



Town of Carlisle, MA

Citizen Engagement Strategy

Prepared By: Amelia Percentie

Office of Municipal & School Technology

Executive Office of Technology Services & Security (EOTSS)

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Image: Public Library, Carlisle MA¹

Introduction

Carlisle is a small Town of nearly 5,000 residents² located in the northeast of Massachusetts in Middlesex County. In October of 2015, the Town entered into a [Community Compact agreement](#) for Citizen Engagement as an Information Technology Best Practice. Leveraging the Community Compact Program, Town leadership requested assistance from the State to explore engagement options, specifically around their website redesign initiative. In the summer of 2016, a team from the Office of Municipal & School Technology (OMST) began researching the Town's efforts around citizen engagement, focusing largely on

¹Daderot (August 15, 2010). Public Library, Carlisle, Massachusetts. *Wikimedia Commons*. [Public Domain](#). Retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Library_-_Carlisle,_MA_-_IMG_1037.JPG

²2010 Census. *U.S. Census Bureau*. American Factfinder. Retrieved from https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml

their online presence. This report provides an overview of Carlisle’s recent endeavors and our recommendations for reaching more constituents online.

Overview of Digital Communications

WEBSITE

The Town of Carlisle initiated a complete redesign of their [website](#) in 2015 to address concerns around outdated style and stale content. Currently, content is added and maintained by various departments in Town Hall and often remains as static information. With no IT personnel on staff, it has been a challenge for Town leadership to proactively engage with the community online. Today, the Town website provides a number of interactive tools used to inform and engage residents, including the items listed below. With a more intuitive, modernized website in the works, the Town hopes to make online transactions more convenient for constituents.

- **Electronic Mailing List.** Residents that want to stay up-to-date with municipal events and meetings can subscribe to an electronic mailing list through the Town’s website. They receive occasional updates through this tool regarding Planning Board Agendas, Recreation News, and changes to the website.
- **Blackboard Connect Emergency Notification System.** Authorized officials can send personalized voice, email, and text messages to residents and business owners who have created Blackboard accounts through the Town’s website. This outreach method is typically reserved for communicating weather emergencies, road closings, and other environmental conditions that could potentially affect citizens.
- **UniGold.** Residents can access this bill pay system to make their property, real estate, and motor vehicle excise tax payments online. The system provides a secondary channel to submit payments when Town Hall is closed or inaccessible.

With help from [CivicPlus](#) and a local Technology Working Group, consisting of a few elected officials and residents with technological expertise; the new website is designed to better support communication and business transactions between Carlisle's citizens and local government. Through improved functionality and a more user-friendly interface, Town leadership plans to offer the following amenities to the public once the redesign is complete:

- Automated News Feed
- Announcement Postings
- A Centralized Calendar of Events (Currently managing 3 separate calendars)
- Board and Town Meeting Information
- Permit Applications

The website's intuitive new Content Management System (C.M.S.) does not require extensive technical expertise to operate and will enable staff to implement these features quickly.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Today, the Town of Carlisle does not have an established social media presence; however, the [Carlisle Police Department](#) and [Carlisle Public Schools](#) do have a small following on Facebook and Twitter.

Leadership has expressed interest in improving Carlisle's social media presence. They plan to create an official "Town of Carlisle" government Facebook page in the near future.

ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT

In addition to their other technology initiatives, Town officials are enthusiastic to provide better 'Information-as-a-Service' to citizens when they need it. The website redesign project presents a particularly great opportunity for leadership, staff and volunteers to work together and explore modern communication tools.

Additional Technology Initiatives

Carlisle has made significant enhancements to their technology infrastructure to better support transactions and two-way communication with citizens. Below is a list of additional noteworthy IT projects in Carlisle that are complete or underway:

- *Robust Wi-Fi at Town Hall* – Carlisle installed a new wireless network at Town Hall to accommodate the public and municipal staff.
- *Consolidating IT* – Recently, the Town merged their school and municipal IT support to retain consistent technological assistance in-house.
- *Prioritizing IT in FY18 Budget* – The Town of Carlisle understands that IT investments are an essential part of business operations. This model was reflected in their budget proposal for fiscal year 2018.
- *Shared Services* – Carlisle is looking into the possibility of partnering with surrounding communities and establishing shared IT services. They are also considering other types of services such as facilities and housing.
- *E-permitting* - Carlisle's Building Department is utilizing the [Patriot Properties](#) permitting software, PermitPro, to track their internal processes. The software comes with a public facing feature; however, today, it is not being utilized. The Building Department is in the process of digitizing their documents to support online applications in the near future. Once complete, access will be released to the public and citizens will be able to submit and track their permit applications online.

COMMUNITY COMPACT IT GRANT

In March of 2016, the Town of Carlisle applied to the [Community Compact IT Grant Program](#) and was awarded funding. Town officials utilized the funds to relocate part of their IT infrastructure to another government building that offered a more secure and weather resistant space. As a result, the Town is better protected from data loss due to unanticipated events.

Citizen Engagement Strategy

The following pages offer several recommendations to the Town of Carlisle to coincide with their website redesign. Included are best practices for maximizing website engagement, as well as basic guidance around social media and content management.

WEBSITE BEST PRACTICES

Like the Town of Carlisle, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is also completing a website redesign. Throughout the planning and implementation phases of the redesign, the State's Digital Services team used data analytics, surveys, and other marketing tactics to inform changes to [Mass.gov](#). The sections below, share some of the methods that were used to better understand users and maximize website engagement.

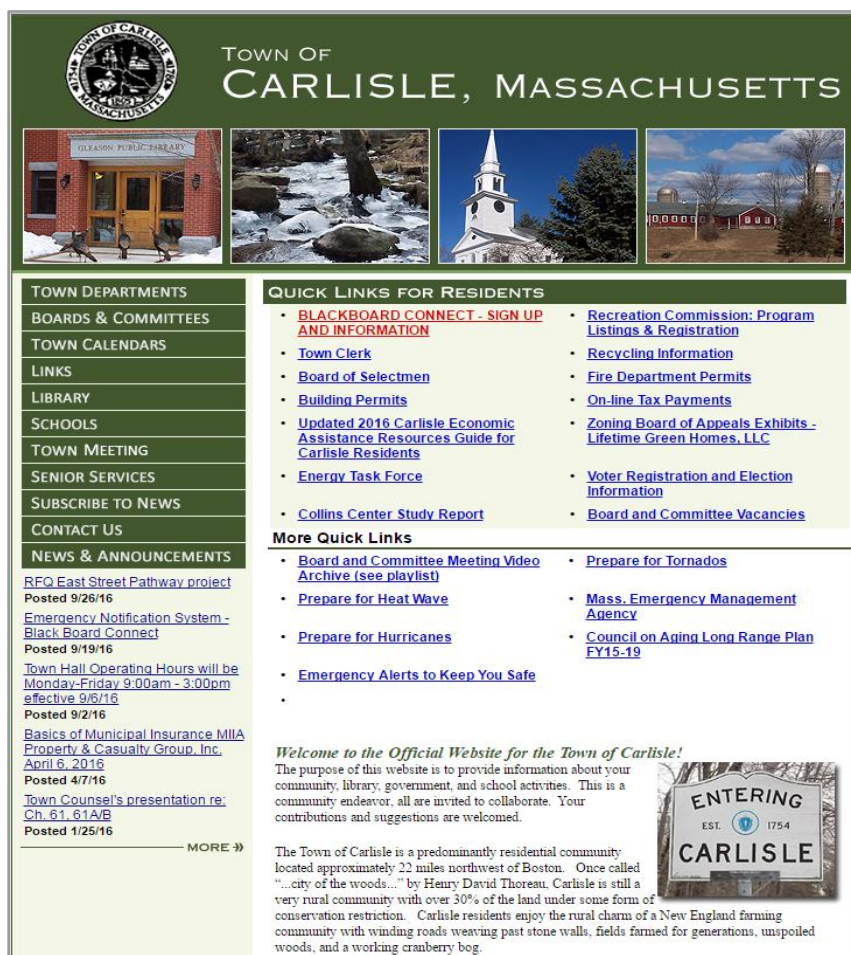
Design for mobile with the new website. As more residents gain access to the Internet and rely on it as a key information source more regularly, they demand that their governments offer more resources online. According to 2015 data from the Pew Research Center, approximately 84% of Americans use the Internet³. Other data⁴ suggests that the way people access the Internet has also shifted. Globally, mobile internet usage has surpassed desktop and laptop usage by about 3%. However, in the United States, an increasing percentage of the population is using mobile devices exclusively to browse online content at

³Perrin, A., & Duggan, M. (June 26, 2015). Americans' Internet Access: 2000-2015. *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved from <http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/06/26/americans-internet-access-2000-2015/>

⁴(November 1, 2016). Mobile and Tablet Internet Usage Exceeds Desktop for First Time Worldwide. *StatCounter: Global Stats*. Retrieved from <http://gs.statcounter.com/press/mobile-and-tablet-internet-usage-exceeds-desktop-for-first-time-worldwide>

42%, compared to desktop computers at 58%. This shift in user experience means that mobile apps and responsive web design are a high priority for any technology initiative.

Keep the website homepage simple and clean. As of this writing, Carlisle's current website homepage contains a left-hand navigation menu, a list of Town events (below the left-hand navigation), and two sections comprised of additional 20+ "quick" links. These links lead to valuable resources like permitting forms, voter registration information, election details, and archived board and committee meeting videos. However, complex webpages can often deter users from exploring the website further and can negatively impact the site's bounce rate⁵. Having a high bounce rate could indicate that users are unsure of where to go from the homepage, so they exit out of the website entirely.



Screenshot: Carlislema.gov
taken October 20, 2016.

⁵ Bounce rate - The rate at which users navigate away from the website after viewing one page.

A 2012 Google Study⁶ found that the more complex a website appears visually, the harder it is for users to process the information that's presented, resulting in a negative impression. The same study suggested that users can make this determination within 17 – 50 milliseconds. Based on the research available, we would recommend that Carlisle implement a simple and intuitive website design. Below are some excellent examples of simple, yet highly efficient websites from peer communities.

Municipality	Population ⁷	Median Household Income ⁸	Website
Cohasset	7,542	\$113,843	http://www.cohassetma.org/
Hamilton	7,764	\$109,500	https://www.hamiltonma.gov/
Middleton	8,987	\$108,622	http://townofmiddleton.org/
Southborough	9,767	\$143,916	https://www.southboroughtown.com/

Understanding your audience with web analytics. With the website initiative underway, Town officials have the unique opportunity to design each webpage using a 'Constituent First' approach. If analyzed effectively, website data can be an extremely valuable resource that can help municipalities better understand their constituents and their objectives.

Website Analytics – In today's data driven world, collecting and analyzing user data can be an effective and efficient way to get to know them better. Prior to the launch of the new Mass.gov website, the Massachusetts Digital Services team used several analytics software to measure user behavior and discovered that only 10% of the website's content drove over 80% of its traffic. Today, that 10% of highly-sought after information is showcased at the forefront of the new site.

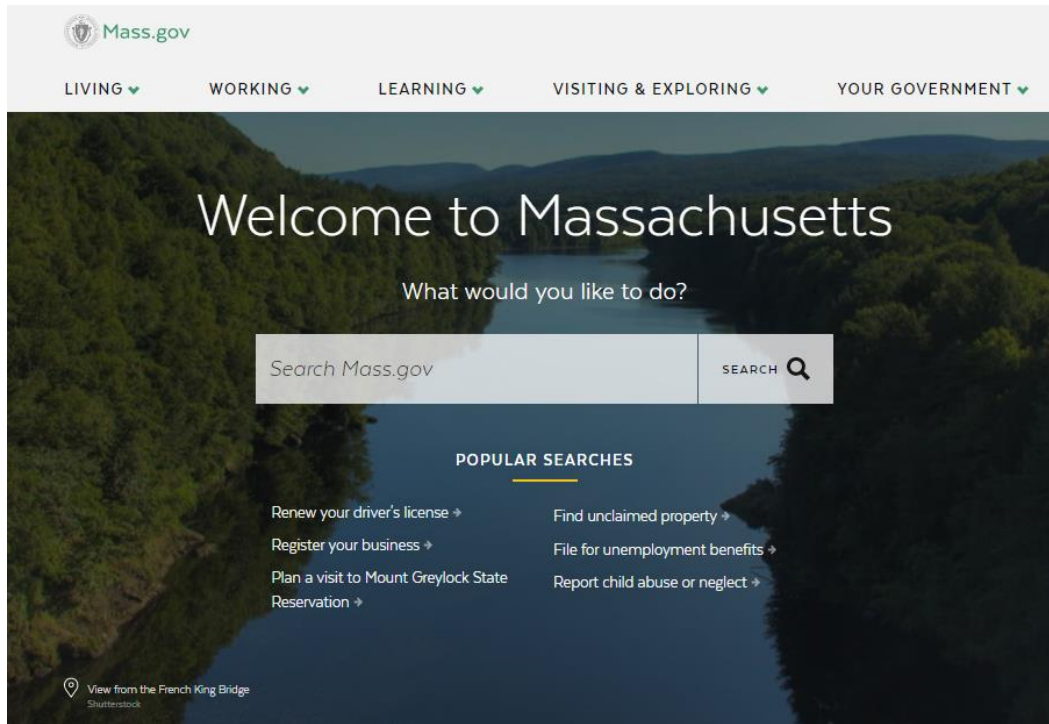
⁶Tuch, A. N., Presslauer, E. E., Stocklin, M., Opwis, K., & Bargas-Avila, J. A. (August 17, 2012). The role of visual complexity and prototypically regarding first impression of websites: working towards understanding aesthetic judgements. *Google User Content*. Retrieved from

<http://static.googleusercontent.com/media/research.google.com/en/us/pubs/archive/38315.pdf>

⁷2010 Census. U.S. Census Bureau. American Factfinder. Retrieved from

<https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml#>

⁸ Ibid.



Carlisle can replicate the State’s approach by discussing analytics software options with a CivicPlus representative. Having access to website data will provide insight into constituent interests using key performance indicators (KPI) to build a better online engagement strategy. See Appendix A for a list of KPI metrics to look out for.

Inform residents about the new website design and features before going live. One challenge of implementing a new website is introducing it to residents. Given the extent of the functionality of the old site, it is safe to assume that many citizens will simply stumble upon it in the course of conducting business with the Town. However, such a major initiative and improvement warrants a celebration. This moment is an opportunity to publicize a successful initiative that will improve the website experience for residents. Consider creating a small outreach campaign to get residents excited about the new features they’ll have access to. Leverage existing communication platforms to share interesting details about the new site and incorporate visual aids into the campaign to grab the attention of the end user. The website launch is an opportunity to highlight the new tools that the website offers and tools that existed previously but were perhaps underutilized. These can be identified by comparing the online and offline figures for things like payments for excise and real estate taxes, parking tickets, and other financial transactions. Wherever the statistics show a low percentage of online transactions, that might be a good candidate for a social media post, or email, to promote the website.

Preparing staff for new content management role. As more departments become involved with updating the new website, there will be an increased need for training staff on the platform. CivicPlus sells a variety of training resources staff can use to develop or sharpen their content editing skills including on-site or virtual training, pre-recorded training videos, educational webinars, and consulting services. We would suggest providing ample training opportunities along with any new website deployment, whether this support is provided by the vendor or internal staff. Consider sending your content editors a weekly tip, a useful tidbit they can consume in 30 seconds, increasing their skill without disrupting their day – and providing a gentle reminder that they have a responsibility to keep their web content current.

SOCIAL MEDIA - BEST PRACTICES

Establish an official government Facebook page for the Town of Carlisle. As Internet and mobile device usage continues to increase, so does participation in social media. We recommend that the Town of Carlisle strengthen their online presence by creating an official government Facebook page. Pew Research indicates that roughly 65% of adults are on at least one social media site⁹ and that Facebook is by far the most popular social media site for user engagement.¹⁰ By making a Facebook page, Town officials can create more opportunities for two-way conversation online. If utilized effectively, Carlisle could leverage Facebook's features and functionality to engage members of the community that are not proactively involved in civic events. Fortunately, there is an unmanaged, unofficial “Carlisle Town Hall” [page](#) on Facebook that Town leadership can claim and use today. To gain administrative rights to this page and upload new content, follow the step-by-step instructions in Appendix B. For guidance on creating engaging content for your Facebook audience, GovLoop and Facebook created an official guide for government organizations that can be accessed at the link provided: <https://www.govloop.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/The-Governments-Guide-to-Using-Facebook.pdf>

Create a basic social media policy. To coincide with claiming and verifying the “Carlisle Town Hall” Facebook page, leadership should consider creating a basic policy, or guidelines, around content (i.e. when and what to post on social media). Appendix C provides some key considerations for creating a simple yet effective social media policy.

⁹Perrin, A. (October 8, 2015). Social Media Usage: 2005-2015. *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved from <http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/10/08/social-networking-usage-2005-2015/>

¹⁰Greenwood, S., Perrin, A., & Duggan, M. (November 11, 2016). Social Media update 2016. *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved from <http://www.pewinternet.org/2016/11/11/social-media-update-2016/>

Link Facebook to the Town of Carlisle website. Carlisle's new CMS provides several social media integration options that would enable residents to receive Facebook updates through the Town's official website. At the very least, we suggest placing a link or button to Carlisle's Facebook page on the website – preferably on the homepage. Alternatively, Carlisle can consider embedding their Facebook feed directly on the website homepage to keep web content dynamic and interesting.

Designate time every week to plan out social media posts. One person should be tasked with developing Carlisle's social media content to maintain a consistent message and tone. This designated "Social Media Administrator" should dedicate an hour per day, per social media platform, to gather content and brainstorming ideas for new posts. One piece to consider when creating content for social media is whether an outsider would understand a given post based on the information that's provided; is there enough context for a visitor to know what is going on? Once Carlisle's Facebook page has gained some traction, the Town can analyze their feed to determine which types of posts are getting the most attention. Doing so will reveal which civic-related topics resonate with constituents the most.

Posting during an emergency. Residents will be looking to Carlisle's Facebook page during local emergencies like fires, snowstorms, or police action. In addition to creating and managing content, the Social Media Administrator will be responsible for communicating emergency information to the public. This role is well suited for individuals who are familiar with, or plan to learn about, the features and functionality of social media. Having foundational knowledge of these platforms is essential for reporting accurate information during time sensitive or high-pressure situations. In preparing for this role, you might find the webinar at the following link useful: <https://youtu.be/FTfxuuUo2mQ>.

Dealing with negative comments. Negative comments are a serious concern for municipalities. Fortunately, social media platforms like Facebook provide content moderation tools that can prevent offensive words or phrases from appearing on the page. For instance, Facebook's Profanity Filter uses community feedback to determine which words and phrases to block. When turned on, the words and phrases are hidden (but not deleted) and can still be restored if needed. New words can be added to the block list by configuring the Page Moderation setting.

For instructions on how to activate these profanity filters, go to:

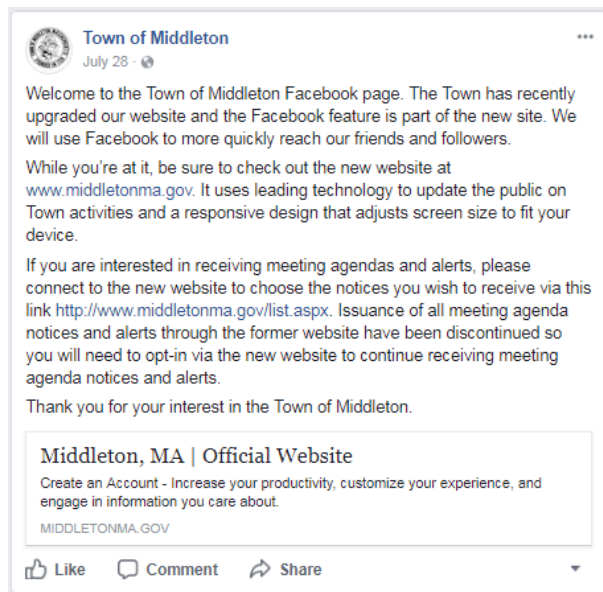
<https://www.facebook.com/help/131671940241729>.

If a negative comment should appear on Carlisle’s social media feed, one way the Social Media Administrator can address the situation is to thank the commenter for their response; then provide them with contact information of the appropriate Town department that can resolve their issue over the phone. By turning the situation into a personal discussion, Town staff can remediate the issue in a less public space, control the tone of the conversation, and provide detailed accurate information about the subject.

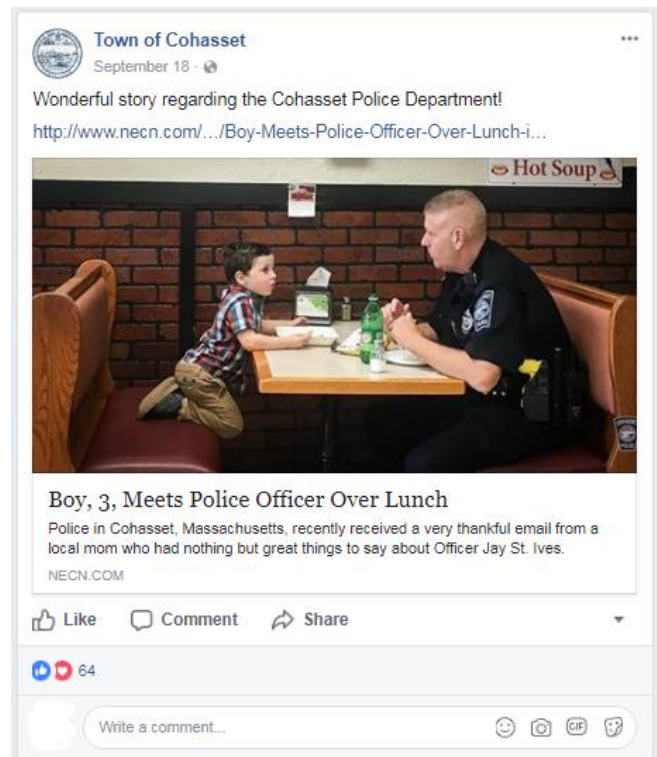
Social Media Metrics. Similar to website analytics, social media metrics can help municipalities better understand their constituents’ objectives and interests. We recommend monitoring Facebook engagement metrics (i.e. reactions, likes, views, comments, etc.) rather than the number of followers. Although having a large number of followers is nice, and often begets better engagement results, it is more important that people are seeing and interacting with content. The more that people view, like, or otherwise interact with Carlisle’s social media posts, the more visible these posts will be to other followers on their feed. To learn more about Facebook’s free analytics tool, see Appendix D.

Examples from Peer Communities: The following table provides a list of Facebook pages managed by several peer communities. The Town of Middleton, for instance, completed a website redesign and created a Facebook page earlier this year. They were able to leverage their new social media account to promote the website’s features and functionality. The Town of Cohasset demonstrated exemplary engagement online by promoting authentic, meaningful content that citizens are looking for. One of their posts regarding the Cohasset Police Department received over 60 reactions from the community, which is a huge accomplishment for a following of 804! Examples from both of these Towns can be found below.

Municipality	Followers	Population ¹¹	Facebook Link
Middleton	108	8,987	https://www.facebook.com/TownofMiddletonMA/
Paxton	190	4,806	https://www.facebook.com/Town-of-Paxton-Massachusetts-451402635028133/
Bolton	339	4,897	https://www.facebook.com/Town-of-Bolton-114751118647/
Georgetown	572	8,183	https://www.facebook.com/georgetownma/
Cohasset	804	7,542	https://www.facebook.com/Town-of-Cohasset-438057013057164/
Harvard	909	6,520	https://www.facebook.com/Town-of-Harvard-Massachusetts-120479257967897/
Hamilton	1,038	7,764	https://www.facebook.com/HamiltonMATown/



Town of Middleton Facebook Post – New Website Promotion, Uploaded on July 25th, 2017



Town of Cohasset Facebook Post – Uploaded on September 18th, 2017

¹¹2010 Census. U.S. Census Bureau. American Factfinder. Retrieved from <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml#>

Conclusion

The Town of Carlisle has displayed tremendous dedication to the advancement of technology in their community. Significant infrastructure enhancements have been made to strengthen and secure the Town's IT environment; and to better support online engagement with citizens. As Carlisle migrates to a new website platform this year, we hope this strategy document provides substantial guidance around growing their online presence. With the recent infrastructure improvements, website redesign, and social media initiatives underway; Carlisle is well-positioned to engage with citizens via the internet and other digital communication tools.

Appendices

Appendix A – Measure Website Success with Analytics Software

Today, municipalities do not need extensive technical expertise to effectively manage their website. With user friendly web analytics tools available, it is much easier to access and gain valuable insight from website data. Once your organization has implemented a web analytics tool, you can utilize the following key metrics to track engagement¹²:


- *Bounce Rate* – The rate at which users visit a page, and leave without navigating to another page on the site. This typically indicates that there is a user navigation or content issue that needs to be addressed.
- *Behavior Flow* – Take advantage of behavior flow to understand visitors’ goals and aversions.
- *Trends* – Keep an eye out for trends in the data, especially those that are not so obvious. They could indicate that something important is happening in the community.
- *Sources of Traffic* – Your source of traffic can be an indication of how well the website is promoted through various communication channels. For instance, if most users are entering the website via a search engine (I.e. Google) this may mean that there is a lack of representation on social media.

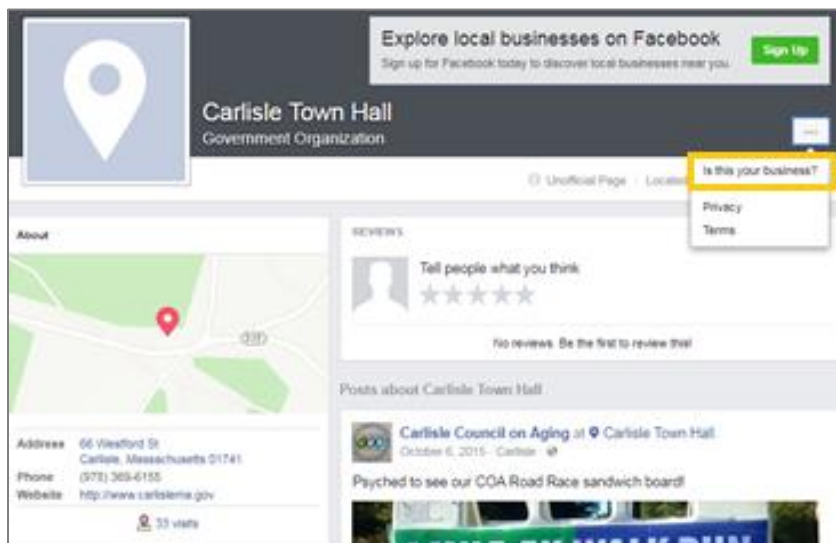
¹²Forbes Agency Council. (January 20, 2017). 14 Ways You Can Use Google Analytics to Improve Your Website. *Forbes*. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesagencycouncil/2017/01/30/14-ways-you-can-use-google-analytics-to-improve-your-website/#5355df073e93>

Appendix B – Establishing a Facebook Page

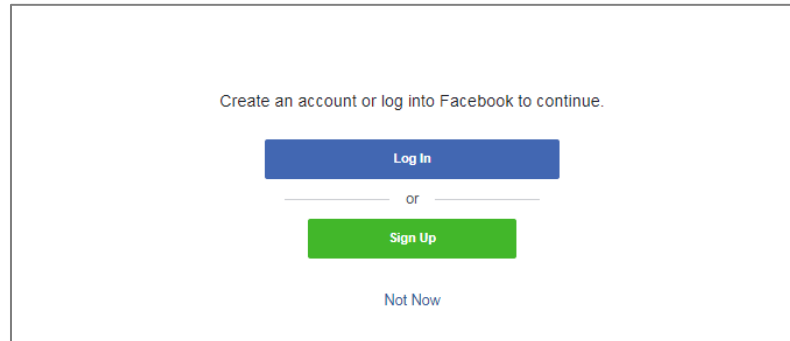
1. *What you'll need to get started.*

- a. A personal Facebook account
 - i. As a security measure, Carlisle's Facebook Page must be linked to a personal Facebook account. Multiple administrator roles can be added to the Page once it has been created; however, these individuals are required to have Facebook accounts as well.
 - ii. To create or claim the "Carlisle Town Hall" Facebook Page, Town officials can use a staff member's existing Facebook account (I.e. from those given authority to manage the Page) or create a new one. To create a new Facebook account, you'll need to enter the following information:
 - An email address (Can be a municipal email - all Facebook notifications will be sent to this address)
 - Personal Information: First name, last name, birthday and gender
 - Password
- b. Profile photo (E.g. Town Seal) – Dimensions 170 wide x 170 tall
- c. Cover photo (E.g. JPG file) – Dimensions 851 wide x 315 tall

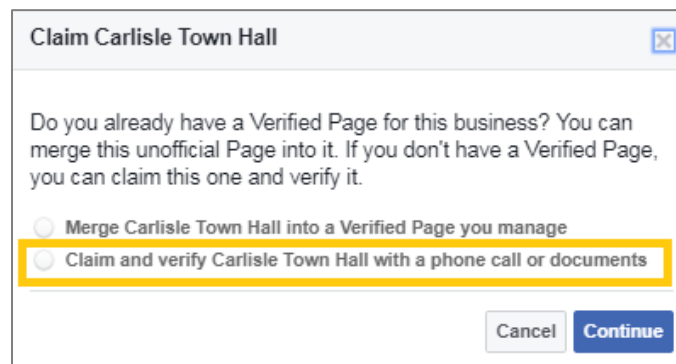
2. ***Claim "Carlisle Town Hall" Facebook Page.*** Go to the unmanaged [Carlisle Town Hall](#) Facebook Page. At the top of the page, in the bottom right corner of the banner, *click* on the ellipsis icon . *Select Is this your business?*



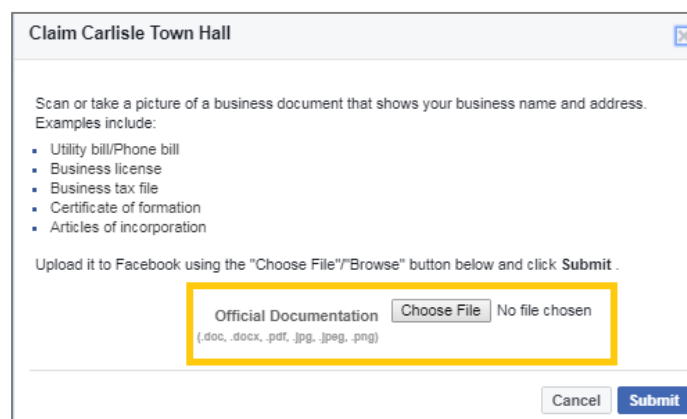
Facebook will prompt you to either Log In or Sign Up. If you are already logged into a Facebook account, *skip* ahead to the **next step**. Otherwise, *select* **Sign Up** and fill in the required fields. *Click* **Create Account** and follow the remaining prompts to finish creating the account.

A screenshot of a Facebook login/signup prompt. The text at the top says "Create an account or log into Facebook to continue." Below this are two buttons: a blue "Log In" button and a green "Sign Up" button, separated by the word "or". At the bottom, there is a link that says "Not Now".

Next, you'll be given the option to merge or claim the Carlisle Town Hall Page. Since Carlisle is not managing an official Facebook page today, *select* the **Claim and verify** option.

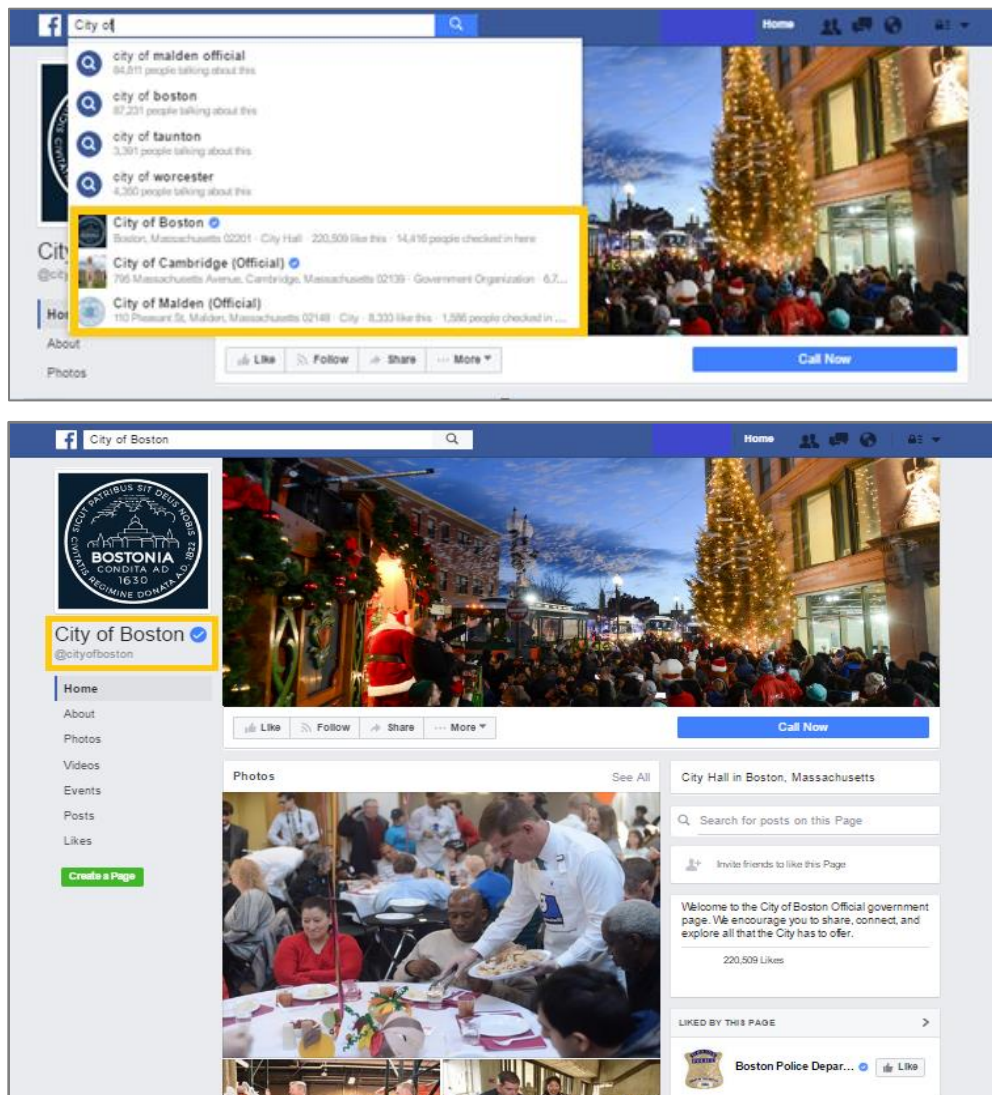
A screenshot of a Facebook dialog box titled "Claim Carlisle Town Hall". The text inside asks: "Do you already have a Verified Page for this business? You can merge this unofficial Page into it. If you don't have a Verified Page, you can claim this one and verify it." There are two radio button options. The first is "Merge Carlisle Town Hall into a Verified Page you manage". The second is "Claim and verify Carlisle Town Hall with a phone call or documents", which is highlighted with a yellow box. At the bottom right are "Cancel" and "Continue" buttons.

You will be asked to verify your relationship with the organization by providing business documentation such as a utility/phone bill, business license, business tax file, certificate of formation, or articles of incorporation. *Click* **Choose File** to upload one of these official documents.

A screenshot of a Facebook dialog box titled "Claim Carlisle Town Hall". The text inside says: "Scan or take a picture of a business document that shows your business name and address. Examples include:" followed by a bulleted list: "Utility bill/Phone bill", "Business license", "Business tax file", "Certificate of formation", and "Articles of incorporation". Below this, it says: "Upload it to Facebook using the 'Choose File'/'Browse' button below and click Submit." There is a text input field with the placeholder "Official Documentation" and a "Choose File" button next to it. The text "No file chosen" is to the right of the button. Below the input field, it says "(.doc, .docx, .pdf, .jpg, .jpeg, .png)". At the bottom right are "Cancel" and "Submit" buttons. The "Choose File" button and the text "(.doc, .docx, .pdf, .jpg, .jpeg, .png)" are highlighted with a yellow box.

Depending on which claiming method you selected, the request could take up to 72 hours to process.

3. **Request Verification.** Once you've acquired the Carlisle Town Hall Facebook page, you can submit a request for verification to receive a **verification badge**. The badge is typically displayed next to the page name and lets users know that they are on an official Facebook page and a trustworthy source of information from the Town.



To submit a request for verification, follow the on-screen instructions provided in [Facebook's Help Center](#) or email your request to Facebook directly at gov@fb.com.

4. **Developing and maintaining your Facebook page.** Once Carlisle’s Facebook page has been created and verified, next steps include *updating* the Town’s information in the **About** tab and *adjusting* the **page settings**. There you can manage your privacy and notification preferences; and assign page roles, or administrator roles. Create a posting schedule for the Facebook page and manage it regularly, consistency is key. The table below displays best times to post on Facebook from several sources. Appendix E provides guidance on creating a custom schedule to meet the needs of your audience.

facebook					
Source	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
HubSpot ¹³			3pm – 4pm	1pm – 4pm	1pm - 4pm
TrackMaven ¹⁴		Best Day of the Week			
Forbes ¹⁵				1pm – 3pm	1pm – 3pm
Huffington Post ¹⁶				1pm – 3pm	1pm – 3pm
Buffer ¹⁷				1pm – 3pm	1pm – 3pm
Fast Company ¹⁸	1pm – 4pm	1pm – 4pm	1pm – 4pm	1pm – 4pm	1pm – 4pm
QuickSprout ¹⁹	1pm – 3pm	1pm – 3pm	1pm – 3pm	1pm – 3pm	1pm – 3pm

¹³Kolowich, L. (July 25, 2017). The Best Times to Post on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn & Other Social Media Sites. *HubSpot*. Retrieved from <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/best-times-post-pin-tweet-social-media-infographic>

¹⁴The Best Times to Post on Social Media. *TrackMaven*. Retrieved from http://pages.trackmaven.com/rs/251-LXF-778/images/TrackMaven_Best-Times-to-Post-on-Social-Media.pdf

¹⁵Connor, C. (November 8, 2015). For Brands and PR: When is the Best Time to Post on Social Media? *Forbes*. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/cherylshappconner/2015/11/08/for-brands-and-pr-when-is-the-best-time-to-post-on-social-media/#6ed257d71779>

¹⁶Pollard, C. (April 6, 2015). The Best Times to Post on Social Media. *Huffington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.huffingtonpost.com/catriona-pollard/the-best-times-to-post-on_b_6990376.html

¹⁷Cooper, B. (June 1, 2016). A Scientific Guide to Posting Tweets, Facebook Posts, Emails, and Blog Posts at the Best Time. *Buffer Social*. Retrieved from <https://blog.bufferapp.com/best-time-to-tweet-post-to-facebook-send-emails-publish-blogposts>

¹⁸Gillet, R. (September 25, 2014). The Best (and Worst) Times to Post on Social Media. *Fast Company*. Retrieved from <https://www.fastcompany.com/3036184/the-best-and-worst-times-to-post-on-social-media-infograph>

¹⁹Patel, N. (January 2, 2015). What are the Best Times to Post on Social Media. *QuickSprout*. Retrieved from <https://www.quicksprout.com/2015/01/02/what-are-the-best-times-to-post-on-social-media/?display=wide>

Appendix C – Establishing a Social Media Policy

Establish a basic social media policy.

1. **Review sample policies.** The Town of Carlisle should review social media policies (created or updated within the past five years) produced by other towns. Below are a few sample policies for inspiration.
 - a. Mass.gov Social Media Policy [<https://www.mass.gov/social-media-policy>]
 - b. Auburn Social Media Policy [<https://www.mass.gov/social-media-policy>]
 - c. Oxford Social Media Policy
[http://www.town.oxford.ma.us/Pages/OxfordMA_Treasurer/SOCIAL%20MEDIA%20POLICY.pdf]
2. **Create an outline.** We've provided an outline for a basic social media policy below. More sections can be added by the Town as their social media presence grows.
 - a. Introduction
 - b. Purpose of Policy
 - c. List of Social Media Platforms and Definitions
 - d. General Guidelines - Do's and Don'ts
 - e. Acceptable Use of Social Media at Work
 - f. Violations
 - g. Acknowledgement Form
3. **Create an acknowledgement form.** Typically placed on the last page of the social media policy, the acknowledgement form requires municipal staff to sign and confirm their agreement to the policy's terms and conditions.

Appendix D – Social Media Metrics

Facebook – One way Carlisle can measure engagement is by leveraging [Facebook Insights](#), the platform’s built-in analytics tool. It provides a dashboard overview of performance metrics such as page likes, post reach, and page engagement (i.e. likes, shares, comments). Page admins can drill down into each metric and uncover demographic information about their audience. Age, gender, and geolocation are some examples of insights that can be gained by using this tool. To access the Insights tool for your Facebook page, follow the instructions below.

How to Access Insights:

1. *Login* to the **Facebook Page**
2. *Click* on **Insights** at the top
3. *Click* on sections to the **left** to focus on a metric

How to Export Data from Insights:

1. From Insights page, *click* **Overview** on the left
2. *Click* on **Export Data** on the right
3. *Select* how you want the data
4. *Click* on **Export Data** again

For more information about this tool, go to: <https://www.facebook.com/business/a/page/page-insights>.

APPENDIX E – Finding the Right Schedule for Social Media

In Appendix B, we've provided a list of posting schedules based on suggestions from 5 – 7 different sources. While these sources do a good job of capturing user behavior, many fail to take the following local factors into account:

- *Newsfeed Algorithms* - Above all, social media posts need to be interesting. They need to capture the attention of the user. Otherwise, platforms like Facebook will use their "Newsfeed Algorithm" to determine whether a post will appear on people's feeds²⁰.
- *Scalability* – If your social media page only has 10 followers, having regular engagement from 2 or 3 people means that 20 – 30% of your audience is engaged. That is quite an achievement! The same idea can be applied to pages with 5,000+ followers. Numbers do not necessarily determine success, but they can be useful in defining what success means to an organization.
- *Timing* – Holidays and days of the week play a significant role in the level of engagement a post will receive. Social media users are drawn to relevant content, it helps them feel like they are part of a community. Posting content that everyone can understand or enjoy will likely get a higher response rate than posting content for a specific topic.
- *Audience* – Knowing what type of audience you have will also help to define what success means for your social media account. Depending on the demographic status and interests of your followers, posting less or more frequently than recommended may be a better strategy for your team.

To effectively utilize social media, these kinds of nuances must be incorporated into the long-term strategy. The examples listed in Appendix B should only be used as guidelines to help build an initial following. Once Carlisle has achieved this, they can customize their posting schedule by following the instructions below²¹.

²⁰Hsiung, C. (July 27, 2017). Your Social Media Strategy: Social Media Is the Way Communities Network Now. *ICMA*. Retrieved from <https://icma.org/articles/your-social-media-strategy>

²¹Lee, K. (December 1, 2016). The Biggest Social Media Science Study: What 4.8 Million Tweets Say About the Best Time to Tweet. *Buffer Social*. Retrieved from <https://blog.bufferapp.com/best-time-to-tweet-research>

1. *Pick 4 times to test* – Select 4 different times to upload content to your social media. These times can be based on staff availability, the list in Appendix B, or a combination of the two.
2. *Schedule Posts for each of these times* – To retain consistent data, upload the same post to your social media at the 4 selected times. There are online scheduling tools available to help you do this; however, they usually come with a price.
3. *Examine your analytics to compare* – Once you’ve uploaded the post to your page at the selected times, compare results. Analyze which post received the most responses and log your findings.
4. *Keep testing* – Explore other content options, repeat this process using images or links instead of text. Try posting on other days of the week (including weekends) to see which begets better results.
5. *Refine your approach* – The results of this experiment can be used to create or update your posting schedule. The process can be repeated regularly until an ideal posting schedule has been achieved.