

Minutes of the East Montpelier Selectboard

December 8, 2013 Special Website Content Forum

The East Montpelier Selectboard hosted an open house for Town employees, appointees, volunteers, and elected officials from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. As part of this event, the Selectboard conducted an informal website content design discussion to solicit town resident input on the desired content for the Town's new website (www.eastmontpeliervt.org). This event was open to the public.

SB Attendance: Chair Seth Gardner, Kim Swasey, Steve Sparrow, Casey Northrup, and Carl Etnier; Town Administrator Bruce Johnson

Public Attendance: Mike Garand, Denise Brown, Terri Conti, Sandy Conti, Kim Watson, Ross Hazel, Gene Troia, Elliott Morse, Florence Morse, Norman Hill, Scott Hess, Amy Hess, Kristi Flynn, Edie Miller, Marty Miller, Larry Brown, Paulie Coburn, Dave Coburn, Amanda Northrup; many more arrived as the website discussion was ending and the town party/food element of the evening took center stage

At 4:30 p.m. Chair Gardner welcomed attendees to the website content aspect of the evening. A content feedback form was provided to attendees. Chair Gardner went through the form item-by-item, requesting public comment on each item. Ms. Swasey noted comments on a flip chart. The bulleted list following each item is a summary of comments received.

Public information includes the grand list, property tax details (not including, however, state payment information including income sensitivity specifics), delinquent tax information, births, marriages, deaths, property transfers, permits, election results, board & committee documents (members, agendas, notices, minutes, etc.), the annual report, and more: Do we draw a line and, if so, where? Please keep in mind that this is public information and we can't stop others from posting/publishing such information (for example, the Signpost, both in print and online, publishes births, deaths, transfers, and more).

- Do not include value of property transfers; include note that the information is available at the town office
- Do not include grand list on website; include note that the information is available at the town office
- Do not include voter checklist; include note that the information is available at the town office
- If vital statistics (birth, death, marriage) are provided, avoid specific day/year
- Town Clerk provides vitals lists:
 - Births with month of birth, parents, and name
 - Marriages with month, bride, and groom
 - Deaths with month, age, and name
- Annual Town Report should be on website; provide as many as available; establish an archive of the reports [Larry Brown offered to provide digital files of the reports L Brown has printed for the town; may go back 25 years]
- Do not include an itemized delinquent tax list; include note that the information is available at the town office

- Include all boards & committees that are listed in town report; list the members and provide approved minutes
- Provide information on town zoning permits; maybe include fireworks permits; do not provide burn permit information
- Provide election results as soon as they are available
- Include a “Clerk’s Corner” with a “frequently asked questions” section
- Do not include dog licenses; include note that the information is available at the town office or from animal control officer

The Annual Town Report, distributed to all town residents, contains a great deal of public information of a personal nature, but is also the single best source of current and historical town information: Should the current and past annual reports be posted on the website?

- Concern raised about the specific content of the land transfers page; prefer that it not include values; can’t edit existing annual reports, but could alter information on the transfers page in future editions
- The Signpost has received requests for property transfer values; it is public information
- Montpelier provides land transfers with value; provides entire grand list as well

Personal contact information for elected, appointed, and volunteer town officials is a tricky area: What, if any, personal contact information would you like to see on the website?

- Include all contact information that is town provided (office numbers & emails); don’t provide personal contact information
- Provide contact information on elected officials unless they specifically opt out

The website calendar currently is used for town government meetings/notices; the Signpost website and the new Front Porch Forum calendar provide notice opportunities for community organizations: Should we open up the town website calendar to other groups and, if so, where do we draw the line?

- Do include the municipal meetings with links to agendas and locations
- Don’t include EMFD meetings
- Provide links to school calendars

Many of the formal documents (such as ordinances/policies/town meeting minutes signed by officials) on the website are scanned documents which are essentially unsearchable; searchable versions (such as a .pdf of a Word document), without the signatures, could be posted in place of the official documents: Should we post only searchable documents on the website?

- Prefer that all documents be searchable
- The official, signed versions of documents are not necessary

The town has a website links policy (as part of the Selectboard-adopted Website Policy and Privacy Statement; available on the website in multiple locations) that limits the type of links allowed to governmental, educational, community service, utility (including

newspaper), and other similar organizations; links for political organizations, candidate sites, most for-profit businesses, and individual/personal sites are not allowed: Understanding that the town cannot be responsible for or endorse outside links, what links would you like available on the town website?

- Provide links to the organizations the town votes to provide funding
- Include a title for those links stating that the organizations are town-supported
- Invite local businesses to provide website links

Any other comments/concerns regarding the website or specific content?

- Road Foreman would prefer that his cell number not be on website; town garage and pager numbers are sufficient
- Provide clear information on when to use “911” and when to call non-emergency numbers to report road issues

At 5:30 p.m. Chair Gardner concluded the website content aspect of the evening and thanked the participants.

Respectfully submitted by Bruce Johnson, Town Administrator

Approved: January 6, 2014 East Montpelier Selectboard meeting