

Present: Chairperson Lynn Kier; Members: Greg MacKenzie, Edna Freier, and R. Jean Ruth

Absent: Tricia Sloan

Also Present: Village Clerk/Assistant Manager, Ellen Marshall
Council Liaison, Walter Briggs

Chairperson Kier called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. in the Village of Beverly Hills municipal building at 18500 W. Thirteen Mile Road.

APPROVE/AMEND AGENDA

Motion by Kier, second by Ruth, to approve the agenda as published.

Motion passed.

REVIEW AND CONSIDER APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF A REGULAR COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD NOVEMBER 8, 2012

Motion by Ruth, second by Freier, to approve the minutes of a regular Communications Committee meeting held November 8, 2012.

Motion passed.

REVIEW PROPOSED CHANGES TO VILLAGE WEBSITE

Committee members have been working with Ellen Marshall and the Village's technical consultant Robert Ferkel on updating the Beverly Hills website. There was discussion at the last meeting about features that members would like to incorporate into the new website.

Marshall projected a model of the proposed website layout on a screen for the committee's input and suggestions. Meeting materials distributed to members included a packet with a list of additional drop down menus for each button positioned across the home page. The drop down menus will be a work in progress as the current site is converted to the new site. It was noted that meeting minutes, the municipal code and Village Charter will be searchable.

The Committee evaluated the sample website and was pleased with the direction of the new layout. Where to place various categories of information was a topic of discussion. One of the suggestions was to provide FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) links under each of the major categories in order to make the website as user friendly as possible.

Committee members liked the look of the website and the picture on the home page. There was conversation about rotating the cover photos to reflect seasonal scenes in Beverly Hills. A way to engage residents may be to encourage them to submit community photographs. The legal implications will be explored. Community events and activities will occur under the government link. There will be a link on the website to other government sites, utilities, and miscellaneous websites that might be of interest to residents.

In response to an inquiry, Marshall indicated that she will be talking to the technical consultant about a mobile version of the website. The suggestion was made at the last meeting to provide an interactive map showing key locations in the community. Adding this feature will be explored. Members talked about asking for feedback from a group of residents or a focus group before publishing the website or to publish an article in the newsletter asking people what they want to know about the Village.

Briggs noted that there are two separate websites for the Village of Beverly Hills and the Beverly Hills Public Safety Department. The PSD website is maintained by public safety personnel. A link to the Public Safety Department page will be placed on the Village website. There followed discussion on improving communication with the Public Safety Department in terms of including prominent public safety information on the Village website. The Committee may want to consider the feasibility of combining the websites at some point in the future. There was a consensus that the short-term solution should be to include a link to the PSD website.

Marshall commented that she has been asked to post the Public Safety bi-weekly activity report on the Village website. She also mentioned a program called Crimedat (crimedat.com) that may be implemented by the Village. It is a program that publishes the type of crimes that occur in a community, where they occurred, and encourages residents to submit tips.

Marshall intends to bring a grant request before the Birmingham Area Cable Board for the expense of updating the Beverly Hills website. This will be an agenda item for the February 20, 2013 Cable Board meeting at 7:45 a.m. Communications Committee members are welcomed to attend that meeting.

Kier suggested an agenda item for the next meeting to talk about a communication strategy for getting the word out on the new website. Marshall was asked to look into whether statistics are available to determine the number of visitors to the Village website and whether any analytic capability will be included in the new website. It was mentioned that outreach through the Gov.Delivery program, a press release sent to local newspapers, and the Villager newsletter will be means of communicating the new Beverly Hills website.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

LIAISON COMMENTS

Briggs related that an individual representing a group of concerned residents has recently requested that Council take advantage of a program called Crimedat. Crimedat.com provides crime statistical information to residents. It is an online crime-mapping website that is available 24/7 for anyone to look up police calls and crimes that have taken place in a community. Briggs mentioned that he spoke with Birmingham officials about their use of Crimedat. He noted that the City of Birmingham has a full-time public relations person, who is able to provide crime reports to crimedat.com.

Briggs remarked that the Eagle and Eccentric newspapers no longer report on crimes that occur in Beverly Hills. He spoke to Manager Wilson about requesting the assistance of the Communications Committee to explore what other communities are doing to get that information publicized. This will require coordination with Public Safety Director Rich Torongeau. Participation in the Crimedat program would require involvement from local and regional law enforcement personnel in terms of reporting incidents.

The assignment would be for a member of the Committee to work with the Public Safety Director and administration to find out how to reinstate the practice of publishing crime reports in local newspapers. In addition, the Village needs to establish what is required to participate in Crimedat in addition to the \$365/year fee. There will be personnel involved in terms of submitting crime reports. The task will be to determine what resources this will require and the value to the community. Briggs said that a representative of the Committee could contact Birmingham Assistant Manager Joe Valentine to discuss their experience with Crimedat.

Chairperson Kier volunteered to take the lead on this assignment. She summarized that the charge to the Committee was to look into what happened to the crime reports that used to appear in the Eagle and Eccentric newspapers and to work with Public Safety to quantify the overall cost and time requirements to participate in Crimedat.

ADMINISTRATION COMMENTS

None

COMMITTEE COMMENTS

None

Motion by Ruth, second by MacKenzie, to adjourn the meeting at 8:57 p.m.

Motion passed.