



America's Small Town Capital

Title: *A Minute in Montpelier Podcast & Accessible Communication*

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June is the time for backyard BBQs, summer vacations, and outdoor adventures. Most of us are too busy enjoying the beautiful-but-fleeting Vermont summertime to attend a City meeting, catch up on the news, or write to our local representative about issues affecting our community. But no matter the season, your City is working hard to make sure you have what you need to thrive.

Making it easy to stay connected with your City is the mission behind our strategic initiative to communicate effectively. As we enter the second half of the year and our lives adjust to the rhythm of summer, we wanted to take a moment to highlight some of the ways the City is working to make our local government easier to engage with and more responsive to our community's needs. After all, connecting people with what they need to know is what public service is all about.

What does it mean to communicate effectively? To understand what effective communication is, it's crucial to understand what it does, and why it's so important to our current strategic plan:

- **Effective communication brings people together.** When people from different communities come together, we become stronger and better able to solve problems. More diverse perspectives mean we're more likely to come up with solutions that benefit more people.
- **Effective communication doesn't just inform - it empowers.** When we connect people with information, it opens opportunities to contribute to our community. One of our greatest strengths as a city is our active and engaged community members. Our committee members – volunteers who are passionate and dedicated to serving our city – are a testament to the strength we hold collectively as a community.
- **Effective communication creates public value.** We all benefit from a thriving community because what we put in is an investment in our future selves. Communicating effectively means we're getting a bigger return on our initial investment. It's a positive feedback loop that grows stronger with every message.

Making communication accessible is part of what makes it effective. When we remove barriers to communication, we enable more people to participate in our democracy.

That's why I'm excited to share the newest addition to our communications repertoire, our podcast, *A Minute in Montpelier*.

A Minute in Montpelier will feature one topic a month in a half-hour-long show available free on Spotify. Our Communications Coordinator Evelyn Prim will introduce a special guest or group who will discuss recent topics of public interest on each episode.

Episode #1 will feature our City Assessor, Marty Lagerstedt, and will be available on Spotify starting on June 29th. Marty will be talking about the current City reappraisal and answering questions submitted by the public.

Why a podcast? Several reasons:

- **Podcasts allow us to reach a wide audience.** People can listen to a podcast virtually anywhere thanks to smartphones, radios, and Wi-Fi.
- **Podcasts reach people where they are and don't require a significant time commitment.** You can start and pause a podcast at your convenience, on your chosen device, on your own time.
- **Podcasts reach audiences who may have difficulty accessing visual or written communication, or who can't physically attend a meeting.** Adding podcasts to our array of communication methods increases their diversity and capacity to better serve the needs of our residents.

In addition to our podcast, we're working diligently to revitalize our website to have it serve as the central hub for all communications. Our website upgrade has been an ongoing project since it began in the summer of last year and has involved hundreds of hours of content analysis, user-interface adjustments, and systems and layout development.

Our team has been working diligently to remove content that is no longer useful and replace it with content that better serves our current needs. A few recent additions include:

- A [communications page](#) outlining all the ways to stay connected with our City. It also contains an archive of our monthly *Bridge* articles such as this one, and links to our social media accounts,
- An up-to-the-minute ["News Flash"](#) carousel on our homepage where we post the latest and notable happenings around town,
- Montpelier Police Department updates and reporting data, including [quarterly reports](#), [media logs](#), and [monthly raw data sets](#) to keep our commitment to transparency and accountability.

Listening, learning from, and responding to our community is a top priority for all City staff. In addition to developing systems and structures for sharing information with the public, we're also working to improve the way the public can share information with us.

Creating space for collaboration and dialogue helps us achieve greater outcomes than if either of us were to go it alone. City Council meetings aren't the only way you can participate – our committees also serve an important role in the way action items are triaged and how decisions get made.

All committee meetings are open to the public. Meeting dates, agendas, Zoom links, and minutes for all committees are posted on our website in the [Agenda Center](#).

Attending a committee meeting is a great way to connect with others in your community who are actively working on an issue or project. For instance, the Homelessness Task Force is working to mitigate the homelessness crisis in our community. Another example of a committee doing great work is the Montpelier Energy Advisory Committee (MEAC). MEAC works with our Sustainability Coordinator to transition our municipal buildings and equipment over to net zero energy sources.

Committee meetings are also a great way to share your ideas or thoughts on a particular topic that affects our City. Each committee has a city staff liaison who helps facilitate meetings and acts on the decisions made by the committee.

If you have questions about an activity or event, want to report an issue, or would like more information on a City project, we encourage you to reach out to us by email, phone, or stop by City Hall during business hours. Contact information for every department is located on their respective webpage on our website, www.montpelier-vt.org