:00 p.m. Agenda items to include meeting with city manager (limit ½ hour) and then 1½ hour review of website.

Committee members were willing to stay and look at one unresolved issue on the city website, that of board, commission and committee meeting information/schedules.

Currently the flow to access information is:

Click on Agendas... > meeting lists with partial items desired (agenda) > another page for list of agendas, minutes, audio, support documents. Discussion reiterated changes desired and noted in previous meetings. Additionally, Hoyte desired a second route to access individual meeting information through a “City Meeting” link on the home page.

Changes desired in how city meeting information is accessed include:

1. Access through link to boards, commissions and committees.
 - a) Click on Agenda, Minutes and Media Icon , go to
 - b) Reverse chronological listing only by committee name and date, i.e. only list meetings (no agendas, etc). Click on specific meeting date, go to
 - c) Single page for individual meeting with date, time and location and agenda, minutes, audio, support documents.

2. Access via home page.
 - a) Click on “City Meetings” go to
 - b) Comprehensive list of all city meetings in reverse chronological order. Click on specific meeting date, go to
 - c) Single page for individual meeting with date, time and location and agenda, minutes, audio, support documents.

The formats above are based on learning at our last meeting that the audio cannot go on first page technologically – need to confirm.

Retain listing of meetings specific to a board, commission or committee. I.e. maintain two lists.

Dottie reiterated her desire for use of key word search to pull up items from an individual meeting.

Next review topic. Rehoboth in the News. This was removed from website left navigation bar from consensus at earlier meeting to table it until ready. Stan reiterated his concern about RSS feed automatically feeding into this section; he believes articles need to be inserted manually. Recent items for inclusion: Superbeach status and being named top ten Boardwalk . Consensus of committee is to reinstate Rehoboth in the News.

Next review topic: Search feature. Dottie repeated her desire to be able to do a key word search through pdf documents. John McGowen of Delaware.net had been tasked at the last meeting he attended to review search feature – committee wants to follow-up with him on this in a future session.

Dick Cleaveland said he thought one page on the web site referenced the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) but he could not find them. No one could pinpoint where they might be.

A summary of some action items for next meeting include:

- Home page – look into calendar of meetings > click to comprehensive list of all city meetings > individual information on the specific meeting
- Rehoboth in the News – reinstate and manually insert articles to “market” Rehoboth Beach.
- More research on search features by Delaware.net – provide demonstrations, search items

Meeting adjourned at 2:55p.m.

Minutes authored by Stan Mills