

Delaware Municipal Web Developers Group

MEETING SUMMARY

October 27, 2011

Delaware Public Archives

Dover, Delaware

12:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

AGENDA

1. Attendees

Win Abbott (Milton), **Dick Cleaveland** (Dewey Beach), **Jennifer Coulbourne** (Smyrna), **Mark Deshon** (UD-IPA), **Tom Glenn** (Sussex County), **Greg Hughes** (GIC), **Kim Hughes** (Ellendale), **Cathy Jacobi** (Milton Police Department), **Sharon Karl** (Henlopen Acres), **Christine Karpovage** (GIC), **Mike Mahaffie** (GIC), **Richard Maly** (Camden), **Debbie Morris** (Sussex County), and **Lonnie Wynn** (Milton)

plus guest **Ken Bonovich** (Kent County)

2. News and Announcements

Mike Mahaffie (**GIC**) said that we want to make sure we're adding value for those who attend meetings.

Historically, website issues for towns have been primarily lack of staffing, funds, or technical expertise. Because GIC's mission is connecting citizens to government (C2G), it has been involved in the MWDG to help local governments connect to their citizenry this better.

Since GIC began offering WordPress sites, nearly 12 local governments have gone this route. The City of New Castle, one of the oldest in terms of having not been redeveloped in a while, is the latest project and is now in development.

Greg Hughes (**GIC**) wanted to get a barometer from the group on the new catering company being used for this meeting today. Most thought the food was an improvement, particularly the cookies.

We then introduced ourselves to one another and welcomed new members.

3. Reports and Freeform Discussion

Smyrna just launched beautiful new site. Greg Hughes asked about their use of Twitter, as early adopters. This demonstrates that government can reach out to touch others who may or may not interact with a website.

Jen Coulbourne says they're getting more questions via Twitter, particularly about when meetings are. Folks are using the website for info, but Facebook and Twitter act as information supplements (may reach different audiences).

Dick Cleaveland says that, for **Dewey Beach**, it's becoming a new way to make inquiries of government. Mike asked if Smyrna's Twitter and Facebook feeds are automated. Jen says she thinks so but wasn't exactly sure how.

Tom Glenn (**Sussex County**) offered, "Facebook is the new AOL." Greg agreed that the youth generation is using social media almost exclusively. Greg continued that the Internet is a tool, which demonstrates this paradigm shift. "Go where [the citizens] are, because they're not coming to us."

Jen said that the culture in her office in and around the need for social media has changed 180° (in favor).

Facebook is the second most popular site in the U.S. The state of Delaware uses Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, and YouTube. Tom asked about Google +. Greg and Mike each said that GIC's mission is to keep an eye on what is going on and what is being most used. Greg says he's seeing a shift from Facebook to Twitter.

Mark Deshon (**IPA**) asked what the implications are for local government communicators. Greg said that the hardest thing for local governments is to "speak with one voice." The tough part is to have a consistent and comprehensive communication plan.

Greg then introduced FourSquare into the discussion. FourSquare is a location-based social media/competition-oriented app. The primary interface is the mobile phone, which has GPS capability. Businesses want people to come visit them. Point values for various categories earn "badges" for users. Why would towns want to know? Maybe a town is trying to get people to check into certain venues or meetings. These apps are becoming smarter.

Christine Karpovage (**GIC**) said that towns want to know about social media and what to do and how to use it. Jen said that Smyrna's citizens have sometimes answered questions from other citizens via Facebook or Twitter.

Kent County Levy Court is beginning to redevelop its site. Ken Bonovich said that his biggest issue right now is what should be on the homepage. He wants the homepage to be the gateway but not be overcrowded. Greg says the web is going to a more graphical interface. Prioritization should be for things that are hot or things that *should be* hot.

In the beginning it was, "Do you have a website?" It quickly moved to, "What is your website address?" Now, people don't care. They're using searches (e.g., Google).

Best practice is to use meta data (title, description, tags, keywords, etc.). Greg suggested that tabs, rather than rollovers, might be the best way to go and reminded us that rollovers may not be accessible. Christine suggested that the county should document what their citizens' most pressing questions are and then begin prioritizing. Mike reminded everyone that what the municipal official cares about is usually NOT what the citizen (consumer) cares about. Greg said that the state spotlights certain things, but only for a time, while keeping other items constant but with a varying visual representation on its homepage.

Sharon Karl (**Henlopen Acres**) asked about how to access stats. Christine said that WordPress has a stats feature that one can turn on/off.

Diana Poole (**Elsmere**) said that it uses the stats because they're going smoke-free. She also said that its Police Dept. has decided to roll its website into the town's site.

Mark said he's working on developing a site in WordPress now. Dick asked how long it takes to learn it. Diana said it's very easy. See codex.wordpress.org and wordpress.org/support.

Mike then shared a bit about his [WordPress handout](#) (PDF).

Mike spoke about the new MWDG site. He said there's a spotlight area built-in now for which he'd like suggestions.

4. What's New at GIC?

Mike reported out that GIC is moving into eGov through a contract with Delaware Interactive (a division of NIC USA).

Planning 10–15 new apps.

- Practice driver's test
- Update to shop.delaware.gov

- Parks reservations
- A new public meeting calendar

Greg mentioned that, in relation to the calendar, he is looking to have local governments also use that public meeting calendar for posting their meetings.

Another new item is a "location" page, a database-driven maps page for office locations within the state government, including a QR code, which will take one to a smart phone-friendly version of the information.

They are also looking to add QR codes to historic markers throughout the state.

Other projects:

- news.delaware.gov (a WordPress site) – for the state to use for news items and RSS feeds
- a new FOIA form – de.gov/foiarequest
- updating agency pages - sites recently redeveloped:
 - Department of Correction
 - Department of Education
- learning how people got news about Hurricane Irene (link cloud)

Mark asked about easy-to-use form software to apply in a website. Mike said the FOIA request is a simple SMU (secure mailing utility) form.

Dewey Beach is now implementing an online voter-registration system. Dick has been pushing the town administration that anything that can be obtainable via FOIA can conceivably be put on their site. Tom says that there has to be a fee involved in FOIA requests. Tom said that he thinks that's a discussion that Dewey Beach officials should have with Sussex County.

Open data is now a major emphasis for the state.

4. New Site Requests

- Town of **Milton** wants to update its website. Right now it lacks support.
- Town of **Ellendale** has no full-time staff and is interesting in a website to put out information.

5. New Business

Dick asked about how to build in redundancy of staff. Greg asked if our group could possibly fill that role. This touched off a small discussion about this

conundrum, which is present in nearly every organization to a large degree. Greg said that the WordPress solution is a reasonable choice to make to help remediate this.

Mark asked about how we could include cities/towns that are not currently a part of this group or whose representatives either never or no longer attend. Christine said that we could use facebook & mwdg website. Mike suggested that the group's website (mwdg.delaware.gov) needs to become the virtual space through which members become more involved and get information.

Also discussed having a private group set up on Facebook for MWDG members. The group asked questions about the use of Facebook and Greg reviewed briefly about social media and it's benefits.

Announcement of Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place on Thursday, January 26, 2012, at 12:30 p.m. at the Delaware Public Archives and will begin with lunch.