# COMMUNICATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

# TOWN OF EXETER SELECT BOARD

**AUGUST 23, 2021** 

# **OVERVIEW**

- CAC mandate and work since 2018
- Key findings
- Recommendations
- Discussion
- Next steps

## ROLE OF THE COMMITTEE

- Created by the Select Board in 2018
- Seven members, a Select Board rep, and a member of the IT st
- Mission: to "evaluat[e] the ways in which the Town communicates with the public and ensur[e] that strategies maximize citizen engagement across multiple platforms and determin[e] the strategies that could be strengthened and mov[e] forward with ways for improvement."

## CAC WORK TO DATE

- Analyzed current town communications channels and usage
- Researched website alternatives, best practices, other towns
- Conducted Communications Survey in 2020 and gathered informal feedback
- Bob Glowacky served as a resource to town departments
- Wrote "plain-English" summaries of Warrant Articles for Town Meeting 2019, 2020, and 2021
- Consolidated findings and recommendations in this report



### Exeter Town Meeting Voter Guide: Articles 4-6 explained

#### MOST POPULAR

- 1 What's Up Doc column: Is foreign accent syndrome for real?

  May 25 at 10:00 AM
- 2 Looper column: How to stay Christian after graduation May 27 at 11:22 AM
- 3 Blog: Creating Optimum Ventilation in a Small House May 27 at 5:17 PM
- 4 Blog: How Often Should You Vacuum Your House May 27 at 4:41 PM

#### **OUR PICKS**



#### **UPCOMING EVENTS**

Create Tickets | Sign In





Posted Mar 2, 2020 at 6:04 PM

EXETER — For the last four weeks, the town of Exeter's Communications Committee has presented summaries of the 26 warrant articles appearing on the March 10 Town Meeting ballot. Here are the remaining articles on the ballot. All of the articles can be viewed in their entirety on the town's website at <a href="http://bit.ly/WarrantFactSheet">http://bit.ly/WarrantFactSheet</a> and <a href="https://www.exeternh.gov/townclerk/elections">https://www.exeternh.gov/townclerk/elections</a>.

Article 4 (\$10.85M Recreation Park expansion)

# THE BASIC QUESTION

How Do We Want to Present our Town to the

Public?



### **Select Board Guidance**

- Communications Guidelines . Establish guidelines for communications by departments operating as part of the "Town of Exeter"
- Policies and Best Practices. We need policies and best practices to ensure town staff communicate clearly, accurately, and effectively

## **Communications Coordinator**

## Designate a Communications Coordinator with a Dual Role

- A resource to help each department deliver its messages effectively
- A quality controller to assure that information under the umbrella of the "Town of Exeter" is readily available in a cohere and beneficial manner as provided under the guidelines and be practices

## **Communications Coordinator**

- Department Responsibility . Each department remains responsible for providing content about its activities that is responsive to its users, as well as accurate, and timely
- Staff Member for Communications

   Each department should designate a staff member to be responsible for its communication (more on this below)

# RECOMMENDATIONS Communications Coordinator

 Not a Micromanager . CAC is not recommending that all communications be funneled through or micromanaged by Communications Coordinator

 TBD . Select Board and Town Manager to determine how best to fill this role

# Staff Training & Designated Communications Staff

- Training . Communications Coordinator assists with basic training on communications policies and best practices
- Point Person . Each department designates a communications point person and a backp
- Job Description. Communications point person's communication dutions are clearly defined in employee's job description and included in performance review
- Updates. Training yearly or as needed with changes in technology or best practices

# TOWN COMMUNICATIONS PRIORITIES

- Website
- Use of push notifications, alerts, and subscriptions (texting and email "marketing")
- Social media presence

## NOT COVERED BY THIS REPORT.....

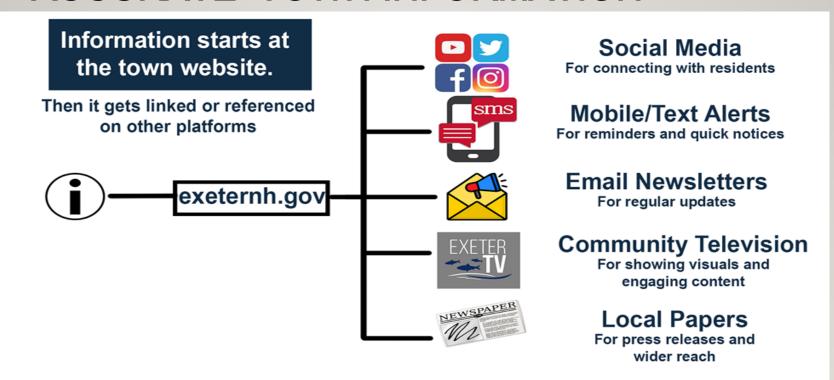
- This report does not cover ExeterTV or other more traditional communications channels, such as press releases, public forums, printed newsletters, and phone communications.
- Concerns specific to residents who do not use computers, tablets, smartphones or social media. To be addressed separately.

## WEBSITE - EXETERNH.GOV

Primary source for up -to-date and accurate town information.

- Image. Establish a positive and attractive web presence for the town
- Practical . Help residents find practical information
- News. Prominently display upo-date official news, calendar of meetings and events, announcements, and alerts
- Forms. Provide printable/scannable online forms and applications, an answer FAQs, to simplify and reduce the workload of town staff and officials
- Community . Foster a sense of connection to the local community

# PRIMARY SOURCE FOR UP -TO -DATE & ACCURATE TOWN INFORMATION



## WEBSITE ISSUES

- Platform is Fine . Current platform provide by Municode is as good as any available
- More Effective Use . Town staff need to use the website more effectively
- No Webmaster . No webmaster or central coordination of website content

## WEBSITE ISSUES

- Inconsistent presentation onfusing lack of uniformity and predictability for the user
- Department landing pages look very different
- Examples follow

### Town Clerk

View

dit

Revisions

Clone content

#### Town Clerk

DAYS WE ARE CLOSED IN JULY

PAY ONLINE SERVICES

HOW TO SET UP AN ACCOUNT

LOOK UP YOUR VOTER INFORMATION

**BOAT INFORMATION** 

HOW TO REGISTER TO VOTE

Boat Registration

Checklist Supervisor

+ Elections

Landlord Agent

+ Motor Vehicle

NH Hunting and Fishing License

**OHRV** Registration

Pay Online

Town Clerk

Town Reports

**Transfer Station Permits** 

+ Vital Records

FOLLOW HO



#### Parks and Recreation

View Edit Revisions Clone content

#### Parks and Recreation

#### What's happening now



#### Park Street Playground Renovation Survey

The Town of Exeter is conducting a survey to get valuable feedback from the community on there thoughts and public opinion of the playground located on Park Street. This survey will provide the town with helpful information to ensure that the renovation of the new playground meets needs of the community. What amenities would you like to see at the new playground? We are looking at a sustainable playground such as the one at Kid's Park. These amenities will last 30 plus years and bring enjoyment to the surrounding neighborhoods. These are only examples and not all

elements will be able to be implemented in the design. A final design will come out from your suggestions.

Please click on link to fill out a survey.

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAlpQLSdetVTr8sm3n4nU0l8URpp5PCmuR36yZrnGSs iWArtOl0j 6w/viewform?usp=sf link

Read more



#### 2021 Summer Concert Series

Sing, dance, and have fun with our weekly Summer Concert Series

Each year our series showcases high-quality artists featuring a variety of genres of music. It's one of Exeter's best summer traditions. Our department has been doing this series for over 30 years now!

Concert Times: 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

LOCATION: Swasev Parkway 316 Water Street, Exeter.

Read more



#### New Hampshire E-Sports League - Fall

The newly formed NH Esports league consists of more than 10 different Parks & Recreation Departments from across New Hampshire. This league, which is organized and officiated by GGLeagues, offers families the opportunity to game in a safe and monitored environment. Not only will **Town Facility Use Permits** 

General Infomation

Online Registration

Facilities & Parks

**Programs** 

Trips

Aquatics

Team Schedules

**FOLLOW US** 

#### **Public Works**

View Edit Revisions Clone content

#### **Public Works**



The Public Works Department is committed to serving the community with excellence. We strive to maintain the road system in the best condition possible, provide a clean and ample supply of water for people to enjoy, and dispose of wastewater in a way that does not pollute.

We provide for the proper disposal of residential solid waste, ensure warm and clean municipal buildings, and maintain a safe, reliable vehicle and equipment fleet. We are committed to rendering quality work while exercising strict fiscal responsibility. Our commitment to the preservation of the town's antiquity parallels our desire to provide a progressive avenue into the next century.

#### More from our department:



We're hiring!

The Exeter, NH Public Works Department is currently seeking the following full-time positions:

Engineer Technician Heavy Equipment Operator **HVAC & Plumbing Maintenance Technician** Mechanic Water/Sewer Heavy Equipment System Operator

Read more

#### Curbside Collection

Update 8/18/21: Trash and recycle pick-up will be delayed one day due to

#### Contact Information

Subscribe to News

Water Restrictions

- **Drinking Water**
- Engineering
- Highway
- Maintenance
- Reports and Studies

Stormwater

Transfer Station

- Trash and Recycling
- Wastewater

#### **FOLLOW US**

#### CONTACT INFORMATION

#### Public Works

13 Newfields Road Exeter, NH 03833 PublicWorks@exeternh.gov

**Edit Contact Details** 

View Full Contact Details

## WEBSITE ISSUES

- Unreliable content
- Information is sometimes in multiple places and out-of-date
- Video

# WEBSITE ISSUES

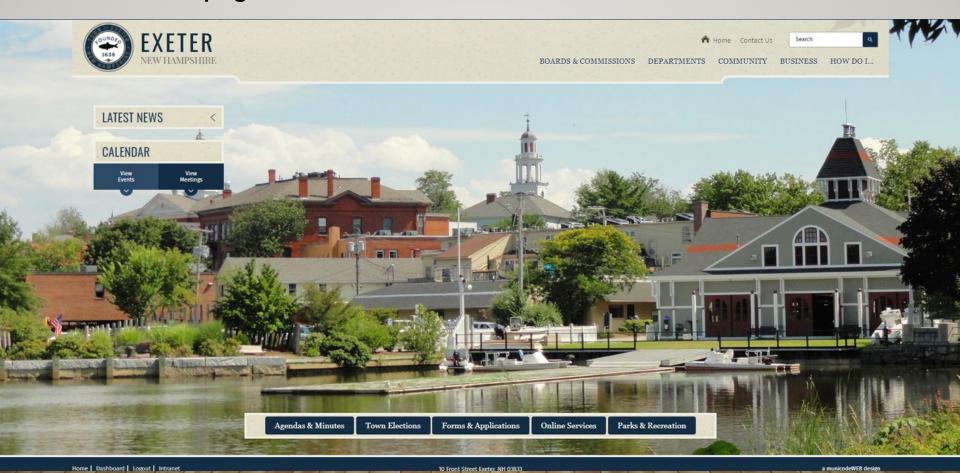
Poor search functionality

Video

## SOME EASY FIXES

- For ~\$1,000 we can redesign the website to more prominently feature upcoming meetings/events and highlight town news
- Photos next

## Current Homepage -- Latest News and Calendar items are hidden



### Proposed New Homepage -- events and news are highlighted

#### **Employment Opportunities with the Town of Exeter**



BOARDS & COMMISSIONS DEPARTMENTS COMMUNITY BUSINESS HOW DO L...



# TEXTING, EMAIL, ALERTS, SUBSCRIPTIONS

 Survey results and trends show that people want to receive information instead of look for information

"Push" notifications are already being used by some departments

Examples

## "PUSH" EXAMPLES

### **DPW Construction Updates**

 DPW Staff update town on paving, sewer work, road closures, and more via email marketing service

### Parks and Recreation

- Email marketing program with large distribution list to promote services, offerings, and other department news

### **Exeter TV monthly and Biweekly Newsletter**

- TV staff monthly email with new content, upcoming meetings, and other town news
- Email blast to promote The Exeter Biweekly Report video with links to supplement the video and point people toward related content

# RECOMMENDATION EXPAND PUSH NOTIFICATIONS

- More newsletters with contributions from other departments to make it more "official" and create a place people expect to find reliable information
- Texting services to reach a wider demographic
- Texting services for instant notifications with the least amount of work for residents
- Texting is matching and outpacing email as the preferred methodomication

## NEED TO REPLACE MYEXETERNH APP

- MyExeter NH app was adopted to allow twoay communication between residents and town staffreporting issues
- Not well used by residents or town staff
- Town already possesses mobile notification services through EMS/PD/FD- Rave Mobile

## **COMMUNICATIONS BUDGET**

### Possible Reallocation of Funds and/or Personnel

• The 2019 Carsey Report noted that, "Departments for the large part spend less than 1% of their operating budgets on their communication efforts (64% of departments)."

## **COMMUNICATIONS BUDGET**

# Where should the Town place "Communications" items in the Town Budget?

- Much infrastructure is now under Information Technology but no operational budget
- Where would a Communications Coordinator fit
- Create line items for communications/marketing costs in department budgets

## Other Next Steps...

- Draft Resident Handbook/Guide
- CAC to research and evaluate town's current and potential future usage of other communication platforms
- Incorporate all communication platforms into
   Communication Policies and Best Practices document
- Revamp Exeter TV policies (last done in 2010)