

Addendum to Communications Committee end of year report 2005

The Committee, (Craig Belt, Jeff Pahl, Rebecca Spitler, Robin Sansone and myself) met again on Monday December 5th, largely to feedback on the web site.

Firstly it was noted that Traxx.com had added some additional features to the web site for no added cost, which we were very pleased with. The main one was the addition of RSS feed (Real Simple Syndication) for notification of updates to the web site in a different way that is becoming very popular with the technically savvy crowd. For more information about the RSS feed, see 'Web site features' in the About' menu'.

There is now the capability to add the mp3 file of the council meeting to the site as a 'podcast'. We are not sure how many citizens will take advantage of downloading the audio file however, but we will be able to see this, and review it at a later date. So far, I have only added a few council meetings to the site, as the files are very large and will take up a lot of the space allocated to the site. We can probably keep up to a dozen files available should council like to do as many as that. Please let us know what you think.

None of the above was any additional cost to the city as it is all 'open source' additions and therefore free.

We discussed having an additional person from the group to have full access as an Administrator to enable them to access the 'backend' of the web site, to make changes when the clerk is unable to do so. Jeff Pahl volunteered to do this. So far, only the Mayor, Claire and Jackie add content to the site, and both the Mayor and Claire do not access the highest level. However, the Mayor has all the passwords required to access this area should there be a need. While the site is still in its infancy, we recommend that this should continue to be this way.

The search engine on the site is very fast, however the committee had received requests to be able to narrow the field of search just to 'minutes' or 'ordinances' for example. This may be possible as it stands, but there needs to be more instructions to do that, or the search engine needs to be upgraded. We have therefore asked traxx.com to investigate this.

One council member has asked if contact email address for council should be available on the web site. Most email addresses put in through 'mambo' are automatically scrambled, preventing site readers, so it is possible to do that, however we would like to ask council to discuss this and let us know what you would like to do.

We had also been asked again to consider how council discussion could be made available to the public, and having discussed this with traxx.com, it would be a simple free addition. Council would be able to comment on any 'reports' posted in the Quick Links section. Then comments would be able to be read by everyone but only added to by those given permission to do so. Please let me know if you would like to pursue this, and feel free to ask any questions about how this would be set up.

Lastly in terms of next year, the committee would like to recommend the clerk updates the 'Directory and Handbook' as soon as possible, so new council members and residents would be in there. There is money in the budget to do that.

We would also like to think about the Mayors message or City newsletter, and make some recommendations on the format, as well as options for residents to opt to receive it in a different format.

Lastly, as we had also mentioned before, we would like to investigate Municipal Wi-fi for the City, and Frank Lombardi has offered to join the committee to work with on this area.

Jackie Wall
City Clerk/Communications Committee Chair
December 15th, 2005.