

Delaware Municipal Web Developers Group

MEETING SUMMARY

July 23, 2009

University of Delaware Paradee Center

Dover, Delaware

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

1. Attendees/Absentees

Attendees:

Win Abbott (Fenwick Island), **Doris Adkins** (Greenwood), **Jennifer Brook** (Smyrna), **Cheryl Carney** (Magnolia), **Dick Cleaveland** (Dewey Beach), **Marian Delaney** (New Castle), **Mark Deshon** (IPA-University of Delaware), **Agnes DiPietrantonio** (Fenwick Island), **Kristen Krenzer** (Middletown), **Joe Merkel** (Smyrna), **Sue Muncey** (Clayton), **Danny Schweers** (The Ardens), and **Pam Smith** (South Bethany);

plus guests **DeAnna Kuhn** (Cheswold) and **Tina Larimore** (Greenwood)

Absentees:

Cathy Beaver (Townsend), **Barbara Belli** (Wilmington), **Lisa Boltz** (Camden), **Tricia Booth** (Seaford), **Lee Brubaker** (Ocean View), **"Sam" Callender** (Cheswold), **Kathleen Clifton** (Delaware City), **Dorothy Doyle** (Kent County), **Alice Erickson** (Lewes), **Sarah Ferguson** (Felton), **John Giles** (Elsmere), **David Henderson** (Rehoboth Beach), **Greg Hughes** (GIC), **Dana Johnston** (Newark), **Shadina Jones** (Cheswold), **Lisa Kail** (Bethany Beach), **Mark Kennedy** (Kent County), **Jason Kilpatrick** (Milford), **Tina Law** (Elsmere), **Mike Mahaffie** (OSPC), **Richard Maly** (Camden), **Jim McElhinney** (New Castle County), **Oralia McGinness** (Harrington), **Ed McNeeley** (GIC), **Tracy Mulligan** (Bethany Beach), **Jessica Norton** (Odessa), **Aaron Officer** (Dover), **David Potter** (Middletown), **Tom Roth** (Henlopen Acres), **Jesse Savage** (Bridgeville), **John Schatzschneider** (Harrington), **Jamie Smith** (Laurel), **Angela Townsend** (Georgetown), **Dell Tush** (Dewey Beach), **Bonnie Walls** (Bridgeville), and **Richard Wright** (Millville)

Mark Deshon thanked the Town of Camden for providing lunch and Kristen Krenzer (Middletown) for providing dessert (homemade brownies).

Introductions

Mark stated that all MWDG members have a part to play in this group through participation. He encouraged new members to ask questions, give answers, and

participate in the conversation. He welcomed all attendees and encouraged them to come to every meeting. Mark noted that the number of people on the group's roster is twice as many as the number of people who actually participate. Consequently, the group tends to lose out on the non-participants' importance and expertise.

2. Member Website Reports

- **Arden** – Includes minutes, town description, committee descriptions, just purchased Dreamweaver plug-in for slide show.
- **Cheswold** – Hosted by Delaware.Net. Thinking about adding newsletter material.
- **Clayton** – Revamped their military subsite "Our Hometown Heroes" using a revolving slide show (a CivicPlus feature).
- **Dewey Beach** – Google Maps implemented. Use questions/comments as a website-feedback mechanism. Uploads audio recording of meetings. Involved now in training other town officials to be able to upload info to their Delaware.Net-hosted website. Wants to make parking tickets payable online.
- **Fenwick Island** – There are a lot of features but not much in the way of a budget for the website. FI has 350 year-round residents and 5,000 in the summer.
- **Greenwood** – Nothing to report. Will be partnering with the state's GIC through Greg Hughes to work on the site.
- **Magnolia** – Within 30 days of having launched the site. Attached farmers' market flyer. Want to have online payment.
- **Middletown** – Still transitioning to Dreamweaver software. Goal is to launch a new site by the end of the year.
- **New Castle** – The new Council is interested in revamping the website.
- **Smyrna** – Town recently received the "Best Old House" award for its historical neighborhood. Now using Twitter and Facebook as a way to help residents know what's going on. Launched military recognition subsite. Currently trying to implement Google Maps. They now have a front page slide show of 15 or more images. Council photos are new. They have also implemented a CivicPlus "notify me" utility.
- **South Bethany** – Still satisfied with BeachNet, their town's web service and host. Posted town budget in PDF.
- **IPA – University of Delaware** (no report)

Kristen (Middletown) is also working with Odessa to help them, as they lost Jessica Norton.

3. Member Speaker on "Making Better Photographs"– by Danny Schweers (the Ardens)

Mark Deshon introduced the member speaker, Danny Schweers, and noted that Danny is a very good photographer as well as being involved in website design. Danny has been photographing for more than 40 years and has had four photographs exhibited at the Delaware Art Museum. He is a past president of the Texas Photographic Society.

Danny gave a presentation titled "Making Better Photographs." He had approximately 50 sample photographs, mostly of people, which he displayed in a slide show and explained what he did with the images. The following tips are taken from the handout that Danny distributed to attendees:

What's important – light, framing, and personality!

- Light your subject.
 - Most light comes from overhead, but the best light for photographs comes sideways, hitting the front and side of the subject.
 - If you are outside, move the subject into the shade so the light comes from the sky, not the sun. If you are inside, move the subject near a window.
 - Keep the sun to the photographer's back.
 - An overcast sky is good.
 - Use your flash. Even if there is plenty of light, you can use your flash in "fill flash" mode. Many cameras have this option.
 - Be careful of reflections in eyeglasses.
 - If there is little light and you cannot use a flash, wait for the subject to pause before releasing your shutter. Brace the camera, use a monopod or a tripod, or switch on the vibration reduction feature if your digital camera has it.
 - Cloning tool in Photoshop is useful in getting rid of unwanted shadows.
- Frame what is of interest.
 - Crop what is without interest, or make it dark.
 - A common mistake is not getting close enough to the subject or leaving the background cluttered.
 - Get close enough or zoom in so that the subject is well framed and background clutter is minimized. Also, you can crop on the computer.
 - Using a flash can automatically light up the subject while keeping the background dark, if the background is far enough away.
- Catch personality.
 - Good portraits are difficult primarily because people don't like having machines aimed at them. They get tense and stone-faced, like prisoners in front of a firing squad, or suspects being examined.

- Once a person sees one or more photos of themselves looking rigid as a corps, they become even harder to photograph: they think the experience will be repeated or think good photographs of them cannot be taken.
- Start by relaxing yourself. Find a way to enjoy the experience. Talk to the subject. Get to know them. Don't just tell them you are delighted or privileged to be photographing them, find a way to be delighted or feel privileged.
- If you are feeling good about the experience, your subject is much more likely to relax and to show themselves. Tell them what a challenge it is to get a good photograph of anyone and ask them to help you. Spend time with them and keep shooting until they have shown themselves.
- Again, you are asking the subject to give you something. Wait to receive it, be patient, and be thankful when it is given. You might not expect it, but this is true for sunsets and mountains as well.

Danny concluded by saying, "Shoot prolifically, edit ruthlessly."

4. Other Business – moderated by Mark Deshon (IPA – University of Delaware)

Group Demography

Mark stated that he is looking to do a survey (online) of the members to find out what their interests are and to develop a comprehensive database to help make decisions on where the group needs to go from here. He noted that the texture of the group changes as personnel changes. Mark hopes to have the results of the survey for the October meeting. Mark will send out an email regarding this, and he will call on some members to help him with the process. He asked members to email him suggestions for the survey. The following suggestions were given at the meeting:

- Develop a list of critical items to have on a local government website.
- Develop a list of website hosts that the towns are using and how much the towns are paying for the service.

Mark Deshon and Greg Hughes (GIC) plan to make visits to the towns that do not have a representative in the group. Mark also hopes to contact the towns who are thinking about having a website to invite them to become a part of the group before they have to make decisions regarding their website.

Announcement of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be at the Delaware Public Archives. The tentative date is Thursday, October 22, 2009. Mark Deshon will confirm that date and notify members. Lunch will be provided by the Town of Magnolia.