Delaware Municipal Web Developers Group
MEETING SUMMARY

July 24, 2008
Kent County Levy Court Building, Dover
12:30 to 3:30 p.m.

AGENDA

1. Attendees/Absentees

Attendees:

Barbara Belli (Wilmington), **Lisa Boltz** (Camden), **Lee Brubaker** (Ocean View), **Dick Cleaveland** (Dewey Beach), **Marian Delaney** (City of New Castle), **Mark Deshon** (IPA – University of Delaware), **Sarah Ferguson** (Felton), **Dana Johnston** (Newark), **Kristen Krenzer** (Middletown), **Patti Laurion** (Sussex County), **Richard Maly** (Camden), **Dorothy Martin** (Kent County), **Don Mulrine** (Camden), **Pam Smith** (South Bethany), **Danny Schweers** (Arden, Ardencroft, Ardentown), **Eddie Sparpaglione** (Sussex Co.), **Nelson Wiles** (Lewes), and **Richard Wright** (Millville)

plus guest **Marvin Williams** (Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative)

Absentees:

Win Abbott (Clayton), **Cathy Beaver** (Townsend), **Tricia Booth** (Seaford), **Jennifer Brook** (Smyrna), **Mark Callan** (Dover), **Kathy Clifton** (Delaware City), **John Giles** (Elsmere), **David Henderson** (Rehoboth Beach), **Greg Hughes** (GIC), **Lisa Kail** (Bethany Beach), **Mark Kennedy** (Kent County), **Jason Kilpatrick** (Milford), **Tina Law** (Elsmere), **Mike Mahaffie** (OSPC), **Jim McElhinney** (New Castle County), **Paul Morrill** (Delaware City), **Tracy Mulligan** (Bethany Beach), **Jessica Norton** (Odessa), **David Potter** (Middletown), **Tom Roth** (Henlopen Acres), **Donna Schwartz** (Fenwick Island), **Rita Shade** (Newport), **Jamie Smith** (Laurel), **Angela Townsend** (Georgetown), and **Dell Tush** (Dewey Beach)

2. Member Website Status

- **Arden** – No changes to mention. (Danny manages 20–25 websites including the Ardens. The group had a subequent discussion about content management systems and who owns content.

- **Camden** – In the process of updating their website. Added an e-complaints log. Within the first hour the Town received an email complaint. It was a success. The Town is working on internal logs. Website is hosted by Delaware.net. The Friends of Historical Camden are collecting history of the homes and people of Camden along with photos. These can be accessed on the website. A lot of research is involved. There is a lot of interest from the owners of the historical homes.

- **Dewey Beach** – Currently, Google's return listing for Dewey Beach is an issue. Working to improve those search results by doing things on the website that interest people. Many of the voters are nonresidents, and the website is a good way to keep them informed. Would like to broadcast the Council meetings on the Internet. An FTP account solved the problem of loading PDF files. Dick has been working on encoding email addresses. (The group had a discussion regarding spammers, spidering, and encoding. This would be a good topic for a future meeting.)

- **Felton** – Currently has NVU ("new view") but would like to use Dreamweaver. Felton is in a budget crisis and won't fund the purchase of Dreamweaver. Through research, Sarah found a group that will possibly provide the town with Dreamweaver. Sarah is debating on whether or not to go live with the NVU-built version. (The group was in consensus that Sarah should go live with what she has done in NVU. Going live could generate interest and support of the website. Mark Deshon advised Sarah to avoid dead-end links.)

- **Lewes** – Continuing to make the website more useful for the residents. Met with Delaware.net regarding an e-government initiative. Nelson announced that he will be leaving Lewes; the City needs to decide who will assume responsibility for the website. Implementing a content-management system (CMS) with Delaware.net. Will go live with a online bill-payment system.

- **Middletown** – Obtained approval to move to Dreamweaver for page authoring and site management. Kristen and David are attending classes on Dreamweaver at Del Tech. Would like to make the website more user-friendly. Middletown receives emails saying how good the website looks.

- **Millville** – The Town Manager's monthly report is now posted online. Millville is a town of mostly property owners, not residents. The out-of-state property owners are using the website to stay in touch.

- **Newark** – This was Dana Johnston's first meeting with MWDG. She has been working for the City of Newark for two months as manager of communications. She manages the content of the City's website, which is a CivicPlus product.

- **New Castle** – Making seasonal changes to the website. Using OPC for paying taxes online with credit card. A fee is charged depending on the amount of the payment. The City gets a lot of requests for credit card payments, but they don't actually see very many instances of people using the online feature.
- **Ocean View** – The Town launched its new website on June 25 hosted by Delaware.net. Delaware.net provided a 60- to 90-minute training session, and the Town is now capable of making updates as needed, including uploading PDF files and links. Tried to set it up logically and with short pages to avoid scrolling. Continuing to load content.
- **Smyrna** – The new Smyrna website went live on June 20. CivicPlus is the host. The Town loves it.
- South Bethany – Gregg Hughes and his staff (at GIC) enabled the town's online forms using Adobe LiveCycle Reader Extensions. This service was provided free of charge. (See previous meeting notes on Adobe LiveCycle fillable forms.)
- **Wilmington** – In the content-management stage. Phase one is getting the website up and getting it to look new. Phase two is working with the various departments and making sure their information is being displayed properly. It should be up in September. Wimington's new domain name is *www.wilmingtonde.gov*.

- **Kent County** – Providing forms on the estate process for public download. The Microsoft Word template allows the user to save the form to their hard drive. Useful to law offices and to citizens who want to handle estate processes themselves.
- **Sussex County** – Released the tax bills for 2008 online on July 23. Preparing for the three open Council seats next year. Sussex County sadly lost a paramedic in an accident on June 17. The County's website was used by people looking for information regarding the accident. The County writes their own CMS to fit their tools. Eddie discussed Twitter and Podcasting. Trying to add more features and functionality. Web payments are accepted. (The Adobe MAX Conference is November 16–19 in San Francisco. Eddie highly recommends this conference because he believes it is the best way to learn technically what is going to be happening on the Web.)

- **IPA** – Mark Deshon recently attended a University-wide Web meeting. The University has a new President who hired a new Vice President of Communications and Marketing. They are in the process of making changes. It will be a two- or three-step phased-in project. The first phase is to refresh the current website and go live August 1. The main message is that the University essentially has one website, which is a positive from the marketing perspective. The marketing project will take a good amount of time to implement. In parallel, Mark will be meeting with IPA colleagues to

begin the next iteration of the IPA site, which will incorporate the look-and-feel of the new University site.

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.

Guest Speaker: Marvin Williams, Assistive Technology Specialist for Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative

Marvin is the New Castle County Assistive Technology Specialist for DATI. He has a Bachelor of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering from Santa Clara University and a Master of Science in Biomedical Engineering from Iowa State University. He has over ten years experience in providing AT services and equipment recommendations to consumers as well as experience in providing commercially available assistive technology and in the design and fabrication of custom equipment. Marvin is a RESNA-certified Assistive Technology Practitioner and Rehabilitation Engineering Technologist.

Marvin presented an educational session on Web Accessibility to the members using PowerPoint. The following are excerpts from his presentation (which you can download as slides in PDF and listen to as an MP3 audio clip - see above).

Web Accessibility means that people with disabilities can perceive, understand, navigate, and interact with the web and that they can contribute to the web.

Section 508 of the Disabilities Act applies to Federal Agencies and provides standards for making websites accessible to people with disabilities. Although there is no mention of local municipalities in terms of compliance at this time, there are plenty of reasons to make your website accessible.

Accessible Web pages benefit...

- Visually impaired
- Physically impaired
- Hearing impaired
- Learning or cognitive impaired
- Also the general public visiting your web page

Why accessible Web design?

- An estimated one in five people have a disability condition at some time in their life.

- As the population ages, the need increases.
- People with disabilities are also prospective customers, employees, and participants in online communities.
- It is the right thing to do.
- Avoid a lawsuit.

Tools of the trade

- JAWS
- Window Eyes
- Sum Text
- Kurzweil
- Read Please Pro
- WYNN
- FireVox
- SimplyWeb 2000
- Text Help Browsealoud

Big problem areas

- Images and links
- Multimedia (video and audio)
- Structure (style sheets, tabs, navigation)
- Documents
- Color Use

Images

- Remember to use Alt text with images (Alt="appropriate descriptive text here" within image tags in your code).
- Only have descriptive Alt text on significant images (make sure Alt text is meaningful).
- Never use Alt text spacers (using the word "spacer" as your Alt text).
- Use blank Alt text code where no image description is necessary (Alt="").

Link Text

- Link text should always provide a reasonable description of the link target.
- Remember that links are not intuitive to first-, second-, and third-time users.
- Link text should make sense when read aloud.

Notes on Using Multimedia (Video and Audio)

- Use only when necessary.
- Always caption video.
- Always provide transcripts for audio.
- Always let people know about available accommodations.
- Avoid flickering content.

Structure

- Watch those style sheets.
- To tab or not to tab
- Make sure forms have field identifiers.
- Style does not bring substance.
- When in doubt, use the KISS rule (keep it simple, stupid).

Documents

- PDFs should be tagged and accessible.
- If possible, try to provide two alternatives to PDF (HTML, TXT, etc.).
- Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

Color

- Colors should not be the sole means of conveying information.
- Color shouldn't block the view.
- Don't overdo it.
- Have others look.
- Don't let your style kill your substance.

What happens now?

- Talk to your peers.
- Talk to your users – focus groups or "blind reviews"
- Try it out yourself.

The IRS is a leader in 508 compliance. Their website has accessible IRS tax products that offer brail and text formats.

Marvin ended his presentation with a quote from his Grandma
Tolbert: "There are no problems, only opportunities to improve and grow."

The presentation was very informative, useful, and dynamic.

4. Membership Survey and Announcements

National Association of Government Webmasters (NAGW) Annual Conference

Barbara Belli, MWDG's liaison with the NAGW, gave this brief promo on this year's conference.

National Association of Government Webmasters Annual Conference
September 10–12, 2008
St. Charles, Ill.
www.nagw.org/index.php/annual-conference

The conference will be September 10–12 at the Pheasant Run Spa and Resort near Chicago. There is a pre-conference half day session on September 9. The conference registration fee is $425, and the resort cost is approximately $145 a night.

The brochure and schedule for this year's conference was available for members to take home.

Barbara has been a member of NAGW for five years and believes it is a fabulous organization. It is an organization of people in municipal governments just like the members of MWDG.

Membership is $75 a year. Benefits include discounts on books, magazines, domain registration, software, and a list-serv accessible only by members.

The East Region representative is Nicole Maillet. She can be contact by email at east@nagw.org.

Other Announcements

Greg Hughes will be making a presentation regarding MWDG, with prep help from Mark Deshon, at the Delaware Institute for Local Government Leaders on Thursday, October 30, at the Rehoboth Convention Center. Mark suggested that as many MWDG members attend as possible. The registration fee for the day-long event is only $50. See the IPA events page for online registration.

Next meeting will be October 16, 2008. Lunch will be provided by the City of Lewes.