Web Committee Meeting Minutes
January 6, 2016
Shutesbury Town Hall – Technology Room

Members present: Chairman Paul Vlach, Webmaster Fred Steinberg, Michael DeChiara (also Select Board Liaison), Town Clerk Susie Mosher, and Jamie Malcolm-Brown.

Guests: Finance Committee Chair Gary Hirshfield, and Leslie Bracebridge

Minutes taken by Paul

Agenda items:
1 - Resignation - received from Willa Jarnagin.
2 - Review / approve past minutes - November 17, 2015 meeting.
3 - Google analytics info - insights, discussion
4 - Selectboard memo stemming from All Boards Meeting October 20th. Review, discuss any action items or follow up required of web Committee. Memo (still in draft form?) to be provided by Michael DeChiara.
5 - Web site review and discussion. Content, format, features, design, feedback requests, etc.
6 - Items not anticipated.
7 - Next meeting date:

Paul called the meeting to order at 7:07 PM

Paul acknowledged Gary Hirshfield and introductions were made all around. Paul asked what Gary was interested in, and in what way we could assist him. Gary said he was a bit of a 'meeting junkie', and that he wanted to be a part of the effort to enhance communication in town, especially in regards to town government, and understood, from the Oct. 20, 2015 All Boards Meeting, that the Web Committee would be playing a large part in that. Paul acknowledged that we were expecting to help facilitate that effort, which was being led by the Selectboard.   Gary asked if he would be able to participate in the discussions during the meeting, or if that would be a hindrance, and Paul said that would be fine, and if it became a problem, they would discuss it further.

In light of Gary's focus, Paul moved directly to **agenda item #4.**

Paul asked Michael to share the latest version of the Selectboard memo stemming from the All Boards meeting and discussion. Michael stated it was still in draft form, which he had shared in an email. Paul asked if he had incorporated the suggested edits he had sent back, and Michael said he had not. Paul asked that he look for them, and incorporate them, as there were a number of informational errors he felt should be adjusted. Paul asked Michael to recap or read the memo he had brought with him.

He did so, reading the memo which focused heavily on setting up town email accounts for every entity, with a designated handler who would acknowledge receipt, share it as the group (board, committee, department, etc) desired, and following a consistent response protocol to be decided by each group.

Susie asked about Electronic Receipt Requests, which she sometimes gets as a component of incoming email; and whether she could set it up for her replies. Fred said no, not in an automated fashion.

Michael continued, sharing the Selectboard (SB) desire that all groups post their Minutes online. Susie noted that she knows groups who have very real reasons not to post their Minutes.

Gary, asked if we knew who is NOT receiving email. Fred said no, and asked if we should develop a list? Paul noted that Susie had planned to do that verification as she handled her Town Clerk duties, as asked if she'd been able to do so. She said she had not, yet. Fred offered to compile a list to compare the Elected and Appointed officials lists to the existing assigned Town email accounts, to identify the gaps.

Paul and Michael talked about how groups should be utilizing the Town Announce email list; and the website, to share their info. Fred recapped how that has worked in the past; posting new info on webpages, then sending out announcement emails to draw attention to it.

Susie said she sees the CPC – Community Preservation Committee and Broadband Committee updating their web info and posting their Minutes, but said the next step – getting others to do the same – is not going to happen. They are resistant to taking on more work.

Gary said that some groups have a larger need to update their content, based on what they do... such as Broadband.

Michael restated his vision of assigning 'tags' to all content, so people can search the website more easily. Those posting would assign multiple possible search tags to everything they upload, and then items wouldn't need to be put on dedicated pages. Paul said he thought that would further complicate the updating process, didn't understand how that would work without actual pages, and would have to see it done to understand it. He thought it would be intimidating to the more casual website editors we have now.

Michael explained that by using Content Management tags, you can feed multiple "pages" either with visible tags, or just to feed the search process. Essentially it's an online relational database, that could include 'people profiles' that plug into their roles as committee or board members, with the potential to have full contact info listed for each of them.

Susie said some people ask her for info, and she tries to refer them to the website; but often they don't want to go there looking for it; they just want an immediate answer. Also, many in town don't have good internet access; or don't know about things like the Town Calendar on the website.

Fred warns that the start up, design and upkeep of the site is done by volunteers and will require a lot of time and expertise. It can be a real burden to do.

Susie / Fred discussed the Drupal update vs the website 'architecture' build: First one is necessary, the second is optional and much more ambitious. MD – it might be time for the Selectboard to commit to a budget for communication and the necessary support and contracts for the website redesign and build.

Gary H.: Can the web committee come up with a number ($$) for that?
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Jamie – For a very small team, with us still doing a lot of the work, maybe $10,000 to $20,000.
Gary – Can we get people together to envision this, and define the scope of what needs to be done by a vendor? Right now, the web committee seemed scattered.
Susie – that's the definition of small town volunteer run government. There may be many who do not want to get involved.
MD wants to push for renaming of Web Committee to the Communications Committee
Leslie – there are canned programs out there, but they wouldn't necessarily meet our needs.
MD – agreed its a big jump, but best done by doing our own. He looked at 53 municipal websites, and many were horrible.

Gary H/MD/JMB – are to develop parameters of a new design and build upon which to formulate a request to finance committee. Discussion of whether it is a capital expense or not. Gary H – finance committee can work that out.
Susie – There is no comprehensive database of town emails and contacts list, including phone numbers, etc. This should be included in the proposal and would be of great value. Also, the next Our Town mailing should have a short note about website resources. (Note: Paul did create that for the next mailing.)

MD: Classified page – Fred created it, a 'help wanted' – but the Town Admin never got back to him to refine it and approve it, so it has not gone 'live', accessible and linked from visible webpages. MD to follow up with TA Torres on this, so it will be made available to the public.

Leslie – Any new design must take into account future changes, such as voter info, minimum wage notices, open meeting law, conflict of interest, etc.

MD – described his vision of how tagging would work for that.

Gary H – It comes down to figuring out the communications infrastructure first, so the design will fit that.
Susie – She is still learning the best ways to communicate – in person, email, web, etc.
Fred/Jamie – software called Slack can be used, or incorporated into the new design, to communicate between groups or individuals.

MD – that type of system may not be easy for many to embrace, or even be interested in trying it.

Gary H – The best communication (ex: the current regional schools issues discussed last night) are done one on one or in small groups, rather than 15+ at a time.
Leslie – Aside from the money, we must plan on a manager for the project, and the cost of managing it.

MD – moves to recommend to the select board that the web committee be changed to the communications committee. Susie seconded.
Susie – the other communication tool is the Our Town newsletter, coordinated by Janie gray and Linda Baines. The motion was then amended to be for a Web Communications Committee. Voted unanimously. MD will bring that to the select board.

MD moved, Fred seconded to accept the minutes of November 17, 2015. Voted unanimously.

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Fred noted that Google Analytics was turned on, and committee members should start to look at them.

A subcommittee was formed, consisting of MD, Fred and Jamie, to define the scope of the new web design and build. Susie – look at expert and volunteers roles, both at first, and ongoing.

Next agenda – review Google Analytics for the site; follow up on committee name change - did the select board approve it?; and finance committee vs web redesign issue.

Paul will purge the What's New section of the home page, and add a note to ask viewers to send any design or content change suggestions to web@shutesbury.org

Next meeting date – Friday Feb 12, 2016 at 6pm

Meeting adjourned at 9:06 PM