

Report by the Committee on Communications on the Future of the Association Website

Jerry Shaw

Environment

Most small governing bodies keep up with technology in order to communicate with their voting constituents. All towns and cities in Connecticut have implemented modern means of conveying information to the public. As an example, [Branford](#) recently updated their website to ease the way for dissemination of information and notifying residents of important events.

The [Stony Creek Association](#) provides conventional postings of Board proceedings for those who desire the tried and true avenues, however, this has fallen behind in broadening the inclusion of Stony Creek voters in a modern information envelope, which includes the viewing devices such cell phones and iPads.

Our local library, [Willoughby Wallace Memorial Library](#) has updated their website recently, and in both the Branford and WWML cases, workers for both organizations can use software provisions to update their respective websites without technical knowledge. Important information can be infused in the information stream on an expedited fashion.

Other similar shoreline chartered organizations such as [Civic Association of Short Beach](#), [Pine Orchard Association](#), [Clinton Beach Park Association](#), and the [Clinton Beach Association](#) have kept up with more modern websites. Cell phone access to these websites renders them available to a wide mobile population.

The question is, how much are we willing to pay, both in upfront costs and sustaining effort, to maintain timeliness and relevant content that will inform constituents and keep them coming back?

Exploratory Efforts and Analysis

The most difficult aspect of gauging how much to spend on a website is a measure of derived value. How much is it worth to the public to have timely access to SCAEB minutes AND notices of village importance? Are there sources of information that a website can display to add value that the other avenues can't. There is ample proof that it can.

Perhaps the most compact and frills-free of the known association websites is [Clinton Beach Association](#), managed and built by Robin Kohnke: clintonbeachct@gmail.com. More elaborate is the [Pine Orchard Association](#) website, managed and built by Peter Robinson: OfficeManager@pineorchardassociation.com.

Pine Orchard Association has 460 households. POA has an office building and an office manager, in part, because it retained its zoning powers, and POA retained ownership of substantial shore property. POA assesses at a mill rate of 3, with tax revenues of \$153,000, expenses of \$44,000, and a budget of \$60,000.

CBA has about 140 households, a mill rate of 4.8 and [tax revenues](#) of \$28,000, expenses of \$27,000, similar to [Stony Creek](#), but with 3 times the number of residences.

A category in the Stony Creek budget is “Member Communications,” which at least for this reporting period, does not appear to include website expenses. See http://sca-ct.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/2019_2020-BUDGET.pdf. See the following from Greg Ames:

Itemized Categories Report
7/1/10 Through 6/30/19

Page 26

7/20/19	Cat/Sub	Date	Account	Num	Description	Memo	Clr	Amount
		10/12/15	Checking	2929	Fasano, Ippolito & Lee	Services- Legacy theater \$1980 a...	c	-2,475.00
		12/2/15	Checking	2934	Fasano, Ippolito & Lee	Services thru11/13	c	-1,457.50
		1/5/16	Checking	2936	Fasano, Ippolito & Lee	Services thru12/17	c	-165.00
		3/1/16	Checking	2942	Fasano, Ippolito & Lee	Services thru 2/16	c	-165.00
		5/3/16	Checking	2950	Fasano, Ippolito & Lee	Services thru 4/7/162/16	c	-275.00
		6/7/16	Checking	2955	Fasano, Ippolito, Lee & Fi,orentine	Services thru May 17	c	-825.00
		7/12/16	Checking	2967	Fasano, Ippolito & Lee	Services thru june 21	c	-1,072.50
		8/11/16	Checking	2975	Fasano, Ippolito & Lee	Services thru July 28	c	-385.00
		9/7/16	Checking	2978	Fasano, Ippolito, Lee & Fi,orentine	Services thru August 16	c	-1,320.00
		10/4/16	Checking	2990	Fasano, Ippolito, Lee & Fi,orentine	Services thru Sept 20	c	-687.50
		11/3/16	Checking	2995	Fasano, Ippolito And Lee	Services thruOctober 14	c	-742.50
		12/6/16	Checking	3000	Fasano, Ippolito And Lee	Services thru November 3	c	-962.50
		1/3/17	Checking	3004	Fasano, Ippolito, Lee & Fi,orentine	Services thru December 8	c	-825.00
		2/7/17	Checking	3008	Fasano, Ippolito, Lee & Fi,orentine	Services thru January 16	c	-357.50
		3/30/17	Checking	3014	Fasano, Ippolito & Lee	Services thru Feb 7	c	-330.00
		5/2/17	Checking	3024	Fasano, Ippolito And Lee	Services thru April 10	c	-770.00
		6/14/17	Checking	3030	Fasano, Ippolito And Lee	Services thru May 5	c	-275.00
		8/16/17	Checking	3055	Fasano, Ippolito, Lee & Fi,orentine	Services thru July 19	c	-2,667.50
		11/7/17	Checking	3070	Fasano, Ippolito & Lee	Services previously approved 8/1	c	-247.50
	TOTAL 851 lawyers engineers et al							-35,180.30
	852 Website							
		12/30/14	Checking	2873	Aldris Design	Use of WW Library website		-765.00
		1/6/15	Checking	2875	Mark Richter	Website hosting and domain reim...		-481.60
		12/6/16	Checking	2999	Mark Richter	Website charges reimbursement	c	-74.94
		11/7/17	Checking	3073	Mark Richter	Website hosting charges reimburs...	c	-538.20
		6/4/19	Checking	3159	Stony Creek Computer Services	Email liscences	c	-531.54
	TOTAL 852 Website							-2,391.28
	TOTAL 850 professional fees							-37,982.83
	900 miscellaneous							
		11/30/12	Checking	2753	Mark Sullivan	Holiday winter festival contribution...		-250.00
		9/3/13	Checking	2804	Spencer Bartels	Tag Sale Ads		-75.16
		10/3/13	Checking	2809	Town Of Branford	playground		-10,000.00
		12/7/13	Checking	2813	Shore Publishing	Tag Sale ad		-56.00
		12/7/13	Checking	2812	Willoughby Wallace Library	Contribution to Holiday Concert		-250.00
		5/5/14	Checking	2824	Dee Dee Hakun	?		-10.00
		8/5/14	Checking	2846	Bonnie Sanders-Newton	Concert Band Fee		-400.00
		9/2/14	Checking	2851	Andy Bromage	Concert cancellation fee		-200.00
		9/2/14	Checking	2852	K&G Graphics	print ZBA appeal petition Legacy t...		-24.67
		10/7/14	Checking	2860	Betsy Wieland	postage for Legacy theater petition		-171.50
		10/8/14	Checking	2863	... K&G Graphics	print Legacy theater signs		-8.00
		12/2/14	Checking	2872	Beth Stevens	Legacy theater petition mailings a...		-266.00
		3/3/15	Checking	2887	Linda Reed	contribution to holiday concert		-250.00
		6/7/16	Checking	2959	Dan Bullard	Reimbursement for zoning copies		-3.00
		8/2/16	Checking	2974	Dan Bullard	SCA cell phone	c	-88.13
						SCA cell phone 6/19-7/18	c	-61.77

Website Bids

In an attempt to test the web designer market, I solicited two tentative informal bids.

- [Meg Summerfield Studio, LLC](#), the firm that designed the WWML website, came in with a bid of \$8,000. In addition, the Association would have to do significant prep. To quote Meg's response: "For our website design projects, we do require the content to be prepped and ready before we get started, so that copy and photography is all set prior to the start date."
- Jeffrey Cohen, VP of [Image Works](#), a well-respected web design firm, came in with a bid of \$6,500. While not explicitly discussed, it is expected that significant upfront prep work would also be required. Image Works would use [Wordpress](#), the current platform used by sca-ct.org.
- Two other firms were contacted, Christopher Carvache from [Cyberpunk Interactive](#), and the web developer, Jen Payne, who crafted the website for the [Branford Land Trust](#), under the [Words By Jen](#) banner. Neither could take on the project. Note that Martha Walsh is one of the graphic designers for the latter firm.

Costs

To provide some comparison to other Association expenses, the snow plowing budget is around \$6,300/yr. Insurance totals about \$5,500/yr. Note that secretarial costs are/were \$200/month or \$2,400/year. Website development cost is one-time, non-recurring, with current web hosting charges ([Wordpress.org](#)) of roughly \$500/yr remaining the same.

A Low Cost Alternative

Another website platform sits in front of us every time we use Google mail and the Google Chrome browser. [Google Sites](#), the new version, offers a free platform with limited capability, but significant advantages, such as WYSIWYG design and shared editing capability. In addition, it can be linked with Google Analytics to monitor site activity.

Note that there are several other initially free or low cost website platforms. [Weebly](#), [WIX](#), [Squarespace](#) is not free but starts out at \$12/mo. You must design your own website, which is also true of [Wordpress.com](#) (note Wordpress.org is a different branch of Wordpress).

Using Google Sites to Create a Prototype

The advantage of a free web design platform is that it allows the development of a prototype to explore the feature-domain, i.e., what you expect your website to do and what is not needed. The following exploratory website was developed with just that philosophy in mind: <https://sites.google.com/view/stonycreekassociation/home>.

This list of site pages is totally exploratory and can be easily modified. Links are active.



- [Home](#)
- [Archived Minutes](#)
- [Charter/By-laws](#)
- [Coastal Resiliency /Climate Change](#)
- [Documents](#)
- [Finance/Budget](#)
- [Governance –SCAEB Membership](#)
- [History of Stony Creek](#)
- [Member Surveys](#)
- [Messages from the Board](#)
- [Photos](#)
- [Recent Minutes](#)
- [Strategic Planning](#)
- [The Creek at Risk](#)
- [Useful Links](#)
- [Village Events](#)
- [Weather Alerts](#)

Conclusion

Several web developers have been contacted, and two bids were received. An exploratory website was developed. An offer to transfer ownership of the exploratory website to the SCAEB has been made. I would suggest that the Board: 1) decide whether the value of an updated and timely-managed website would equal or surpass the costs; 2) determine next steps in the future of the Association website, sca-ct.org; and 3) take appropriate, official action per their determination.