

Communications Advisory Committee Meeting
Thursday, November 3, 2022, 6:30 pm
Wheelwright Room
Exeter, NH 03833

MINUTES

Present: Martha McEntee (Chairperson), Chris Zigmont, Lindsay Sonnett, Herb Moyer, Bob Glowacky, Andy Swanson, and Nancy Belanger (Select Board Rep Alternate).

Absent: Nina Braun

The meeting convened at 6:30 pm.

Welcome New Member, Meeting Schedule, Possible Alternate Voting Members. Martha welcomed Chris Zigmont to the Committee and thanked him for volunteering to help us with our work. To introduce Chris to the group, she asked the members to talk a bit about their backgrounds, their interests in communications and their reasons for joining the committee.

After reviewing the calendar of town board and committee meetings, Bob suggested that the first Thursday of the at 6:30 pm was usually open so the members agreed to adopt that as the Committees regular monthly meeting date and time going forward. In December, however, the meeting would be moved to the second Thursday, December 8, 2022, to avoid conflicting with the town's Christmas celebrations scheduled for the first Thursday, December 1, 2022.

Martha also raised the possibility of appointing two alternate voting members to the committee to alleviate the problem of failure to meet a quorum when a regular voting member is absent. Nancy will raise this with the Select Board.

Approval of Minutes. On a motion by Lindsay , seconded by Chris, the June 22, 2022 meeting minutes were unanimously approved.

Action Items:

Social Media Policy & Best Practices Guide

Bob and Martha reviewed the draft of the revised social media policy , which had been sent to the committee members. They noted that the town supports the use of social media to enhance its ability to engage and collaborate with the community and specifically:

- to provide information about Town services, programs and events to its residents
- to encourage dialogue among residents about Town matters
- to provide an avenue for communication among residents and the Town about issues of concern, especially service-related matters.

Accordingly, the town's social media accounts and platforms are not intended to be traditional public forums for the general exchange of ideas and viewpoints, but rather limited public forums for discussion of specific services, programs and events. The distinction between a "traditional public forum" and a

“limited purpose forum” is important for First Amendment purposes. The town needs to be able to moderate the discussion on its social media platforms to achieve its goals and can do so effectively only if they are considered to be limited purpose forums. In a traditional public forum, such as a park or public meeting place, the government cannot usually not restrict someone from expressing anything they want unless the government has a critical purpose to do so and adopts the most narrow measures possible to achieve that goal.

Bob expressed concerned about the practicality of moderating the sites and removing non-conforming comments and the members discussed this. Chris suggested creating a do’s and don’ts guide for participants. The members noted that different departments and committees would have different communications goals. Bob noted that the structure of different platforms could restrict how we could present our policies and practices to users on them

Nancy was impressed with the policy and was pleased that the committee is looking at this.

Martha plans to go back and to further clarify some of the text, and correct typos. Martha and Bob will review the draft with the Town Manager before taking it to the Select Board for review and approval.

Lindsay left at 7:00pm.

Overall Communications Plan/Best Practices Guide

Bob reported that his work is continuing and that he would give a more detailed update at a later date.

Communications Coordinator Update

- **Public Safety Complex Project**

Bob reported that communications efforts for the public safety complex have included a prominent website posting, various social media posts, and video walkthroughs on YouTube. He noted that a website FAQ and a FAQ document are in progress. An open house is also planned.

- **Digital Newsletters**

Bob reported that a recent Department Head meeting led to the Town Manager suggesting that we expand our digital newsletter presence. Discussions centered around having departments submit information for a comprehensive quarterly newsletter that could potentially become monthly or biweekly in the future.

He noted that Exeter TV already distributes a short biweekly newsletter and a monthly newsletter so we could potentially build off of that. In addition, Parks and Rec has over 6,000 people on the list for their newsletter.

The members discussed how to generate interest in digital newsletters.

Herb suggested using a funny PSA.

Chris noted that in the commercial world surveys, quizzes, contests and the offer of free products are used as draws. He also suggested physical methods, such as signage and QR codes around town. Bob suggested a banner across the Town Hall.

Nancy bemoaned the loss the *Exeter Newsletter* as a traditional source of information that was widely looked to by the entire community and that has not been replaced.

Chris noted that in today's world we need to meet people where they are. He said that as a citizen he would like to learn about things earlier rather than after the fact. This may mean that more money will need to be spent so the town can communicate effectively on social media.

Martha said that it might be helpful to focus on specific topics such as public safety complex project to learn how we can better get specific messages out to the public.

Chris agreed that we should use these projects as a test case for how to do things. But he also said that we need to continue to develop best practices and policies and have them in place so we can communicate effectively.

Nancy stressed that the CAC should not be taking positions but getting out unbiased information

Nancy –noted that the various departments don't use a single email service and suggested that it would make sense to have a unified service. Bob and Andy noted that it would take leadership from Select Board and Town Manager to make that happen.

Herb moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:14pm. And there being no further business the meeting adjourned.

The Next meeting will be held on December 8th, 2022 at 6:30pm.
