

Delaware Municipal Web Developers Group

MEETING SUMMARY

October 16, 2008

Kent County Levy Court Building

Dover, Delaware

1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

AGENDA

1. Attendees/Absentees

Attendees:

Win Abbott (Clayton), **Barbara Belli** (Wilmington), **Jennifer Brook** (Smyrna), **Lee Brubaker** (Ocean View), **Dick Cleaveland** (Dewey Beach), **Marian Delaney** (New Castle), **Mark Deshon** (IPA-University of Delaware), **Dana Johnston** (Newark), **Mark Kennedy** (Kent County), **Kristen Krenzer** (Middletown), **Patricia Laurion** (Sussex County), **Richard Maly** (Camden), **Dorothy Martin** (Kent County), **Ed McNeeley** (GIC), **Sue Muncey** (Clayton), **Donna Schwartz** (Fenwick Island), **Danny Schweers** (The Ardens), **Pam Smith** (South Bethany), **Eddie Sparpaglione** (Sussex County), and **Richard Wright** (Millville).

Absentees:

Cathy Beaver (Townsend), **Lisa Boltz** (Camden), **Tricia Booth** (Seaford), **Mark Callan** (Dover), **Kathleen Clifton** (Delaware City), **Sarah Ferguson** (Felton), **John Giles** (Elsmere), **David Henderson** (Rehoboth Beach), **Greg Hughes** (GIC), **Lisa Kail** (Bethany Beach), **Jason Kilpatrick** (Milford), **Tina Law** (Elsmere), **Mike Mahaffie** (OSPC), **Jim McElhinney** (New Castle County), **Tracy Mulligan** (Bethany Beach), **Donald Mulrine** (Camden), **Jessica Norton** (Odessa), **David Potter** (Middletown), **Tom Roth** (Henlopen Acres), **Rita Shade** (Newport), **Jamie Smith** (Laurel), **Angela Townsend** (Georgetown), **Dell Tush** (Dewey Beach), and **Nelson Wiles** (Lewes).

2. Website Status Reports

- **The Ardens** (Arden, Ardentown, Ardencroft) – From a suggestion by a citizen, Arden will begin using Microsoft SharePoint.
- **Camden** – Had Delaware.Net put the Google analytics on each page. The average person visits the site for about 30 seconds.
- **Clayton** – Was a .com and is now a .gov. The ISP is Comcast and the URL is .gov. Is concerned because the town e-mail addresses are Delaware.com.

Ed McNeeley (State of Delaware) referred them to Greg Hughes (State of Delaware) but indicated that separate (i.e., non-domain-matching) e-mail addresses are common.

- **Dewey Beach** – Making recordings of the Town Council meeting and putting the recordings on the website. Negotiating with Delaware.Net about going to their new system. Have posted a listing of committee members on the committee pages. Would like to be able to test new information placed on the website before making it live.
- **Middletown** – David Potter and Kristen Krenzer have completed Dreamweaver training and are reconfiguring to Dreamweaver. Trying to make a nice, beautiful header. CGI Communications spent two full days filming in the town and is creating six one-minute videos. The videos will be linked to Middletown's website. CGI Communications sells advertising to local businesses. So far they have sold 18 ads.

Mark Deshon asked if a .gov web address is allowed to have ads. There was a discussion. Eddie Sparpaglione (Sussex County) and Ed McNeeley (State of Delaware) agreed that ads were not allowed. Barbara Belli (Wilmington) stated that Wilmington used CGI Communications services in the past and at that time she had spoken with a DotGov representative who told her the ads were allowed. Barbara added that it was wishy-washy. Mark Deshon warned to be aware of the pitfalls of showing advertising from your website if you are a .gov.

- **Millville** – Pulled up the analytics for the website in preparation of the budget process. The average visit was 2.03 minutes. There were 700 visits to the website in August and September.
- **Newark** – Working on making the website more visually interactive with the community.
- **New Castle** – Nothing new to report. Still hosted by DCA.Net.
- **Ocean View** – Had just gone live in July. Website designed and hosted by Delaware.Net. It works well. No real complaints from citizens. Having forms accessible on the website has cut down on town staff having to send forms out. Have posted information on the announcements page regarding water bills and a water-bill calculator. The local newspaper has gone to the website and picked up information which they ran (for free) in the newspaper.
- **Smyrna** – Went live with CivicPlus in July and has had positive feedback. People like it and it works. Forms are available on the website. Looking to do video recordings of council meetings and post on website.
- **South Bethany** – Nothing new to report.
- **Wilmington** – Continuing to work on the website redesign, particularly their intranet. Also, working with the IT Department regarding scripting for online applications.

- **Kent County** – Nothing new in terms of the web page look or design. Have been doing a lot of back-end maintenance and cleanup, which has been very time-consuming. However, it is worth it to make sure that memory is in tact and being used as efficiently as possible.
- **Sussex County** – Eddie Sparpaglione and Patti Laurion will be attending the Adobe MAX Convention in San Francisco November 16-19. Eddie highly recommends the convention. Sussex County uses Dreamweaver for just about everything. Will be using RIA (Rich Internet Application) on internal things. It is more animated and interactive. Through the website, the County is holding an election scholarship contest for students in grades K-12.
- **Delaware.gov** (Government Information Center) – Upgrading search engine to Google Search appliance. By default, Delaware municipalities have landed in the state's search engine. Could have a separate collection for local government. Looking at archiving websites – how to take snapshots of websites for archival purposes. The State has added Twitter to its website.
- **IPA** – A new University homepage was launched August 1. The University's goal is for all of the colleges and their departments to have a common look and feel that reflects the overall institution by December 31, 2008. Templates were made available including a standard header and footer with department content to be placed in the middle. Mark is working on moving IPA in the direction of compliance with the University's goal. Mark Deshon was asked by the Delaware League of Local Governments (DLLG) to create a simple website for their organization. IPA already hosts the DLLG online directory, which has information about local governments in Delaware, so Mark also changed the look and feel of the online directory to match DLLG's site. DLLG's web address is www.dllg.org.

During a group discussion, it was mentioned that the .gov domain fee of \$125 can be avoided if you apply (for a .delaware.gov domain) through the State of Delaware.

3. Presentation on E-Mail Anti-Harvesting Techniques and Search Engine Optimization – by Eddie Sparpaglione and Patti Laurion (Sussex County), presented by Eddie Sparpaglione

E-mail Harvesting is defined as the process of obtaining lists of e-mail addresses using various methods for use in bulk e-mail or other purposes usually grouped as spam.

Advantages and disadvantages of the following Anti-Harvesting solutions:

- List-poisoning

- Address Munging
- Client-Side Scripting (JavaScript)
- CSS Manipulation
- Images
- Contact Form (Sussex County uses Contact Form)

Other best practices:

- Avoid Stereotypes
- Do Not Respond
- Disable HTML
- Disposable E-mail addresses

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

SEO can be defined as:

- Process of improving the volume and quality of traffic to a website from search engines
- Interested in the return and ranking (order) of web site in results

SEO Techniques, SEO Tips and Tricks, Google Recommendations, and Google Resources were presented.

There was a stimulating group discussion. The presentation was very informative and useful. Mark Deshon thanked Eddie for his presentation.

4. Group Viewing of Oct. 30 Presentation to DLLG: "The Web Today and a Statewide Resource Group for Addressing Local Government Website Development" – by Greg Hughes (GIC) and Mark Deshon (IPA - University of Delaware), presented by Mark Deshon

Mark gave the group a preview of the presentation that he and Greg Hughes prepared for the October 30, 2008, Delaware Institute for Local Government Leaders (DILGL), titled "The Web Today and a Statewide Resource Group for Addressing Local Government Website Development."

Comments were generally favorable.

Win Abbott commented that, from a salesman's point of view, it needs to help "close the sale," with respect to participation in our group.

Mark also passed around a draft of a MWDG brochure he created that will be distributed to DILGL participants on October 30.

It was suggested by Eddie Sparpaglione that a steering committee could be put together to meet more frequently and answer some of the questions brought up from this meeting.

5. Report on NAGW Annual Conference by Barbara Belli (Wilmington)

Barbara reported that it was a great conference with a good mix of beginner, intermediate, and advance courses. She attended sessions on SharePoint, mapping the future of government websites, and adding Facebook and social networking links on government websites. Also, accessibility was a big push. About 200 people attended the conference. Next year the conference will be in Galveston, Texas. NAGW member benefits include discounts, online training, magazines, and member directory. Mark Deshon asked Barbara to keep her eye out for a possible guest speaker for a future MWDG meeting.

Jen Brook (Smyrna) recently joined NAGW.

- **www.nagw.org**

Announcement of Next Meeting

Next meeting will take place on Thursday, January 22, at 12:30 p.m. at the Kent County Building and will begin with lunch, courtesy of the Town of Middletown.

It has not yet been determined which municipality will furnish lunch.