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Approved

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**Town of Winchendon
Communications Committee Meeting Minutes
March 25, 2021
Via Zoom
109 Front Street, Winchendon, MA 01475**

Present:

Ray Coe, Chairman
Guy Corboseiro, Vice Chairman
Barbara Anderson, Secretary

Missing:

Greg Vine

The Chair called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m. There were no comments by members and the Chair proceeded to reach the mission of the Communication Committee and establish the boundaries of the committee's purview. He emphasized that we are an advisory committee only.

Mr. Corbosiero questioned whether the committee was continuing as previously designed, or are we creating a new committee. The Chair responded that we are a continuation of what had previously been established. The Chair then asked for public comments, to which there was no response.

The Chair began with an update on Zoom/streaming capabilities. He discussed the studio in Town Hall with streaming capabilities. It seems to be working well, although the facilities are cramped. Anderson stated that there is a lot of public support for keeping the Zoom aspect of public meetings. We need to look into what we can do to accommodate the public. Clinton added that there are some districts keeping it. He is aware of districts that have kept the capabilities. The hardware is not inexpensive. It would cost a minimum of \$2,000. It has been some time since he has last looked into it. Clinton questioned how much longer we would be keeping the Zoom, and if the cost is worth the effort. Anderson responded that the public prefers the Zoom feature. It is something that we may want to consider indefinitely. Clinton responded that he would continue looking into it and check with Don O'Neil to see what would be feasible. Moon suggested that there may be an assumption that we would discontinue Zoom. Anderson said that there was some public outcry to maintain it. It increased public participation, so we need to look into it. Corbosiero stated that he would prefer either/or and not go with a hybrid, as it would increase confusion. Some people would like to improve public participation, rather than discourage it. Clinton stated that he prefers in person over the Zoom.

Coe stated that he would rather go live than the hybrid, due to the constraints of the control room, it would take a lot of training and work to get it to function properly and as it stands, we have difficulty with the equipment we have. We have to take that into consideration. Corbosiero suggested that we look into it and see where it goes before making a decision. Anderson stated that our job is to figure out how to get our information out more easily to a great population. Coe

stated that meetings are rebroadcast several times, there is no need for misinformation. Anderson stated that maybe because it is a different venue, and we have to find more venues. But, we have to fight disinformation.

Anderson stated that we also have the town webpage. All our meetings and information are accessible on the town web site. The problem is the people who are used to picking up a newspaper, and we no longer have that avenue available. We have the Courier, but that is also online, and people who do not have computer access, do not have accessibility. Daigle stated that there are certain meetings that are required to be broadcast live, and others that are not according to our Charter. Anderson also stated that not all meetings are uploaded promptly, causing problems. Daigle replied that our office uploads all meetings, except sometimes there have been school committee meetings that have not been forwarded to Town Hall right away, do not get uploaded right away. There may be one or two meetings that are missing.

Daigle said that she did reach out to Comcast asking about the negotiations process, and was told there was not. She also did reach out to Westminster to get a copy of the recent contract. It is a 10 year contract, which needs to be gone through. Corbesiero asked who takes the lead in the negotiations. Daigle suggested we reach out, in her opinion, the town should move first. We could also get Town Counsel involved as well. Moon stated that he has found a number of places in the contract where there is some leeway to ask for changes and we have a responsibility to know where that is. There are also places where maybe both sides can work together. Coe asked Mr. Moon and Mr. Clinton to work together and coordinate the contract information and present it to the committee. Clinton agreed that he could work with Moon.

Anderson asked for a "Wish List" of needs for communication. Moon suggested a "Communication Policy" guide. Without policy, you are constantly playing catch up, and until we develop a policy for social media, etc., there will be a variety of responses, and not all of the responses are the ones that you would recommend. Anderson stated that we need to get information out, even if it seems small and inconsequential, it's important to people. People always ask why they aren't told things. Daigle said, that at some point people need to take responsibility. Moon stated that technically in the contract, we really can't promote anything. Anderson stated that we aren't promoting, we are informing when a new license is granted or information was changed. Clinton stated that he agreed we need to find ways to communicate better, but we can't fight apathy. People still won't get it if they don't care. Clinton stated that the schools have been using Parent Square, which has been very successful. They can choose whether they want information via text or by email. It is used several times a week, and also allows for direct communication with teachers. Coe stated that he needs more room in the recording booth and we must have a radio to have music broadcast on our all access station. We are only an advisory group, and no one has been interested in allocating any funding. We need to enlarge the recording studio. Clinton would like to see more involvement at the school level. He would like to get more broadcast equipment to be able to showcase the school on Channel 8. We would like to get the studio at the school up and working again and go back to a 2 studio

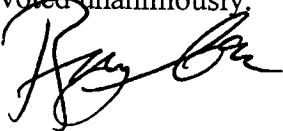
capability. Ultimately, we would love the ability to broadcast live from remote locations. We have to figure out what avenue we want to go down. We will get a bigger draw from broadcasting live. You get less people from watching after the fact. Moon included that going live requires not only more equipment, but more training. You would also need editing skills. His suggestion would be to move forward in steps. We have to start with a line item budget.

Moon stated that there is no budget line item set aside for equipment. Daigle confirmed there are two line items for communications, including technology. Moon stated they need to be able to foresee upgrades and anticipate communication needs. Coe asked Anderson what was meant by benchmarks and timelines. Anderson explained that we need to discuss the timeframe for completing the Comcast negotiations. Anderson suggested Clinton and Moon work on what our benchmarks should be. Moon suggested we do a backwards timeline. We need to include holidays and develop a set time and day when we will meet. He isn't sure how we will nail that down. There are a number of details that need to be worked out. Anderson stated that she assumed as we get closer to the contract date, we will have to meet more frequently.

Coe stated that we probably will not be able to do site visits due to Covid. He would advise we go to either Leominster or Athol, but due to the pandemic, we really might not be able to. He also stated that they have large stations that we will probably never have. Anderson stated that it might be worthwhile to at least go see what they have and what we might need. Coe said that because we don't have the funding, or the personnel to be able to do what they do. Anderson stated that her goal was to utilize students as much as possible. Clinton said that they are very interested in getting involved at the school. Moon said that he will look at the Blue Devil Weekly, so that he can get an idea.

Coe stated that to set the next meeting date and agenda. Corbosiero stated that we can meet anywhere. Clinton said there is space at the school as well. Clinton stated that earlier is better. 4 PM is a better time. Corbosiero can't meet before 4 on Wednesdays. It was decided that we will try to meet the first Wednesday of every month at 4 PM.

Coe asked for a motion to adjourn. Anderson made the motion, seconded by Corbosiero and voted unanimously.



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