Town of Wellesley
Website Standards and Guidelines
# Table of Contents

STYLE GUIDE........................................................................................................................................................................... 1

DOCUMENT PURPOSE........................................................................................................................................................................... 2

WEBSITE PURPOSE........................................................................................................................................................................... 2

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.......................................................................................................................................................

CONTENT GUIDELINES.....................................................................................................................................................................

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS.............................................................................................................................................

BREAKING UP CONTENT........................................................................................................................................................................... 3

CONTACT INFORMATION STANDARDS.............................................................................................................................................

DOCUMENTS....................................................................................................................................................................................

FONT STYLES....................................................................................................................................................................................

GRAMMAR & TONE.............................................................................................................................................................................

HEADINGS & PAGE TITLES...................................................................................................................................................................

DEPARTMENT HOME PAGES............................................................................................................................................................

BOARD/COMMITTEE HOME PAGES................................................................................................................................................

IMAGES...........................................................................................................................................................................................

IMAGE SPECIFICATIONS................................................................................................................................................................

APPLIES TO ALL IMAGES ............................................................................................................................................................

DEPARTMENT LOGO........................................................................................................................................................................

NEWS FLASH................................................................................................................................................................................

SLIDE SHOW..................................................................................................................................................................................

LINKS...........................................................................................................................................................................................

LINKS (EXTERNAL)...........................................................................................................................................................................

LISTS (BULLETED)............................................................................................................................................................................

NAVIGATION..................................................................................................................................................................................

PAGE DESCRIPTIONS....................................................................................................................................................................

SOCIAL MEDIA................................................................................................................................................................................

TABLES...........................................................................................................................................................................................

VIDEO...........................................................................................................................................................................................
STYLE GUIDE

This font is Vollkorn, used for Heading text.

This font is Open Sans, used for Body text.

Both fonts may be downloaded for personal use at Google Fonts - https://fonts.google.com/

The official Town Seal is maintained by the Town Clerk. JPG versions of the following approved seals are available in the “H:\CLK\TOWN SEAL 2009” folder:
DOCUMENT PURPOSE
The purpose of this document is to provide direction in establishing and maintaining consistent content and links across our website. Standardized design elements ensure a consistent experience as a user navigates throughout the home page and interior / departmental pages.

WEBSITE PURPOSE
The purpose of our website is to provide online government services, education and access to information regarding services, meetings, programs, activities, policies, documents, and facilities we provide that promote the community’s public health, safety and welfare.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
• The IT Department (ITD) shall be the System Administrators for the Content Management System (CMS). System Administrators are responsible for adding new users and modifying permissions. System Administrators are also responsible for maintaining global navigation menus and the overall design of the home page and interior pages.
• Department Heads shall designate at least one Owner to be responsible for adding, changing, or deleting all content for their respective departments in accurate and timely fashion.
• Maintenance of the website is a staff function. System Administrators will work with Boards and Committees that are not staffed to identify an appropriate resource to assist with content management.

CONTENT GUIDELINES
All content published on the website must be consistent with the Website Purpose. System Administrators reserve the right to remove content material not being maintained or that does not adhere to the following standards and guidelines:

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS
• Avoid internal abbreviations and acronyms --- don't assume a visitor to your site knows what they mean.
• Acronyms should be spelled-out when first used, followed by the acronym in parenthesis. Subsequent references should only use the acronym. Acronyms should not contain periods between letters.
  o Example: The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is responsible for keeping our community healthy.
BREAKING UP CONTENT

- Content should be broken up into small, easily readable chunks. As a general rule, the text beneath each header should not contain more than 2 or 3 short paragraphs and each paragraph should not contain more than 3 to 5 sentences.
- Subheadings encourage users to keep scrolling to find information, so make sure that each new topic has a header.
- Separate topics should be housed on separate pages. While users will scroll longer pages to scan similar information, it is frustrating to scroll through information of completely unrelated topics.
- The Spacer Widget may cause page layout issues on mobile devices such as tablets and phones. For example, a spacer widget on the page may look correct on a desktop or laptop, but will cause large empty spaces on a phone or tablet.

CONTACT INFORMATION STANDARDS

Contact information must be accessible or viewable in the feature column (right side) of your department homepage and relevant interior pages. Please provide the following information:

- Name of Department Head / Primary Staff Contact (optional, but recommended)
  - Email address (actual or generic)
- Full Department Name
  - Department email address esp. if not listed for Department Head
  - Phone / Fax number
  - Hours of Operation
  - Link to full Staff Directory
  - Physical address
  - Google Map / Directions

DOCUMENTS

- All documents should include the extension in parenthesis after the title to warn users that they are opening a PDF document, not a web page.
  - Example: Dog Licensing Form (PDF) or Fee Calculator (XLS)
- It is highly recommended that documents placed in the document center be converted to PDF file format (or HTML) unless there is a specific business need to have other file formats (Word, Excel) available. Use of PDFs protect the integrity of the document, while other formats present a risk of the document being changed or modified.
- When linking to documents (vs. pages), please check the “Open Link in New Window” checkbox in hyperlink settings.
**FONT STYLES**

- Underlining should only be used for hyperlinks. Underlining for emphasis can confuse users who might think they can click on that area of the screen.
- Avoid using all caps for anything but acronyms. If you need to emphasize something, use bold instead. Using all caps can make the words more difficult to read.
- If moving information from another source to one of your pages (for example, copying from word to your browser), make sure to paste all items in **plain text** by using the tool in the Editor widget. This will clear any formatting or text class information from the previous source that may be left on the text.

**GRAMMAR & TONE**

- Content should be grammatically correct and written in clear, concise sentences.
- The average citizen skims website content and therefore will best comprehend content written at a 4th or 5th grade level, so keep information simple.
- Avoid using exclamation points.
- Know your audience. Some content is meant to engage. Some content is meant to inform or educate. Some content has to simply direct users to contact a real person. Not all content is intended to do everything, and that is ok. Make sure that you are keeping your audience and the purpose of the content in mind when writing and formatting content for the website.
- It is okay to write in a more conversational tone when writing for the web; however, slang and jargon should still be avoided.
- Avoid writing in the passive voice as the **active voice** is more engaging and direct. For example:
  - Passive voice: “Action on the bill is being considered by the Board.”
  - Active voice: “The Board is considering action on the bill.”
- Put the most important information at the top.
- Do not use run-on or fragment sentences.
- Be consistent with your sentence tense throughout the entire page. For example:
  -“The meeting held September 6 **was attended** by 80% of the committee. Votes for this meeting **were** in favor of…”
- Make every page independent and explain its topic without assumptions about the previous page seen by the user. Site visitors can enter a website at any page and move between pages as they chose.

**HEADINGS & PAGE TITLES**

- Page titles should be clear and concise and accurately describe the content found on the page.
  - Ex: “Content Policy Documents” is much clearer than just “Documents.”
• Headings and subheadings should be used to break up content and provide the user guidance as to what information is in the text below it.
• Headings should be created with title case and should be clear and concise.
• When formatting a heading, the CSS styles Subhead 1 and Subhead 2 are used to show the hierarchy of information on the page – they are not just decorative elements. You should only use Subhead 2 to separate information that is related to the Subhead 1 topic. Subhead 2 should always follow a Subhead 1.

DEPARTMENT HOME PAGES
• The department’s Mission, or a brief description of basic responsibilities should appear at the top/center of every department home page.
• Vision, Values statement, and/or History should be placed on an interior page, not on the landing page.
• If a department directly serves a Board/Committee (e.g. Health Department / Board of Health), the top link in the left-side navigation bar should be to the Board/Committee home page.

BOARD/COMMITTEE HOME PAGES
• All Board/Committee members should be listed in a table in the center column of every Board/Committee home page.
• The top link in the left-side navigation bar should be a link to that Board/Committee’s Minutes & Agendas (i.e. Agenda Center category).

IMAGES
• Images used on the site should enhance the content on the page. Remember that a large number of our visitors now use a tablet or smart phone to view our website. Keep pages clean and uncluttered, with a minimum of photos for easy navigation.
• Pictures should be reviewed monthly and adjusted accordingly for seasonal or current community activities.
• Non-public event photos that contain people’s faces must have a photo/video consent release on file.
• Do not use clipart, word art, or cartoon-like images.
• Do not download or “lift” images from other websites. We comply with all copyright laws. A reliable source for freely usable media is Wikimedia Commons (https://commons.wikimedia.org).
• Graphics used on the website should be either .jpg or .png.
• Images require a descriptive alternative text for users with screen readers. File names and single words do not make usable alt text entries. Try “black and white police cruiser with lights on” instead of “cop car,” or “young girl participating in recreation program” instead of “little girl.”
• Do not use animated gifs.
IMAGE SPECIFICATIONS

APPLIES TO ALL IMAGES:
- Images should not appear stretched
- Images must be of high quality and not appear pixelated
- Images inside the content area should be no wider than 800px.

DEPARTMENT LOGO
If you wish to add your department logo to your page, place it at the top/right of the center column.

NEWS FLASH
- Images should have 4:3 aspect ratio and a minimum width of 400 pixels (i.e. at least 400 pixels x 300 pixels).
- System Administrators are happy to help you crop/resize an image that meets these dimensions

SLIDE SHOW
- Maximum 800px wide (resize height proportionally).
- All images in the slide show should be the same size and aspect ratio.
- Maximum of four (4) slides and no more than one Slide Show widget per page.

LINKS
- All links to external websites should be set to open in the same window.
  - All links to documents should open in a new tab or window.
  - All links to other pages within the same website should open in the same window.
- Don’t write out the URL in the text as it is often difficult to read and decipher where that link is going. Instead, link the title of the website, page, etc. When choosing text or writing text to link to, the link should be intuitively named – they don’t necessarily have to be verbatim page titles.
- Avoid using terms like “click here” as they don’t indicate to the user where the link is going to take them. They also hinder the usability of the site for someone utilizing a screen reader. Instead, link to words that indicate what is found at the link. (Ex: Instead of “to view the training document, click here” use “View the training document.”)
- Don’t replicate content, use links instead. You can link to content within the site on the same topic to avoid having to duplicate any content
- Be the authority when you can, but don’t create content you are not the authority on. Want to educate citizens on disaster relief and emergency management using the same tools that FEMA uses? Link to the FEMA website, don’t replicate their information. This allows residents to easily access information directly from the authority on the topic and keep you from having to update and maintain content.
LINKS (EXTERNAL)

External Links should follow the guidelines below:

- Should assist in fulfilling the Website Purpose.
- Should have a natural synergy to information provided on the website and be consistent with our goals, policies and the Website Purpose.
- Shall be to a website that is managed in a professional manner (i.e., fully operational and available most of the time).
- Examples of external links:
  - Governmental agency or governmental organization, or special purpose district which provides information related to the Website Purpose.
  - Partnering agencies.
  - Public safety related websites, including hospitals.
  - Educational facility, such as a library, museum, school and university.
  - Professional association that has a natural and logical fit with information provided on our website.
- All links to external websites should open in the same tab or window.

LISTS (BULLETED)

- Long lists within text should be broken out into bulleted lists so that they can be easily scanned.
- Alphabetize lists with more than three items.
- Avoid over-bulleting.
- The first letter of each item in a bulleted list should be capitalized.
- There should be a break between the bottom of a bulleted list and the next text.
- Bullets should go, at the most, two levels deep.
- Do not mix sentence fragments and full sentences in one bulleted list. For consistency, all bullets in each bulleted list should contain the same format (and verb tense).

NAVIGATION

Limit the number of interior menu items to six (6) or less on the left navigation bar for overall website consistency. The first menu item should be the “I Want To...” option that is required throughout all department headers (this item will count as one of the five (5) mentioned above).

- When possible, two-tier main global menus should be used to allow the user to see deeper into the navigation without having to click into something that may or may not take them where they want to go.
- Menu items and navigation throughout the site should be listed in alphabetical order to make information easier to find.
PAGE DESCRIPTIONS

- Page descriptions should be completed for every page. This will help search engines to better determine what pages to bring up as the results for a search. They also help guide users to the correct information by providing better details on what can be found on the page.
- Page descriptions should accurately describe the content on the page, including any major topics that are covered.
- Page descriptions are displayed below page titles when using the Pages Widget.

SOCIAL MEDIA

- Department social media (FB, Twitter, etc.) feeds should be displayed in the feature column (right side) below the contact information via Graphics Link widget.
- Please contact System Administrators to have your department's social media outlets added to the site's Social Media Index page.

TABLES

- To be ADA compliant, all columns must have headings.
- Tables should be kept small and short; for citizens that require a screen reader, tables are read line by line (top to bottom) and left to right.
- If the information you are displaying in a table doesn't consistently fit under the headers for that table, that information should not be displayed in a table.

VIDEO

- Video is a powerful communication tool. Departments are encouraged to incorporate video into their web pages. You can display videos with text links or embed videos right on your page using the Custom HTML widget. For video assistance, contact the System Administrators at webmaster@wellesleyma.gov.

MODULE GUIDANCE

AGENDA CENTER

- See separate guidance document on workflows for Posting a Public Meeting.

ARCHIVE CENTER

- Archive Center should be used for recurring / monthly / annual documents (e.g. departmental newsletters, Annual Town Reports, bi-annual financial statements).
CALENDARS

- Never Archive!
- The Meeting Calendar is maintained by the Office of the Town Clerk with assistance from System Administrators.
- **Do Not** check the “Featured” box. Checking this box will cause your event to display in the featured events Column for all calendar categories.
- Existing calendar categories shall be maintained by the department owner or their designee. To set up new calendar categories, department Owners should contact a System Administrator.
- Be specific in “Title” field.
- Keep your “Description” short – 144 characters or less.

DOCUMENT CENTER

- Store documents in sub-folders to aid in finding documents.
- If you are not using a document, unpublish it and delete it from the Document Center to avoid cluttering up the center with unnecessary documents.
- Use the Modify functionality to replace older versions of documents with newer ones. This will preserve links to that document from other sites.

FORM CENTER

**All forms must include a ReCaptcha element in order to prevent malicious attacks against the form. Any form found without ReCaptcha will be unpublished.**

The following types of forms work best in the Form Center:
- “Contact Us” forms or other simple requests
- Forms consisting of mostly short answer, multiple choice, or long answer questions
- Forms that can be emailed to a particular person or accessed by a particular person for processing
- Forms that don’t require an official signature or notary

The following types of forms don’t work as well in the Form Center:
- Forms containing a lot of text-based instructions or introductions
- Forms that require attachments that must be originals
- Forms that require an official signature or notary
- Forms that require private information (see below)

The Form Center is not a secured way of collecting information, meaning that CivicPlus cannot guarantee the security of the information after being collected through the Form Center. As such, CivicPlus recommends that forms that contain specific kinds of identifying information should be not be created in Form Center. CivicPlus recommends any form with potentially identifying information remain as is or be
turned into a PDF that must be printed and mailed or brought in for submission. Identifying information includes:
  o Social Security numbers
  o Driver’s license numbers
  o Tax ID numbers
  o W2 or other tax documentation or information
  o Birth certificate copies
  o Account numbers

NEWS FLASH
• Always Archive! (Show Archive: YES)
• “Read on...” Text – leave as “Read on...” for website consistency.
• Image Size 400w x 300h for consistency. The image MUST be sized outside of the module.
• It is recommended to not exceed 8-10 news items in the carousel.
• In order to allow residents to sign up for notifications, the fields “Email List”, “Allow Subscribers” and “Allow SMS” must be selected in the category settings.