



THE MARYLAND MUNICIPAL LEAGUE
The Association of Cities and Towns

Engagement & Outreach Committee

6:00 p.m.

Wednesday, December 8, 2021

Virtual Room Link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82537399434?pwd=VjVSS3FqRjE4Z2l1Q3ZZdkRGWThYUT09>

AGENDA

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| 1. Call to order | Chairperson Keller |
| 2. Proposal from Legislative Committee | Abby McNinch, LC Chair |
| 3. Update on Traditional programs | Paula Chase Hyman |
| a. Essay contest content distribution timeline | |
| b. Debrief on MGW Month social media campaign | |
| c. Banner City outreach | |
| 4. Promo Video Initiative – Update & Outline of Committee’s Role | Chairperson Keller & MML Staff |
| 5. Announcements | Paula Chase-Hyman |
| 6. Adjournment | Chairperson Keller |

It’s essential to the committee’s goals to have a quorum. Please contact Sharon Easton at MML with Regrets ONLY by December 6. As you’ve accepted the appointment, we will assume you plan to attend, otherwise.

Paula Chase Hyman is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Engagement and Outreach December Meeting

Time: Dec 8, 2021 06:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82537399434?pwd=VjVSS3FqRjE4Z2l1Q3ZZdkRGWThYUT09>

Meeting ID: 825 3739 9434

Passcode: 914332

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Maryland Municipal League

The Association of Maryland's Cities and Towns

Engagement and Outreach Committee Meeting Notes

**Wednesday, October 27, 2021
Virtual Meeting**

- PRESENT:** Emily Keller, Mayor, Hagerstown, Chair
George Bacorn, Chief of Police, Denton
Douglass "Doug" Barber, Clerk, New Carrollton
Celina Benitez, Mayor, Mount Rainier
Elizabeth Boa, Manager, Glen Echo
James D. Gaston, III, Administrator, Brentwood
Michele Gregory, Councilmember, Salisbury
Awilda Hernandez, Clerk, Bowie
Don Mulrine, Administrator, Denton
Jack Orris, Councilmember, Berlin
Bernard "Brad" Pudner, Public Works Director, Berwyn Heights
Briana Urbina, Councilmember, New Carrollton
- NOT PRESENT:** Deborah Burgoyne, Mayor, Burkittsville
Amy Chmielewski, Mayor, Bel Air
Sharron Lipford, Engagement Director, Seat Pleasant
Leta Mach, Councilmember, Greenbelt
- STAFF:** Paula Chase Hyman, Director, Member Engagement
Sharon Easton, Membership Specialist

Call to Order

Chairperson Keller called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

She informed the committee that she was now the committee chair. She stated that she appreciated everyone volunteering to serve on the committee.

Since there were no formal introductions at the last meeting, committee members introduced themselves to each other.

O V E R . . .

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Chairperson Keller informed the committee they would be doing the Promotional Video initiative highlighting places within municipalities, but not the Six Flags Day initiative.

MML Member Engagement Director Paula Chase Hyman thanked committee members for their dedication and commitment. She noted that it's going to be a good year once the committee knows how things are going to proceed. She stated that Chairman Keller has jumped right in, and the committee is in good hands.

Update on Traditional Programs.

Essay Contest Content. Paula stated that she wanted to bring the committee up to date on the more traditional programs since we have new committee members. The essay contest is one of the committee's more traditional and older programs and is already in the works. Normally the committee would decide what the theme would be and how to phrase the materials. We didn't do that this year since there are better uses of the committee's time, so she has taken on that task. The essay contest theme will be the Soul of Maryland, which was easy to build upon. The essay contest content has been sent to the printer and should be returned in December.

Paula stated that we will continue to keep the essay contest process digital, but we hope to have an in-person ceremony in the spring. We are aiming to have the materials created in time to send to municipalities in December. She noted that we changed the timeline because everything was virtual at the time. Since the contest is digital, it is easier to have a later timeline available to send to schools.

Paula will post the content that will go on the digital flyer in a follow up to the committee. The contest is aligned with how the committee has always formed the questions. She has respected that the committee's style and has made no change to that format.

Berwyn Heights Public Works Director Brad Pudner inquired about the committee's role in the essay contest. Paula stated that we have tried to realign what the committee does as part of their engagement and outreach to make sure municipalities are being encouraged to take part in all the ambassador programs. She stated we ask the committee to make sure that their assigned municipalities visit the schools to let them know about the fourth-grade essay contest. We would like for the mayor, council, or staff member to go to the school to explain what a municipality does and the role of the mayor. We have noticed that when municipal officials conduct school visits, the submitted essays are stronger. If you can visit multiple schools, feel free to do so. We are looking for the municipality to promote the contest to their elementary schools and encourage fourth grade students and teachers to participate.

Paula stated the committee is expected to read essays. She informed the committee that we usually receive 2,500 essays. Last year with the essay contest being digital and a new process, we received over 1,500 essays. We expect to get closer to 2,500 essays this year and require the entire committee to make a commitment to read essays for a few hours. The essay contest reading was digital last year but we haven't decided on the format this year. Whether hybrid, or virtual, the essay reading is completed in one day.

As a committee member, you are making sure your municipality supports the contest and that you encourage other municipalities to support it as well. We also request that committee members attend the ceremony to honor the winners.

Mount Rainier Mayor Celina Benitez commented that she liked the virtual reading last year. Paula stated that being able to provide the digital essays to the committee was easier. If we are doing a hybrid reading with digitally submitted essays, committee members would need to have their computers whether virtual or hybrid. She noted it would be challenging to do a hybrid reading since essays are submitted digitally. It would take some reconfiguration, but we don't want to rule it out yet.

Brad Pudner inquired if there was a list of contacts for their assigned municipalities. Paula noted that there is a newly created committee resource page which has a fact sheet that provides a link to our digital directory. If you know someone in the town with direct access to the mayor, use your contact, otherwise the best contact person is the manager or clerk who are the ones who would act on it.

MGW Month Social Media Campaign. Paula informed the committee that Municipal Government Works Month is November. It is the month that promote how and why municipal government works. If you go to the MGW page on our website, there are suggestions your municipality can use. We always ask the committee to make sure their municipality is using social media to promote what their municipality is doing. We want you to use the hashtag #MGW month to highlight some of events that your municipality is doing. It is the easiest way to participate in MGW month and it will go outside of your municipality so that people can understand. Paula stated that if you have things going on in your municipality during MGW month, like a clothes drive, that is municipal government at work. Encourage whoever does social media for the town to use hashtag #MGW month and MML will retweet your posts.

Paula commented that when you fly the flag, people may not know what the flag means. You can do a resolution proclaiming Municipal Government Works Month internally within your municipality, but make sure to do another activity as well.

Committee members noted that the proclamation is a teaching tool for their newly elected officials. They also noted that in addition to the proclamation, they do other activities as well.

Banner City/Town Outreach. - Paula noted that committee members were assigned municipalities to help champion through the Banner City/Town program. Committee members should think of the Banner City/Town program as a guidepost to the resources and activities that the League offers that municipalities can take advantage of. It is part of the municipalities membership and is the easiest way to help them understand what membership entails. There are things like attending conferences, chapter and department meetings, going to the schools as well, items under criteria 5 like exhibiting on main street, and serving on committees. You want to make sure your assigned municipalities are aware of the programs and keep them involved. It's like a signpost pointing to all the different things MML offers and what you are doing is encouraging them periodically with an email or phone call making sure they are still on the road to Banner City/Town. It's a way to stay in touch with them because Banner City/Towns are our most engaged municipalities. There are going to be some municipalities who won't get the designation but that doesn't mean you shouldn't continue to point them to the resources so they can use their benefits. When someone doesn't receive the designation, we like to know whether the reason is they can't afford fall conference or that chapter meetings are too long. It's a way for MML to find out why some may not be interested in some of the initiatives.

Promo Video Initiative - Next Steps. Chairperson Keller informed the committee that she met with Paula and Sharon regarding the initiative and is very excited. She is the co-chair of Washington Goes Purple

and they have done a lot of promotional videos regarding opioids. Instead of doing regions, she suggested doing four to five one-minute-long videos highlighting different themes focusing on things that we have in Maryland like parks, outdoor spaces, waterways, public art features in our community, unique architecture, and clock towers, things that we might not have elsewhere.

Chairperson Keller stated as a first step, we would put out an RFP for videographers to produce four to five one-minute videos featuring specific themes with the understanding that they will have to travel across Maryland. We need a quick turnaround time to be able to roll out the videos at the summer conference in June.

After we receive the responses, we will know what we are dealing with as far as budget and can solicit sponsors, if needed. Then, as a committee, we will work with the videographer to nail down final details. The committee will encourage municipalities to participate and if not participating, encourage them to promote the videos and put them on the social media to engage and highlight municipalities.

The committee liked the idea of doing themes. Several committee members indicated their towns would be willing to participate.

Paula thanked Chairperson Keller for being willing to take over the project after the change in leadership losing Mayor Grant as chair. Chairperson Keller has been excited about it and despite the abbreviated time we are dealing with, feels we should continue with the timeline to get the videos done and have a video premiere at summer conference. Paula noted that the videos can be available for the rest of the year for people to showcase on their cable access channels and YouTube. She also wants to give kudos to the committee for being willing to take on something new that they have never done before.

Paula noted that it's an exciting opportunity because the committee will be responsible for trying to get the municipalities involved. The committee will have to decide how many municipalities to include based on what the videographer tells us. She hopes that we get so much interest that we will have to turn people down.

Paula stated that she hopes the committee understands this is a moment where they get to make their mark on something that could really have an impact on economic development and tourism in the state, especially if we can get the State to finance some of it.

Berlin Councilmember Jack Orris inquired as to the timeline. With over 100 municipalities, as ambassadors, what's wrong with asking municipalities to make their own videos and submit them. Chairman Keller stated it was a possibility, but the point of being the Engagement and Outreach Committee and trying to put municipalities in the forefront is for the committee to do it and promote it all together. All municipalities are not going to be able to be included and some may not want to be. This is for the committee to highlight and promote municipalities. We want to encourage them to be engaged, get involved and have people visit Maryland. She stated it is something that we could do in addition to the video initiative.

Paula stated that the original goal was to reflect on all the different things that Maryland has to offer. Mayor Grant had already started conversations with the Governor's office, and they were willing to help

with financing. Paula stated that Mayor Grant's original plan was to do a regional video but noted that doing a thematic video is better. It was to be used as a promotional tool to bring attention to municipalities. Every municipality is not going to want to do it. As for municipalities submitting their own videos, the videographer may be able to use snippets of what is provided. But, for right now, we are not going that route, but it could be a viable option.

Brad Pudner asked who the target audience was for the video. Chairperson Keller informed the committee that it will be brought up to the videographer. If the videographer informs us that we can do two-to-three-minute videos, then we can use it on websites, and it will be more about celebrating each other. If we are going to be able to put it out as different commercials, which can only be thirty seconds to one minute long, and are able to get sponsors, then we can do the video as a Come to Maryland and the reasons why.

Paula stated that one of Mayor Grant's objectives was making sure that the state legislature understood the power of 157 municipalities. He wanted to be able to show that there is industry in municipalities. It was broad-based in terms of the audience that would see it. He also wanted to make sure that we plant the seed that municipalities exist in the state.

Brad Pudner suggested having a video of mayors showing what is great in their towns and maybe use it as a tool to promote Banner City. Chairperson Keller liked the idea to promote Banner City and said it could be done in addition to the promotional video initiative.

Paula informed the committee that the Maryland mayors created a mayor's wearing masks video and promoted it on social media. She also liked the idea of municipal videos and stated it was something that we could do outside of the promotional video. She noted that it would be a cool MGW month initiative because we could ask for videos now with the theme, "why is your municipality the soul of Maryland?" Municipalities could post it on their social media pages and MML would retweet.

Bel Air Councilmember Jack Orris stated this was a good opportunity to do this and that we could promote municipalities doing a video for BCT like the city hall selfie a few years ago.

Paula informed the committee that we are ready to kick off MGW month so if we are planning to ask municipalities for a video, we can put that into our messages. She noted that the MGW videos would be separate from the Promotional Video project. Depending on when we get them back, we might receive material that could be used in a broader video. She liked the idea and noted that the committee should think about it separately. We have never asked for videos for MGW month, and this is a perfect time to do it since MGW month starts in three days.

Paula informed the committee that she will send out a follow up email. She asked committee members to submit their ideas via the email, so we have a coherent idea of what we are asking people to post.

Berlin Councilmember Jack Orris suggested that for the messaging, we could word it, to celebrate #MGWmonth, let's look at the possibility of a video featuring your municipality.

Chairperson Keller reiterated her ideas for themes which are parks, waterways, public art, unique architecture, clock towers. Other themes suggested were sustainability, technology, fashion, and diversity.

Paula informed the committee that we are ready to begin the staff portion of MML Strategic Plan, so her goal is to get the language for the RFP done by the end of next week.

Committee members inquired as to the target date of the video. The target date for premiering the video is at the summer conference in June.

Chairperson Keller noted that although this meeting was done virtual, she wanted to know the committee's preference for meetings, hybrid, virtual or in person. Most of the committee preferred virtual. Paula informed the committee that to maintain social distancing, a hybrid option would allow three to four people to attend in addition to the chair and staff. She noted the last time we had a hybrid meeting, we didn't have a lot of people who wanted to come in, so it worked. If we offer the hybrid option, it would be expected that the chair would be in person. After discussion, committee meetings will be virtual unless the chair is in person, then we will offer a hybrid option.

Chairperson Keller stated that the tentative November 17 meeting depends on the status of the RFP. She noted that we could keep the meeting date in case it is needed. Paula noted that the committee doesn't normally meet in December but if the RFP is not back in time for the November meeting, we will leave the option open for an early December meeting.

Chairperson Keller stated that if we can make some decisions by the end of the year, we will have the next few months to figure out the details. If the videographer is going to film in the winter months, outdoor shots will be coordinated based on the weather. Paula noted that filming will probably be late winter. We hope that we can avoid the weather and will instead be filming instead when things start to thaw out.

Denton Administrator Don Mulrine asked if there was an updated Banner City/Town list. Paula stated that she will provide an updated list of municipalities still in contention. She told the committee not to discount their assigned municipalities that are no longer in contention, because we still want to encourage them to take advantage of the benefits.

Brad Pudner inquired if there was an appropriate way to reach out to the more experienced members to get some pointers on reaching out to assigned municipalities. Paula stated that experienced committee member would be willing to help, or you can reach out to MML staff Paula and Sharon.

Announcements

Chairman Keller thanked the committee members for their time and adjusting to the changes. She is excited and looking forward to what we will accomplish this year. She also thanked Paula and Sharon for their assistance.

There was a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded and passed. There being no other business the meeting adjourned at 6:52 p.m.