

WINCHESTER TOWN MEETING
COMMUNICATIONS STUDY COMMITTEE
PUBLIC LISTENING SESSION SCRIPT

APRIL 13, 2022

>> *SLIDE: PUBLIC LISTENING SESSION...*

GOOD AFTERNOON AND WELCOME TO THE COMMUNICATIONS STUDY COMMITTEE'S PUBLIC LISTENING SESSION.

I'M LANCE GRENZEBACK. I SERVE AS CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE. THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE — ALL VOLUNTEERS—ARE LISTED ON THE SCREEN.

WE ARE RUNNING A HYBRID MEETING TO ENCOURAGE AS MUCH PARTICIPATION AS POSSIBLE. SO, LET ME START BY WELCOMING ALL OF YOU IN THE AUDITORIUM AND THOSE OF YOU JOINING US REMOTELY BY ZOOM. THE COMMUNICATION LINKS ARE WORKING, SO A SPECIAL THANKS TO SHUKONG OU FOR HIS TECHNICAL EXPERTISE.

I WILL BEGIN WITH A SHORT PRESENTATION ABOUT THE COMMITTEE'S PURPOSE AND ITS KEY FINDINGS TO DATE. I WILL THEN OPEN THE FLOOR TO COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS. WE WILL TAKE COMMENTS FROM THOSE IN THE AUDITORIUM AS WELL AS FROM THOSE ATTENDING REMOTELY OVER ZOOM.

>> *SLIDE: COMMITTEE EMAIL ADDRESS*

WE WILL TRY TO ACCOMMODATE EVERYONE WHO HAS QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS, BUT IF YOUR ZOOM LINK FAILS OR YOU THINK OF SOMETHING AFTER THE SESSION, YOU CAN SEND US YOUR COMMENTS BY EMAIL OR THROUGH THE COMMITTEE'S WEBPAGE. THE ADDRESSES FOR BOTH ARE ON THE SCREEN. WE WILL SHOW THIS SLIDE AGAIN AT THE END OF THE SESSION.

>> *SLIDE: 3 PICS – TOWN BOARDS...*

LET'S BEGIN.

WHY THE COMMUNICATIONS STUDY COMMITTEE?

BECAUSE OUR TOWN MEETING FORM OF GOVERNMENT DEPENDS ON A WELL-INFORMED CITIZENRY, BUT OUR COMMUNICATIONS ENVIRONMENT AND THE MEDIA LANDSCAPE HAVE CHANGED DRAMATICALLY. THE WINCHESTER STAR OF OLD HAS FADED AWAY AND BEEN REPLACED BY A KALEIDOSCOPE OF INTERNET WEB SITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS.

THESE CHANGES HAVE AFFECTED HOW WE LEARN ABOUT THE WORK OF OUR TOWN BOARDS AND THE DECISIONS OF OUR TOWN MEETING. AT ISSUE IS WHETHER WE ARE ADAPTING OUR COMMUNICATION PRACTICES TO THESE CHANGES.

THE 2021 FALL TOWN MEETING CREATED THE COMMUNICATIONS STUDY COMMITTEE. TOWN MEETING TASKED US WITH RECOMMENDING WAYS TO ESTABLISH MORE ROBUST AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS AMONG TOWN BOARDS, TOWN MEETING AND TOWN RESIDENTS.

THIS AFTERNOON AND AGAIN AT 700PM THIS EVENING, WE WILL BE SUMMARIZING THE KEY ISSUES THAT WE HAVE IDENTIFIED TO DATE. WE WILL REPORT OUR FINDINGS TO SPRING TOWN MEETING, WHICH BEGINS ON APRIL 25TH. WE WILL THEN BRING OUR RECOMMENDED ACTIONS TO THE FALL TOWN MEETING THIS NOVEMBER.

IN OUR SURVEYS AND INTERVIEWS TO DATE, WE ARE HEARING THAT THE TOWN'S COMMUNICATIONS NEED IMPROVEMENT. RESIDENTS, BOARD MEMBERS AND TOWN MEETING MEMBERS ARE TELLING US THEY FIND IT DIFFICULT AND OFTEN FRUSTRATING TO GET TIMELY AND ACCURATE INFORMATION.

>> *SLIDE: POOR COMMUNICATIONS ...*

THEY ARE TELLING US THAT IT IS IMPORTANT TO TAKE ACTION BECAUSE POOR COMMUNICATIONS IMPACT —

- TOWN MEETING BY —
 - INCREASING THE TIME REQUIRED TO UNDERSTAND AND DEBATE ISSUES AND BUDGETS, AND
 - INCREASING THE RISK OF MAKING COSTLY AND INEFFECTIVE DECISIONS.

>> *SLIDE: TOWN GOVERNMENT ...*

- TOWN GOVERNMENT BY —
 - INCREASING STAFF COSTS AND VOLUNTEER BOARD TIME,
AND
 - REDUCING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TOWN SERVICES.

>> *SLIDE: PUBLIC ...*

- RESIDENTS BY —
 - ERODING TRUST AND DISCOURAGING PARTICIPATION IN
TOWN GOVERNMENT, AND
 - REDUCING VOTER TURNOUT IN TOWN ELECTIONS.

>> *SLIDE: RESIDENTS ...*

MORE SPECIFICALLY, **RESIDENTS** ARE TELLING US—

- IT IS HARD TO FIND TOWN INFORMATION.
- THE TOWN WEBSITE IS DIFFICULT TO NAVIGATE, THE CONTENT IS INCOMPLETE AND OUT OF DATE, AND THE SEARCH FUNCTION DOESN'T WORK. WHILE THE RECENT OVERHAUL WAS A POSITIVE STEP, MORE WORK IS NEEDED.
- THE TOWN DOES NOT SEND OUT SUCCINCT AND TIMELY BLURBS ON EMERGING ISSUES.
- IT IS PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT TO FOLLOW ISSUES ACROSS OUR 7 ELECTED BOARDS, 17 DEPARTMENTS, AND SOME 40 APPOINTED COMMISSIONS AND COMMITTEES. MOST MEETING NOTICES AND MANY AGENDAS ARE TOO CRYPTIC.

- TOWN COMMUNICATIONS ARE NOT REACHING MANY RESIDENTS AND CONSTITUENT GROUPS, ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO DON'T REGULARLY USE FACEBOOK OR TWITTER, VISIT THE TOWN'S WEBSITES, WATCH WINCAM, OR SUBSCRIBE TO THE LOCAL NEWSPAPERS. EVEN AMONG THOSE WHO USE SOCIAL MEDIA, AUDIENCE SHARES ARE LOW.

>> *SLIDE: TMMS ...*

TOWN MEETING MEMBERS ARE TELLING US —

- MEMBERS, ESPECIALLY NEW TOWN MEETING MEMBERS, NEED MORE INFORMATION ON HOW TOWN GOVERNMENT WORKS.
- MUCH OF THE INFORMATION PROVIDED TO TOWN MEETING MEMBERS—ANNUAL REPORTS, MOTION BOOKS AND BOARD PRESENTATIONS — IS EITHER TOO MUCH OR TOO LITTLE, AND OFTEN ARRIVES TOO LATE TO SUPPORT WELL-INFORMED DEBATE.
- ARTICLES FREQUENTLY LACK CONTEXT AND UNDERSTANDABLE FINANCIAL IMPACT INFORMATION, AND
- THERE IS NO ESTABLISHED GUIDANCE ON COMMUNICATION AMONG TOWN MEETING MEMBERS OR WITH PRECINCT CONSTITUENTS.

>> *SLIDE: TM SURVEY CHARTS*

WE SURVEYED 2021 TOWN MEETING MEMBERS—71 PERCENT RESPONDED. WE ASKED MEMBERS TO RATE COMMUNICATIONS —

- BETWEEN TOWN GOVERNMENT AND TOWN MEETING

- WITHIN TOWN MEETING, AND
- BETWEEN TOWN MEETING AND PRECINCT CONSTITUENTS.

COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN TOWN GOVERNMENT AND TOWN MEETING GOT AN AVERAGE RATING OF 3; THE OTHER COMMUNICATIONS —WITHIN TOWN MEETING AND WITH PRECINCT CONSTITUENTS—GOT LOWER MARKS.

>> *SLIDE: TOWN BOARDS ...*

FINALLY, THE **TOWN BOARDS** ARE TELLING US —

- FEW HAVE FORMAL COMMUNICATION PLANS—MOST RELY ON INFORMAL PERSON-TO-PERSON DISCUSSIONS.
- THEY HAVE VERY LIMITED VOLUNTEER TIME AND EVEN LESS STAFF TIME FOR COMMUNICATIONS, AND
- IT IS DIFFICULT TO COMMUNICATE AMONG BOARDS AND COMMITTEES— EACH WORKS WITHIN ITS OWN SILO.

>> *SLIDE: BALANCE...*

THE COMMITTEE'S NEXT PHASE OF WORK WILL FOCUS ON IDENTIFYING COST-EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS TO THESE ISSUES WHILE BALANCING THE NEEDS OF TOWN BOARDS, TOWN MEETING AND TOWN RESIDENTS.

WE WILL NOT BE STARTING FROM SCRATCH.

- WE SPEND MONEY NOW TO MAINTAIN OUR WEBSITES, DISTRIBUTE EMAIL, POST LEGAL NOTICES, PRINT AND MAIL REPORTS, AND SO ON.

- WE WILL BE LOOKING FOR THE MOST COST-EFFECTIVE USE OF THESE EXISTING FUNDS.
- THE TOWN OPERATES SEVEN WEBSITES, HAS SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS ON FACEBOOK AND TWITTER, AND HAS IMPLEMENTED A REVERSE-911 CALL SYSTEM.
 - WE WILL BE LOOKING AT OPPORTUNITIES TO LEVERAGE THESE PLATFORMS TO BETTER REACH OUR MULTIPLE TOWN CONSTITUENCIES.
- THE TOWN PRODUCES EXTENSIVE DATA ON ITS BUDGET AND OPERATIONS, PROVIDES ANNUAL REPORTS TO TOWN MEETING, AND MAKES PERIODIC MAILINGS TO RESIDENTS.
 - WE WILL BE LOOKING AT OPPORTUNITIES TO RECONFIGURE THIS INFORMATION FOR EASIER ACCESS, COMPREHENSION AND DISTRIBUTION.
- AND, WE CAN LEARN FROM OTHERS.
 - WE WILL BE LOOKING AT BEST PRACTICES IN COMPARABLE TOWNS.

>> SLIDE: PICS... COMMITTEE EMAIL ADDRESS

WE WILL BE WORKING ON OUR RECOMMENDED ACTIONS BETWEEN NOW AND FALL TOWN MEETING. IF YOU HAVE SUGGESTIONS, WE'D LIKE TO HEAR THEM—WHETHER TODAY OR LATER BY EMAIL.

THAT IS A QUICK SUMMARY OF THE COMMITTEE'S PURPOSE AND ITS FINDINGS TO DATE.

I'LL NOW OPEN THE FLOOR FOR COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS.

I'D ASK THOSE OF YOU HERE IN THE AUDITORIUM TO COME TO THE MICROPHONE WHEN I RECOGNIZE YOU SO THAT THE PEOPLE ATTENDING REMOTELY CAN HEAR YOU.

IF YOU ARE ON ZOOM, PLEASE CLICK THE "RAISE HAND" ICON AT THE BOTTOM OF YOUR ZOOM SCREEN. IF THE "RAISE HAND" BUTTON ISN'T SHOWING ON YOUR SCREEN, TRY CLICKING ON THE "REACTIONS" ICON OR SEND US NOTE USING THE "CHAT" BUTTON.

BEFORE YOU ASK YOUR QUESTION OR MAKE YOUR COMMENT, PLEASE LET US KNOW YOUR NAME.

THANK YOU.