

Town of Amherst Website Content and Submission Policy

Intent

It is the Town's intent to provide electronic access to its information through a logical single point of entry. For the Internet, this logical point of entry is the Town's officially registered domain name (www.amherst.ny.us). For the purposes of this document, "website" will refer to the Town of Amherst's official Internet domain: www.amherst.ny.us.

The Town of Amherst has developed an external (Internet) website as a service to residents and the community at large for the purposes of disseminating useful, accurate and timely information. Residents with a connection to the Internet or those who use public facilities (public libraries, schools, etc.) may find information 24 hours a day; 365 days a year.

Each town department will be defined as a subweb within the official domain. The registration of an individual domain name for any town department is not recommended because each separate domain name fragments the single logical point of entry, may lead to public confusion and email delivery problems, and would contribute to increased costs as well as administrative and maintenance issues. In addition, usage statistics would be more difficult to compile.

The Town's website is for "official use" only. All information disseminated through the Town's website must be related to the official duties and responsibilities of employees and departments.

Content

Information found on the website includes, but is not limited to, the following areas:

- Town services
- Town government
- Contact information
- Amherst statistics and related information
- News and events calendar
- Site search
- Online geographic information and mapping data
- Special announcements

Design and Functionality

The overall design of the website will follow accepted standards for government based websites. Site design will include elements to enhance ease of use. A navigation system will include global, local and contextual menus and icons relating to specific topic areas or locations on the website. A search engine

will be included for overall site searches. Information will be presented using available web based technologies (e.g., hypertext markup language [HTML], active server pages [ASP], etc.).

Roles and Responsibilities

The website will be administered and maintained by Office of Information Technology personnel (website coordinator). The website coordinator will be responsible for overall site design, page layout standards and implementing available and appropriate technologies on the website.

Because of the increasing need to coordinate departmental interests through a single point of contact, department heads (and other officials) will formally name a website liaison for their department. While website liaisons may not be involved with website publishing, they must have authority to:

- Identify and commit department resources to support website content for the department.
- Oversee website development projects in the department.
- Determine the appropriateness of potentially "sensitive" material.
- Approve final designs of website information and services prepared for the department.
- Resolve support issues relating to the currency and accuracy of departmental information.
- Represent the department in setting and reviewing website policies and standards.
- Serve as website "representative" to encourage the use of the website for resident and staff services and disseminate website-related information to department staff.

The last item is important, as staff must be aware of website services as they begin to respond to questions by users of the website and direct individuals to online information. Website liaisons must have an understanding of the services delivered throughout their department; technical expertise is not necessary.

Additionally, the website coordinator will communicate issues that may impact or be of interest to website liaisons and departments.

Elected Officials

No part of the website may be used for campaign related purposes. Such campaign-related purposes include, but are not limited to, the following: statements in support or opposition to any candidate or ballot measure; requests for campaign funds or references to any solicitations of campaign funds; and references to the campaign schedule or activities of any candidate. No elected official's website content may directly link to any private website related to a candidate's campaign for elective office, but it may link directly to the Town Clerk's election-related pages where general election and candidate information may be found.

To encourage participation in and heighten voter interest regarding elections, the Town Clerk will be responsible for providing candidate, ballot and voter information on its website and will seek ways to provide similar election-related information via that site.

Submission Standards

Website liaisons will submit all content for their department/function in an acceptable electronic format outlined below. The website coordinator will provide guidance to liaisons with software or hardware options necessary to comply with the submission standards.

Textual information will be submitted in a standard word processing format such as Notepad, Wordpad or MS Word. Website liaisons will be responsible for text layout (headings, paragraphing, bulleted lists, etc.), spelling, and grammar. The website coordinator will not be responsible for any editorial changes to submitted content.

Graphics and Photos will be submitted in a standard graphic file format such as JPEG, GIF, BMP or other freely distributable digital format. The website coordinator will provide technical assistance to liaisons unfamiliar with graphic publishing. At the discretion of the Office of Information Technology, limited digital scanning may be available.

Vendor related materials will follow the guidelines above for textual and graphic/photo information. The website coordinator will be available to advise vendors on available technologies and acceptable submissions.

Encapsulated documents will be submitted in Adobe Acrobat format (PDF). The website coordinator and website liaisons will work closely on developing efficient and cost effective methods for producing encapsulated documents containing one or more of the following elements: textual documents, graphics, photos, maps, etc.

Information that is not covered in one of the elements above will require consultation with the Office of Information Technology and/or the website coordinator.

Information and content will be posted to the website on a first come, first serve basis. In most circumstances, updates will occur within 48 hours of submission. More complex submissions or design elements may require more time to complete.

Public Comments and Questions

Public comments or questions submitted via email, telephone, fax or traditional mail will be referred to the department head or website liaison for review. Actions resulting from comments or questions will follow applicable website content and submission policies. Additionally, an alias email account will be available to any department head or website liaison for public feedback.