

January 28th, 2021

The Public Communications Ad Hoc Committee held a special virtual meeting on this date at 5:00 p.m. First Selectman, Danielle Chesebrough, Katie Martin, Bruce Flax, Denise Easton, Kristin Clarke, and Elizabeth Young were in attendance. Public and press were able to participate via audio on a conference call line. The video of the meeting can be found on the Town's YouTube page.

Call to Order

Bruce Flax called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Correspondence- Mr. Flax asks the committee if anyone has received any correspondence. Each member answered "no."

Approval of Minutes- Mr. Flax asked the committee if there was anything that needed to be adjusted to the minutes of the group meeting held on November 17th. No further corrections or adjustments were made. Denise Easton made a motion to approve the minutes and Bruce Flax seconded the motion. The group then unanimously voted to approve the minutes.

Old Business- Mr. Flax addresses the group about an email from Ann Harvey, one of the PCAHC members who was unable to attend the evening's meeting, and her concern about the direction that the group is taking. Mr. Flax states that she is feeling perhaps like some others might feel with regard to a need for a clearer picture of our intentions. Bruce hopes that at the end of the meeting we will have clear "to dos" to move the committee forward.

New Business- Discussion- Where is the committee with the development of a community survey.

Ms. Easton lets the committee know that she has reconfigured the list of Stonington committees and commissions and is going to personally reach out to various groups.

Mr. Flax asks the group to think about how to define our survey- what information do we want to get from businesses, constituents, our town-what is it that we want to know?

Elizabeth Young suggests surveying questions like "what do you want to know?" "how do you prefer to receive your communication?" Ex: (Facebook, Instagram, or both?)

Danielle Chesebrough adds that in their minds when they were thinking about this survey with regards to the CT sustainability guidelines, it was to gather a baseline of information from people to learn about what information they want to get and how they want to get it. She adds that social media is one component, so exploring options like mail as in the form of a postcard or newsletter; do they want something emailed to them? Ms. Chesebrough also offers up that a good

question to ask would be "do you know what current methods of communication are being used by the town government?" Most likely she adds, we will find out that many people don't know exactly. Finally she gives examples of exact questions the PCAHC committee could potentially use on a survey:

1. Did you know that the town has these methods already?
2. Do you find the current communication methods useful?
3. What feedback do you have that could help us improve our communication methods to make them better?
4. What new things might you want to see? i.e. an official town newsletter mailed out? Town government news, highlights from non profits or linkages from other community organizations? Weekly? Monthly?

Denise Easton- in building on that - Ms Easton asks if we get a list of what some existing issues are in order to receive meaningful feedback from the people we are surveying?

In response to Denise's question, Ms. Chesebrough suggests reaching out to neighboring towns who are certified Sustainable CT towns such as Old Lyme and Waterford who have done an inventory to find out how they currently communicate their news including reaching out to board and commission members to say; "how do you communicate your news?" Ms. Chesebrough suggests that in doing an inventory that it may bring up ways in which we can reach not just residents but also visitors who visit the town website for example- that the inventory will identify demographics to build off of for survey questions.

Denise Easton asks if there is a master list of emails for the chairs of committees and commissions that she could perhaps email a google poll to? Danielle Chesebrough responds that she could obtain them from the chairs of the committees as well as from the non-profit roundtable to see what the response is and maybe obtain information from those who are most interested and engaged in helping the town.

Denise Easton asks Ms. Chesebrough if it is acceptable to have a mass meeting with all the board committee and commission members? Ms. Chesebrough replies that you can meet with 1 member from each committee and commission who can represent them as their communication feedback person.

Danielle Chesebrough further articulates that we can look to put together a communications goals and missions statement for the town of Stonington -who is our target audience and what is it that we are trying to communicate? (updates from boards or departments within? highlights from nonprofits? news from the Selectman's office or from Human Services or the Planning committee?)

Discussion: 2 surveys need to be generated to get needed info from every angle

Bruce Flax addresses the group with the thought that we really need to come up with 2 different surveys. Some of the boards currently have their own methods of communication- could we find out statistically how that is working for them? A survey from them and a survey from the town too. Danielle Chesebrough

suggests a survey directed toward town residents and a survey directed toward town boards and commissions members.

Discussion: Pilot any social media campaigns to increase visibility for the town's existing online presence?

Katie Martin addresses Danielle Chesebrough with regards to how the PCAHC could help with the town's social media engagement, in addition to working on the surveys discussed. Ms Chesebrough recommends that 2 people reach out to the 30 boards by dividing them up- noting that it will be a heavy lift to follow up with everybody and that 2 other people could absolutely take a look at the town's facebook and instagram pages to see what we could be doing better. Help growing engagement and growing followers in real time would be great.

Eliazbeth Young recommends that someone dedicate themselves to social media; make it an official position to establish consistency and oversight.

Danielle Chesebrough suggests putting together a document to outline what it would take to have a good social media presence. What are some best practices and benefits? Perhaps create a 1-2 page document that recommends what the needs are.

Elizabeth Young volunteers to create a job description or put something together.

Danielle replies; could we look at what we are currently doing and analyze what we could do better? Could we gather insights and come up with some solutions to improve what exists?

Elizabeth Young asks; could we use the Stonington Community forum to direct people to the town fb page for direct information?

Danielle Chesebrough responds; Stephen could post things (head of the page) so it is not a town official posting there. Ms. Chesebrough says we could reach out to him.

Kristin Clarke agrees that having a plan for posting is helpful. Is there a schedule to the town posts? Ms Clarke suggests that having a method of what posts happen on what days lets the townspeople know more of what to expect from the town on a regular basis.

Ebbie Young suggests software that helps with scheduling social media posts.

Bruce Flax summarizes that our survey needs to address the questions: What modes of communication do you know exists? What do you want to know? How do you want to get it? Once we have obtained that information we can then score it.

Discussion- what action items do we want to execute moving forward with the surveys?

Denise Easton suggests we come up with 10 simple questions using the Google docx to edit and work on them together as a group.

Bruce confirms that we can use the Google docx as a centerpiece to get the questions together for both surveys so that we can get the action out by the next meeting.

Denise Easton tells the group that she will work on thematic grouping to make it easier to direct survey questions to specifically obtain information about what communication practices they are using and which ones are working for them.

The committee will continue to:

- Explore how the Town can better communicate with the public through the use of social media and the Town website;
Consider the establishment of a Town newsletter and other forms of communications, including cost involved;
- Explore ways for Boards/Commission to better communicate with the public as well as with each other;
- Contact other municipalities for suggestions and recommendations as to best provide and obtain information from Town residents; and
Make recommendations to the Board of Selectmen consistent with their findings on or before October 31, 2021.

Discussion – Assignment of Tasks

Each group member will add information to the google doc to keep each other informed. It will serve to further conversations and discussions for the committee going forward.

The group will come up with, edit, and approve 10 questions for the 2 independent surveys (boards and commissions & town residents) for the February meeting.

The group will look into doing an inventory and come up with a best practices strategy to be Sustainable CT certified

The group will recommend what is most needed to run the town's social media platforms successfully and effectively.

PCAHC will execute the above based on the following:

- Research on what other Communities are doing for communication - mapping and samples/best practices; outreach to those communities to see how they are resourced. Discuss scoring/review sheet for research purposes.
- Review Town's existing communication mechanisms - social media posts (written and video), town website ease of navigation and

content; email outreach from First Selectman
(content/format/outreach)

- Surveys and outreach to our community - what do they like that we are doing; what is working; what is not; creating survey questions; hosting virtual input sessions
- Outreach to Boards and Commission - how do they currently communicate with town officials (liaison); with community members; with other boards/commissions (communication flow); how do community members feel communication is working/ underling of the Boards and Commissions.

Comments on Old Business: No further comments regarding old business.

New Business: Elizabeth Young asks- Can we legally do giveaways on a government FB page? Danielle Chesebrough will look into that for the group..

Comments from the Public

None

Comments from the Committee

None

Adjourn

There being no further business to come before this Board, the meeting adjourned at 5:55 p.m.

Katie Martin
Recording Secretary