

NORTH YARMOUTH COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

December 19, 2014

Minutes

Attending: Darla Hamlin, Donna Palmer, Katie Murphy, Rob Wood, Kathy Whittier

Minutes of previous meeting: Approved as printed: Katie/Rob. Voted.

Meeting was held 12/12/14 with Donna, Rob, Rosemary Roy, Alex Carr to summarize miscellaneous conversations concerning the charge for the committee and activities related to the charge. If everything is ok, Alex will take this to the Selectmen in early January. Two additional items were discussed: (1) Guidelines for municipal communication – what activities are publicized on RFTH. Have the guidelines used been written down? They need to be accessible for whoever is putting together RFTH. Should these guidelines also be posted on RFTH? We need them for our notes as well. They should also include Facebook. (2) Facebook communications policy. We reviewed the charge. Adopt charge as formulated: Katie/Donna. Voted.

Other items of discussion at 12/12/14 meeting:

1. Postcard: We need 5-6 weeks' notice from the BOS for known events; emergencies can be dealt with via email and/or through the Town Office. The postcard template should always be used to simplify the process. The Town Office can do mailings, so there is no need for outside bulk mailing.
2. RFTH: What has been posted hasn't been conforming exactly to the guidelines. Nonprofit announcements will go back to the bottom. Donna will continue to volunteer as a Communications Committee member to work with Debbie and Jess (who is paid for his work). The distribution list is managed by Debbie and Jess.
3. Quarterly newsletter: This has great potential. The lead on this should be the Town Manager report. The Town Manager would also like to pull up committee reports. Someone will need to take Town Manager reports, summarize and edit material. There will be a need to call people/committees to track down information. We should be creating the format. Rosemary also talked about selling ads (this worked in Poland). It is important that everyone know who is in charge and/or who makes final decisions about content, etc. Donna noted that for RFTH, she came up with initial idea, which she ran by Rosemary. For other items, such as spotlighting businesses, profiles of town employees, etc., how might we do this? The Communications Committee would have Rosemary's back, but she would have the final say on topics. A quarterly newsletter can also provide legal notification. We would propose three newsletters per year, with the first one in March. The Town Report takes the place of one newsletter in chronological order.
4. Web page: New software allows for more flexibility. The Town Office will make the decision on which software and let us know – we aren't involved with this, except with the possible exception of creating a stylesheet. The new software enables corrections without going through all of the confusion of office.gov. This also needs a person who will oversee: e.g., Caitlyn.
5. Town Report: This doesn't come from the Communications Committee; the Town Clerk has legal responsibility. It was noted that it is more interesting when it includes future information.
6. Channel 2: Not part of the Communications Committee budget.

Ongoing business:

Budget notes: For the newsletter, Rosemary noted that printing could be done in house, but the committee noted that printing should be kept in the budget as an outside vendor. We will ask for a sample from the Town Office as well as talk to the staff about the feasibility of their actually adding this work to their schedule. We expressed concern about quality and use of staff time.

Frugality: Is this changing? Are people thinking in terms of value instead of cost? If the BOS really wants improved communications, then money needs to be spent. Use this year as a litmus test.

Town demographics: We need both electronic and traditional media to reach as many citizens as possible.

Summary: In the next month, look for guidelines for RFTH etc., as well as what newsletters should include. Donna will provide a sample template for a newsletter with the budget.

Facebook page: This isn't super important, but it is reaching younger people. Items posted by others on the town site can be problematic – this needs to be monitored. Concern was also expressed about how Facebook looks – quality. How can the town Facebook site be controlled or managed? How do we make sure it isn't getting out of hand? Do we provide guidelines here as well? Revisit after we've done other things.

Next meeting: Friday, January 9, 7:30 am at downstairs meeting room.