

## ComCom 2005-07-06 Minutes

*Called to Order 8:04pm*

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Attending: Alan Thompson (*chair*), Benjamin Sterling, Roland Walker, CM Gerard Kiernan, Lt. Pat Timmons, Chief Tom Parker, Bill Carr, Rob Oppenheim, Sgt. Patrick Vitchock, Lawrence Gyger, Drena J. Galarza, Jack R. Jones, CM Lawrence Taylor, J. Toscano, Mayor Vernon Archer

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Vernon Archer: What I would like you to do:

Substantial Resources -

- \* The Town Crier has made good gains with Rob. Rob is expecting even more.
- \* TV broadcasts town meetings, but sound needs improvement, also displays text information (rotating boards). Need to use this resource better.
- \* Web site was set up years ago with Alan Thompson's help. Alan is now overwhelmed, information on the site needs to be updated
- \* Police have no real presence on any media: they need more exposure.
- \* Unification of media.

*(arrival of more interested citizens)*

\* Broad vision: TV, Crier, email lists, Web integrated, take advantage of strengths of each. All of these are maintained by town government, maximize ability of citizens to communicate with town as well. Mayor Archer plans to stand back from process, make sure understand his request for our mission. Please make recommendations for Mayor Archer to bring to Council (e.g. review crier ordinance, web site ordinance?, TV ordinance?). Expects that changes to law should be relatively minor -- will mostly be practice and policy.

Gerard Kiernan: Financing this is an issue. The town needs to hire IT professionals. We need to figure out how to afford suggestions from the Communications Committee.

Vernon Archer: \$1k/yr for web in past years, \$5k this year. Other sources of money available if necessary. The Town Crier got a decent boost, but not as much.

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## Introductions

- \* Alan Thompson: Married 19 years, 2 children. At inception of web site, maintained for years, worked on lots of other town activities, DBA for Archer campaign.
- \* Benjamin Sterling: SYColeman/Army contractor part of army.mil, freelance web development

work since 1999. Will start school at University of Maryland this fall.

\* Roland Walker: Riverdale Park resident for five years; lives in Ward 1. Town activities small until recently. Programmer/researcher, reluctant web developer.

\* Gerard Kiernan: Moved to Riverdale in 1970. Member of the Town Council from 1991 to 1999. Transit District Overlay Zone Committee/Town Vision Committee/Mixed Use Town Center Zoning Committee/.../Recreation Board/Town History Book co-author. Photographer for Town Crier in the past. Physics/Electrical Engineer in college/graduate school. Has taught classes. Writes long technical documents.

\* Lt. Pat Timmons: Has been with the Police Department 15 years. Maintain crime stats. Grew up around here.

\* Chief Tom Parker: Police officer for 25 years (come December). Currently serve PGCO Police Chiefs member at large. The police department would like an interesting, interactive web site. Messages, blotter, crime bulletin, stats, media relations section, accidents, crime prevention related publicity, would like to be able to answer common questions (how to pay ticket, red light camera issues, false alarms) Would also like links to other web sites (Maryland State Police web site, sex offender registry...). Want people to come back to look at police department web site as well. Staff recruiting info would be nice. Need general IT upgrade, would appreciate help.

Rob Oppenheim: Will police staff be able to work on this?

Chief Parker: Only one records person, she can probably put "Crime of the Day" in it (CrimeStar database).

Gerard Kiernan: Require physical separation for many computers (not connected to internet) in Police Department to satisfy laws or at least moral obligations to keep sensitive information private. Network internal to town.

Chief Parker: I have some design ideas for web site. Will communicate with committee in future.

\* Bill Carr: newest resident, wife & two greyhounds very recently (October 2004). Likes walkable community. IT Consulting in Fortune 500, State & Local, semi-retired these days. Worked in education before IT Consulting. Raised in NY, Greenville SC. Lived in Fairfax, VA, for a while, likes MD better.

\* Rob Oppenheim: Town Crier editor. Moved to Riverdale Park in 1975. Worked on Town Crier in 1989-1992, not too active since then, took up Town Crier again 3 issues ago. In and out of politics for a long time. Primarily computer programmer. Helped build communications center for Red Cross.

\* Pat Vitchock: Part time detective, somewhat full time computer geek at Police Department. No formal training in information technology. Trial and error, learned from brother in network world. Will work with Chief / Lt. Timmons on content.

\* Lawrence Taylor: Council Member for Ward 4, second term. Coming up on 30th wedding anniversary, youngest child about to go to grad school. One small dog. Com background: 31 years with LAN Verizon, most advanced thing installing T1/T3, ISDN circuits. Wants to tie

town together, sees this as a good way to do it.

\* Lawrence Gyger: graduate student, University of Maryland, Mechanical Engineer, Web development, here as concerned citizen.

\* Drina J. Galarza: Kindergarten teacher, looking to help out with Town stuff, worked with Rob

\* Jack R. Jones: Moved to town in October, 1975. Two children, active in Boys & Girls Club, home schools children, worked with Citizens for Open Government, PRIDE. Media experience is mostly italic pen and parchment. Dabbles in design. Struggles with email.

## Reports

(Alan Thompson) **email lists**: RP Announce, RP ComTalk, RP Chat (not yet in existence). Running fine, membership climbing.

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(Roland Walker) **Cable Channel**: Old character generator, seldom updated (Thanksgiving hours, leaf collection currently on screen). Suggests throwing out, replacing with something new. Anything that spits out COAX signal fine. Wants to make fresher, easy integration with staff. (No cable station in Madison Hill). Audio at council meetings. Convert to digital for what's recorded.

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(Alan Thompson) **Web Site**: Userland Frontier at onset, stuck at early version by cost of upgrading. Worked on migration to WML (thewml.org). Site was not (significantly) updated during migration development.

Ben Sterling: Uses Dreamweaver for design, hard codes html (php does much rendering work).

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(Rob Oppenheim) **Town Crier**: Approach is to produce lively, timely, interesting read, wants more authors, etc. In past, problem with volunteer burnout. Wrote a lot of the first two issues. Two stories from others in most recent issues. Has high standards, people not completely happy with changes. How transition to Town Staff, extremely part-time? Camera ready copy to printer. Has lead on cheaper guy, but not much cheaper. Looking at full color capabilities, but unlikely.

Bill Carr: Ads in Town Crier?

Gerard Kiernan: Yes, standard rates.

Rob Oppenheim: Running advertisements is bottom of his priority list as editor of Town Crier.

Gerard Kiernan: Free ad with new businesses, more or less at cost after that (rates supposed to be set by Town Council).

Roland Walker: The farmer's market committee ad was spiked, this was not a good thing to do.

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(Alan Thompson) **Town staff packets:** Everyone should read off-line, discuss over e-mail, need to keep moving tonight.

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(Roland Walker) **Unification:** Elegant, simple, improve things. Unify to save time. Better content. Unification all media draw data from the same source. Web site basis of content. News page in blog format. Suggests news page on front. News timely, but overlaps content. (Picture of Web->Editor->Town Crier, Web->TV (via RSS)). Roland volunteers to mock up RSS->TV links (Gerard Kiernan wants in Spanish too). Might need to change Code (Alan Thompson says probably not). Stories timely, Crier scoops up stories for publication.

Rob Oppenheim: Wants keywords instead of tinyurls

Roland Walker: tinyurl.com security risk

Gerard Kiernan: Have links on electronic version only

JT: abc4.com known, links in elec version only, easy to remember

Alan Thompson: Try to get town's own tinyurl server up with keywords before next Crier

## **Action Items**

**Goals:** Update everything, hand off maintenance to town staff.

Roland Walker: wants to make Alan Thompson obsolete. Alan Thompson should move on to bigger items. Alan Thompson thanked RW for kind words.

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**Mission statement:**

Topics to include: (Specify media outlets). Integrate. Update/modernize media outlets. Long term viability. Inform citizens, facilitate communications between citizens and town government, Funnel citizen comments to government back to citizens. Build community through communications. Alan Thompson promised to work on better wording.

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Rob Oppenheim: Random thought: phone bank to town meetings?

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**Split into subcommittees?** Committee will stay together for the moment -- no subcommittees -- single topic meetings better than general.

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**Schedule:** Mayor Archer would like us to complete by winter. Web site seen as being on critical path because of position on Roland's pyramid.

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**[RP ComTalk] e-mail list:** Many people feel overwhelmed by e-mails, other people want e-mail interface so don't have to remember to visit forum site. Decided to set up trial forum on Ben's website, discuss (over email) moving the forum to riverdale-park.org if people who prefer e-mail happy with forum-email mirroring interface.

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**Other topics discussed:** Moving town from ci.riverdale-park.md.us to riverdale-park.org as main domain (discussion postponed to next meeting), Spanish language translation (worry about it later), Gazette (Rob Oppenheim thought they had "obligation" to print some RP material, will check out later).

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Next meeting to be scheduled over e-mail

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*Adjourned at 10:22pm*