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THE FIVE BASIC STEPS FOR REGISTERING A DOMAIN NAME FOR YOUR MUNICIPALITY

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STEP ONE – SELECT THE TYPE OF DEVELOPER

Selecting a website developer is a pivotal decision because it determines how involved in all of the steps you will need to be. The types of developers vary, but usually fall into one of the following categories: volunteer, in-house personnel, or a contracted individual or company. Each offers its own benefits other than costs, which are outside the scope of this

article. In order to evaluate the developers, you will need to consider what you would like to accomplish with your website, as well as the experience level each developer will offer you. Here is a quick overview of the categories of benefits you should consider when evaluating the developer to use.

BENEFIT	VOLUNTEER	IN-HOUSE	CONTRACTED
Experience level	Varies — requires evaluation	Varies — requires evaluation	Should be the highest
Cost	Free or very low cost	Minimal if personnel are already on staff	Higher than the other two
Development time	Generally slowest	Depends on other duties	Fastest
Quality of end product	Depends on experience	Depends on experience	Highest
Maintenance of website/design	Reliant on volunteer — could be slow	Depends on other duties	Depends on contract

STEP TWO – DECIDE ON A DOMAIN NAME

Deciding on a domain name is a very important part of the process as this name will be your web address. The domain name could also become part of your city's identity on business cards, stationery, etc. A domain name consists of a top-level domain and a second-level domain. A top-level domain (TLD), or domain extension, is the part of the domain name

located to the right of the dot, e.g., .com, .edu, .org, .gov, or .net. The part of the domain name to the left of the dot is called the second-level domain (SLD) name. This is the readable part of the domain name that refers to the entity or organization behind the Internet address.

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The most common TLDs or generic TLDs (gTLDs) are .com, .net, and .org. These common extensions have certain guidelines, but are all options for a city to use. One additional option for a city to use is the www.ci.CITYNAME.tn.us form, which is part of the Country Code Top-Level Domains (ccTLDs). Some cities may register a name in all four TLD spaces. For example, if you are the city of MTAS you could register the names www.MTAS.com, www.MTAS.net, www.MTAS.org and www.ci.MTAS.tn.us. Shorter names are easier for people to remember, but if you want to include additional identifiers such as “town of” or “city of” that is acceptable as well. That might look like www.townofmtas.org or www.ci.townofmtas.tn.us.

STEP THREE – SELECT A REGISTRAR

This step may not be necessary depending on the type of developer you choose. For example, if you are contracting with a professional website development firm, it could manage the entire process for you, which should include all the remaining steps. It would be good for you to review the steps in case you change companies at a later time. You may choose to register your own domain name so that the city maintains control rather than giving that control over to someone else.

The registrar is the retail company from whom you purchase the rights to your domain name. This company should be accredited by the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) at <http://www.icann.org> or by a national ccTLD authority to register Internet domain names. ICANN has authority over all the gTLDs, while the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA) at <http://www.iana.org> has authority over ccTLDs.

The registrars for the gTLDs are numerous and the pricing is very competitive. Here is a link

to the list of ICANN accredited registrars: <http://www.icann.org/registrar-reports/accredited-list.html>. Some that you may recognize are GoDaddy.com and NetworkSolutions.com.

For your ccTLD registration, there is only one registrar and that is Neustar at <http://www.nic.us/>. In order to purchase a domain name such as www.ci.CITYNAME.tn.us you will need to provide specific documentation. Neustar is currently in the process of modifying this process. In order to create a new domain name in the space, Neustar suggests contacting it at 1-888-415-0365 or support.us@neustar.us.

STEP FOUR – REGISTER THE DOMAIN NAME

The process of registering the domain name may differ slightly depending on the registrar you choose, but will be similar in several ways. First, you will need to provide contact information for your domain name. Four types of contacts exist for all domain name registrations: registrant, administrator, technical contact, and billing contact. Depending on the registrant, additional information may be required. The listed registrant is considered the domain owner. The registrant should be the city and the city’s contact information. The administrator is the contact who can interact with the registry or registrar for the domain owner. The technical contact is the person who manages the domain. The billing contact receives invoices for domain registration fees. Each of these contacts can be different entities or the same.

If you are outsourcing your web presence, all of these may have the company or person with whom you are contracting as the contact person. However, you should request in the contract that the city be listed as the registrant.

Most registrars give access to their registration database by letting you create a user name and

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password when you register your domain name. Therefore, if you allow an outside vendor or person to register your name, and do not have in the contract that the city will retain ownership of the domain name after the contract expires, the company could actually keep the domain name, sell it to someone else, or just let it expire. Getting the rights back to the name could be difficult, expensive and time consuming. If you do maintain your own domain name, make sure that your contact information is accurate because most registrars will automatically list an expired domain name for auction on The Domain Name Aftermarket (TDNAM). Some registrars will give you a grace period to claim the name, but if they are unable to contact you and someone else bids on and purchases the name, you lose the rights to it. You will then be put in the position of trying to purchase your name from the person or company that won the auction.

STEP FIVE – POINT YOUR DOMAIN NAME TO YOUR WEBSITE

The final step depends on who your registrar is and where your website is hosted. If the registrar is hosting your website, or if you have contracted this out to a vendor, then this step will most likely be handled by that party. If you maintain your website in house or with a vendor other than your registrar, you will have to make DNS changes to your domain name. These settings can be obtained from your host company, and the steps to make the changes can be found on your registrar's website. Once your domain name is registered and your website is live, let us know so we can update our records to reflect your new web address.

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