

Longmeadow

Web site team seeks freedom

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LONGMEADOW - The town's Web site team wants new owners.

Partly in response to recent problems over a School Committee posting, volunteers who have spent a year and a half designing and maintaining www.longmeadow.org formally presented selectmen with their proposal to take the operation out of the hands of the town government.

Volunteer Mark P. Gold told selectmen Monday that the group would like to start a non-profit organization called Longmeadow Community Website Inc., funded by private contributions and run by a board of directors that includes one member selected by selectmen.

An important aspect of the request is that the group be allowed to take the domain name with it.

Selectmen asked for more time to consider the issue. "Traditionally, when volunteers do work

for the town, they don't walk away with the product," Selectman Arlene C. Miller said.

Although run mainly by volunteer residents, the Web site's connection fees are paid for by the town. In recent months, selectmen have raised questions about the legality of posting what they consider position papers by groups supporting the school renovation project. State laws prohibit use of town resources to lobby voters before an election.

But the volunteers have said that their goal is to be a true community Web site, offering information from a wide range of groups.

"We believe that this proposal results in a structure that more than meets the original mission statement of the formation of a community Web site," Gold said. "It strengthens it through the partnership that is created between a private organization, the elected community leadership and town departments."

Pat Krusko, the town's information technology coordinator, said at the meeting that she feels the town should maintain an official Web site. She said she is looking into whether Longmeadow could have an official Web site with a state address.