

February 25th, 2021

The Public Communications Ad Hoc Committee held a special virtual meeting on this date at 5:00 p.m. First Selectmen, Danielle Chesebrough, Katie Martin, Bruce Flax, Denise Easton, and Kevin Bowdler 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." Bruce let the group know that he spoke with Kevin Bowdler from the Economic Development Committee about joining our meeting so that we could learn more about what they are doing at Stonington 1649.

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 January 28th. 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- no old business was brought up for discussion.

New Business- Discussion- Come up with a communications strategy based on the Sustainable CT template.

Danielle Chesebrough -the town has put together a draft of the communication strategy for the town and would like the communications committee to take a look at what we have shared, examples from other towns, and then at the March meeting we can talk it through and finalize the town's strategy. She would like the group to take the lead on this by making comments and outlining any changes to the strategy to get it as close to finalized by the March meeting- April at the latest. Do we share that strategy as part of the survey to get feedback and how much input do we want to receive?

Denise Easton- asks Danielle: who are we communicating with? Is there an agrate way that we can communicate with everybody?

Danielle Chesebrough responds with: Looking at the town calendar?

Denise Easton replies on the town website; she finds too many links to attend the meetings for town. It is a multi-step process in order to get to what you want.

Maybe there is a way to create a template to streamline how all platforms communicate to improve the interface.

Danielle Chesebrough- introduces Kevin Bowdler- From the EDC (1649 site)- and states that we need to cross reference you all on the town website.

Discussion- How the Stonington 1649 website works and how could the town improve their current communication strategy using the EDC website as a model/or perhaps partner together.

Kevin Bowdler- gives a little background- in order for economic development to occur the town needs to build a brand - gives a view to potential developers and residents (residential property owners) to market Stonington to them. We built the 1649 website where we publish a story every month- what's going on in Stonington- about developments. Creating an archive of positive stories. Hartford Healthcare for example. 80%- talk about something we want to change in development.

Denise Easton questions if there is a way to use communication that has positive stories- a consistent one branded approach

Kevin Bowdler encourages us to use the 1649 logo (waves of the water & plowed rows of agriculture) agree to a uniform template format, colors, font - planning zoning, building and planning, parks and rec

Danielle Chesebrough asks- will you continue the monthly newsletter?

Kevin Bowdler responds- 8 stories over the next 12 months.

Danielle Chesebrough asks- should we do a newsletter? Or the EDC is doing such a good job of doing the stories.

Kevin Bowdler responds- Stonington Events magazine is doing a great job. Likes the format goes to every household.

Ms. Chesebrough- adds that some people would like a monthly emailed update. If there is an opportunity to have the EDC support that effort, that would be great. We don't have a sustained way to get information out about news and events, where your tax dollars are being spent, what initiatives are going on etc.

Mr Bowdler replies- hard to get a hold of people's emails. I will leave that to you. We have the infrastructure there.

Ms. Easton suggests sharing communication listings- as a sample- to grow the list in a positive way for the town.

Ms. Chesebrough- suggests the use of our non-profit roundtable to allow people to opt in.

Mr. Bowdler suggests adding a way to link to 1649.

Ms. Chesebrough states that we can and will add it to our website for folks to subscribe.

Danielle Chesebrough asks if they could share their colors and fonts so we can make a Stonington Brand.

Discussion- What are our action steps going forward from this meeting?

Bruce Flax- so many layers for what you want to provide for the community of Stonington. Are we still interested in putting out a survey? People don't want to know until they want to know. For example, "I don't care about economic development until something is going up near my house." Some towns have a really in depth policy- it's a lot for us to take on - a bit overwhelming. What can we accomplish as a committee that makes the most sense?

Ms. Chesebrough replies with- finalize survey questions by March. Look over the Sustainable CT guidelines. Give feedback on the first draft.

Ms. Martin- I added to the survey to make it more comprehensive- questions look good. I think we shouldn't hesitate about the survey questions...we should look to launching it.

Ms. Chesebrough- short term items- look at the town website- visitor tab specifically. Look at the 1649 website and figure out where to link it from the town website. We have a living document to keep improving on and if the group can accomplish some of these items we will have met the expectations for this board.

Katie Martin- asks what mode do we utilize to deliver the survey questions? Survey Monkey?

Ms. Chesebrough- found out that wasn't as good. We have some recommendations- I will connect you with Haley,

Ms. Easton- should we link our survey so that we get more responses/feedback

Danielle Chesebrough- get other boards and non-profits to share the survey and generate more responses/feedback. Get the most eyes on the survey to have it ready to send out.

Bruce Flax- resend the link to the survey to the community to get more input so we can have it ready for the March meeting.

Danielle Chesebrough and group exchange thank yous for coming together.

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

Comments from the Public

None

Comments from the Committee

None

Adjourn- Bruce Flax motions to adjourn the meeting. Denise Easton moves to adjourn. Katie Martin- seconds the motion. There being no further business to come before this Board, the meeting adjourned at 5:54 p.m.

Katie Martin
Recording Secretary

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bruce Flax". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.