

# Communication Committee Minutes

## Call to Order and Scheduling

The meeting was called to order. The next meeting is scheduled for April 16th at 6:30 PM instead of 6:00 PM, to accommodate work schedules. Chris Calio confirmed that any time after 5:30 PM works, and Cheryl Barber also agreed to the later time due to her commitments. The group agreed to conduct a roll call.

## Roll Call

- Chris Calio: Present
- George Lodato: Present
- Cheryl Barber: Present
- Sharon Ardisana: Present
- Jill Cranmer: Absent

A brief introduction of members followed, with Chris Calio identified as a Town Council member, Sharon Ardisana as a citizen, George Lodato as Councilman for Ward 4, and Cheryl Barber as a member of Operation West Laurel.

## Election of Chair and Secretary

The committee discussed the need for a Chair and Secretary. Jill was nominated to be Secretary but is currently on vacation, so the decision was postponed. Chris declined the Secretary position. Jill's willingness to serve will be confirmed after her return. George was nominated and unanimously accepted as Chair due to his ongoing involvement with committee issues.

## Overview of Committee Responsibilities

The committee's responsibilities include reviewing the town website and those of nearby towns (Georgetown, Milton, Seaford) to identify best practices and improvements. The committee will meet with department heads to gather input for the website, suggest a new

navigation roadmap, and consider different drop-down menus for user ease. Additionally, the committee will review the newsletter to maximize its utility and develop a “Welcome to the Neighborhood” brochure using samples from Seaford, Milford, and the Help Initiative. Open discussions will focus on enhancing communication between the town and the community, including connecting with the Board of Education or students.

## Project Timeline

- Week 1: Town management contacts vendors (Delmarva Digital and other web designers).
- Weeks 1–6: Committee meets Thursdays from 6:30–8:00 PM.
- Week 7: Council reviews, approves, modifies, and recommends website changes.
- Weeks 8–12: Developer creates new website and committee receives input and pricing.
- Weeks 12–14: Town staff test and tweak the website.
- Week 15: Staff training on the new website.
- Week 16: Public rollout of the website.

The committee discussed the importance of providing feedback to Delmarva Digital prior to their presentation to the Town Council on May 11th, ensuring requirements are clear to avoid redundant proposals.

## Communication and Project Updates

Town projects such as sewer and water pipelines and road paving are managed and updated by the town, while developer-led projects are not directly tracked. The committee suggested creating menu options for community organizations with links to their websites, enabling residents to access updates and events directly from those sources. Linking to external websites, such as the library and police department, was considered an efficient way to provide information without constant updates by town staff. Successful communication depends on organizations maintaining their own web presence.

## Community Assistance and Resources

The committee reviewed community assistance brochures from Milford and Seaford, containing useful phone numbers and program information. Such resources should be included online under “Resources,” categorized by county or state. The group noted frequent calls from residents seeking assistance, emphasizing the need for accessible information on the website. Brochures would also be distributed at events like Bike and Brew and the Heritage Festival, with volunteers sought to help compile these materials.

## Document Accessibility

Members expressed the importance of making council presentations and proposals (such as DDD) available online, since not everyone receives handouts at meetings. Reports and presentations from department heads should also be accessible after meetings, benefiting those who cannot attend.

## Department Reports and Financial Transparency

The committee discussed posting department monthly reports online, marking them as “Draft” until formally approved by the council. The state’s “open checkbook” system was referenced as a model for financial transparency. There was consensus that more comprehensive budget information should be provided to give a clearer picture of financial health.

Regarding fines and unpaid taxes, the committee noted the process of sheriff sales and payment arrangements. The state of Delaware no longer allows capias for unpaid fines, limiting enforcement options. The group discussed the Alderman’s Court and the relationship between police ticketing and court revenue.

## Website Enhancements and Department Tabs

Members suggested adding department-specific tabs to the website for updates, reports, and links to external resources. For the police department, links to their website and Facebook page should be included, along with a crime bulletin for residents. The committee debated the process for filing complaints online, advocating for a system where

complaints can be submitted digitally without requiring notarization, while ensuring the identity of the complainant is verified.

## Online Payments and Billing

The committee discussed improvements to online payment systems for the Alderman's Court and property taxes, focusing on the cost and practicality of providing receipts and bills online. There was concern about the annual costs of software solutions and suggestions to adjust settings to allow printing zero-balance bills as needed.

## Planning and Zoning

The committee highlighted the need for planning and zoning information on the website, including department reports marked as drafts before meetings. There was discussion about the election and term structure for planning and zoning and the importance of historical knowledge and continuity within these bodies.

## Community Engagement and Voting

The issue of community apathy was raised, noting low voter turnout and the challenge of motivating residents to participate. Members discussed past events where significant public engagement occurred, particularly during major projects or proposals.

## Adjournment

Public comments were completed, and a motion for adjournment was made. The meeting concluded with a discussion of school district websites and the organization of community resources, emphasizing the importance of collaboration and accessibility for all residents. With there being no further business, Councilman Lodato made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Sharon Ardisana seconded the motion. Vote was 4-0, with member Jill Cranmer absent. Meeting Adjourned at 7:48 p.m.



Committee Chairman