

Marblehead - a Digital Democracy?

There is a profound alienation and mistrust between many people and their elected officials that is expressed in town and board meetings, elections, and lawsuits. Our antiquated procedures and tools combined with divisive social media, limits fact-based information and citizen participation. **Marblehead can become a leader in implementing a tool set that is specifically designed to allow greater participation and fact-based media.**

Several governments have developed tools and systems to fix these problems. One of them is the government of Taiwan under the leadership of Audrey Tang, Taiwan's Digital Minister and a globally recognized civic technologist. They have developed and championed several **tools for digital democracy** that promote **transparency, citizen participation, and collaborative governance**. Their approach emphasizes **open-source development, radical transparency, and civic inclusion**. Help us imagine what town department(s) could learn and benefit from these tools to increase civic participation. Help us enroll town officials and employees to implement them.

Here are the core tools and platforms:

1. Taiwan (Virtual Taiwan)

- **Purpose:** To enable collaborative policy making between government and civil society.
- **How it works:** Combines online discussion platforms with offline meetings. Citizens, experts, and officials deliberate on complex issues.
- **Success stories:** Helped shape legislation on Uber, fintech regulation, and online alcohol sales.
- **Possible Marblehead issues:** Air B&B's, Implementation of 3A, Sustainability steps

2. Pol.is

- **Purpose:** To map public opinion through open, structured dialogue.
- **Functionality:** An AI-powered conversation tool that groups users by shared opinions and highlights areas of consensus.
- **Strength:** It avoids polarization by surfacing common ground, not promoting divisive comments.
- **Use in Taiwan and in Marblehead:** consensus-building.

3. Join Platform

- Taiwan's national e-participation platform.
- Features:
- Public policy proposals: Any citizen can propose ideas; if a proposal gains 5,000 signatures in 60 days, the government must respond. - adjust numbers for Marblehead
- Online petitions, budget transparency, participatory budgeting.
- **Goal:** To institutionalize civic engagement in daily governance.

4. Transparency Tools

- **Principle:** "All meetings are open by default."
- **Practice:** Video, transcripts and meeting notes online.
- **Goal:** To create trust in governance by ensuring open access to decision-making processes.
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Philosophy Behind the Tools:

- "Digital democracy is not about voting more often. It's about listening better."
- Deliberation, inclusion, and co-creation, rather than top-down decisions

A recent report from Bowling Green: <https://www.whatcouldbgbe.com/>

Tools: <https://www.ethelo.com/> <https://pol.is/> <https://frankly.org/>

Guides and graphics: <https://www.demnext.org/>

Who will help Frank with this project? Contact him! fkashner@gmail.com