

Town of Winchendon

109 Front Street, Winchendon, MA 01475

Communications Committee Minutes

April 7, 2025

4:30 p.m. - Town Hall 4th Floor Conference Room

MINUTES

Members Present: Katie Johnson, Shaina Cunningham, Amanda Phillips, Guy Corbosiero, David Conner, Inanna Arthen

Absent: Greg Vine

Others Present: None

Meeting called to order by Chair Inanna Arthen at 4:30 p.m.

- No comments from members of commission
- No comments from the public
- Motion to approve minutes made by Guy, seconded by Shaina, approved unanimously
- Shaina gave updates to the community communications group. The Community Communications group recently mapped out who wasn't at the table at their meetings. They assessed how event compiling is going. Trying to build more effective systems
- Update on courier from Inanna. Weekly papers continue to go up online every week. Monthly print expected to be printed in April. Courier is now a secure website. Since the paper has been publishing news again, the amount of hits on the website have doubled. Anecdotally, people have been reading a lot about prop 2.5. Inanna is looking forward to "beefing up the Courier" so it reaches a larger percentage of people in town. Goal to refer people back to the new town website and reach everyone in town, even on the fringes of town. How do we loop people who do not visit town hall back in? Inanna is still working on figuring out what is going into the print edition for April, keeping in mind that it is a monthly print, not weekly. The printed Courier will have a community connector insert with both one large calendar with all the events, and another page breaking them down again by category.
 - Dave suggested putting a survey in the print edition. Or refer folks to the website for a survey? Let's see how people want to get their news - brought back podcast idea - would people listen to a podcast? Potentially reaches a demographic that we are not reaching (commuterers). Can put a link on the website to the podcast.
 - Inanna - time constraint concern of creating podcast
 - Shaina - let's connect with Crysta from What's Up Winchendon for how to create a podcast easily. Seconded survey as a good idea.

- Jane reinforced anecdote that people are grateful for the “beefed up” courier. Suggested links/steps for people to get involved. What topics will be coming up after prop 2.5?
- Jane - how does communication promote “working together” and create an active community. How do we shape our community?
- Transportation update from Katie - need help to promote community connector once launch date is established. How do we establish trust? Having a really hard time finding a driver. I’m worried that a lot of folks don’t understand our funding as well.
- Shaina & Google calendar for community communications. One umbrella calendar and system for collecting events has been established. Shaina is working on streamlining the system. Toying with the idea of hyperlinks to either different orgs or creating categories (i.e. youth, seniors, etc...) on the town website calendar. Melanie Franklin from Cornerstone Church committed 5 hrs/week to volunteer for this project every week.
 - Folks can send pictures to highlight events that have already happened.
 - What’s the calendar going to look like once we copy it onto the town website? We have so many events/orgs on the calendar - it’s not user friendly. How do we make it user friendly?
 - Jane - color coded
 - Shaina - filter. Jane - can get people engaged by searching. Katie suggested filters by category. Shaina suggested filters by org.
- What tool are we going to use to communicate? We want to use the website, but the website is not regularly updated. How can we tell people to go to the website when it’s not accurate? Is there a way to electronically get rid of old information or a way to prompt departments to update when the date gets too old? Need to be able to link to other websites (school, library). Shaina and Katie will follow-up with Civic Plus about this.
- Inanna - gap between the actual jobs that people do and how to communicate what they do to the community. Townspeople don’t know what’s going on every day - builds distrust based on lack of information. Wants to sit down with the Chief of police to discuss how other police departments keep the public informed. Bangor, ME, famous for social media, helps people know what is going on with their police department.
 - Used to have department heads go to board of selectmen meetings to discuss their job. Also creates video to watch at any time - could create audio files as well to engage commuters.
 - Jane agrees that it’s a good idea too.
- Dave posed the question: How many people who moved away from Winchendon that cannot see or learn about what is happening in their hometown?
- How do we create a podcast?
 - Guy - put an ad in the courier looking for a subcommittee to create a podcast?

- Dave - Reach out to MWCC
- Inanna - youth changemakers, but Bonnie says the youth don't have a lot of time, overwhelmed
- Seniors are more long term than youth and could have the correct skills
- Shaina - students have public service hour requirements
- Dave highlighted the importance of the override information sessions going into every neighborhood - getting out into the community. "Disseminates information into the community in a different way".
 - Jane & town hall info session. - Folks are having a lot of trouble getting through to the assessor's office. Bill took their information to field those questions. No questions about what could happen if it doesn't pass. Questions about managing the town differently.
 - At town hall, people could potentially not approve the budget - what happens then?
 - Amanda - information was not on the website until this week. Town hall has done a poor job of explaining why we are doing the vote before the town meeting.
 - Shaina - "Facebook is loud" but a majority of people in town don't even know that this is override is happening.
 - Misinformation creates a lot of the questions that people have. We need to be accurate.
 - Jane - when there is a gap, people will fill the gap with misinformation
 - Amanda - people can fact check the misinformation on Facebook because there is no information on the website
- Go to the selectboard meeting and sit with town manager. We need one tool and we need the department heads on board - this is why the website is not updated now.
- We need to think long term.
 - Jane - what does the role of this committee look like long term? People want to see a plan.
- We should invite Crysta and Bill to future meetings.
- Next meeting will be on the 2nd Monday in May.
- Invite Erika Eitland BOS to a future meeting.
 - Jane - she is the ideal advocate for us on the BOS.

Inanna motioned to adjourn. Seconded by me. Adjourned at 5:48.

Approved By: Inanna Arth, Chair