

SUGGESTIONS FOR UPDATING THE DC COUNCIL WEB SITE

July 2011

LEGISLATION/HEARINGS RECORDS

- The site should allow users to sign up for email alerts of hearings and roundtables, by committee. Subscribers would be alerted when a bill has been introduced and referred to the committee, when a hearing/roundtable is scheduled, when a hearing/roundtable is cancelled or re-scheduled. Note: This raises the question of how these alerts would be handled. Ideally, the Secretary's office would have an automated system to handle this.
- The LIMS search box by keyword doesn't always seem to turn up the same search results twice — even when using the same keywords. It would be helpful to be able to search by title or by legislative text. And to post tips on the best ways to use the search box based on the criteria the web developers selected.
- The materials included for each legislative record within LIMS should include the following:
 - Overall: There are a number of fields in LIMS that are never filled in, but would be useful if they were used.
 - A full final witness list, including those who testified without signing up. Ideally the list would show who had signed up and whether they testified.
 - All testimony that was submitted.
 - Committee reports should be linked to each bill (and should be posted promptly).
 - Written questions submitted to public witnesses by the Committee prior to the hearing, plus the answers provided.
 - The bill's fiscal impact statement
 - A link to the video record of the hearing
- Allow witnesses to sign up on line. This would be a link on both the calendar and on the committee web sites (if the committee web sites are standardized). This could simply be a link that opens an email to the committee clerk
- The witness list should be posted on the Council calendar the day before the hearing and updated on the day of the hearing if there are changes. Note: We understand that this relies on committee staff to compile and submit lists in a timely fashion.
- Similar to 'Introductions from the dais' the council website should also include an 'Amendments from the dais section.' These could be posted until the enrolled version of the legislation is able to be posted to LIMS. The section should include:
 - Who introduced the amendment
 - The text of the amendment
 - The status of the amendment (accepted as friendly, passed, failed)
 - If the amendment was put to a voice vote or roll call vote, the voting record.

CALENDAR

- A calendar listing for a committee meeting or hearing should include the following:

- a link to a bill's legislative record
- a link to allow people to sign-up to testify, made inactive after hearing date, and a feature to allow users to request an email reminder of a specific hearing. (Boston's council calendar (<http://www.cityofboston.gov/calendar/citycouncil.asp>) does this.)
- A summary of actions taken at the meeting. The Montgomery County council site posts a summary of the actions taken at each committee hearing on their calendar. See <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cshtml.asp?url=/content/council/packet/index.asp>.
- The calendar should include a "New hearings posted/ hearings rescheduled/hearings or meetings cancelled!" feature. This would reflect anything newly scheduled or re-scheduled within the current week.

ENCOURAGING/FACILITATING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

- The site used to have a portion called "public participation" and listed ways to find out what is going on at council. The new website should have a public portal such as this that would give people tips on ways to "Get Involved" and ways to "Get Help with Constituent Services."
- The "Get Involved" section could include:
 - The site should provide information to residents about their role in the process. This would be a nice DC Civics 101 section, in part. History of DC and the Wilson Bldg, for example. But also material on how to get involved in Council issues. Like Montgomery County, MD does – see <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cshtml.asp?url=/content/council/about/pub.asp>
 - Ways to sign up for the mailing list or an email list for a particular committee.
 - A link to the daily calendar or schedule of hearings
 - Information on how to get transcripts from hearings or watch past or current hearings
 - The site should explain rules for testimony, including how to submit if a person is unable to attend a hearing.
 - The site should make clear people need ID to get in the Wilson Building.
 - The site should allow users get info on reserving space in the Wilson Bldg for meetings/events.
 - The site should consider how to allow non-English speakers to access info.
- The "Get Help with Constituent Services" would include:
 - An overview and link to 311
 - A way to search and find out which Councilmember represents you and how to reach that Councilmember's constituent service person.
 - The site should have information on how to request a ceremonial resolution
- The site should have an easy –to-read and print ward map of the entire city. The current map is not printable and does include the ward numbers on it — you can only get information after you click on a ward.
- How A Bill Becomes Law – This part of the site would benefit from more details and a jazzier presentation — maybe something graphical or animated. It would be useful for schoolchildren,

too.

- There should be full web site accessibility for people with disabilities (Office of Disability Rights can provide technical assistance on this). For example, it should allow users to change the font size.
- The site should have information about how to request reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities visiting the council or testifying (they have this up now for visitors but could probably be expanded to include testifying etc.).
- The site should have a map of the Wilson Building with info about accessible entrances, and a floor plan showing location of the Council offices. It should offer directions to the Wilson and make it clear that people need an ID to enter the building, as well.

COMMITTEES

- The Committee pages should include:
 - The committee's schedule, including upcoming hearings.
 - The Committee's hearings during the current council period with links to video recordings of prior meetings and the corresponding testimony and witness list. (This is currently found under the 'media' section.)
 - These hearings should also include a text summary of the topic of the hearing, and a link to legislative record for each bill considered at the hearing.
 - Summary of actions at prior meetings, as is suggested under the recommendations above for the calendar.
 - Links to bills currently under the committee's jurisdiction (that have been referred in the current Council period.)

COUNCIL MEMBERS

- The link to each council member should list all staff, their respective positions, and contact info
- The Councilmember's website should have a link that lets you subscribe to press releases and newsletters from the member
- The Councilmember's website should include information on how to contact a constituent services person

BUDGET

- Budget Process – given the uniqueness of the District, a clear explanation of this process would be really useful.
- Budget documents:
 - The site should keep an archive of past committee reports and questions and answers submitted during the budget oversight process.
 - The site should provide links to enrolled versions of the Budget Support Act and

Budget Request Act for each fiscal year (including any amendments made at a later date)

- The budget section of the website should include link to the CFO's budget and financial plan section of its website.