

ECAC Meeting – January 23, 2018

The meeting was called to order at 18:25. Betsy Fadem, Kate Jones, Tom McGurk, Kevin Melich, Ron Mintz, Pete Motel, and Jim Oram were present.

Tom reviewed the agenda for the evening.

The minutes from the December 11, 2017 meeting were approved without changes.

The group discussed the website project. Tom offered the following framework for the discussion:

Website Improvement Project Guidelines

- 1.) Transparency is inherently good government
- 2.) Improvements should be in a similar scale to the township's size
- 3.) ET is a leader in some areas (Library & Planning) and not in others (Park and Rec)
- 4.) Use analytics wherever possible
- 5.) Add where practical, data such as maps, surveys, studies, historical commission records
- 6.) Recognize challenge of keeping website up to date.
- 7.) Gap analysis based on initial comparison of Easttown vs. Tredyffrin, Radnor and Willistown
- 8.) Any changes should favor one-time additions vs regular updating programs

Gaps Identified through Gap Analysis

- 1.) Improve layout of home page by offering more options for directing visitors
- 2.) Add historical data for Legal Notices, Ordinance updates, and Resolutions
- 3.) Department Improvements - generally add more information
 - a. Park and Rec - extend information on facilities and activities
 - b. Police -
 - c. Public Works
 - d. Engineering Projects
 - e. Finance
 - f. Zoning and Planning
- 4.) Improve Notifications - weather, crime, emergencies, road closing, etc.
- 5.) Increase community links
 - e.g. business associations, events, non-profits, school board, historical society, Credit Rating
- 6.) Add In-Community magazine to website
- 7.) Add suggestion page "How can this website be better"
- 8.) Extend Q&A sections offering facts and information to the public
- 9.) Move to on-line forms
- 10.) Add more photos where possible and practical
- 11.) Can website be mobile friendly?
- 12.) Add organization chart and description
- 13.) Add voter information page
- 14.) Add on-line payments

Gaps Prioritized and Grouped by Type

<u>Type/Priority</u>		<u>Responsible</u>
Systemic		
A*	1.) Improve layout of home page by offering more options for directing visitors	Site master
B	2.) Improve Notifications - weather, crime, emergencies, road closing, etc.	
B	3.) Increase community links	
B	4.) Extend Q&A sections offering facts and information to the public	
A	5.) Move to on-line forms	
B	6.) Add more photos where possible and practical	
A	7.) Add on-line payments	
Departmental		
A	1.) Department Improvements - generally add more information <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Park and Rec - extend information on facilities and activities b. Police - c. Public Works d. Engineering and Projects e. Finance f. Zoning and Planning 	Dept Heads Site Master
Specific		
A	1.) Add historical data for Legal Notices, Ordinance updates, and Resolutions	Site Master
B	2.) Add In-Community magazine to website	
A	3.) Add suggestion page "How can this website be better"	
B	4.) Can website be mobile friendly?	
C	5.) Add organization chart and description	
A	6.) Add voter information page	
*	Priority: A = high, C = low	

Buck Buchanan was unable to attend tonight but he sent over comments on Willistown's website:

- Zoning Maps are equally difficult to read. Easttown suggests going to such maps to determine state roads from township roads regarding dead deer but there appears to be no such designation.
- Both townships contain fee schedules that are somewhat buried, Willistown within "Apply for Permit" and Easttown within "Land Development". Suggest breaking them out separately.
- Contractor registration is a separate category for Willistown while it is contained within Building Permits for Easttown.
- Willistown offers a site for "Volunteer" interest while Easttown has a section "Employment" which refers only to a Pump Station opening that expired on 04.21.17.
- Willistown offers a significant amount of info on Township park facilities while Easttown's is blank.
- Emergency notifications are similar and sufficient although Easttown's reference to "Vacation Home Checks" could mean "Vacant" which is referenced on another page.
- Willistown offers "Learn about Upcoming Events in Willistown," but the site only refers to administrative events which is a bit misleading. Easttown does a fine job of posting administrative events
- Neither Township provides much info on real estate taxes although Willistown references them in "Pay My Bill."
- Willistown provides helpful and interesting links for "Animal Control" and "Request a Public Record."
- The treatment of paint disposal is confusing on the Easttown website.

Ron offered the following comments on the Westtown website:

- Westtown Township
 - The Westtown Township website is attractive, clean, colorful, and very modern looking. The banner movement is particularly interesting.
 - The community bulletin board with new postings and important data is useful.
 - On line bill pay is very helpful.
 - The on line forms are very helpful.
 - Posting the tax data is a good transparency policy.
 - The link to the township newsletter is helpful.
 - The links to the various boards, commissions, and departments is easy and intuitive.
 - The parks and recreation links are nice.
 - The actual calendar (in a calendar format) is nice.
- Easttown Township
 - The forms should be able to be filled out and submitted on line.
 - I like that the township code is posted.

- I like that the historic budgets and audits are posted.
- The minutes are out of date – and the library ones are missing.
- The trash link when to a 404.

The sense of the group was that the website should be reviewed biennially with respect to its structure but the content should be reviewed more frequently, as often as semi-annually.

Kate informed us that the vendor comes in to “skin” the site – essentially a complete redesign – quadrennially; we’re now in the third year so the new effort will be coming. However, Kate thinks that we can still add items to the website, even before the re-skinning.

A question was raised of how to formalize the website guidelines; are they policies, procedures, or suggestions? Who enforces them? Kate also suggested that there be guidelines for social media.

Tom queried how we should be judging ourselves with respect to the website, suggesting that transparency of information is important. He also suggested that the improvements we ultimately recommend should generate a website that is in scale to the size of the township. The library’s website is quite good in his opinion (Kate later mentioned that it is controlled by the library). The Parks and Recreation data are poor, but he noted that there is no director for it.

The following are various suggestions with respect to the website:

- The Township should be using Google analytics when possible.
- Add as much practical data as possible, including the Township code.
- Recognize the challenge of keeping it up to date.
- Changes should favor one-time additions rather than ones that need frequent updates.
- Add information about the stormwater management project.
- Add plans for various pending public works projects.
- Add information about planning and zoning matters.
- Suggested links:
 - Weather on the NOAA website.
 - The Township’s credit rating, although we would need to get permission from the rating agencies to do so.
 - The Chester County website.
 - A map of the voting precincts (or a link to the County’s Registrar of Voters data).
- Develop a mobile version of the site, or make it as an app.
- Improving the police data, but this requires more investigation.

Kate informed us that if we want to add any legal notices, doing so would require that they be added to the code. Once updated, it can be posted. Updating the code is an ongoing task, not a one-off add because it does indeed change.

It was suggested that we ask each of the Township departments to come up with suggestions and recommendations and updates (although Kate would do the actual tasks of updating herself). There needs to be a person appointed to add information for the Parks and Recreation Department.

It was also suggested that we review the efficiency of adding a comments section seeking input on how to improve the website. Another alternative would be to delay doing this until the improvements are finished and then seek input.

There was a suggestion about adding an 'Anonymous Tips' section but only if it would automatically link to the County's service; if not, this should not be done. There are some concerns about whether anonymous tips are truly anonymous, so this warrants further discussion if we are to proceed with it.

Kate said that she is working on getting various permits that could be filled out on line, but there is some software engineering that needs to be done as well as various negotiations. She also said that it is possible to accept on line payments, but a fee would be required for credit card payments while an ACH transfer would not incur a separate charge (the sending bank might charge one to its customer). It was suggested that the location of the Township's bank be added for in-person payments.

Future projects:

- The board is developing its top priorities for the year, but what to do with Hilltop House is of high importance.
- The board will be looking into the renovation of the Devon train station and what the Township can do to facilitate and prioritize improvements there, working with a myriad of agencies.
- Betsy provided an update on meetings she had with different EMS companies further away from our area, including Good Fellowship in West Chester and Whitemarsh Ambulance in Whitemarsh Township. More regionalization of these services is a possibility.

The meeting adjourned at 20:09.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ron Mintz