

TOWN OF UPPER MARLBORO

14211 School Lane • Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772
Phone: (301) 627-6905 • www.uppermarlbormd.gov

TOWN COUNCIL

Mayor Charles J. Colbert • Vice Mayor Derrick F. Brooks • Councilmember Sarah A. Franklin • Councilmember Karen H. Lott
• Councilmember Joseph Hourcle

OFFICE OF THE TOWN MANAGER

TO: Town Council
FROM: Clayton Anderson, Town Manager
DATE: September 22, 2026
RE: Landings Cost Discussion

Purpose

This report asks the Council to discuss the content direction, public survey approach, distribution method, and cost of The Landings, the Town's quarterly newsletter, and to consider whether advertising revenue should be pursued to help offset production costs.

Background

The Landings has a long history as a Town communications vehicle:

- 2006–2018: Published as a monthly or bi-monthly print newsletter.
- 2018: Transitioned to an electronic (e-newsletter) format.
- 2019–Present: Re-established as a quarterly print mailer, a format that has continued through 2026.

The newsletter is currently distributed three ways:

- Print mailer sent via U.S. Mail to Town households and businesses.
- PDF/digital version posted on the Town website.
- Excerpts and highlights shared on the Town's social media platforms.

Cost Analysis

Staff currently print 400 copies of The Landings per quarter. The table below summarizes the current per-issue cost.

Cost Component	Rate	Quantity	Quarterly Cost
Printing (400 copies)	—	400	\$1,828.76
Postage	\$1.36/copy	400	\$544.00
Staff Labor (Level 1)	\$25.52/hr	6 hrs	\$153.12
Staff Labor (Level 2)	\$29.86/hr	6 hrs	\$179.16
Total Quarterly Cost			\$2,705.04
Estimated Annual Cost (x4 issues)			\$10,820.16
Cost Per Copy (all-in)			\$6.76

At the current pace of four issues per year, staff estimates the Town spends about \$10,820.16 annually to produce and distribute The Landings, excluding indirect overhead (equipment, software, or supervisory time not captured in the hours above).

Discussion Item 1: Newsletter Content

Staff requests Council direction on what is considered "newsworthy" for inclusion in The Landings going forward. Possible content categories for discussion include:

- Council actions, votes, and policy changes
- Public safety updates and crime-prevention tips
- Capital projects and infrastructure updates (e.g., the pocket park, annexation)
- Economic development and business spotlights
- Community events, recreation, and senior programs
- Budget and tax information
- Town services, deadlines, and permitting reminders

Discussion Item 2: Public Survey Questions

To ensure content matches resident interest, staff proposes fielding a short public survey (mailed insert, website, and social media). Draft questions for Council consideration:

- How do you currently read The Landings — print, website, or social media?
- How would you prefer to receive The Landings in the future?
- Which topics are most valuable to you? (Council news, public safety, events, development, budget, other)
- How often would you like to receive The Landings? (Monthly, bi-monthly, quarterly)
- Would you support a smaller print run with a stronger digital/email option?
- Do you have suggestions for content you'd like to see included?

Discussion Item 3: Distribution Recommendations

Staff offers the following distribution options for Council discussion:

- Maintain the current model: full U.S. Mail distribution to all households/businesses, plus website and social media.
- Hybrid model: reduce print run to opt-in households/businesses that request mailed copies, paired with an email/e-newsletter sign-up to reduce printing and postage costs.
- Digital-first model: return to a primarily e-newsletter format (as in 2018) with a limited print run for residents without internet access, distributed at Town Hall and community locations.
- Expanded digital promotion: increase paid or boosted social media reach in place of some print costs.

Discussion Item 4 Advertising Revenue Opportunities

To help offset the annual cost of approximately \$10,820.16, the Council may wish to discuss whether The Landings should accept paid advertising from local businesses. Considerations include:

- Establishing a rate structure (e.g., business card size, quarter-page, half-page) with rates set to recover a defined share of print/postage cost.
- Adopting an advertising policy addressing content standards, size limits, non-endorsement disclaimers, and equal access for local businesses.
- Prioritizing space for local, Town-based businesses, potentially tied to the Facade Improvement Program and other economic development outreach.
- Setting a modest initial revenue target (e.g., offsetting postage costs) before scaling the program.

Requested Action

Staff requests a Council discussion and direction on the following:

- Confirm content priorities for future issues of The Landings.
- Authorize staff to conduct a public survey on newsletter content and distribution preferences.
- Provide directions on the preferred distribution model.
- Determine whether staff should develop an advertising policy and rate structure for Council consideration at a future meeting.