
Town Website

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Subject : Town Website

To : Paul Santaniello <psantaniello@longmeadow.org>

Cc : Mark Gold <mgold@longmeadow.org>, Marie Angelides
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Paul,

I writing this email to you- the Longmeadow Select Board chairman...

I listened the "town website" discussion during the July 2 SB meeting and was disappointed that not much progress has been made toward its improvement.

I heard a wide range of options now being considered ranging from hiring a LHS student (or college intern) to improve the current website to a plan to start over and contract with a high end CMS (content management software) solution such as CivicPlus. It appears that the SB has no real idea as to how to fix the website.

From what I have seen, I consider Amherst's town website network to be one of the best in the state- Amherst employs the CivicPlus software for their websites.

To obtain more information about the Amherst's town website, I contacted Kristopher Pacusas, *Director of Information Technology for the Town of Amherst* in October 2010 and asked him a series of questions. Based upon this email interview I wrote a Longmeadow Buzz article ([Road Map to a New Website](#)). If you read this Buzz blog post, you will find that Amherst used a broad scope approach- CivicPlus developed the CMS software; Amherst IT people resources, town employees and volunteers maintain and update the website on a regular basis. You will see from Mr. Pacusas' answers that achieving this top benchmark status is not inexpensive- particularly with regard to committed people resources.

Going forward here is what I would recommend for Longmeadow....

1. **Continue using the WordPress CMS platform.**

Contrary to what Mr. Gold states... there are many companies and towns successfully using this system. In addition, there are many Word Press third party plug-ins that should allow the town to integrate additional functionality to the website. The Word Press CMS platform proposed by Website Taskforce Team was described as a "free" "out of the box" solution for the town website. As you have found out that is not true and it requires some additional development work.

Here is a link to the Dover, MA town [website](#) that utilizes the WordPress CMS for a pretty good solution.

2. You need to contract with an **experienced** person to coordinate, make changes/improvements to the WP software on a regular if not daily basis.
3. It would appear that additional training may be needed for some town employees who post on the website on a regular basis. The current West Nile Advisory that is posted on the homepage today is good example of why this may be necessary. There is no information attached to the posting.

I would also select town employees who are not dept. heads to post information and to maintain their department webpage since this activity needs to be done on a regular basis. In addition, timely posting of this information needs to be included as part of their job responsibilities. If necessary, a small stipend (\$500) could be added to their salaries as is done by the School Dept for the 6 designated school "webmasters".

4. There are a number of other Longmeadow web resources that should also be accessible from the Longmeadow.org homepage.

I recommend that the town integrate these other useful Longmeadow based web resources ([LongmeadowMA.org](#), [LongmeadowBiz.com](#), [www.facebook.com/longmeadowbiz](#)) into the homepage.

Read my latest Buzz [blog post](#) (**It's Time to Fix the Website**) for additional details.

I would be interested to discuss this subject further with the Select Board at a future meeting.

Sincerely,
Jim Moran
48 Avondale Road
Longmeadow, MA
