

CITY OF BURTON
PUBLIC ACCESS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 12, 2010, 4:00 P.M., COUNCIL CHAMBERS
www.burtonmi.us

The Meeting is called to order by Chairman Danny Wells at 4:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Wells, Smith, Martinbianco and Heffner.

MEMBERS ABSENT: None.

OTHERS PRESENT: Fire Chief D. Halstead, M. Udell, IT Director, and
J. Adams, Deputy City Clerk.

**PURPOSE OF THE MEETING: Discussion relative to organization of the Public Access
Committee**

PRESENTATION:

Mr. Wells said he believes the purpose of this committee is to promote open government and get residents informed and involved in their city government, and promote our city for future growth both residentially and commercially. He would like some goals done before the next meeting and we can talk on those and add or subtract from them.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION: None.

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION:

Mr. Martinbianco stated the Council President is here to give a brief summary on his ideas for the Committee.

Mr. Udell presented the Committee with his notes on the City's website.

Mr. Heffner spoke on the following items he would like to see the Committee address: A link to every department, paying bills through the website, a link to Council with e-mails and a bio page, a kids page with the history of Burton and links to games, a link to the seven different school districts, as well as the County, State and elected officials. A self-help page to show the Help Wanted jobs, stores where residents can get decent prices on food, help with their mortgages and a link to MSHDA. Mr. Heffner stated further, he would like to see the City Charter on the website, Council meetings video-taped and put back on the public access channel. Once the website is up and running, he would like to have Council meetings on the website where people can watch them at their leisure.

Mr. Wells expressed that it is important to have a link to the city ordinances. He would like to see meeting minutes including a DVD of video-taped meetings, Administration and City Council information including pictures, bio's, contact information and e-mail capability through the City's computers so that Council can interact with their home computers. We would have a password to get into our e-mail that comes into the city instead of the e-mail going to home addresses.

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Mr. Wells stated further, he would like to see a link to properties the city owes including a minimum bid requirement and procedures on bidding; a link to all Burton schools including charter schools, a link to all Burton businesses, or to at least those that want to be on there.

Mr. Udell expressed it could become cumbersome if you get too many links to individual businesses. The more content we put on the site, the bigger it gets on how much space it takes up on servers. We are limited right now to 200 gigabytes of drive space and we are running low. If we go over that amount, we will be charged more money. Links are very easy to do.

Mr. Wells said service groups such as the Rotary, Eagles and Chamber of Commerce are very important to have on there as well as the Burton churches, Pastoral Association and Parks & Recreation. Some will have to be upgraded on a weekly basis but most of it won't. As far as the Council Meetings, he thinks the Clerk's office would update on a meeting-by-meeting basis.

Mr. Udell said due to lack of training he did handle that, and then one individual was trained and set up links to the minutes and even learned a bit of coding. Then that person got transferred, so now we are doing it all over again with the Clerk's office. They do about 60% of it and I do the remaining 40%. Soon they will be doing it all.

Mr. Martinbianco referenced a website from Troy, Michigan and one from Lewistown, Maine that he reviewed. He was impressed with their links and the information available that most taxpayers want to know about their community. The Committee needs to look at where we are at right now, the features currently in place, the ones we want to keep and get rid of, and then expand the system to other links we are going to need. Mr. Martinbianco mentioned the ability for residents to pay taxes and water and sewer bills on-line, links to building and electrical permits, links to the State, bringing Comcast in to video-tape Council Meetings and how social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook can bring a community together and share information. He suggested building on those aspects, given some of the things that MML and National League of Cities brings us, find out those communities that are successful with the sites they run, what it costs them, and then we will go from there.

Mr. Wells said Eastpointe is hosting the MML Region I Meeting in February or March. He suggests the Committee go to check out their system. The City Manager is also the IT person, and he programs into the computer their meetings. Cameras are positioned on City Council, the podium and various areas. It is downloaded immediately onto a DVD. A copy goes to the library, one to the Mayor and one to the IT office. You don't have to worry about Comcast coming in. If we can do it in-house, it is much more cost effective. Mr. Wells referenced My Space, Twitter and Facebook. He suggests if an Administrator or Councilperson wants to do that, he would not open that up to the City. You are opening it up to some real issues and possibly Open Meeting Act violations.

Mr. Udell said he is not opposed to social networking, but if a Council member has a Facebook page, a link could be made to that page from his Council page, and a disclaimer added that states you are leaving the City of Burton's website and what happens on this page is not an opinion of the whole City.

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Mr. Smith asked if the website has a counter that marks visitors and the pages they go to.

Mr. Udell said there is a counter on the home page but he does not know how accurate it is. Coracom hosts the website and through some software he has, he can download the daily log files, get page counts, times of the days, days of the week, and so forth. Mr. Udell acknowledged that he did not create the website.

Mr. Smith asked if they could have information as to what the public is using the website for, and what the communities find relevant before the Committee's next meeting. Mr. Smith asked if due to fiscal constraints, could anything be implemented at this time without expense.

Mr. Udell stated if we stay with the current website, we could add a Council page with minimal expense. Some of the things discussed today are already in place or in the process. There are pages for each department but the problem is getting content on those pages. What do we want to put there? The idea was that the department would put their own content on them. Paying bills on-line is in process right now. There is a link on the website to BS & A Software to look at utility bills.

Discussion continued regarding paying bills with credit cards and ACH payments. Mr. Smith inquired regarding direct deposit and spoke briefly on Grand Blanc Township's procedures of having residents fill out a form that authorizes taking payments from savings and/or checking accounts. Mr. Udell said he can speak to Grand Blanc Township's IT person on what it entails as far as the technology side of it. He thinks it is more in the domain of the Controller's office with the bank accounts and so forth to receive those funds.

Mr. Udell said he has 2 partial proposals; one verbal and one written. Both were around \$15,000 to \$25,000 for a complete new website, depending on what you want to do with it. We pay \$200 or maybe a little more a year for Coracom to host the website. If you add more content, they will increase their fee. We looked at a content management system.

Mr. Wells expressed that public access also means getting seniors out to the Council meetings. He talked to a gentleman at MTA that is willing to work something out to get seniors here and back every other Monday night. He knows that computer technology is a lot of public access, but also getting out into the community to spread the word is important.

Chief Halstead stated he has a www.burtonfire.org website. He stressed the importance of the City's website so people will know about our City, and for people to say this is the place where I want to live.

Mr. Wells said he was on the MML and NLC websites and there are grants available for new technologies. The city needs a grant writer that is available, whether it is someone at the County or someone that can work on a contingency basis. He believes quite a bit of this can be paid through some grants.

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Mr. Martinbianco stated we have a grant writer on staff. Years ago the job was combined with purchasing agent and grant writing.

Mr. Wells said there is a lady at the County who mentioned before they would help us with grants. There are grant writers that work on a contingency basis. We could discuss this in a Legislative or Finance meeting.

Mr. Wells spoke further regarding DPW Permits. He suggested a possible link called "Ask Strasser" for residents with building code problems or wanting to build a shed. They can go on that website and Mr. Strasser could get back with them. It would save residents a lot of time.

Mr. Martinbianco stated residents may want to learn about the Council people and could read their bio and the bio on the Mayor. They may want to know what our Fire and Police Departments does and their responsibilities as to response time. Regarding ADA compliance, the more public access we encourage is important. He knows computers at Burton Memorial Library are used a lot. We may want to set up 4 or 5 stations at City Hall.

Mr. Martinbianco asked if there are further obligations from an ADA standpoint as to what we committed to and provided. In making equal and open access through the Internet, is there something additional to make that provision.

Mr. Udell said he is not aware of any additional stations, and/or obligations.

Chief Halstead referenced SPUD software and possibly talking to them. They do this for a lot of different people. It is not as complicated as we think it is. He suggested creating a priorities list and tackling a. first, b. second, c. third, and then at some point, review what you have done and talk it over with the IT, department heads and Council. Then re-evaluate whether it is working. Chief Halstead also suggested looking at unique hits from people out of town.

Discussion ensued concerning bringing people and businesses to Burton. Chief Halstead expressed that the I-69 corridor has only one restaurant close by. A Cracker Barrel Restaurant would be an ideal location to bring into Burton and Belsay Road would be very appealing. Kelly Lake is an attractive park and we have a lot to offer.

Mr. Wells stated we have had a lot of good input in the meeting today. He doesn't think public access just means computers. It is also getting out into the City. He mentioned the senior centers having their own website.

Chief Halstead stated Elga Credit Union collected school supplies for kids going back to school and that could have been on the website as well as Back-to-the-Bricks and the Gus Macker.

Mr. Udell said in looking at most of the items on the list, he can implement them immediately on our existing website. Comcast use to provide training to volunteers for the use of their cameras and editing board. He doesn't think their editing room on Torrey Road is open any more.

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Mr. Udell expressed further he feels the kind of networking in the Committee meeting today is what we need to do to get this going. Lack of training and communication is the reason some things have not been put on the website.

Mr. Martinbianco said the audit session is in a couple of weeks. The budget is coming up and some of the training things have not been taken advantage of in past budgets.

Mr. Wells briefly summarized items that were discussed. Mr. Smith said he is retired and has the desire to help in any way. A timetable of 2 to 3 weeks was suggested for Mr. Udell to implement what he can, and to look into further the other items discussed. Mr. Wells said the Committee could meet again on February 16th or 17th and hopefully, they can work out a visit to Eastpointe. He thanked everyone for their input.

Meeting adjourned at 5:40 p.m.

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