



Town of Milford

Citizen Engagement Plan January 2017

Background

Milford is a medium sized town in Worcester County with an estimated population of 28,000. The town has an annual budget of \$99 Million; the medium household income is \$50,856.

Milford recognizes the need to upgrade its website to keep pace with the rise in citizen expectations for greater online access to services and information.

Core Objectives

There are four core objectives of this Citizen Engagement Plan.

1. Informational Portal: To provide a high level of current and relevant town information, organized in an easily accessible and intuitive structure.
2. Transactional Services: To provide a variety of services that citizens can complete online, 24/7, when it is most convenient for them. The website will be a hub for these services, which are expected to grow over time, as resources permit.
3. Social Media Considerations: Although the focus of this Citizen Engagement Plan is on the development of a new website, the website should provide future integration capabilities as the town increases its involvement with other social media platforms.
4. Practical Solution: The content management system needs to be both cost effective and time efficient. The website must be kept current and interesting, requiring a solution that is very easy to maintain by departmental personnel.

Essential Requirements

The upgraded website will include the following features and enhancements.

- a. Design & Layout: The home page needs to be attractive and welcoming, and be a positive reflective of the community.
- b. Navigational Structure: The layout needs to be uncluttered and well organized, with multiple ways to gain easy access to core information. The site should deploy mega-menus, help centers and taxonomy.
- c. Advanced Search: The search tool needs to provide filters to refine the search and must include the ability to search within PDFs.

- d. Responsive Design: The website will reconfigure itself to maximize its appearance and usability on all devices, such as smart phones, tablets, and wide screen monitors.
- e. Urgent Alerts: The site should allow for the posting of important and time sensitive information.
- f. Emails & RSS: The site should allow for the creation of various email listserves the public can subscribe to, such as department news, board agendas, and committee minutes. Each page should also be compatible with RSS.
- g. Content Scheduling: It is important content postings be scheduled so that content creation can be done at any time for future availability on the website and a date can be scheduled for content to be unpublished if no longer relevant.
- h. Social Media Integration: To plan for future considerations, the website should be integrated with various social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube.
- i. Public Meetings Calendar: The town would be best served by having a stand alone meetings calendar, separate from other events, with the agendas of upcoming meetings attached to each date.
- j. ADA Compliance: The website must comply with core ADA requirements so all visitors can readily get the information they need regardless of their personal circumstances.
- k. Broken Links Reporting: To assist in the maintenance of an up-to-date website.
- l. Traffic Statistics Monitoring: The ability to monitor website visitor traffic levels and patterns to help with the ongoing adjustments to content and navigation structure.

Recommended Enhancements

The following are under consideration as additional website enhancements.

- a. Language Translation: To maximize its engagement with a growing diversity of constituents.
- b. Fillable Forms: To allow for more timely submissions and/or transactions.
- c. Public Records Requests: Devote a section of the website to explain procedures and submit requests.
- d. Business Directory: Establish a listing of all businesses, by category, to illustrate the town's commitment to its business community.
- e. Open Bids: Provide to ability for vendors to secure all Bids/RFPs online, and to automate the dissemination of all addendums and bid results.

Future Considerations

The town's new website is just the start of an ongoing Citizen Engagement plan that will grow over time. The following is a partial list of other online services that may be added as resources permit.

- a. Recyclopedia: Assist constituents to minimize the waste stream by providing a structure for how best to recycle and dispose of household items.
- b. Board & Committee Application: Enhance the recruitment of board volunteers by providing online tools to review vacancies and expiring terms, and to submit applications.
- c. Live Streaming of Public Meetings: Help to increase public participation in government by providing live online access to core board meetings.
- d. Financial Transparency: Provide online tools to help constituents better understand both where their funds are being spent and the challenges of matching resources to needs.

- e. Burn Permits: Streamline the process of both securing a burn permit and activating the permit on a given day.

Professional Development

Once the website development has been completed, it will be up to staff to maintain the site over time. To maximize the success of its objectives, it is imperative the site is kept current, up-to-date, and interesting.

➤ **Recommended Governance**

The long term success of the website would best be served by decentralizing the maintenance down to the department level. This may need to develop over time, as full adoption at the start may not be feasible, nor practical. Various roles and permissions may be assigned, such as site administrators, department users, board volunteers, and content creators, to name a few.

➤ **Initial Training**

All staff initially engaged in maintenance will be trained onsite. Each will then be granted access to their respective areas for a period of trial and testing before the site goes live.

➤ **Ongoing Assistance**

A variety of resources are in place to insure all staff are able to maintain and/or increase their competency over time. These include:

- Built in Documentation throughout the CMS
- Online Help Center, including Self-Help Videos
- Monthly Webinars
- Live User Support via Phone or Email
- Live Onsite Refresher Training

Promotion of Website & Online Services

The launch of the new website needs to be supplemented by a promotional campaign aimed at informing constituents of the upgrade and of the additional services available. Here is a partial list of recommended actions:

1. Contact Local Media:
 - a. Ask for an article, create a press release, add message to Cable TV
2. Advertise Website in Print
 - a. Add to bill stuffers, dog license renewals, town stationary, annual reports, street signage, etc.
3. Create After-Hours Phone Message directing visitors to the website
4. Add URL to signature of all employee emails.
5. Instruct all employees to reference website during visitor interactions.
6. Preview/review at town meeting
7. Add signage to all walk-up windows
8. Create Computer Kiosk within Town Hall