

**Rock Hall Communications Board Meeting**  
**March 19, 2018**

6:31 call to order

Present: Jan Plotczyk, Linda Buckle, Kate Johnson, Beth Andrews (liaison)

**New Business**

Board members engaged in a discussion describing their overall frustration resulting from the mayor and council's apparent lack of interest in the Communication Board's efforts to fulfill its duties as identified and called for in the Town Code.

Some main points of discussion were:

- The livestreaming of board meetings was added (at an additional cost to taxpayers) because the mayor told the council that minute taking would no longer be required. The mayor misspoke and minutes are required. Very few citizens view these meetings and the CommBoard questions why these meetings are still being streamed.
- The CommBoard's main duty as per the Town Code, Chapter 4, is to make sure that the town website is up to date with correct information.
- Website and ancillary website feature services such as bill pay and livestreaming are not discussed with council.
- Updates and revisions provided for the website have not been posted, although reminders have been sent.
- Candidates for services are not transparent, fees and services are not reviewed by any party other than the mayor (who does not present any comparative data to the council), and there is an apparent lack of due diligence. Billpay, which the council was not aware of, was used as an example.
- There is no review (content, grammar and spelling) of website changes and updates.
- There are no posting policies or protocols for the website or social media.
- We questioned the supervision of the Washington College interns for the Main St endeavor, based on the format, presentation, grammar, and spelling that was sent to town businesses. These are students who need professional guidance. Interns are not free labor.

- The mayor, who is in total control of the website, is providing the council with less than factual information regarding access to the website. The council takes guidance from the mayor, because the mayor is more familiar with websites, social media and computers in general. They have been misled many times and have voted in agreement with the mayor, whose knowledge and actions they trust, not realizing that some of the information offered by the mayor as factual is misleading or incorrect. Examples of this are the denial of interfacing with the website vendor, and the statement that having access to google analytics would permit folks to see private emails, etc.
- The Rock Hall mayor's vision plagiarizes almost verbatim the mayor's vision for the city of Seattle Washington (see below). This is dishonest and illegal, a huge concern. The CommBoard questions why the mayor could not write his own vision for a town for which he is the mayor.
- Cora Dixon and William Fielder, both prior members of the CommBoard, were a huge asset to the website launching as well as contributors post launch. Both parties were frustrated with the inappropriate behavior and handling of the website as was mentioned in their resignation letters (see below).
- The Social Media Policy called for in the Town Code, Chapter 58, is not being followed.
- HUGE ISSUE: No elected official should have access to any government owned social media. This provides control of the site and the site's content to the ELECTED OFFICIAL since it is possible to easily extract private citizen data from the social media site (website or facebook) which can be used in campaign efforts and solicitations, providing an upper hand over any other party not privy to access of this data. The council should be aware of this and make the appropriate changes as soon as possible, making certain this type of thing never occurs.

Included as an integral part of these minutes are actual copies of data as mentioned above.

The three remaining members resigned from the communications board before the end of the meeting, all stating they are being prevented, by way of no access, and no apparent interest on behalf of the mayor and council, from doing what they volunteered to do and therefore see no reason to participate or attempt to contribute any longer.

Adjourned 7:38 pm

Respectfully submitted with attachments,  
Kate Johnson, former Secretary

Attachments:

1. Board Resignation Letter
2. Comparisons - Office of the Mayor Vision
3. Cora Dickson's Resignation Letter
4. William Fielder's Resignation Letter

### **1. Board Resignation Letter**

March 19, 2018

To the Mayor and Council:

It is with deep regret and much frustration that the current members of the Rock Hall Communications Board tender our resignations immediately. Our reasons for resigning can be seen on the video recording of the March 19, 2018 Communications Board meeting, available at [http://townhallstreams.com/stream.php?location\\_id=31&id=16052](http://townhallstreams.com/stream.php?location_id=31&id=16052).

Sincerely,

Jan Plotczyk, Chair  
Linda Buckle, Vice Chair  
Kate Johnson, Secretary

### **2. Comparisons Office of Mayor Visions (see next page)**

**Rock Hall Communications Board**

**Report –  
Comparison of Website Text;  
Stolen/Plagiarized Property**

**April 2017**

+++++

In the LEFT column:  
**Mayor of Seattle’s Vision for Seattle**

Copyrighted and Published 2014

Office of the Mayor  
Mayor Edward B. Murray

© 1995-2016 City of Seattle

Date of First Archive:  
August 6, 2014 (web.archive.org)

<http://www.seattle.gov/mayor/my-vision-for-seattle/a-safe-city>

In the RIGHT column:  
**Mayor of Rock Hall’s Vision for Rock Hall**

Copyrighted and Published 2015

My Vision for Rock Hall  
Office of the Mayor, Brian Jones

© 2015

Date of First Archive:  
June 17, 2015 (web.archive.org)

<http://www.rockhallmd.com/my-vision-rock-hall>

**Yellow** highlighting indicates passages copied directly, and not attributed (i.e., plagiarized) from Seattle Mayor’s Vision.

**Blue** highlighting indicates unattributed passages from Rock Hall’s Comprehensive Plan.

**Seattle**  
**A Safe City**

Public safety is the foremost responsibility of city government. All Seattle residents deserve to be secure in their homes, safe in their neighborhoods, and able to explore our city without threat or intimidation. Our efforts to ensure public safety must be both just and compassionate. Those in crisis, suffering from desperate poverty, mental illness or addiction are themselves victims and deserving of our care and protection. To achieve this, we must provide clear leadership, as well as the best tools and training, to our police officers, fire-fighters and others tasked with putting themselves at risk for our protection.

**Rock Hall**  
**A Safe Town:**

Public safety is the foremost responsibility of municipalities. All Rock Hall residents deserve to be secure in their homes, safe in their neighborhoods, and able to explore our town without threat or intimidation. Our efforts to ensure public safety must be both just and compassionate. To achieve this, we must provide clear leadership, as well as the best tools and training, to our police officers, fire-fighters and others tasked with putting themselves at risk for our protection.

## Seattle

### An Affordable City

Seattle is undergoing a period of record growth and development. Our burgeoning high-tech and life-sciences sectors are creating thousands of well-paying jobs. But for the middle class, families, artists, students, and immigrants new to the country, our city is becoming increasingly unaffordable. Seattle is at risk of pricing out the very diversity it thrives upon.

My administration has already begun working to address this issue. We have passed legislation providing for an increase in the minimum wage in the City of Seattle to \$15, an hour phased in over time, beginning April 2015. The legislation won support from labor, business, and non-profit representatives. Together, we are increasing the income and purchasing power of low-wage workers while protecting small businesses, retaining jobs, and fostering economic development throughout the region.

## Rock Hall

### An Affordable Town:

Rock Hall is undergoing a period of growth and development.

We must continue to encourage the formation of small businesses and encourage the relocation to Rock Hall of small, locally managed businesses. The Town has a (sic) economic business plan that will help with this task.

The Town needs to provide employment with salaries higher than the average for the county, this will encourage families to explore the possibilities of moving here and raising their families here.

We need to continue to create additional business opportunities in the Town, I would like to see more focus on our commercial district on Main Street. We need to work with small business owners to develop a main street business plan that will focus on the future and how we can keep Main Street alive.

We need to provide employment that corresponds to or develops the skills of town residents, together, we are increasing the income and purchasing power of low-wage workers while protecting small businesses, retaining jobs, and fostering economic development throughout the town.

## Seattle

### A Vibrant City

The urban village model – with livable, walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods and nearby parks – is a successful strategy for managing growth in Seattle’s neighborhoods. I want to continue bringing new ideas and approaches to this strategy. During my first 100 days in office, I hosted my first Neighborhood Summit to provide a forum for discussion and new ideas to consider as we think through planning for the future of our communities. I look forward to hosting more of these at the city and neighborhood levels.

The Port of Seattle is the closest big-city port to the Asian market, and our export region is regularly among the top five regions nationally. The good-paying shipping, trucking, railroad, fishing, steel and other freight-related jobs that flow from this considerable economic activity account for a majority of the middle-class job opportunities in our city. Strengthening this activity and ensuring these jobs stay available will require a comprehensive strategy that integrates zoning, transit, freight mobility, regulatory issues and infrastructure development with our regional partners at the port, country, state and federal levels.

## Rock Hall

### A Vibrant Town:

The small-town village model – with livable, walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods and updated recreation areas – is a successful strategy for managing growth in Rock Hall. I want to continue bringing new ideas and approaches to this strategy.

We need to provide a forum for discussion and new ideas to consider as we think through planning for the future of our community. I look forward to hosting these at the town level.

Rock Hall is the entertainment capitol (sic) of Kent County, we host numerous family fun events such as the 4th of July festivities, Pirates and Wenches Weekend, FallFest, Cruise Nights on Main Street and many many more. We need to continue to support these events and recruit additional volunteers to discuss potential new events. I am committed to keeping Rock Hall Active.

Our civic, business and community leaders work hard to make our Town inviting for residents, visitors, businesses and industries – anyone who wants to call Rock Hall “home.”

## Seattle

### An Interconnected City

In Seattle, we live in quirky, single-family neighborhoods and dense urban villages. We work in industrial centers, commercial districts and retail cores throughout the city and the region. We may travel by car, but more often by foot and bike, bus and rail. In Seattle, we need a coherent transportation network, rather than a patchwork of plans.

This is why my administration is committed to developing a comprehensive, multi-modal transportation strategy for Seattle. We will integrate and prioritize our pedestrian, bicycle, transit and freight plans; staying true to the goals of each while recognizing they must work together as a system.

## Rock Hall

### An Interconnected Town:

In Rock Hall, we live in a small town with many great establishments. While most of our full-time residents may travel by car to their place of work, many of our tourists and visitors especially those that visit Rock Hall by boat use and depend on the Town's Tram Service to visit our, commercial stores, restaurants and retail cores throughout the community. In Rock Hall, we need a coherent transportation network for our locals and visitors, rather than a patchwork of plans. We need to continue to look into a means of alternative transportation to assist our senior citizens with appointments, etc.

This is why I am committed to continue working with organizations such as the Greater Rock Hall Business Association and Elected Officials to develop a comprehensive, multi-model (sic) transportation strategy for Rock Hall that serves not only our tourists and visitors but our locals and senior citizens. We need to integrate and prioritize our pedestrian, bicycle, and tram plans; staying true to the goals of each while recognizing they must work together as a system.

## **Seattle**

### **A City that Fosters Innovation**

A safe, vibrant, affordable, interconnected city for all is the goal of my administration, and I hope to achieve these goals by harnessing the kind of innovation and creativity that has long-defined our great city.

This means using data to drive the most efficient use of resources, make the best investments, and deliver the best outcomes for the residents of Seattle. It means replicating what has been successful elsewhere, discontinuing what is not producing the desired results, and having the energy, encouragement and initiative to generate new solutions to experiment with and see what's truly possible.

## **Rock Hall**

### **A Town of Innovation:**

A safe, vibrant, affordable, interconnected town for all is my goal while serving as an Elected Official for the Town of Rock Hall, and I hope to achieve this goal by harnessing the kind of innovation and creativity that has long-defined our great town.

This means using data to drive the most efficient use of resources, make the best investments, and deliver the best outcomes for the residents of this great town. It means replicating what has been successful elsewhere, discontinuing what is not producing the desired results, and having the energy, encouragement and initiative to generate new solutions to experiment with and see what's truly possible.

Whether you are a company searching for a new location, a retiree looking for a safe, quiet community, a tourist seeking fun and recreation, or a family in search of great schools and friendly people Rock Hall has what you need.

### 3. Cora Dickson's Resignation Letter

#### STATEMENT FROM CORA DICKSON

My husband, William Fielder, and I have a long history with the current Rock Hall website. In June 2013, we approached the Rock Hall Council with a proposal to form an ad-hoc committee to study the Rock Hall website and make recommendations. With participation from then-Council Member Brian Jones, we met several times over the following seven months and even held a public meeting before we finalized our recommendations. We published a lengthy report called "Roadmap for a New Rock Hall Web Presence."

The ad-hoc committee worked closely with Brian to bring about this new website, including a procurement process that specified technical criteria and a scoring system to help the Council evaluate the proposals received. Then after the vendor was selected William and I joined the "focus group" that worked directly with the vendor on content and design, leading to the launch the website by the end of March 2015. We also helped the town formulate its email policy. And finally, we proposed the Communications Board, which the Council voted unanimously to become part of Rock Hall's town code in June 2015.

We applied to join the Board and were among the first members sworn in at the November 2015 Council meeting. From the beginning, for reasons that are not entirely clear, the Mayor has treated the Communications Board with disrespect. We were, and still are, baffled by his 180 degree turnaround from welcoming our assistance to obstructing it in every way possible. The final straw came at the May 2 workshop meeting. The Mayor drew a line in the sand: no website access for the Communications Board, even if it were read-only for the purposes of understanding how the website works. We were granted the website analytics access and given permission to contact the vendor, but these are meaningless if we do not understand the content management system.

He furthermore stated that he particularly opposed the Board having any role in recommending any changes to the government pages. Given all the time and effort on my part to develop the government side of the website last year, in order to ensure that residents can access useful information online, this was the worst insult. The Mayor is fully aware of my contributions to the website because we worked together on it.

By the way, last year when the website was launched I participated in the vendor's webinar training. Since many sections of the gov website were not finished, I wanted to work collaboratively with the staff to continue improving the gov pages. The follow up meetings never happened (probably got a little bit derailed because of the election). Even though the vendor gave me access, I was waiting until we had established the Communications Board. I thought it would be the best protocol to support the town staff in some sort of official capacity. The vendor's records prove that I never logged in after training. But apparently the Mayor now would not trust me with such access.

Ultimately, we are volunteers for the Town. We were appointed to help the Town. We simply cannot make any progress under these circumstances. The worst part is the innuendo that we are not trustworthy, yet he can never specify what “dastardly deeds” we are planning. All we requested is the access we need to better understand how the website works and how it is used. Now there are indications that members of the Council view us negatively because of our conflicts with the Mayor – despite our requests being totally reasonable, but he has made a mountain out of a molehill.

Although the Mayor has asserted otherwise, it is most definitely a question of TRUST. These days, I wonder why somebody whom we trusted so much through this long process of building the new website has now turned against us.

I commend Council Liaison Butch Price for giving us a voice and trying to play the role of peacemaker between the Board and the Mayor. However, the Mayor is clearly no longer interested in our opinions, even though he relied on us originally and supported our efforts. We overcame enormous resistance to change in the beginning, but this time we have truly hit a brick wall.

Despite my deep commitment to helping the town achieve its website goals, I no longer want to serve on the Communications Board under these intolerable conditions. Even in this six-month period, many issues have come to light, and I would like to inform the Town Council so that they are aware and could possibly take steps to address them. Please see attached.

Sincerely,  
Cora C. Dickson May 4, 2016

## **PROBLEMS THAT NEED URGENT ATTENTION**

### Too much power in the Mayor’s hands

- An elected official should not have full admin rights access to the website.
- The town is relying too much on the Mayor for technology setup. This includes the display screen and the web streaming. If he is absent from a meeting, nobody else knows how to do these things.
- The Mayor is the only one maintaining the town’s social media. The town staff needs to take over this responsibility. Furthermore, the Mayor was directing Facebook users away from the town’s official page to the Mayor’s page. That is simply unacceptable.
- The Mayor is changing things on the website and adding sections without even telling the staff or consulting with them.

### Town staff needs to be empowered and others should also be allowed to contribute

- The town manager should authorize the town staff to take the time needed for online training from the vendor.

- The staff should also contact the vendor for step-by-step instructions when necessary. They are allowed to do this as part of the service the town is already paying for.
- The Virtual Towns and Schools (VTS) platform for the website is not being utilized in the way it was intended. (See page 14 of the VTS proposal, attached) Right now, only a few people have website access and those users have full admin rights. The more efficient way to keep content updated is to grant many people contributor access but limit that access to certain sections of the website.
- For example, one person on each of the boards and committees should be able to post meeting minutes and agendas. This would take a burden off town staff, and increase the public's access to meeting information.
- The two volunteers who are updating the tourist side of the website should be formally appointed by the Council, with a one year term and a clear list of responsibilities.

#### Many areas of the website are being neglected

- The town staff needs to take whatever steps are necessary to set up online bill payment for the water/sewer bills. This would be an option for residents/businesses in addition to the current methods of payment (in person or by mail). The vendor is ready and willing to help. It was promised as part of the design of the website.
- The "notify me" page is confusing. Why is "Communications Board" listed under urgent alerts and general announcements? Why do you have a separate check box for "Grants Office"? What is a "Free Form Document Update"?
- How many people have signed up for these notifications? Also, the notifications for meetings are not always consistently sent. Why is this not done automatically when the agendas are uploaded?
- The town business directory is ALREADY out of date. New businesses have not been added, businesses that left are still listed. Who's responsible? The town is small, it shouldn't be so difficult to keep it up to date. We should be proactive and reach out to retail businesses face-to-face regarding their directory listings.

#### Website analytics would be extremely helpful for the tourist side of the website

- We need to see the patterns of usage over time; do they correspond to the seasonal patterns?
- Which pages were the most utilized?
- How many times did people click on the event graphic on the home page?
- Is the harbor cam popular?
- Each business should be notified on a regular basis how many times their directory entry on rockhallmd.com directory was viewed, starting with the annual data but perhaps then monthly or quarterly.
- Analytics can also help us determine whether lodgings or restaurants actually have an alphabetical advantage in the listings.

Acquiring this data requires a deeper dive. As a team, the six members of the Board were willing to tackle this, and even take training if necessary. Instead, they were mocked by the

Mayor as being “unqualified.” The Mayor even suggested that a county employee do the website analytics for us. The important thing is that people who are familiar with the town and the town’s website undergo this analysis. The Communications Board could be tasked to compile all the results in an easy-to-read format for the town that could be published on its website for the citizens and business owners to read as well. Any overarching tourism strategy for Rock Hall should leverage these website usage statistics.

#### **4. William Fielder’s Resignation Letter**

I hereby submit my resignation from the Rock Hall Communications Board, effective immediately. Due to management issues I am unable to perform my duties to the best of my abilities, or even close.

I have done my best with the Website Committee, the Website Focus Group, and The Communications Board to follow the strictest of professional ethics, and it is my sincere hope that I’ve served the Town well up to this point. Unfortunately, I think any further efforts will be a waste of time for both myself and the Council. Both sides of a contract, even volunteer, require a base level of trust, which I believe to have been broken.

As far as I am aware, I have no access to any Town accounts or logins. If someone could verify this, and remove any such access, I’d be most obliged. As a computer security professional, you have my iron clad word that I will do nothing that would cause harm to the Town website, social media, or any other Town network presence.

Note that I have signed a contract with the Rock Hall Police Department to provide volunteer network security advice and serve as a technical expert for any computer related cases. This contract is still in force, entirely separate from the Communications Board, and unaffected by this resignation.

Regards William Fielder May 4, 2016