

Delaware Municipal Web Developers Group

MEETING SUMMARY

January 24, 2008

Kent County Levy Court Building, Dover
12:30 to 3:30 p.m.

AGENDA

The meeting began with lunch and networking. Special thanks to the Town of Middletown for providing the lunch for this meeting.

1. Attendees/Absentees

Attendees:

Win Abbott (Clayton), **Susan Ambridge** (IPA – University of Delaware), **Jennifer Brook** (Smyrna), **Mark Deshon** (IPA—University of Delaware), **Sarah Ferguson** (Felton), **Greg Hughes** (GIC), **Mark Kennedy** (Kent County), **Kristen Krenzer** (Middletown), **Patti Laurion** (Sussex County), **Tracy Mulligan** (Bethany Beach), **David Potter** (Middletown), **Pam Smith** (South Bethany), **Eddie Sparpaglione** (Sussex County), **Dell Tush** (Dewey Beach), **Nelson Wiles** (Lewes), and **Richard Wright** (Millville);

plus guests **Syd Swann** (GIC) and **George Wright** (Delaware League of Local Governments).

Absentees:

Lisa Boltz (Camden), **Cathy Beaver** (Townsend), **Barbara Belli** (Wilmington), **Trish Booth** (Seaford), **Mark Callan** (Dover), **Dick Cleaveland** (Dewey Beach), **Kathy Clifton** (Delaware City), **Marian Delaney** (City of New Castle), **John Giles** (Elsmere), **Rebecca Greene** (Felton), **David Henderson** (Rehoboth Beach), **Lisa Kail** (Bethany Beach), **Jason Kilpatrick** (Milford), **Tina Law** (Elsmere), **Mike Mahaffie** (OSPC), **Richard Maly** (Camden), **Jim McElhinney** (New Castle County), **Donald Mulrine** (Camden), **Paul Morrill** (Delaware City), **Jessica Norton** (Odessa), **Marta Pacheco** (Newark), **Tom Roth** (Henlopen Acres), **Donna Schwartz** (Fenwick Island), **Danny Schweers** (The Ardens), **Rita Shade** (Newport), **Jamie Smith** (Laurel), **Marie Thomas** (Ocean View), and **Angela Townsend** (Georgetown).

2. Guest Speaker: Syd Swann, Strategic Information System Project Leader, Government Information Center

Syd works with statewide projects that help to promote easy and organized access to government services and information online. He is currently working with the content and presentation of the State's web portal, Delaware.gov, revising and improving the statewide forms directory, assisting agencies in migrating their forms to enhanced and enabled PDFs, and facilitating the First State Web Association, among other things.

First State Web Association

Syd gave a presentation on the First State Web Association (First Web). This group began in 2005 and has a similar function to the MWDG. More than 40 state agencies are represented through web managers, IT personnel, and public information officers. Their quarterly meetings serve to provide information on various topics such as CSS, Photoshop, Google Maps, etc. Many of the meetings serve as training and educational workshops for the members. Members also have the benefit of a group listserv, agency contact list, and access to the association website.

Tracy Mulligan wanted to know the significance of XML to municipal governments. Syd explained by using the example of an RSS feed (which uses XML), wherein the user can subscribe to receive information and would get an alert on his/her computer. Mark commented that it would be useful for towns that have residents who live elsewhere during the year, like his own town (Bethany Beach). Tracy also wanted clarification on who decides what information to place on the agency site. Syd responded by saying that the information is individualized by the agency, and the public information officer may be the person who decides what should be placed on the site. He also mentioned that First State Web Association had a session on writing for the Web, which included helpful hints such as writing at a seventh-grade level. Syd also encouraged the towns to include the public information officer in deciding what to place on the Web so that all messages are consistent and unified.

Mark Deshon wanted to know Syd's personal experience on getting to a common look and feel throughout the state. Greg Hughes took the question and responded that the whole initiative grew from the fact that the state didn't market itself as one consistent enterprise. Some departments had good sites and others did not. The common-look-and-feel initiative brought all of the departments to a middle ground and evened the playing field. Now between 95-98% of state agencies have the common look and feel, and the focus is on content rather than design.

Syd submitted a list of 61 topics that the First Web has addressed during its three-year existence. This list will prove helpful to the MWDG as it begins addressing member needs and does some longer-term program planning.

MWDG may also take advantage of some of the speakers that the First Web group has used successfully.

3. Member Website Status

- **Bethany Beach** – Went live with its newly developed site on January 4th. Site improvements are good, but changes and adjustments still need to be made. In order to launch, the town formulated an action plan and had citizen participation.
- **Clayton** – Recently contracted with CivicPlus and should go live in April or May. The town addressed its policy issues first and then put out a bid. Will be moving to a “.gov” site.
- **Dewey Beach** – Didn’t have much input when trying to redesign. Keeping content updated is an issue (Mayor Tush is the current webmaster). Currently in the process of reappointing ad hocs and are trying to encourage participation.
- **Felton** – Still working on site development (began in October) using NewView software.
- **Lewes** – Town has content-management system to facilitate submissions from each department, but no one has the time or knowhow to post information and update their sites. The Board of Public Works wants to branch out and develop its own website. Currently trying to implement online payment.
- **Middletown** – Designed and uploaded the Middletown Police Department website. Constantly wanting to add or change information and is looking into using CivicPlus. Would like to have Dreamweaver.
- **Millville** – Initial site was launched in the first week of September. No complaints from the administration. Goal was to reduce scrolling on the site. Recently signed with general code to codify charter, resolutions, etc., which should take 12 months to complete.
- **Smyrna** – Signed with CivicPlus for content management. The new site should go live on May 16th. The town also formulated a government Q/A to create a frequently asked questions (FAQ) database.
- **South Bethany** – Added information on the beach-replenishment project and a recycling sign-up page.

- **Kent County** – No big changes. The county is looking to put together a web policy and recently internalized its IT department.
- **Sussex County** – Working on a new website and will be changing the overall design. Will be using Google search, which will have no ads in the results. Other additions include Babelfish simple language translations and a “How do I...?” list. Dreamweaver is being used for the design, and all of the general information should be available to the user in three or four clicks. They also have a new 911 center.

- **Delaware.gov** (Government Information Center) – Added Google Maps and driving directions and want to have state polling locations integrated with Google Maps. The state has a Google Maps key, so no ads will be displayed. It is also still working on the Adobe forms project and have converted 600+ forms to fillable PDF forms so far.

NOTE TO OTHER MUNICIPAL WEBMASTERS: Please help us add to this status list by sending Mark Deshon a brief status note (like the ones above). Thanks.

4. Decision-making Follow-up to Previous Meeting's Planning Session

This was a discussion and assignment of tasks in response to the previous meeting where priorities were established.

Formalize Steering Committee:

- **Greg Hughes, Eddie Sparpaglione, Tracy Mulligan, Win Abbott, and Kristen Krenzer** volunteered to comprise the MWDG steering committee.
- Will begin by charting a course for the function of the MWDG.
- Can meet separately and give information to Mark Deshon to place on the website.
- Will communicate with the program-planning committee to organize speakers for future meetings.

Communication Strategies:

- How do we increase membership from the unrepresented towns?
 - Possibly calling towns who aren't represented and don't come to meetings.
 - **Eddie Sparpaglione** and **Pam Smith** will communicate with towns in Sussex and Kent Counties. **Kristen Krenzer** and **David Potter** will call towns in New Castle County.
 - **Mark Deshon** will help them gather contact information to build a relevant statewide municipal website contact database.
- Mark Deshon pointed out that a third of the MWDG is not coming to meetings. The group might need to gather information and make a sales pitch to encourage them to participate.
- Tracy suggested having predetermined questions and points before speaking with the towns.

Membership:

- Win Abbott had previously suggested having a binder for each town so that member representatives could track their town's progress.
- Mark Deshon brought up the question of having a membership fee or annual dues for participant towns.

- Dell Tush agreed with the idea and pointed out that the pooled money could buy materials that the entire group could use, rather than buying them separately.
- Overall the group was opposed to instituting a fee for the time being. Mark Kennedy stated that having a fee might limit participation and Kristen Krenzer pointed out that the group being free could be a selling point to towns not participating.
- The consensus of the group was to keep the group fee-free.

Content of Meetings:

- The discussion then turned to the meetings and what should be offered. The idea of workshops where members could gain hands on experience was brought up. These sessions could take place between quarterly meetings in each county, so no one has to travel far.
- Mark Deshon suggested that an idea for a standard part of the meetings could be to examine and evaluate two municipal websites and give peer feedback.
- The steering committee will develop a plan and work hand-in-hand with the program-planning committee to see that we're implementing the best ideas and focusing on the critical topics.

5. Other Business

- Nelson Wiles wanted to know how the group would narrow down what topics to cover in future meetings. Eddie Sparpaglione suggested offering a basic overview of an application, and, if the member has a strong desire to learn more, he/she will have access to other resources.
- Tracy Mulligan brought up a problem of trying to influence other groups in the municipalities and getting them to see that this is important. Mark Deshon affirmed that it seems clear the MWDG has a dual role (within the scope of its mission). One is to offer support within the group and the other is to facilitate open local government through the influence of the MWDG.
- Mark Kennedy suggested reaching out to department heads before a budget is considered. Nelson Wiles suggested writing a letter to the mayors and managers of the municipalities about the mission of the MWDG and pointing out the benefits of membership, possibly speaking more in depth about it to a council or other group that expresses an interest.
- Eddie Sparpaglione suggested having one meeting per year specifically designed for elected officials, so they know how the group is progressing.
- Sarah Ferguson suggested having a "Delaware Website of the Year" award, similar to the Municipal Clerk of the Year award presented at the Delaware League of Local Governments dinner.
- Dell Tush will be speaking with George Wright about the possibility of someone from MWDG presenting information on the MWDG at a future DLLG dinner meeting.