

Ideas for Modernized UP Town Website Policy, Rules, & Municipal Structure Committee Meeting 12-8-15 (Updated by LV 12-12-15)

Attendees: Linda Verrill (chair), Brad Hess (member), Joe Thompson (member), Jarrett Lee, Bruce Burrows, Mary Baugher, Pegi Black

The committee and town residents with experience and expertise in website development met to review the developing list of ideas (see below) for a modernized town website and to preview websites identified as having features we may want to emulate.

Additions to the list of ideas contributed by this meeting are in red below.

Key is to consider how, with minimal available resources, the Town can provide information likely to enable residents to make well informed decisions consistent with democratic principles and processes.

Goals for modernizing the UP Town Website: Increase the transparency of the Town government operating procedures, processes and products; improve upon the functionality and appearance of the current Town website; appropriate balance of marketing and substantive content.

Functions and Features of a Modernized UP Town Website

- Easy to navigate (simple user interface especially for users less comfortable or familiar with technology)
- Follow professional guidelines for web content (WCAG Checklist - see <http://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/wcag.php>)
- Easy to update by Town Hall staff (Content Management Systems) (e.g., Drupal [also Civic Plus – added by Chair Verrill])
- Place for Council meeting and Committee documents – accessible by public (file sharing)
- Items of current interest box(es)
- Calendar
- Analytics-enabled search functionality (Fuzzy matching – search does not need to be exact)
- Tree display of location within website (aka Breadcrumbs)
- Searching by topic turns up all relevant documents, including meeting minutes (revised)
- Online form completion and submission and e-sign and payment capabilities

- Able to serve content to a wide range of devices (Responsive design)
- Ability to archive and play video
- Include opportunities for 2-way communication – sign up for notifications
- Consider a way to notify residents when new information is posted – opt-in for specific information
- Should we develop an “Open Government Policy and Statement” for display on the website?
- Cohesive appearance throughout website. Any reused pages from old website should be updated to reflect new design
- Clicking on an external website should open a new tab
- TBD – hovering or tabbing from major links on the page
- Considerations for 508 compliance
- “Print format” capabilities
- Good contrast
- Sleek look
- Optimize content “above the fold”
- Conservative use of photos/graphics/videos – lean toward more text rather than vice versa

Other

- [Minutes should have clickable links]
- Do some usability testing before standing up

Many information transparency and process transparency objectives can be achieved with a modernized town website

Local Agency Website Transparency Opportunities. 2012. Institute for Local Government. www.ca-ilg.org/WebsiteTransparency (accessed August 25, 2015).

- Potential Web content
 - Decision-making information
 - Info on council, committees, and commissions
 - Agendas and supporting materials for upcoming meetings
 - Meeting notices
 - Minutes and agendas for past meetings
 - Archive of video or audio recordings
 - Explanation of how the public can participate; other information
 - Town Code and Charter [including all updates] in Optimal Character Resolution (OCR)
 - Financial and Human Resource Information
 - Current and past year budget and explanatory information; graphs, charts
 - Revenue source information
 - Treasurer’s monthly report
 - Salary and compensation information
 - Job descriptions

- Contracts and purchasing
 - Current contracts: legal counsel, consultants, etc.
 - Current RFP's
 - Purchasing policies
 - Information on doing business with Town Hall
 - Labor agreements and personnel rules and documents
 - Financial policies
 - Permits
 - Information and application forms
 - Regulations
 - Code Enforcement
 - Contact information for staff who can answer questions
 - Elected Official Information
 - Names, biographies, terms, contact info
 - Information on powers and duties of position
 - How to run for office
 - Voter registration information
 - Departments, general contact info
 - Police (Chief's ideas)
 - House Check forms available online
 - Complaint forms available online
 - Crime alert feature
 - Public Works
 - Disclosure, Public Service Ethics and Transparency
 - News – and info about signing up for news

Reviewed examples of nice (some are award-winning) government web pages (bolded links considered by meeting attendees as the best examples of the list):

<http://www.mountainview.gov/default.asp>

<http://www.el-cerrito.org/>

<http://hyattsville.org/>

<http://www.collegeparkmd.gov/>

<http://dc.gov/> (has a "listen function" and has "open data portal")

<https://www.oakgov.com/>

<https://bouldercolorado.gov/>

www.thurmont.com (Jim's addition)

<http://www.greenbeltmd.gov/> (Chair Verrill added post meeting)