

# Delaware Municipal Web Developers Group

## MEETING SUMMARY

**August 5, 2010**

Delaware Public Archives

Dover, Delaware

1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

### AGENDA

#### 1. Attendees/Absentees

**Cheryl Carney** (Magnolia), **Dorothy Cheatham** (Kent Co.), **Dick Cleaveland** (Dewey Beach), **Marian Delaney** (New Castle), **Mark Deshon** (IPA-University of Delaware), **Sarah Ferguson** (Felton), **John Giles** (Elsmere), **Terri Hudson** (Milford), **Greg Hughes** (GIC), **Dana Johnston** (Newark), **Kristen Krenzer** (Middletown), **Tina Law** (Elsmere), **Richard Maly** (Camden), **Debbie Morris** (Sussex Co.), **Jim Plumley** (Camden), **Barbara Roberts** (Odessa), **Lindsey Shallcross** (Bethany Beach), and **Pam Smith** (South Bethany)

plus guest **Diane Cahall** (Magnolia)

#### Absentees:

**Win Abbott** (Fenwick Island), **Doris Adkins** (Greenwood), **Tyler Anaya** (Harrington), **Cathy Beaver** (Townsend), **Barbara Belli** (Wilmington), **Jennifer Brook** (Smyrna), **Al Bradbury** (Newport), **Lee Brubaker** (Ocean View), **"Sam" Callender** (Cheswold), **Kathleen Clifton** (Delaware City), **Agnes DiPietrantonio** (Fenwick Island), **Alice Erickson** (Lewes), **Tom Glenn** (Sussex Co.), **David Henderson** (Rehoboth Beach), **Lisa Kail** (Bethany Beach), **Mark Kennedy** (Kent Co.), **Wendy King** (Newport), **Kate Layton** (Dover/Kent Co. MPO), **Jim McElhinney** (New Castle Co.), **Ed McNeeley** (GIC), **Tracy Mulligan** (Bethany Beach), **Sue Muncey** (Clayton), **Tricia Newcomer** (Seaford), **David Potter** (Middletown), **Vikki Prettyman** (Blades), **Tom Roth** (Henlopen Acres), **Jesse Savage** (Bridgeville), **John Schatzschneider** (Harrington), **Danny Schweers** (The Ardens), **Jamie Smith** (Laurel), **Angela Townsend** (Georgetown), and **Bonnie Walls** (Bridgeville)

Mark Deshon thanked the Town of Camden for providing lunch, and Cheryl Carney of Magnolia for preparing it.

#### 2. Website Status Reports

**Bethany Beach** – Lindsey noted that nothing had changed but that the BeachCam has gotten a lot of hits on the website.

**Camden** – Richard reported that Camden will be talking to Greg about redoing the website. Added “Other Governments” in the menu, which has links to the federal government, state of Delaware, Kent County, Delaware towns and cities, and nonprofit organizations. Mark said it is a good idea to have links to similar government bodies. Mark was concerned that the nonprofit links were graphic heavy and wondered if it could negatively affect their rating in a Google search (i.e., were descriptive “ALT” tags being used).

**Dewey Beach** – Dick is training the Town Clerk to manage the website. Dick put up a BeachCam. It cycles from the left side of the beach to the right side of the beach. The link to the BeachCam is on a different site than the main site. It is difficult to get input from the staff for the “What’s New in Dewey Beach” section. Dick highlighted the “Movies on the Beach” and “History” pages.

**Elsmere** – Launched its new website in May. John thanked Greg Hughes and his staff (Delaware GIC) for designing a respectable-looking webpage. He said all the credit goes to Greg and his staff and added that the town never received the answer “no” from them. The citizens love the website. It is much more informative. The town takes payments through a third party (Official Payments) on the website. They also have retained their popular CivicPlus add-on “Request Tracker.” Mark inferred that the homepage might not be the best place for the entire Mayor’s Message and suggested sending the reader to another page after the first paragraph. That would move important things like Trash Collection up higher on the homepage. John noted that his bosses want it the way it is.

**Felton** – Trying to implement more blogging. Mark suggested that Sarah use fewer colors on the homepage and maybe “box” information rather than using curly art (the curly art may distract more than it helps).

Sarah will be attending a WordPress conference in Savannah, Ga., on August 19, 20, and 21. There will be one full day of beginner seminars. There will also be WordPress conferences in Baltimore on September 11 and in Philadelphia on October 30. The cost is \$25. If interested in attending, email Sarah at [sferguson@townoffelton.com](mailto:sferguson@townoffelton.com). Sarah will send a report to Mark after attending the conference.

**Middletown** – Nothing new since last meeting.

**Magnolia** – The new website is up and running. Cheryl thanked Greg’s office (GIC) and said they did a tremendous job. It is really nice and it was free. Heritage Today gives the history of Magnolia. Need to add a link for their “Go Green” campaign. The website is a work in progress. Cheryl said they always get inquiries from people who are not in the corporate limits of the town. Mark

suggested putting something on the website referring them to Kent County; this might help cut down on phone calls.

**Newark** – Dana reported that they've started online registration for parks and recreation programs using Max Solutions. It has been very successful. Mark noted that there is a lot of white space in the middle. Dana said it changes with whatever is coming up in the future. Mark will take a look at the website to see if he can give recommendations for a better and simpler way to structure the navigation. Dana noted that she only does the content management, not the design.

**New Castle** – Marian said that she and City Manager Cathryn Thomas had met with Mark and Greg. The city has budgeted to work with them. Mark inquired about timing. Apparently, the City has a contract ready and will be in touch with Mark.

**Odessa** – The website is in need of redevelopment. Barbara is meeting with Greg after this meeting for the first time to talk about transitioning to a WordPress site.

**South Bethany** – Pam noted that the Budget and Finance pages have been added.

**Kent County** – Dorothy took the suggestion from a previous meeting to delete the word "Navigation" above and next to menu items, but it is still there. She noted that she is not the webmaster and that the website is maintained by several departments. They added a search area on the homepage (you have to scroll down to get to it). Mark suggested moving the search area up to where the word "Navigation" is. The Row Office dropdown menu includes the Register of Wills and Recorder of Deeds. There is not much information in this section yet because Dorothy just put it out there. Estate offers that have occurred within the prior month have to be posted. Previously, they were posted at the courthouse and published in a periodic newspaper for three consecutive weeks, but the Register of Wills requested that be posted on the website. The law was changed in February, and postings can be done on the website and/or at the courthouse. They are still published in the paper, too. Postings will be kept on the website for 12 months. The P.R.I.D.E. page contains information pertaining to property such as assessment information and sewer bill information.

**Sussex County** – Posted the top 100 delinquent taxpayers in a PDF file. This page got over 1,000 hits in the first 24 hours. Debbie wants to rename "What's New" to "Press Releases." They are working on revising the tax section. Currently, one can look up a property and see what is paid and what is not paid. In the future one will be able to look at a year and see the original tax

information and any payments that have been made against it and get a balance due. Debbie asked for suggestions for displaying a history page.

**Delaware.gov** – The site is totally new. Everything changed except the top header. GIC looks at the website statistically and aesthetically every 12 to 18 months. They also look for trends. They got rid of things that were not working (i.e., according to Web statistics). They cut down on text. Graphic design work had to be done, which took time. They made Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and WordPress a staple on the homepage. Facebook, Twitter, and WordPress update automatically every 30 minutes. YouTube updates are not automatic. Flickr is at the bottom. Greg approves all photos submitted on Flickr according to GIC guidelines. They entered the Best of the Web contest in early July. Greg highlighted the Shop.Delaware.gov page (the state’s online store) and gave each municipality at the meeting the Heritage Commission book—Man and Nature in Delaware. This book and others are available to purchase on Shop.Delaware.gov.

**IPA** – Replaced the page header, as IPA is temporarily not affiliated with a particular college. The news feature in the middle contains news items from the News Journal or UDaily (University of Delaware news). Next thing Mark is planning to do is to determine which pages should be tracked by using Google Analytics.

### **3. Review Educational Programs and Discuss New Topics of Interest**

Mark noted that the group has covered all of the topics in the topic wish list generated back in January 2009, except for legality or propriety of linking to “for profit” websites, though we have talked about this before at earlier meetings. The following topics were suggested by the group for future training sessions:

- **Web Archiving**
- Look again at **constituent email subscriptions** and whether they can be protected or if FOIA opens them up to everybody.
- **Evaluating your web site using tools like Google Analytics** (how to read and interpret it) and how to present best practices to your local government officials for implementation.
- **Characteristics of a good government website** (resources are available on the web).
- **Cyber Security**
- **Compliance with current regulations**, e.g., ADA, election laws, FOIA, and document retention policies for the website. (Greg said he is going to talk to Jim Frasier about archiving. He said that the state is going to do a snapshot monthly archiving.)
- **Resource Sharing**

- An overview from the state of **equipment/resources that can be extended to municipalities** (e.g., YouTube).

Additional comments/suggestions:

- Instead of reporting on all of the members' websites, showcase three or four websites. Report on websites every six months.
- Discuss individual member's "to do" lists to get ideas from other members on best practices.

Mark reminded the group that the minutes, documents, and presentations are posted on MWDG's website for their reference. He encouraged members to send him an update regarding their website to attach to the minutes if they miss a meeting.

MWDG has a group blog, [mwdg.wordpress.com](http://mwdg.wordpress.com), that has not been utilized. The group can share information through the blog. Mark and Greg will talk about notification lists.

#### **4. Open Discussion/Idea Session about the Group's Administration**

Greg Hughes has offered for GIC to sponsor MWDG (i.e., GIC, rather than IPA, would be the organization behind MWDG). This does not preclude the other members from taking responsibility for providing speakers, communication blog, email lists, increase in membership, etc.

How do we want the group to function two years from now? The following suggestions were made:

- Mark said the idea of alternating formats for meetings might be a good compromise.
- Training on the "hottest" things.
- Have each meeting comprise two sessions (attendees would have the option of attending one or both).
- There is a lot of value to the networking part. More networking and one good education session (e.g., Twitter with a purpose).
- To make MWDG more visible to town and city officials, have a "Best of Delaware" municipal web award. After a discussion, this topic was tabled for the next meeting. Mark asked members to put their opinions on the group's blog.

Greg reminded members of the online training, [totaltraining.com](http://totaltraining.com), that is available through GIC. Contact Greg for a user ID and password.

Mark thanked everyone for their input. Greg and Mark will work on setting up a format to meet some of the objectives mentioned.

### **Announcement of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will take place on Thursday, October 28, 2010, at 12:30 p.m. at the Delaware Public Archives Building and will begin with lunch, courtesy of the Town of Elsmere.