Town of Wellesley

Citizen Engagement Strategy

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Office of Municipal & School Technology

EOTSS | Executive Office of Technology Services & Security

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Image: Town Hall, Wellesley, MA[1]

Introduction

In Spring 2017, the Town of Wellesley signed a Community Compact agreement with the Baker-Polito administration. Creation of the Community Compact Cabinet was Governor Baker's first Executive Order in January 2015 to strengthen partnerships between the administration and Massachusetts' cities and towns. Wellesley selected Citizen Engagement as an Information Technology Best Practice, taking advantage of technical assistance available from the State to develop a more cohesive Citizen Engagement strategy. On August 2, 2017, a group from the Office of Municipal and School Technology met with departmental leadership in Wellesley. The purpose of this meeting was to have a candid discussion around where effective communication was occurring, where improvement could be made, and any barriers preventing those improvements.

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[1] Jameslwoodward (October 16, 2009). Wellesley Town Hall, MA. *Wikimedia Commons. Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported*. Retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wellesley_MA_Town_Hall_06.jpg

COMMUNITY PROFILE

The Town of Wellesley, Massachusetts, has a population of roughly 28,000 residents[2]. Located in Norfolk County as part of Greater Boston, Wellesley is a well-regarded suburb with a school system recognized as one of the best in the state. Like many New England cities and towns, the Town of Wellesley does their best to handle community concerns and continues to seek new ways to establish two-way communication with constituents.

Project Overview

PROJECT PROCESS & PURPOSE

Wellesley aims to educate its citizens so they feel empowered to proactively participate in civic activities. The Town strives to listen and be more responsive to concerns voiced by residents who engage through official and un-official communication platforms. To meet these objectives, Blythe Robinson, Wellesley's Executive Director, coordinated a partnership between the Office of Municipal and School Technology at EOTSS and the Town to develop a strategy that would potentially increase community engagement. The following framework was used by the Office of Municipal and School Technology to assess Wellesley's digital communication environment and devise a plan to help them advance in this area of Information Technology.

1. *Interview Key Stakeholders* – It was decided early-on that Wellesley's input would be the driving force of this initiative. The first step of the project process involved gathering information from staff members and volunteers from various boards and commissions, regarding their views around current digital communication methods and organizational structure. An in-person meeting was held at Wellesley's Town Hall to kick off the project and collect the information necessary to develop a citizen engagement strategy. The event was attended by approximately twenty-five individuals, who were encouraged to speak openly about their communication concerns. The Office of Municipal and School Technology documented Wellesley's feedback, which was an important source of information in evaluating the options available to Wellesley and making recommendations later in the document.

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[2] 2010 Census. *U.S. Census Bureau. American Factfinder*. Retrieved from
https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml#

2. *Themes* – From the project kickoff meeting, we were able to identify a few common themes and concerns affecting the Town:

   a) Lack of human resources available to effectively manage new communication platforms and expectations.
   b) A perception that there is a clear message at the department-level, but ability to disseminate this information effectively varies across departments.
   c) Lack of knowledge around cutting edge communication platforms.
   d) Lack of training and institutional capacity around communication and digital platforms.

   It has been a challenge to push information to citizens who are not already proactively engaged. Wellesley wants to adopt a new approach for disseminating information to the public but is unsure if their organization has the technological expertise or resources to support such a change.

3. *Understand Objectives* – Currently, communication in Wellesley is very decentralized, resulting in varying levels of capacity in each department. While some departments are regularly engaged with constituents via digital platforms, like Facebook and Twitter, others lack the skill, confidence or time to pursue them. The Town is looking to explore new strategies and technology solutions that will help level the playing field. They want to empower employees and volunteers through technology and make it easier for them to reach their audience.

4. *Recommendations and Opportunities* – After meeting in Wellesley, we furthered our research of the Town's digital communications environment by examining their online presence. In the following pages, we've summarized findings around Wellesley's current engagement initiatives and have provided suggestions for possible enhancement to the great work already happening across the community.

Current Engagement Initiatives

WEBSITE

Wellesley initiated a complete redesign of the Town's website to better support 'Information-As-A-Service' for constituents. In doing so, Wellesley has strengthened their ability to provide relevant, accurate information to citizens when they need it. New interactive features such as agenda display, bid postings, and job postings were added to keep residents up to date on Town initiatives. With the help of CivicPlus, the new website was launched in July 2017. Below is a before and after comparison of the "Town of Wellesley" homepage, there is a clear difference in how the information is organized. The previous design was less intuitive and contained a multitude of buttons and hyperlinks. The new website offers simplified navigation and layout, sleek design and a neutral color palette, which gives users a clear sense of direction as soon as they enter the homepage.

Before Refresh
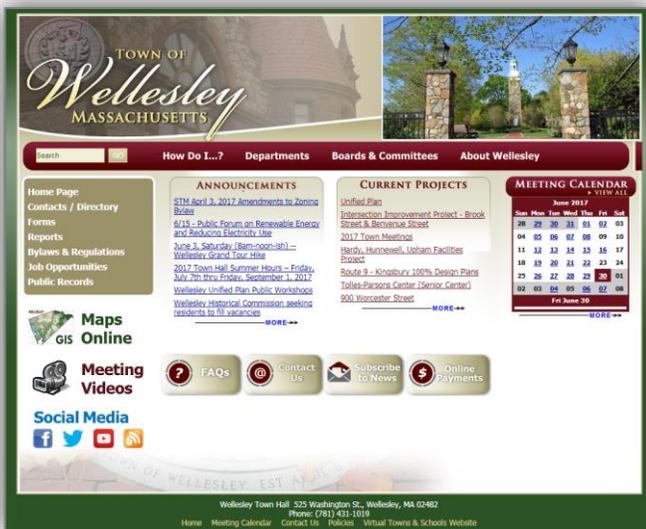
Screenshot: Taken June 30, 2017

After Refresh
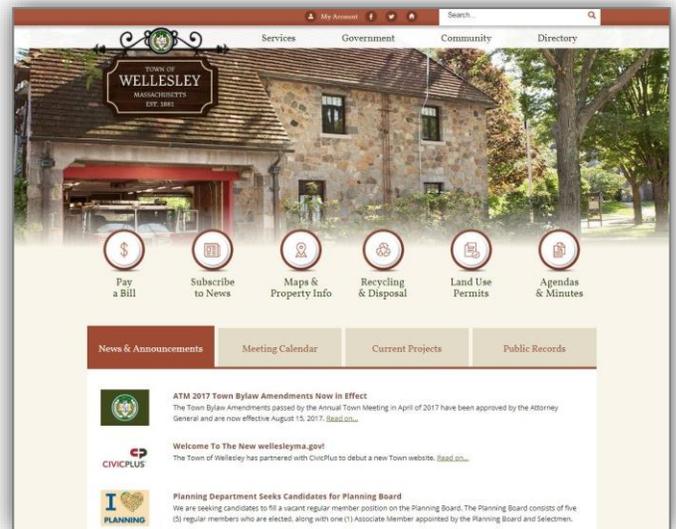
Screenshot: Taken August 24, 2017

SOCIAL MEDIA

Currently, knowledge and use of social media in Wellesley is varied, nine departments have created at least one social media account (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube). As of this writing, the [Wellesley Police Department](#) has by far the largest social media presence with approximately 9,650 followers on Twitter and 3,060 followers on Facebook. The Town of Wellesley has dormant [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages; however, there are plans to start engaging on these platforms more regularly in the near future. Initially these pages will be used to post daily news and interact with users. Their role may change depending on the outcome of this initiative.

TRADITIONAL ENGAGEMENT

In the project kick-off meeting, an excellent point was made regarding the importance of offering a range of communication options to constituents. Wellesley is a diverse community, and is home to citizens with various demographic backgrounds and levels of technological expertise. While there are a growing number of opportunities to engage through the use of technology, namely social media, departments have also found the following communication methods to be effective, particularly in reaching less tech-savvy residents:

- *Public Access Channel* – There may be an opportunity to better leverage the public access channel for communication, while the reach may be limited, there is a sense that this method may still provide value.

- *Email Newsletter* – The Town recently considered this option but needs more time to iron out the details around resident emails and subscription options.

- *Banners/Stickers* – For some departments, this has been the most effective method of communication.

- *Hard-copy Information* – Historically the Town delivered reports and other documentation in print to residents' homes. The reality is that most electronic communications are opt-in and delivery to the home may still be the best avenue to reach most residents.

- *Local Print Media* – Newspapers, and other public print media, remain relevant to many citizens.

Recommendations

To accompany Wellesley's engagement initiatives, the Office of Municipal and School Technology has prepared several recommendations based on our assessment of the Town's existing digital communication platforms and priorities. The following suggestions highlight relatively simple ideas that could be implemented short-term, as well as longer-term organizational considerations.

POTENTIAL SHORT-TERM OPPORTUNITIES

Look Into the Possibility of Enhancing the Town-Wide Calendar – Based on a great suggestion from the Town, we believe it would be worthwhile to consider enhancing the Town calendar so it would be more inclusive of departments and event types happening across the community. The newly deployed Town website has a great 'Meeting Calendar' that spans a variety of town functions; however, there could be an opportunity to engage with a broader range of audiences that might also be interested in family or young adult activities. For instance, the Wellesley Free Library offers courses like 'Etsy Shop Management' and 'Girls Who Code' programs. The Town Calendar could serve as an avenue to increase the reach of these programs and by reaching groups that might not traditionally interact with the Town through the website, you might expand the reach of other communications.
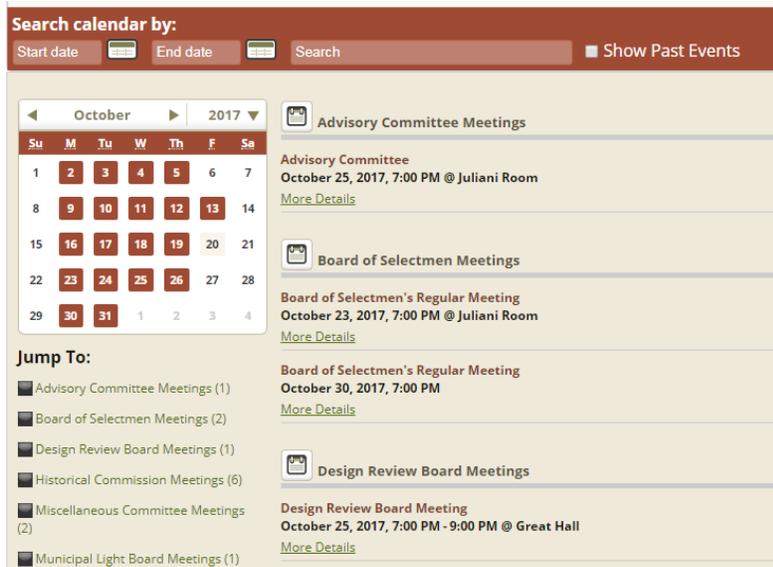
Screenshot: Town of Wellesley Meeting Calendar

The City of Boston's website is an excellent example of a master events page. While most of their events are aggregated to this one site, they do include links to other relevant calendars in the City. If technical limitations prevent integration between the Town and Library calendars, it can still be useful to indicate to website visitors that additional activities can be found in another location[3]. Like Wellesley, the Town of Winchester uses the calendar feature on their CivicPlus website, their approach is to differentiate their 'meeting' and 'community' calendars[4]. The Town of Fairfield, Connecticut, allows constituents to view events by department, and may also serve as an interesting example[5].

Measure Website Success with Analytics Software – In today's data driven world, collecting and analyzing constituent data can be an effective way to get to know them better. Like Wellesley, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts recently implemented a website redesign. During the planning phase of the redesign, the Massachusetts Digital Services team analyzed old website data and discovered that a mere 10% of content drove over 80% of user traffic. Today, that 10% of highly-sought after content is showcased at the forefront of the new website. Data analytics, surveys, and marketing research were the driving force behind the Mass.gov redesign. One analytics tool the Digital Services team uses is Crazy Egg[6]. This software generates

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[3]Events. *City of Boston*. Retrieved from https://www.boston.gov/events

[4] Community Calendar. *The Town of Winchester Massachusetts*. Retrieved from https://www.winchester.us/calendar.aspx

[5] Town Calendars. *Fairfield Connecticut*. Retrieved from http://www.fairfieldct.org/towncalendars

[6] *Crazyegg, Inc*. Received from https://www.crazyegg.com/

a heatmap and scroll map to show how users interact with the website. Results showed that most visitors on Mass.gov go directly to the search box in the center of the page.
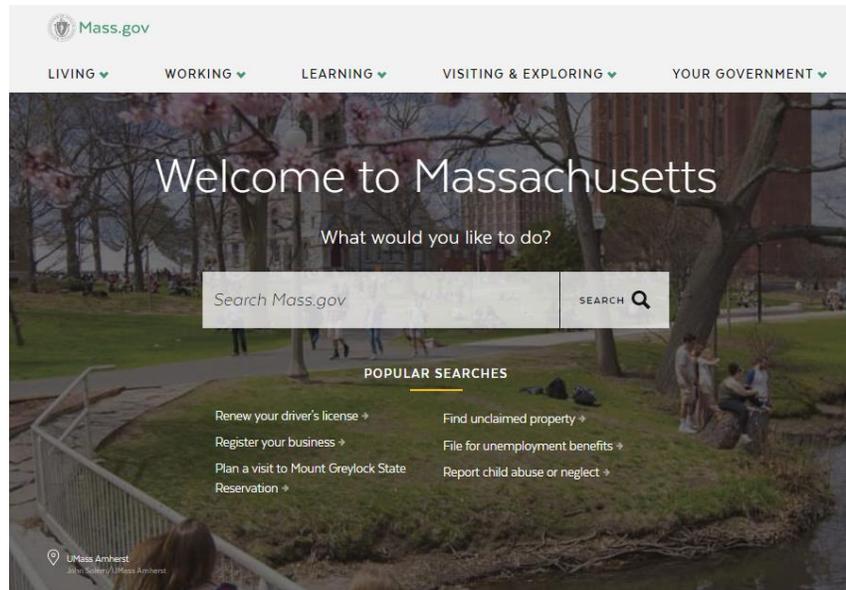
[Chalkmark](#)[7] is another tool that was used in the development of Mass.gov, this service allowed users to test and provide quick feedback on website designs before they were implemented or updated. Currently, the Digital Services team is using an embedded [Formstack](#)[8] form to survey users about their experience with the website redesign. When they submit their survey, the results are populated in a basic Google Sheets document where it is kept for further analysis. While these specific solutions may or may not be a good fit in Wellesley, we hope they are interesting examples of how analytics can be used in making informed website decisions. 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 pertinent KPI metrics to look out for.

Consider Creating a Resident Informational Guide – Another interesting suggestion coming from the Town was the creation of a 'Resident Information Guide'. The information guide would provide residents with fun and educational details about Wellesley. Available in both print and electronic formats, the document could potentially contain a welcome letter (for new residents), dog license form, trash/recycle information,

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[7] Chalkmark Online Screenshot Testing. *Optimal Workshop*. Retrieved from
https://www.optimalworkshop.com/chalkmark
[8] *Formstack*. Retrieved from https://www.formstack.com/

etc. While we don't have direct experience with 'information guides' or data on their effectiveness, an important part of changing the way we engage in government includes evolution of organizational culture, which includes sincere consideration of suggestions from employees and volunteers. This idea could be a good opportunity for a pilot -- as Brian Elms notes in *Peak Performance*, pilots are rare in local governments, and when we do try something new, they aren't often the ideas of municipal employees who have lots of experience and ideas.[9] See Appendix B for examples from other Towns.

Provide Content Management Training Opportunities – As more departments become involved with updating the new website, there will be an increased need for training. CivicPlus sells a variety of training resources the Town 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 an internal resource. 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.

Claim/Merge/Verify "Town of Wellesley" Social Media – Since the official "Town of Wellesley" Facebook page is not verified; Facebook and Twitter allow other users to create pages with the same name. Constituents benefit from the verification process because it reassures them that the information is coming from an official source. We've provided step-by-step instructions on how to claim/merge, and verify a page for Facebook in Appendix C and Twitter in Appendix D.

Finding the Right Social Media Platform for Your Audience[10] – Departments that are interested in establishing a social media presence should research available platforms to determine if they are the right avenues to connect with their constituents. Social media accounts do not accrue large followings overnight, they take time and dedication to build. Each platform is unique with a different set of pros and cons; however, when used effectively, social media can be a great tool to amplify the delivery of your message

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[9] Elms, B., & Wogan, J. B. (2016). *Peak performance: how Denvers Peak Academy is saving money, boosting morale and just maybe changing the world. (And how you can too!), 55*. Washington, DC: Governing Books.
[10] Lee, K. (September 24, 2017). How to Create a Social Media Marketing Plan From ScratchHow to Create a Social Media Marketing Plan From Scratch. *Buffer Social*. Retrieved from https://blog.bufferapp.com/social-media-marketing-plan

10

and reach members of the community that aren't typically engaged in government spaces. Departments should pursue social media platforms that possess useful features and will enable them to achieve their communication objectives, on their terms. The following considerations can help to determine which social networks to try.

Content – An important first step in finding the right social media network is to identify the type of information, or content, you want to share. Departments should produce content that is aligned with their audience's goals, rather than for the sake of having something to post on social media. Whether its job postings, quick tidbits about your department, or video footage from Town events, there may be a special place for you content on the social media spectrum.

Audience – Figure out where your audience spends most of their time (online). Leverage any demographic information you have from Town databases or website metrics to develop a persona, or identity, that best describes the interests of your target audience. This way you'll have some tangible information to analyze and use to develop a social media strategy. Another way you can measure audience preferences is by taking advantage of daily interactions with citizens. Briefly interview them by asking where they would like to start receiving information. Leverage this feedback to form an educated guess, or generalization, about your audience and where to find them. Once you have some solid characteristic/demographic data, you can utilize social media research, like the chart provided in Appendix E, to weigh out your options. In the table below, we've categorized several popular social networks categories based on their general purpose. If you have a business or economic development initiative underway, these may be some channels to consider.

Purpose	Platform
All inclusive	Facebook, Twitter
Image-based	Pinterest, Instagram, Tumblr
Video	YouTube, Vimeo
Business	LinkedIn
Local Engagement	Nextdoor
Real Estate Development	CoUrbanize

Time/Workflow – As public servants, time is our most valuable asset, which is why it is necessary to determine how much of it can be put towards developing a social media presence. Best practice is to spend about an hour per day per social media platform to gather information and brainstorm ideas for new posts. Automated scheduling software like Hootsuite or Buffer can save time, but do require paid subscriptions.

Resources – Take inventory of human and technology resources. Who on your team has the skillset to maintain a social media account and be the voice of your department? What software or devices do you possess that could help you create quality authentic content?

ORGANIZATIONAL APPROACHES THE TOWN COULD CONSIDER

In implementing a Citizen Engagement strategy, there is not necessarily a 'one-size-fits-all' or 'right way'. The best approach is one that takes into account local factors and avoids known pitfalls. In this section, we provide the most viable approaches for Wellesley and provide some of the pros and cons of each approach.

Continue on the Current Path

The current strategy in Wellesley is very decentralized, while this has led to some excellent work at the department level, it has also resulted in some inconsistency when looking at the Town as an organization. This has led to some departments being better positioned to get their message out than others and leaves the community with fewer options in dealing with time sensitive communications. While this is not an optimal approach in effectively communicating with the public, it is not unusual and is the lowest financial cost option.

Hire Full -time Staff for a Highly Centralized Communications Function

Taking an approach that leads to a highly centralized communications function would make it very easy to make communication from the Town to residents more consistent, and might make it easier for leaders in Town Hall to get a consistent message out quickly. Centralizing all Town communications would almost certainly require at least one new full-time staffer, making this likely to be the highest cost option. The Town should also consider that they have very engaged department heads, many who are doing excellent communication work today, taking away all autonomy internally could be very discouraging, leading to less engagement internally, and ultimately less ability to effectively get the message out externally.

Hire New Full/Part-time Staff for Partially Centralized Coordination and Support

Taking an approach that leads to a partially centralized communications function would make it easier to make communications from the Town to residents more consistent, in that it would provide ground rules for departments and potentially allows Town-wide accounts to amplify important messages from departments and departments to amplify important messages from the Town-wide accounts. This approach would require significant investment, in that it requires new full or part-time staff. Overall Town communications would likely improve under this approach and internal stakeholders would likely accept this model.

Formalizing Communications Role and Provide Training for Departments

Pursuing an incremental approach that takes the status quo and adds ground rules and training is a very viable option. This approach could allow for slightly more consistent messaging and slightly better communication from the Town. This would be a relatively low-cost alternative. The downside of this approach is that it would likely result in very modest improvements, and while some departments might be able to improve their communications, others have no capacity today, which would not be addressed by this approach. While there would likely be some cost in providing some level of training for staff and volunteers, it would be a relatively low-cost option.

Organizational Recommendation

Based on our analysis, which considers best practices in engagement and our time spent with department leadership in Wellesley, we would recommend that the Town consider a 'Partial Centralization' approach, which would include hiring full or part-time communications staff. We were impressed with the willingness of department leadership to collaborate, and the great communication already coming from Town Departments. We were also impressed with the apparent level of readiness and willingness to take communication to residents to another level. We believe this approach would be aligned with a suggestion from our meeting with Town leadership, described as a "conductor". If the Town elects to pursue this approach, we recommend that there be additional thought around the scope of responsibilities assigned to this position. If the Town envisions this role to encompass all Town communications – beyond technology-based communication, such as the website and social media, we would strongly suggest that the Town consider a full-time resource. The primary reasons we believe this would be the most advantageous approach include:

- Responsibility for creating and maintaining communication 'ground rules' would be clearly defined.

- There would very likely be a good balance between consistency of communication and ability to respond in a timely manner.

- Departments that are doing well with communications today could keep doing what they are doing with additional support and guidance, while those who do not have communications expertise would be better positioned to get their message out.

Impact Matrix – Predict the Effect of Alternative Approaches

As part of our analysis, we utilized the matrix below to evaluate the most viable organizational alternatives the Town could pursue. This approach allows for comparison of alternatives based on anticipated outcomes for identified criteria – which can be a useful exercise given that we all have gut reactions that may or may not be based on the right or consistent considerations. The criteria and weighting below are based on our experience and interpretation of Town feedback; however, the Town could certainly leverage this tool and modify any assumptions that we have made.

Criteria Definitions:

1. *Sustainability* – Ability to maintain and evolve the program as needed long-term.
2. *Ease of Implementation* – Effort required to implement the solution.
3. *Buy-in* – Likelihood that internal stakeholders will embrace/accept the approach.
4. *Consistency of Communication* – Ability to provide a consistent message, tone and brand.
5. *Responsiveness to Residents* – Capacity to address inquiries coming in through multiple sources and from residents with diverse backgrounds and interests.
6. *Timeliness of Communications* – Ability to provide timely, accurate information to residents on a variety of communication platforms.
7. *Cost* – The financial implications of implementing the solution.

Impact Relative to Criteria:

- 2 – Very Advantageous
- 1 –Advantageous
- 0 – Neutral
- (-1) – Disadvantageous
- (-2) – Very Disadvantageous

Weight of Criteria:

- 0.5 – Lower Weighted
- 1 – Not Weighted
- 1.5 – Higher Weighted

Local Criteria	Weighted Impact	Current Path (reference point)	Full Centralization	Partial Centralization	Formalizing Communications
Sustainability	1.5	0	0	2	1
Ease of Implementation	1	0	-1	0	1
Buy-In	1	0	-1	2	1
Consistency of Communication	1	0	2	2	1
Responsiveness to Residents	1	0	0	2	1
Timeliness of Communications	1	0	0	2	1
Cost	0.5	0	-2	-2	-1
TOTAL SCORE:		**0**	**-1**	**10**	**6**

NEXT STEPS IN COMMUNICATION AND TECHNOLOGY

If the Town elects to move forward with an organizational change in the way communications are handled, particularly those with a technology component, there are a number of best practices that could be considered in developing a successful strategy. Here are some you might consider:

Implement the S.M.A.R.T. Method – When approaching a new technology initiative, think *SMART* by pursuing initiatives that are *Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-Bound (SMART).* The activity provided in Appendix F can be used for future technology planning. The activity can help you to clearly communicate the benefits of the new technology to internal and external stakeholders.

Tactfully Introduce New Technology to the Community – Before unleashing a new public facing technology, consider creating a small outreach campaign to get residents excited about the new features they'll have access to. Leverage Wellesley's existing communication platforms to share interesting details about the new tool and incorporate visual aids into the campaign to grab the attention of the end user. For instance, the new 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. Making the same comparison with the other types of orders that can be placed online would also be useful -- for instance, license renewals and requests for vital records like birth, marriage, and death certificates. Wherever the statistics show a low percentage of online transactions, that might be a good candidate for a tweet or Facebook post to promote the website:

Provide Adequate Opportunities for Training – There tend to be a number of training resources online that can be very useful in training staff. Vet training materials and make it easy for Town employees and volunteers to learn about and effectively work in new platforms.

Do Not Underestimate the Value of Traditional Communication Vehicles – Cutting edge communication vehicles like social media have significantly impacted the way citizens receive information today. However, traditional print and digital media like the public access channel, banners, stickers, and mail, may still have a place – it is important to think about the target audience and how best to achieve your desired outcome.

Remember that Different Departments Have Different Audiences – For instance, the library book club might be very important to some residents, and not others. Default to trusting that departments know their constituency and be open to their input on effective communication. The best experience for residents will be the result of individuals across the organization working as a team.

Create Social Media/Communication Guidelines –If the approach we recommend in this report is pursued, establishing standards will be essential in effectively allowing for a high degree of autonomy to continue while retaining a consistent voice. These should be living guidelines, and we would recommend developing a working group to discuss effective approaches and challenges, rather than rely on a punitive policy driven approach.

Use Town-Wide Social Media Accounts to Amplify Important Messages from Departments – A number of departments are actively engaged on social media and have done great work. We would recommend that departments continue to produce content on their individual accounts, helping to maintain active communication that's relevant for their particular audience. The official "Town of Wellesley" social media accounts can re-post or share those messages that would be relevant to a town-wide audience.

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 there is a tool in place, pay special attention to key metrics like the ones listed below[11]:

- *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 Town of Wellesley 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.

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[11] Forbes 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 – Information Guide Examples

Example: Town of Freetown – 2017 Resident Informational Guide[12]

Examples: Welcome Letters from Other Towns

Town of Stow

Town of Stow
OFFICE OF THE TOWN CLERK
Town Building - 380 Great Road
Stow, Massachusetts 01775-2127
(978) 897-4514 x 1
FAX (978) 897-4534

January 3, 2017

Welcome to Stow!

Enclosed please find information about our Town, a **census form, voter registration, a dog license application, and website information.**

Forms to Complete & Return to the Town Clerk
1. **Census/Street Listing Form:** Please complete, sign, and return to this office. Directions are printed on the back page of the Census.
2. **Voter Registration Card(s):** If you would like to vote at the Town Meetings and Elections please complete, sign, and return your voter registration forms to this office. The State also has an Online Voter Registration System: https://www.sec.state.ma.us/ovr/

Upcoming voting opportunities:
May 1, 2017   Annual Town Meeting
May 9, 2017   Annual Town Election

3. **Dog License Application:** If you own a dog(s) please complete the form, and return the form with your payment, rabies vaccination certificate(s), and a self addressed 70¢ stamped envelope. (94¢ for 3+ tags).

More information about Stow may be found on the town's website: www.stow-ma.gov.

Sincerely,

Deb Seith
Assistant Town Clerk

Town of Lynnfield

Town of Lynnfield

55 Summer Street, Lynnfield, MA. 01940
781-334-9401

May 2017

Welcome New Resident!!

Greetings. It has come to my attention that you have recently moved to Lynnfield. Our records indicate that we do not have you listed in our street listing file, nor do we have a voter registration on file. I am enclosing several forms to be completed and returned to my office:

- Lynnfield Census Form
- 2017 Dog License Application (if applicable)
- Voter Registration Form (or to register on line, www.registertovotema.com and once this has been completed, you will receive an acknowledgement letter from my office)

For additional information about the town and the town departments, you can log onto www.town.lynnfield.ma.us for the town's web site.

Should you have any questions regarding any of the information I have provided, please do not hesitate to call. The Clerk's office hours are Mon – Thurs, 8:00 AM – 4:30, and Friday, 8:00 AM – 1:00 PM. The town clerk's office can be reached by calling 781-334-9400.

Sincerely,

Trudy L. Reid

Trudy L. Reid
Town Clerk

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[12]Brown, J. A., & Estrella, C. (2017) Town Clerk's Office: 2017 Informational Guide. Retrieved from http://www.freetownma.gov/sites/freetownma/files/info_guide_20170803110724.pdf

Town of Lancaster

Town of Lancaster
Office of the Town Clerk
695 Main Street, Suite 2
Lancaster, Massachusetts 01523
Tel (978) 365-3326 ext. 1013 — Fax (978) 368-4011

Mary de Alderete
Town Clerk

Dianne Reardon
Assistant Town Clerk

June 8, 2017

Name
Lancaster, MA 01523

Dear Name,

Our records indicate that you may have recently moved into Lancaster.

Enclosed is a voter registration card so that you may register to vote in town. Also, we have enclosed a census form to be filled out and sent back to us. In addition, if you have a dog, the 2017 licenses are now on sale. You will have to provide a rabies certificate in order to license.

Additional information regarding the Town may be found on our website www.ci.lancaster.ma.us.

You may reach our Office during our regular hours of Monday 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, and Tuesday through Thursday 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM if you should have any questions regarding the Town or the information enclosed.

Once again, it is our sincere pleasure to welcome you and we look forward to assisting you in the future.

Sincerely,

Mary de Alderete   Dianne M. Reardon
Town Clerk   Assistant Town Clerk

enc:

Town of Essex

OFFICE OF THE TOWN CLERK

Christina J. St.Pierre · Town Clerk · Notary Public · CStPierre@EssexMA.org · www.EssexMA.org
30 Martin Street, Essex, MA 01929-1235 | Office (978) 768-7111 | Facsimile (978) 768-2505

Haley Joy Stevens
9 School Street
Essex, MA 01929

June 13, 2017

Mrs. Stevens:

Thank you for registering to vote in Essex! I wanted to remind you of a few Essex-specific details. We are working on bolstering up our Town web site, so you can always check www.EssexMA.org or connect via Facebook to various local non-profit and government sponsored pages. We often place public notices in the local papers such as the Gloucester Daily Times, the Cape Ann Beacon or the Manchester Cricket.

We have a few parking areas that are designated for Resident Parking only. Those are at Centennial Grove, the public boat launch on Main Street ("Town Landing"), the center of the municipal lot off Shepard Memorial Drive, Water Street, Island Road and Conomo Point. Resident parking stickers are issued annually and can be picked up at Town Hall Monday through Thursday from 7:30am-3:30pm. There is no charge for these stickers; however you must bring your vehicle registration that shows the vehicle as being registered to an Essex address to qualify. If you have a lease or corporate owned car please provide a utility bill or something of the sort in your name to confirm residency. If you cannot make it to Town Hall during these hours this can be done by mail. Valid Transfer Station stickers may also be used as Resident Parking Stickers.

There is no formal leash law in Essex however we do require all dogs that are 6 months old and older be licensed and tagged. If your pet was registered in your previous community please bring in the information and we can transfer the license. Essex dog licenses expire March 31st of each year and spay/neutered fee is $15 and the fee for males/females is $24. Any animal control issues may be directed to the Essex Police Department's non-emergency line at 978-768-6628.

The Town of Essex runs their government via a Board of Selectmen and Open Town Meeting. Our Annual Town Meeting is the first Monday in May while the Town Election for local offices is the second Monday in May. Our Fall (Special) Town Meeting is the 2nd Monday prior to Thanksgiving, annually. Our Town Meetings are held at the Essex Elementary School, and our single polling location is at the Memorial Fire Station, 24 Martin Street. For more details or deadlines check out our Town Bylaws on our web site or contact Town Hall.

Enclosed you will find information regarding absentee voting. We hope all parties that are interested in participating in elections are given the opportunity. If you cannot make it to the polls on Election Day please see the attached information for Absentee Voting. Also, in order to maintain an "active" voting status, you must complete and return the "Annual Street Listing" which is mailed to every household in Essex in January or February of each year.

Lastly, the Town of Essex has a Winter Parking ban that is in effect December 1- April 1st of each year. During this ban no on street parking is allowed from midnight to dawn on all streets. There is one exception - Pickering Street – which allows for street parking during the Winter Ban on the odd numbered side of the street only.

Any other questions or anything I can do to help you become acclimated to the Town of Essex or Town government please do not hesitate to contact our office.

Warm Regards,

Christina J. St.Pierre
Town Clerk | Board of Registrars
Notary Public | Justice of the Peace

1. *Request Verification Badge.* Verification badges are typically displayed next to the page name. They reassure users that the page is a trustworthy source of information, according to Facebook's standards. Submit a verification request for the Town of Wellesley Facebook Page by following the on-screen instructions provided in Facebook's Help Center or by emailing your request to Facebook directly at gov@fb.com.

2. *Merge Official and Unofficial Pages.* Log into the Facebook account used to manage the Town of Wellesley Facebook Page. Go to the unverified Town of Wellesley Facebook Page. At the top of the page, in the bottom right corner of the cover photo, *click* on **Is this your business?**
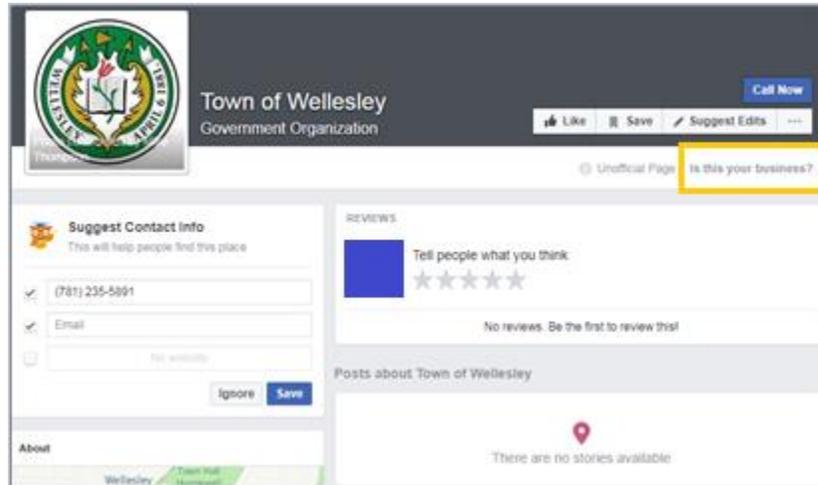
Facebook will ask if you have a verified page for the organization. Although it is not verified, Wellesley does have a Facebook Page so *select* the option to **Merge** and *click* **Continue**. Next, you will be prompted to **Choose a Page** to merge with. One you've *selected* the **Town of Wellesley** Page, *click* **Submit**. The request could take up to 72 hours to process.
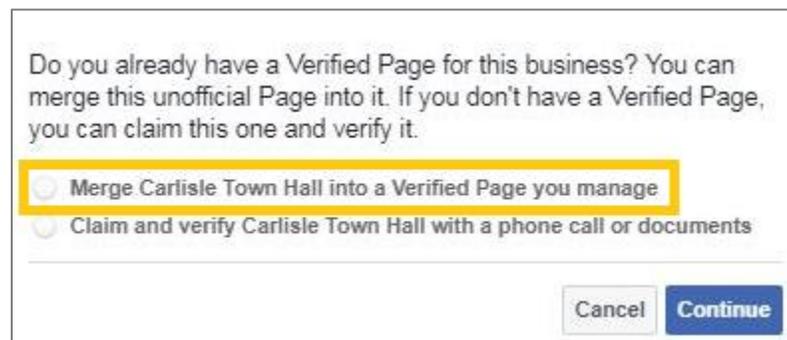
APPENDIX D – Verify Twitter Page

1. ***What you'll need.*** To submit a request for verification, the "Town of Wellesley" Twitter account must have the following information:

   - A verified phone number
   - A confirmed town email address
   - A brief biography about the organization.
   - A profile photo and header photo
   - A website
   - Tweets set to **public** in the account privacy settings

2. ***Submit Verification Form.*** Fill out and submit an Account Verification Form at: https://verification.twitter.com/welcome. To access the form, you must be logged in to your Twitter account.

3. ***Complete Validation***. Twitter will respond to your request via email and ask for additional information to validate the account, follow the remaining prompts to complete the validation process.

APPENDIX E – Social Media Popularity Chart – Demographic Data[13]

% of U.S. adults who use each social media platform

	Facebook	Instagram	Pinterest	LinkedIn	Twitter
Total	68%	28%	26%	25%	21%
Men	67%	23%	15%	28%	21%
Women	69%	32%	38%	23%	21%
Ages 18-29	88%	59%	36%	34%	36%
30-49	79%	31%	32%	31%	22%
50-64	61%	13%	24%	21%	18%
65+	36%	5%	9%	11%	6%
High school or less	56%	19%	18%	9%	14%
Some college	77%	35%	31%	25%	24%
College graduate	77%	32%	33%	49%	28%
Less than $30,000	65%	29%	23%	16%	18%
$30,000-$49,999	68%	27%	27%	11%	16%
$50,000-$74,999	70%	30%	29%	30%	26%
$75,000+	76%	30%	34%	45%	30%
Urban	70%	34%	26%	29%	22%
Suburban	68%	24%	29%	26%	21%
Rural	65%	25%	20%	15%	19%

Note: Race/ethnicity breaks not shown due to sample size.
Source: Survey conducted March 7-April 4, 2016.

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[13](January 12, 2016). Social Media Fact Sheet. *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved from
http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheet/social-media/

APPENDIX F – SMART Worksheet

Specific – Explain why the new technology solution is needed in your community, what purpose does it serve? If the goal is to automate an internal process or reach more citizens, describe how this would be accomplished.   *Response:*
Measurable – Does the proposed solution come with metrics? Will the data be quantitative, qualitative, or a combination of the two? Do you have an internal resource that can perform an analysis of the data you gather?   *Response:*
Attainable – Develop a sustainability plan for each technology solution you wish to pursue. Determine if your organization is financially prepared to support the new product or service long term.   *Response:*
Relevant – Ensure that the goal behind the project is aligned with community's mission; describe how this would be achieved.   *Response:*
Time-Bound – Set a soft deadline for your project and any relevant goals. (For example: Getting X number of citizens signed up for citizen request tool by January 2018)   *Response:*

APPENDIX G – Best Time to Post on Twitter and Facebook

facebook					
Source	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
HubSpot[14]			3pm – 4pm	1pm – 4pm	1pm - 4pm
TrackMaven[15]		Best Day of the Week			
Forbes[16]				1pm – 3pm	1pm – 3pm
Huffington Post[17]				1pm – 3pm	1pm – 3pm
Buffer[18]				1pm – 3pm	1pm – 3pm
Fast Company[19]	1pm – 4pm	1pm – 4pm	1pm – 4pm	1pm – 4pm	1pm – 4pm
QuickSprout[20]	1pm – 3pm	1pm – 3pm	1pm – 3pm	1pm – 3pm	1pm – 3pm

twitter					
Source	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
HubSpot[21]	12pm – 3pm	12pm – 3pm	12pm – 3pm	12pm – 3pm	12pm – 3pm
TrackMaven[22]		Best Day of the Week			
Huffington Post[23]	12pm	12pm	12pm	12pm	12pm
Fast Company[24]	1pm - 3pm	1pm – 3pm	1pm – 3pm	1pm – 3pm	12pm
QuickSprout[25]	12pm	12pm	12pm	12pm	12pm

[14] Kolowich, 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
[15] The 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
[16] Connor, 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/cherylsnappconner/2015/11/08/for-brands-and-pr-when-is-the-best-time-to-post-on-social-media/#6ed257d71779
[17] Pollard, C. (April 6, 2015). The Best Tines to Post on Social Media. *Huffington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.huffingtonpost.com/catriona-pollard/the-best-times-to-post-on_b_6990376.html
[18] Cooper, 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
[19] Gillet, 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
[20] Patel, 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
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.

APPENDIX H – Finding the Right Schedule for Social Media

In Appendix G, we've provided examples of posting schedules for Facebook and Twitter based on suggestions from 5 – 7 different sources. While these sources are intended to capture the complexity of user behavior on social media, many fail to take the following local factors into account:

- *Newsfeed Algorithms* - Above scheduling, 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 feeds[26].

- *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 concept 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 that 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 the type of audience you have will also help to define what success means for your social media accounts. 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 types of nuances must be incorporated into the long-term strategy. The examples in Appendix G should only be used as guidelines to help build an initial following on Facebook and Twitter. Once this has been achieved, consider enhancing your strategy by following the instructions below to create a custom posting schedule [27].

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[26]Hsiung, 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
[27]Lee, 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 picked at random, based on availability of resources, the tables in Appendix G, or a combination of the three.

2. *Schedule Tweets for each of these times* – To keep your data consistent, upload the same post to your social media at the 4 selected times.

3. *Examine your analytics to compare* – Once you've uploaded the post at the selected times, compare results. Analyze which timeslot resulted in 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.

APPENDIX I – Social Media Metrics

Facebook – One way Wellesley 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. *Log in* 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: http://www.facebook.com/help .

Twitter – Twitter Analytics, the social network's built-in analytics feature, allows page admins to track tweet activity, followers, and Twitter Cards[28]. By clicking into a tweet, admins can access details about the post including the number times it showed up in people's feeds. It can even highlight which part of the tweet received the most engagement (likes, retweets, etc.). To access the analytics dashboard for your page, complete the steps below.

Access the Analytics Dashboard for Your Page:

        2.*Log in* to analytics.twitter.com with your **username** and **password.**

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[28]Seiter, C. (September 2, 2014). The Everything Guide to Twitter Cards: How to Choose, Set Up, Measure Them and More. *Buffer Social*. Retrieved from https://blog.bufferapp.com/twitter-cards-guide

3. *Click* on **Tweets**.

Other – If you are looking to explore other social media analytics tools, you may find the following link useful: https://blog.bufferapp.com/social-media-analytics-tools

APPENDIX J – Facebook Basics and Best Practices

Background & Features – Facebook is a free social media platform where users can connect with one another online. With roughly 214 million active members in the U.S. and close to 2 billion members world-wide, Facebook is the most popular social network available today. Facebook's immediacy, popularity, and accessibility make it an efficient, effective, and economical tool for municipalities to engage with their constituents. With this platform, cities and towns can tap into their online community and distribute a wide variety of civic-related information, including but not limited to: job opportunities, press releases from council meetings, event invitations, and traffic notices. The social network is also available via mobile application, so users can read, post, or share information from almost any remote location that has internet connection.

Approximately 76% of American adults online, from various age groups *(shown below)*, are reportedly using Facebook daily to stay informed about local and global events[29]. By applying proper strategies and best practices, municipalities can take advantage of the network to direct their constituents to accurate, useful information.

Percentage of U.S. Users on Facebook (79% of Online Adults)	Age Group (68% of all Americans)
88%	18 – 29
84%	30 – 49
72%	50 – 64
62%	65+

Upon creating a Facebook account, users have access to a variety of engagement tools including a timeline, photo/video albums, event pages, an analytics dashboard, voting polls and surveys. Page visitors can interact with their municipality by commenting on or sharing a post, or by selecting from a range of "reaction" emojis. These features encourage two-way conversations and can help create an environment for municipalities to gauge public opinion around particular issues or initiatives.

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[29] Greenwood, 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/

Getting Started – To get started with using Facebook, go to www.facebook.com and create a personal account. This is a necessary step when establishing either a profile or page[30]. Once your account is setup, fill in the **About** section, to provide visitors with at-a-glance information about you or your organization. Adjust your page/timeline settings, privacy and notification preferences. Depending if you have a profile or a page, you can also assign page roles, to other people who will help manage your page. These individuals will need Facebook accounts as well. To learn more about this feature go to Facebook's Help Center. After following these guidelines, you can begin uploading content, as "posts", to your page or profile; which mainly consist of text, photos, videos, links, or a combination of those media.

Build Your Facebook Following – Facebook's Global Politics and Government Outreach Director, Katie Harbath, offers a few best practices to municipalities that wish to increase the effectiveness of their Facebook presence and maximize citizen engagement[31]. Her recommendations are as follows:

- *Create a Visually Oriented Layout:* Users are more likely to interact with Facebook pages and posts that contain images and graphics rather than links and texts. Cities and towns are advised to use strong images in their public outreach endeavors.

- *Upload Succinct Content:* Posts that are between 100 and 250 characters long get the most likes, comments, and shares on average. Users prefer text that is short, yet meaningful. Written content should contain a single idea, any additional information can be made available as a link.

- *Adorn Posts with Pictures and Videos:* Strong media such as video clips, pictures, and infographics complement the written text in Facebook posts and encourage more interaction from users.

- *Be Timely:* Tie posts to current events or holidays to grab your audience's attention and increase relevance.

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[30] Ramos, J. (June 9, 2014). Facebook Page vs Facebook Profile: Do You Know the Difference? *Hootsuite*. Retrieved from https://blog.hootsuite.com/facebook-page-vs-facebook-profile/
[31] Knell, N. (September 11, 2012). Cities Must Change Facebook Page Names, Or Else. *Government Technology*. Retrieved from http://www.govtech.com/e-government/Cities-Must-Change-Facebook-Page-Names-or-Else.html

- *Post Regularly:* Create a posting schedule for your team and stick to it. Regular, consistent uploads keep your content visible on Facebook news feeds.

- *Give your Followers Exclusive Access:* Provide a behind-the-scenes preview of government operations to your Facebook followers. Staff member FAQs and video/photo footage from council meetings are the types of content that followers don't often see. It helps them feel more connected to the organization's mission.

- *Post During Popular Hours:* Facebook users are most active between the hours of 9 p.m. and 10 p.m. Municipalities are encouraged to think about creating a posting schedule to maximize engagement opportunities and viewership of their content. If you haven't already, we've provided some information on how to get started, in Appendix H.

- *Encourage Engagement:* Create posts that encourage followers to provide input or take action. The [Facebook Questions](#) tool allows page admins to solicit valuable feedback from their followers by polling their audience. Posts can be phrased in a fun and engaging way, below are some examples of fill-in-the-blank statements municipalities can use today. Keep in mind that the results of these surveys will only represent a sample of the population and not the view of the entire community.

   - "When I attend town hall meetings I like to see _____"
   - "The new community garden should include _____"
   - "Next week's meeting should prioritize _____"
   - "'Like' if you would like to watch a live-stream of council meetings"
   - A funny picture with a "Caption this!" description.
   - "Like if you want a pool at the new community park. Share if you prefer tennis courts."

APPENDIX K – Twitter Basics & Best Practices

Twitter is a social network and micro-blog with roughly 68 million American active users[32] and over 328 million users worldwide. Page admins can upload messages, or 'tweets', to their site up to 140 characters at a time. Because of this character limitation, Twitter is often used by municipalities to distribute short, timely messages, such as traffic accidents or weather advisories. In a matter of seconds, users can reply to posts, or share them with a "re-tweet". Like Facebook, there is no registration fee requirement to create an account. The platform is available via mobile app, so users can read, tweet, or share content from almost anywhere depending on internet availability. Roughly 42% of Twitter users[33], from various age groups *(shown below)*[34], are reportedly using the site on a daily basis to stay informed about local and global events. By applying best practices, cities and towns can take advantage of the network to direct their constituents to accurate, useful information.

Percentage of U.S. Users on Twitter (24% of Online Adults)	Age Group (21% of all Americans)
36%	18 – 29
23%	30 – 49
21%	50 – 64
10%	65+

The Anatomy of a Tweet – Below is a brief overview of a basic tweet and its 6 main components[35].

1. *Tweet:* A message posted on Twitter can contain text, links, and visual media.

2. *Reply:* Allows you to leave a comment in response to a tweet.

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[32]Number of monthly active Twitter users in the United States from 1st quarter 2010 to 2nd quarter 2017 (in millions). *Statista*. Retrieved from https://www.statista.com/statistics/274564/monthly-active-twitter-users-in-the-united-states/
[33](January 12, 2016). Social Media Fact Sheet. *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved from http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheet/social-media/
[34]Greenwood, 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/
[35](2016). Intro to Twitter for Business. *Twitter + Research Now: Twitter for Business Study*. Retrieved from https://business.twitter.com/en/basics/intro-twitter-for-business.html

3. *Retweet:* Shares the post with your followers. Clicking the retweet icon once allows you to add a comment before retweeting a post, while clicking it twice allows you to share the tweet without changes.

4. *Like:* A positive reaction to a tweet. Twitter bookmarks all of the posts you like so you can review them again at any time.

5. *Hashtag:* This sign "#", when placed before a word or phrase, is used to identify messages of a specific topic. You can click on a hashtag and see all related content for that particular word or phrase.

6. *Mention:* Include another Twitter user in your tweet by adding "@" before their Twitter username (E.g. @MassLocalTech). Make sure there are no extra spaces lodged in between characters or the link will not become active.


Update Twitter Account Settings – To adjust your account settings, *click* on the P**rofile** icon, next to the **Compose a Tweet** button, and *select* **Settings and Privacy** from the drop-down menu. Several options will be displayed, including privacy and notification preferences.

Build Your Twitter Following – Twitter offers the following strategy for organizations that want to build their following around engagement and effective communication[36]:

- *Keep it Short:* Each tweet should be concise, focusing on a single topic. Include a link to more information if necessary.

- *Use Visuals:* Twitter claims that incorporating visual media in posts increases engagement. Users are three times more likely to interact with a tweet that has a video or image associated with the message.

- *Incorporate Relevant Hashtags:* Adding hashtags at the end of a tweet could potentially boost engagement and increase your following. Doing so pulls in other members of the Twitter community who may be interested your content. In the example below, the Town of Brookline incorporated a "#Brookline" hashtag in one of their tweets. Their tweet would appear in the list of search results for #Brookline, in addition to other relevant posts about the Town. Twitter recommends using no more than two hashtags per post, to effectively leverage the 140-character limitation.

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[36] What to Tweet: Create your Twitter content strategy. [Internal Data]. *Business Twitter.* Retrieved from https://business.twitter.com/en/basics/what-to-tweet.html
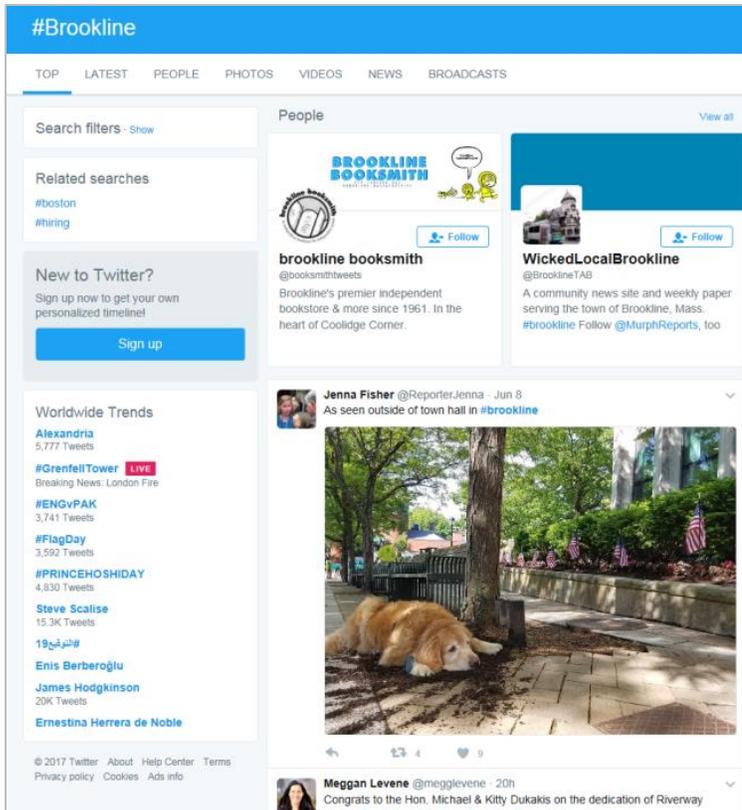
- *Ask Questions and Run Polls:* Twitter Polls is a built-in surveying tool that enables users vote on a particular topic. It displays the results of the poll in real time on your Twitter feed.

- *Connect with Retweets and Replies:* Be kind, responsive, and diligent when responding to followers. Good, quick customer service is a main ingredient when assembling a strong Twitter presence. Each interaction is an opportunity to demonstrate your organization's mission and principles. For longer or more difficult exchanges, continue the conversation privately over direct message.