

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 staff
- 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



Seacoast Coronavirus News

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 <http://bit.ly/WarrantFactSheet> and <https://www.exeternh.gov/townclerk/elections>.

Article 4 (\$10.85M Recreation Park expansion)

THE BASIC QUESTION

How Do We Want to Present our Town to the Public?



RECOMMENDATIONS

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

RECOMMENDATIONS

Communications Coordinator

Designate a Communications Coordinator with a Dual Role

1. A **resource** to help each department deliver its messages effectively
2. A **quality controller** to assure that information under the umbrella of the “Town of Exeter” is readily available in a coherent and beneficial manner as provided under the guidelines and best practices

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

RECOMMENDATIONS

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 backup
- **Job Description** . Communications point person's communication duties 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 up-to-date official news, calendar of meetings and events, announcements, and alerts
- **Forms** . Provide printable/scannable online forms and applications, and 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

Information starts at
the town website.

Then it gets linked or referenced
on other platforms



exeternh.gov



Social Media

For connecting with residents

Mobile/Text Alerts

For reminders and quick notices

Email Newsletters

For regular updates

Community Television

For showing visuals and
engaging content

Local Papers

For press releases and
wider reach

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 ➡ confusing
lack of uniformity and predictability for
the user
- Department landing pages look very different
- Examples follow

Town Clerk

[View](#)[Edit](#)[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

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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 their 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/1FAIpQLSdetVTr8sm3n4nU0i8URpp5PCmuR36yZmGSS_iWArtO10j6w/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: Swasey 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

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Public Works

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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

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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



EXETER
NEW HAMPSHIRE

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LATEST NEWS <

CALENDAR

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Proposed New Homepage -- events and news are highlighted



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Upcoming Events

- 8/23 - Select Board
- 8/24 - Con Com
- 8/25 - BRC
- 8/26 - Planning Board

[View Calendar Here](#)

LATEST NEWS



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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 method of communication

NEED TO REPLACE MYEXETERNH APP

- MyExeter NH app was adopted to allow two way communication between residents and town staff reporting 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)