

Town of Somerset
Communications Committee Meeting Minutes
Monday, October 9, 2023
5:00 p.m.
Zoom

1. Call to Order
 - a. Attendance:
 - i. *Committee members*: Leslie Caplan, Ilene Heller, Joanne Steller
 - ii. *Town Hall and Town Council representatives present*: Debbie Heller (Council Member and committee liaison), E.J. Hardwick (Deputy Town Manager)
 - b. Approved Minutes from Last Meeting (September 11, 2023), as amended
 - i. Amendment: Added "Committee will review Town social media policy" under the item for "Update on new Town website."
 - c. Approved Agenda of October Meeting
 - d. Announcements: Discussed replacement for Barbara Marenus
 - e. Date for next meeting: November 13, 5:00 p.m.
2. New Town website
 - a. Report from Deputy Town Manager:
 - i. The Deputy Town Manager pointed out that he continues to do back-end site work that will make it easier to add content and navigate the site.
 - ii. Committee's page on the Town website
 - iii. Leslie provided draft content for the page which the committee reviewed and approved with these edits:
 1. Add the names of the committee chair and members
 2. Consistently refer to the directory publication as the Resource Guide and Directory
 3. Change item #3 under Mission to: Review and assist in creation of periodic Town Resource Guide; and
 4. Add under Other Committee Activities another bullet point: Greatly expanded and updated content for the Town Resource Guide
 - iv. Leslie will make these changes and provide the resulting document to committee members prior to next meeting
3. Discussed privacy/confidentiality issues for the Town Journal
 - a. Now that the Town Journal is more widely publicly available, the committee expressed concern about protecting the privacy of residents, especially children, pictured and/or mentioned in Town Journal articles. No Town policy governing such concern is currently available. The Town Journal nearly always supplies the streets on which named residents reside, and names and streets are frequently included in captions for photographs of Town residents.
 - i. Questions/issues discussed:
 1. Committee recommends that the Journal be put behind the same firewall as directory
 2. Do we need permission to provide personal/contact information in the Journal? This question is particularly critical if access to the Journal remains open to the public. The committee learned that the Swim Team does have a written permission process.
 3. Issues regarding privacy and permission are especially critical for children -- even if the Journal is maintained behind a firewall.

- ii. Leslie will send an inquiry regarding these issues to the Mayor, and will cc Council Member Heller, the Town Manager, the Deputy Town Manager, and the Council President
4. Discussion of coordination/consistency of calendars across Town publications, including email blasts, social media, Town Journal, and Town website.
 - i. The Deputy Town Manager reports he is working on this coordination. Committees are asked to provide meetings by the fifteenth of the month.
 - ii. The Deputy Town Manger can work with the committees to try to get this information, and can provide the information to the Town Manager to include in the calendar provided in the Journal.
5. Resource Guide/Directory update
 - a. Noting that this annual publication must get underway by the end of 2023, the committee initiated a plan and will call upon the Town Manager to confirm its role in the 2024 edition
 - i. The committee assumes, based on budget talks, that a 2024 hardcopy edition will be printed.
 - ii. The committee will assume the role of updating the Resource Guide from the 2023 edition. This is expected to be limited to new or out-of-date information only because the committee extensively expanded the Resource Guide last year.
 1. Ilene Heller and Leslie Caplan will review the Resource Guide to note any necessary changes for 2024, and request that someone from Town Hall do so as well.
 - b. The committee suggests that the creation of the 2024 Directory (list of names, addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses) be developed and produced by Town Hall. The committee can assist with format and other aspects as needed, since the Directory is listed as a responsibility of the committee in the committee charter.
 - c. Committee will work with Town staff to coordinate updates
6. Coordination with Newcomers Committee
 - a. Ilene Heller reported there are 19 newcomers to Town, including three from late 2022. The committee tabled its idea to welcome them in upcoming Town Journals, pending Town Hall's guidance on resident privacy.
7. Town Journal update: Leslie reported the November issue will include three reports by Council members on issues currently before Town Council
8. This month's agenda failed to include a review of the Town's social media policy; the committee will do this next month.
9. Lecture series
 - Committee agreed upon a pilot program based on committee work and discussions to-date.
 - a. Proposed title: Town Talks
 - b. Format: A short "neighbor-to-neighbor" talk of about 30 minutes with an additional 15-minute Q&A.
 - c. Location: Town Hall
 - d. Proposed schedule: week of January 8, April 8, and a date TBA in September 2024.
 - e. Proposed timing: a mix of weeknights, Sunday afternoon, or Brown Bag lunch
 - f. First speakers to be invited: Jeff Nussbaum and Amy Hoang-Wrona
 - Next step: Leslie will ask John to invite the two speakers giving them the choice of date and timing.
10. Meeting adjourned at approximately 6:10 p.m.