Delaware Municipal Web Developers Group
MEETING SUMMARY

October 22, 2009
Delaware Public Archives
Dover, Delaware
12:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

AGENDA

1. Attendees/Absentees

Attendees

Barbara Belli (Wilmington), **Lee Brubaker** (Ocean View), **"Sam" Callender** (Cheswold), **Cheryl Carney** (Magnolia), **Dick Cleaveland** (Dewey Beach), **Mark Deshon** (IPA-University of Delaware), **Dorothy Doyle** (Kent County), **Alice Erickson** (Lewes), **John Giles** (Elsmere), **Tom Glenn** (Sussex Co.), **Dana Johnston** (Newark), **Jason Kilpatrick** (Milford), **Kristen Krenzer** (Middletown), **Tina Law** (Elsmere), **Richard Maly** (Camden), **Ed McNeeley** (GIC), **Debbie Morris** (Sussex Co.), **Sue Muncey** (Clayton), **Tricia Newcomer** (Seaford), **Danny Schweers** (The Ardens), **Pam Smith** (South Bethany), and **Angela Townsend** (Georgetown)

plus guests **Syd Swann** (GIC) and **Lindsey Shallcross** (Bethany Beach)

Absentees:

Win Abbott (Fenwick Island), **Doris Adkins** (Greenwood), **Cathy Beaver** (Townsend), **Jennifer Brook** (Smyrna), **Kathleen Clifton** (Delaware City), **Marian Delaney** (New Castle), **Agnes DiPietrantonio** (Fenwick Island), **Lisa Driggins** (Camden), **Sarah Ferguson** (Felton), **David Henderson** (Rehoboth Beach), **Greg Hughes** (GIC), **Shadina Jones** (Cheswold), **Lisa Kail** (Bethany Beach), **Mark Kennedy** (Kent County), **Jim McElhinney** (New Castle County), **Oralia McGinness** (Harrington), **Tracy Mulligan** (Bethany Beach), **David Potter** (Middletown), **Vikki Prettyman** (Blades), **Tom Roth** (Henlopen Acres), **Jesse Savage** (Bridgeville), **John Schatzschneider** (Harrington), **Jamie Smith** (Laurel), **Bonnie Walls** (Bridgeville)

Mark Deshon thanked the Town of Magnolia for providing lunch for the near-record number in attendance.

2. Website Status Reports

Town of Elsmere – The website was designed by one of the Town's Police Officers, and the Town Manager (John Giles) is currently maintaining the site. Because of other duties, John said the website receives the lowest priority when it should get the highest priority. He has added Request Tracker (a Civic Plus module) so that citizens can make requests or file complaints online. He would like to put forms and applications on the website. Tina Law (Administrative Assistant) added that the Town Manager does a good job, and the website is up to date.

City of Wilmington – The website has been going through a major redesign for the last two years. The Communications Director wants to have a development oversight group look at the new site. Barbara hopes that within the next few weeks the new site will be launched.

Town of Middletown – Work continues on development of a new site in Dreamweaver. The goal is to have it launched by the next meeting. The Town Manager has requested that Kristen Krenzer look into the price of having the Town Code online. Kristen receives requests for online billing from citizens; however, Council does not like the idea of an online bill-payment option for the town.

Kent County – The format of the web site pages has not changed. She is currently working on several projects that will be in progress over the next year and half. Sheriff sales will be updated more frequently, and the town will have the ability to update that information same day. Down the road there will be a link on the web for attorneys to check out the status for any services that they have.

Mark Deshon (IPA) asked what the purpose of the word "Navigation" was and suggested deleting the word because it serves no functional purpose. It was also suggested that the "Pride" link be more descriptive (i.e., more intuitive).

Town of Bethany Beach – Bethany Beach's website went through a three-year upgrade process, and the current site was launched January 2008. It is a CivicPlus site. The website is very easy to edit.

Regarding the "Emergency Alert" on the home page, it was noted that blinking lights can cause seizures in some users. In addition, it was also noted that the red color (the only red on an otherwise calming blue-and-tan page shell) draws the user's eye to the Emergency Alert link, and if there is no emergency, that may run counter to the intent.

Town of Ocean View – Ocean View's site has been up for almost a year and half; it is maintained by Finance Director Lee Brubaker. It is a Delaware.Net–developed site. Lee said the goal was ease of navigation. There are some things in the navigation that he would like to do differently. Recently, the Town got rid of the separate Police Department site. Need to build the Police Department portion into the town's website. It should be informational, user-friendly, simple, and easy to maintain.

Town of Georgetown – Georgetown's site is maintained by Town Clerk Angela Townsend. The Town has control of everything on the website. The calendar was added recently. Angela thinks the red, white, and blue dates the website and would like to update the look. She would like to post taxes online and have online bill payment, but people are afraid. A suggestion was made to use a third-party company to provide online bill payment. A link has been added to view recently adopted ordinances.

John Giles (Elsmere) noted that by new law, names of election officers must now be posted on the website.

Town of Clayton – Sue Muncey stated that she is maintaining and keeping the website up to date. She has added a slide show to the "Your Home Town Heroes" page. E-Forms are now available online and can be submitted online.

Sussex County – Has been working on behind-the-scenes changes. Added the ability to view deeds online. In the near future, the County will be posting delinquent taxpayers' names online. As of January 19, the County is responsible for dog control and dog licenses and will be adding the ability to register for dog licenses online.

Mark Deshon commented that he liked the font-size options. He also suggested moving the "How Do I" drop-down window towards the top of the page, possibly above "What's New."

City of Lewes – The website is now being maintained by the Administrative Assistant, Alice Erickson. Currently, she has to send all updates to Delaware.Net. She would like the city to consider upgrading so that she can make the changes herself.

Town of Cheswold – Cheswold's is a Delaware.Net–developed site. The Town had received complaints from the community that the website was stagnant. Councilwoman "Sam" Callender volunteered to get it up and running. She would like to put forms and the Town Charter online. There are a lot of things that need to be on the website, but she is only working with a maintenance budget.

Regarding putting the Town Charter online, Sue Muncey (Clayton) suggested to link to the Town Charters page on the state's website, charters.delaware.gov.

Town of Camden – Camden's is Delaware.Net–developed site. The new Town Hall/Police Building is open. The new town seal is posted on the website as well as a picture of the new Fire Company. The economy had a drastic effect on the staff in the town. The town staff has been downsized from six to two people plus the Town Manager. The Town Manager has expressed the desire to address the website and where it is going. Currently, the website is in a holding pattern while it waits for the town to get going in the right direction financially.

Town of Dewey Beach – Dewey Beach's is Delaware.Net–developed site. Dick Cleaveland said his goal at the last meeting was to have people trained to do the content management by September 15. A stumbling block has been Delaware.Net's changes to the system. Dick is deeply involved in training people to do the content management. The town has a new mayor, and three of the five council members are new. This could result in more emphasis on the website. Dick finds that a lot of the questions submitted on the "Contact Us" page are already answered on the website. The site gets 150 daily visitors. If you Google Dewey Beach, the Town's site comes up number two.

Mark Deshon said a good topic for a future meeting would be to review engine tools (see Resources page for "Search Engine Optimization" presentation) and discuss capturing and analyzing statistics regarding visits to your website. Insights can be gained from those statistics.

Town of Magnolia – The website was launched this past summer. It is a work-in-progress. Minutes, newsletter, historical pictures, etc. will be added. The town has handed out newsletters to inform people about the website. There is a link for the Town Charter. Presently the link brings up the Charter in a PDF file.

Mark Deshon suggested removing the ticker from the bottom left of the home page. He also mentioned that, when providing a link to a PDF file, alerting users that Adobe Reader is needed to view PDFs is best practice.

City of Seaford – The current website was originally built in 1998. The website is maintained by Trisha Newcomer, Seaford's IT *and* economic development director. The code on the back end is extensive. A new site will be launched in the near future. Delmarva Digital assisted with the new site. It will be much more user-friendly. Online bill payment will be initiated in another month or two. An E-notification system to sign up for notices via email will be implemented. A business emergency contact form will be available. There will be an economical development page, where commercial property owners will have the option to put in up to nine images and forms. Council is pleased with

what Delmarva Digital has done. Trish said they will make presentations at civic organizations and other organizations in the area to promote the new site.

Richard Maly (Camden) asked about FOIA requests for email lists. Danny Schweers (the Ardens) said that if a policy that says you do not give out this information is stated on the application, then you are covered. It has to be stated at the time the person gives up their information.

City of Milford – Milford has refreshed its site. The IT Department is using a program that allows city employees to log in and make changes to the website. It uses a Microsoft interface to change pictures and text like done in Word. It allows departments to create their own forms. The IT Department has control over the colors, font size, and pictures. Changes can be made from anywhere. The IT Department is doing a lot of training. Utility payments can be made online. Uses E-check for requesting tax-assessment information. Any city service fee (code-enforcement fees, business licensing, permits) can be paid online through Sungard. Contractors can set up accounts there. This will be up and running fully in mid- to late November. Maps will be made available online.

Town of South Bethany – Maintaining website. Pam Smith asked if it was legal for an individual or organization to copy and paste from one website to another website without permission. She also expressed concerns about the citizens confusing the South Bethany Property Owners' Association (the culprit in this instance) website with the town website. The group suggested putting a "Terms and Conditions of Use" policy on the website, which might stop people from doing this.

Mark Deshon suggested using the resources available on the MWDG website, specifically the E-Gov't Policy Resources link on the links and resources page. Mark also suggested that the town might consider changing their site a .gov domain, which would help it become more recognizable as the official government site.

City of Newark – Website is powered by CivicPlus. Website received national attention because of the recent incident involving an elementary student who was suspended for bringing a Cub Scout camping utensil to school. Dana Johnston redirected those comments (some of which were damningly critical) to the school district's website. Dana would like to do more without it costing more. The website is underutilized by the residents, and she would like to see it used more. Plans are to email newsletter and get rid of the printed newsletter. In the newsletter a lot will connect back to the website. The city now has about 250-300 followers on Twitter. The media follows the city on Twitter, and it is quicker than calling or issuing press releases. Working on making online bill payments available. The Parks and Recreation Department wants to revamp its web page. Dana has a Facebook page for the Downtown Newark Partnership.

Mark suggested rearranging the homepage content to prioritize what's most important (e.g., putting "News and Announcements" at the top).

The Village of Arden – Added the "Committee" link and the "Report Incidents to the Safety Committee" link to the navigation.

3. **Overview of the 2009 National Association of Webmasters (NAGW) Annual Conference** (Barbara Belli, City of Wilmington)

NAGW was developed in Overland Park, Kan., by webmasters who wanted to get together to share ideas and learn from one another. The 2009 Conference was held in Galveston, Tex. There were 175 people in attendance. It was a two-day conference.

The workshops this year focused on social media. There was also a workshop on getting information to city employees using an intranet. For people who could not attend the conference, there was a live blog on social networking use and policy. The blog portion of the keynote speech is posted on www.nagw.org. It has a lot of good information. The keynote speaker was amazing.

The membership fee is $75. It provides great resources. NAGW will be offering free webinars to its members. If you sign up on the listserv, you will get plenty of information.

Next year's conference is in St. Louis, Mo., September 22-24, 2010. The cost of the conference is approximately $400. A pre-conference workshop will be offered on September 21 at an additional cost. The cost of the hotel will be $110 a night.

4. **Presentation: [GIC Project] Updates on WordPress and HTML E-mail** (Syd Swann and Ed McNeeley, Government Information Center)

On behalf of Greg Hughes, who could not make it to the meeting, Syd Swann and Ed McNeeley presented a brief overview of how social media tools like WordPress can be used by local governments—for simple, easy-to-maintain websites, blog management, and for crosslinking and repurposing (HTML email and more).

Through the Government Information Center (GIC) in cooperation with MWDG, the state is assisting the Town of Felton and the Town of Greenwood in setting up simple sites using WordPress. The idea is that WordPress makes it easy to publish on the Web. One can do the following:

- update remotely
- easily attach media, PDFs, and audio

- involve multiple administrators
- disable (or enable) comments
- manage posts and page structure automatically

WordPress can be used as a traditional blog or as a content-management system.

Syd then showed examples of what the state is doing with this and other tools:

- State Libraries blog
- Governor's website
- Governor's blog
- Public Relations or news items using HTML repurposed for email

The key is being able to use the variety of tools in today's Internet world to "feed" each other, to feed multiple social media venues to "push" content to a wider audience. This is perhaps best illustrated in the diagram.

GIC stands ready to help any local government in Delaware utilize these tools.
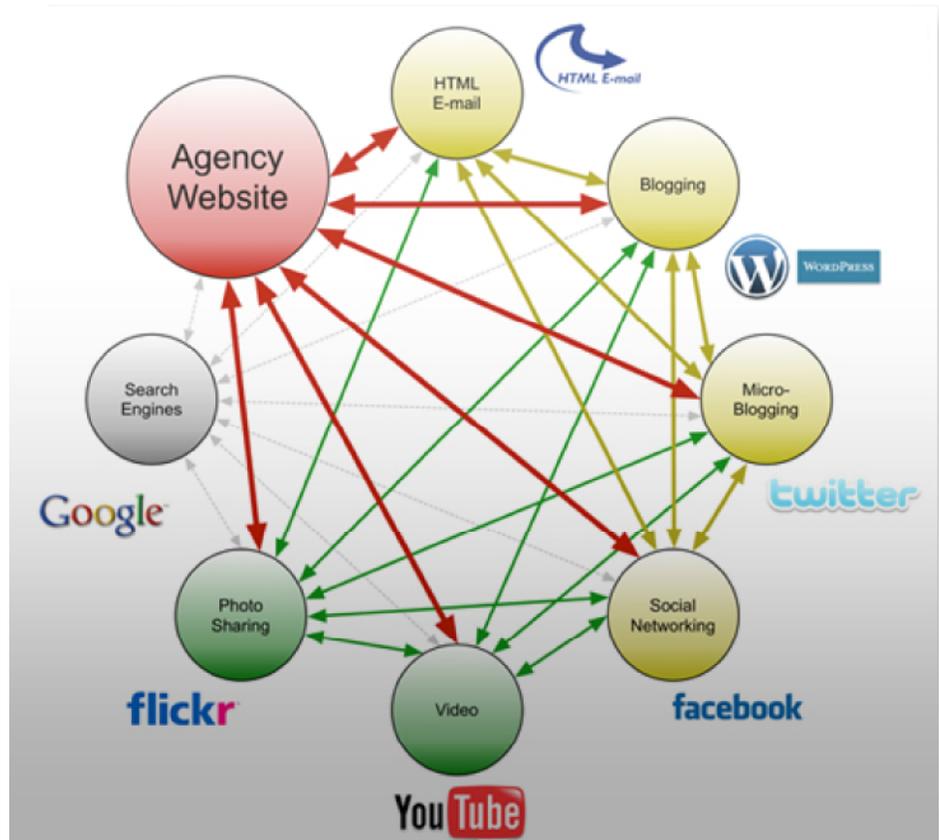
Announcement of Next Meeting

Mark Deshon had intended to make a presentation on the results of MWDG's recent statewide local government web survey; however, time ran out, and it seemed prudent to hold this until the January meeting.

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