

Minutes  
Culture, History and Governance (CHuG)  
Sub-Committee  
May 28, 2008

Present:

CHuG: Susan Brooks, Karen Keane, Jack MacLean, Peter Sugar

COG: Angela Meehan

As agreed at our last meeting, we went on with our discussions, this time on the topic of Information Flow and Communication:

- The overriding question is how to make information available in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Should there be as much information as possible provided – some thought that at times, less is better
- The website is a good candidate for this topic: again, how much should be provided - entering information after all is time consuming. One could perhaps deal with it like an executive summary and then have appropriate links for a more detailed picture
- Blogging is another way - but there need to be some rules ('of engagement'). A protocol would be a good idea.
- How to do this well? we should try to find out how others/other towns do it.
- The site needs to be user friendly above all else!
- Goals need to be established, all framed to serve well the interests of the towns and its citizens.
- One way to arrive at this goal may be to set up a task force, with an appropriate objective, to carry out the necessary research, and thus establish the framework and methodology: there is a need, obviously, to look at other examples.
- The town should focus on this, though there are costs involved, and also there will be a need for a specialist in website design.
- It is acknowledged that we have a computer guru in town, but his functions were established as someone keeping the town's network operative and thus the website has not been his focus: not perhaps the area where his expertise lies.
- Transparency must be one of the important goals, keeping in mind some critical questions:
  - What are the happenings in Town, at the various board and committee meetings ...?
  - What information do the citizens have already? - and
  - What more do they need?
- Are the boards asking the right questions as they arrive at their decisions?
- Some boards are regularly televised – the BOS, the School Committee, LS. Should other boards also be televised – at least some of the important meetings - e.g. the Planning Board?
- It is also possible to consider that televising public meetings may not help - e.g. they may be regarded more as 'theater' rather than being truly informative
- From the point of view of process, the 'Lincoln Way' intentionally slows thing down to give the consideration adequate time, but also to have a consensual result, giving everyone who wishes to have a say, the opportunity to do so.
- It must be kept in mind, that the web is not the only source - for some it is not at all – and we must maintain multiple sources for disseminating the information
- We have newspapers – there is a mixed opinion as to their effectiveness: for one, at the Lincoln Journal, whenever there is a good editor, only too frequently he/she is moved before long. The Lincoln Review is more of a literary paper. Then there were at times other attempts at newsletters, but these have not survived
- Board-to-board communication is also important – this existed within the framework of the Moderator's meetings (bi-annual) now no longer - should they be revived?
- Communication – especially on the network – is also hampered by the Open Meeting Law - and so far there has not been a real solution to the conflicting objectives of transparency of process and efficiency in communication under modern day pressures
- Board survey: we need to complete our research: i.e. tabulate all the responses with numerical values (and not just the open-ended questions)

- Conclusions/summation:
  - Avenues for communication: website very important; other avenues: newspapers, local cable, etc.
  - Information: what type should be provided?
    - Technical
    - Practical
  - Amount of information:
    - What level?
    - What limits?
    - What amount of input to achieve the appropriate output?
    - What would be the cost and how much staff time would be involved?
  - Webmaster: should/could this service be shared with other towns?
  - Transparency: define
  - Communication is worth doing right: thus should be researched to see how it can be improved? Should we establish a task force? If so, what should be its charge?

Next meeting: Our next meeting will be on Wednesday, **6/11** at 7:30 AM at the Library – note: there will be no meeting on 6/4! Our agenda will center around what we will be presenting to the BOS on 6/23