Pomfret unveils new ADA-accessible town website, well ahead of schedule

By Justin Bigos

Staff Writer

Seventeen months ahead of schedule, the town of Pomfret has launched its new ADA-accessible website. The new site launched this week on Monday, Nov. 23, and runs on the popular and well-supported platform WordPress, according to Pomfret selectboard chair Benjamin Brickner.

The site was designed by Pomfret resident Jason Levin, who donated his talents and 40-50 hours of labor to the town project.

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), requires all municipal websites to meet certain accessibility standards by 2028 — "and our current website [did] not meet them," said Brickner.

"The old [Pomfret] site [ran] on outdated software that is no longer supported, making it harder to maintain and keep secure," Brickner told the Standard last week. "It also was not built to the accessibility standard — WCAG 2.1 Level AA — that the U.S. Department of Justice now requires of state and local government websites."

Brickner said that towns the size of Pomfret must meet that accessibility standard by April 26, 2028. "Rather than retrofit the old site, the town replaced it," he said.

Brickner told the Standard that the new site offers several benefits to users. "Pages are structured and labeled so screen readers and other assistive tools can read and navigate them, and they include 'skip to content' links. Content has been reorganized; documents have clear, descriptive titles; and selectboard agendas, minutes, and meeting records are posted and archived automatically," said Brickner, who added that links to pages on the old site are now redirected to the new one.

According to Levin, "The two critical things were setting it up to work with all the ADA compliance regulations, so it's got all the tags needed in the background to help screen readers and anyone who's using screen readers to be able to use the site. And [secondly,] it's more secure. The old site was built on a very outdated platform that was susceptible to hacking and overtaking, and the new site is using a platform that is less likely to be intruded upon by malicious tenders."

"Other than that, it was really just cleaning up the site a little bit, just making it feel a little bit more like 2026, and making it so it works on desktop and mobile and tablet," said Levin.

Now that the new site is up and live, Brickner said it should offer a more userfriendly feel for anyone navigating it. "For most people, the site should be cleaner and easier to navigate, and things should be easier to find. People who use screen readers or other assistive technology should find the site much easier to use. It is also simpler for town staff to post notices and meeting records, which should help keep the site current," he said.

Staff training for the new site is underway, said Brickner. "Over the next year and a half, we'll convert the town's roughly 100 current documents — policies, ordinances, forms and the like — into accessible formats. Older materials are kept in a designated archive, which the federal rule generally treats differently," he said.

Brickner expressed gratitude to his team for meeting the deadline ahead of schedule. "When Mariel Luna, our town administrator, flagged the new federal requirements this fall, I wasn't sure we'd make the April 2028 deadline. Launching a year and a half early, without hiring an outside vendor, is a credit to Mariel; to Becky Fielder, our town clerk; and, above all, to Jason Levin," said Brickner.

"Jason has saved the town a significant amount of time and effort, and he's gotten us ahead of a federal deadline that many small towns are likely to struggle with," said Brickner. "We're very grateful for his efforts."

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