

Strategic Planning Session

Monday, May 16, 2011 at 9:00am

Town Hall Meeting room

Present: Chair Marie Sobalvarro, Bill Johnson, Ron Ricci, Tim Clark, Peter Warren
Town Administrator Tim Bragan/Executive Assistant Julie Doucet

The meeting began with each member and the Town Administrator listing the top three initiatives they perceive for the upcoming year.

Bill Johnson

1. Municipal Buildings Committee (MBC) initiative
2. Structural deficit
3. Planning: Devens/Commercial development

Marie Sobalvarro

1. Fiscal: tightening fees, funding for future capital projects
2. Sewer project seamless implementation
3. MBC initiative

Tim Clark

1. Facilities on the townside with ties to capital planning
2. Revenue generation: review non-taxed/vacant land
3. Regionalization efforts/Devens

Peter Warren

1. MBC initiative
2. Regionalization of services not specific to Devens
3. Town facilities manager

Ron Ricci

1. MBC initiative
2. Structural deficit finding new revenue sources
3. Improve and streamline services/alternate methods

Tim Bragan

1. Facilities,
2. Streamlining, structural deficit tied to fiscal fees and revenues, restructuring fee schedules.
3. MBC initiative

Potential New Initiatives/Issues

Organizational/Operational

Fiscal

The board discussed how to better position the town and prepare departments/committees/boards to develop long range planning. They agreed requiring a five year plan will set the framework and provide a more holistic picture of where the town is. They discussed how to engage others and align thinking to attain common goals.

They envision the following benchmarks:

- An All-Boards meeting in June including all department heads. Encourage all to participate and use liaisons as conduit to feed into.
- Develop sample template for a five year plan

- Set expectations for schedule/deadlines
- July/August: liaisons work with small committees/boards
- October 1 submission of 5 year plans
(Layout goals initiatives, capital, spending requirements)

Tim Bragan will work with Bill Johnson and Tim Clark to finalize dates and overall timelines. They all agree more frequent reports throughout the year from the Capital Planning and Investment Committee (CPIC) will be necessary. Bragan suggested holding a meeting with CPIC prior to their setting guidelines for the upcoming year.

Note: Make CPIC information available on the town website.

Bragan stated the liaisons will be an essential part to make this process work especially with the smaller boards/committees. Bill Johnson said the plans should include goals detailed with action items, tasks and a process involved with achieving those goals. Bragan noted it will be important to manage goals. Johnson will work on a template but does not want to redo what capital has already done. The Selectmen discussed distribution of templates as soon as possible to department heads/boards/committees and a deadline for submission toward the end of June. Community Preservation Committee funds will be considered in the planning process. Johnson envisions the BOS meeting with the Finance Committee and CPIC prior to an All-Boards meeting. This will ensure the Quad-Boards (Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee, Capital Planning & Investment Committee, School Committee) understanding the expectations and commitment to follow through. An All-Boards meeting will be next. Johnson said we should prioritize goals based on the capital costs.

At the BOS June 7th meeting, the board will finalize the process and template. The All-Boards meeting will be held the week of June 13th with the exact date to be determined.

Ron Ricci suggested some training be included at the All-Boards relating to public records law. Tim Bragan said he and Finance Director Lorraine Leonard are currently working on a handbook which explains the finance process.

Fiscal: Fees/Revenue

Marie Sobalvarro recommends a comprehensive review of all town fees. She said many have not been updated in years. Sobalvarro noted state funding and health insurance increases as the two wild cards when it comes to preparing the budget. Bill Johnson suggests focusing on how to fund capital and drive all discussions around that. Concepts discussed were investigating the increase of the CPC contribution, increase/develop new fees, and reconsider taxation of land not currently taxed.

Devens: Tim Bragan noted it is not achievable for Harvard to take over any services in Devens at this time. Ron Ricci said with MassDevelopment coming to us on initiatives can we use this as leverage to flush out some of the details we need to determine if achievable or not. Johnson said if this did happen Harvard would need to do things dramatically different.

Structural Deficit/Fees/Revenues

Topics discussed:

- Five year balanced budget – CPIC will be out of funds in two and a half years
- Devens
- Pay as you throw
- CPC increase
- Capital project funding
- Water/Sewer possible integration
- Review of assessment of tax exempt land
- Development of Enterprise funds when possible example Transfer Station, Water, Cemetery, Park & Recreation
- Fee review

Johnson commented on having a financial sustainability plan which considers future expenses and revenue. Marie Sobalvarro agreed and again expressed the importance to review all fee schedules. Ron Ricci said an immediate review of the rate structure for the water department is necessary. The board also needs to consider how the combination of water and sewer will work and fees established must include funds for ongoing maintenance.

Items discussed on how to manage revenue and expenses:

- Managing spending
- Investigate other revenue opportunities
- Override if necessary
- Increase of CPC contribution

Town Center Sewer project

Marie Sobalvarro wondered if the town is prepared for this project to begin. All the board members agreed this is a huge initiative for this upcoming fiscal year and public outreach will be an important part. Tim Clark said the Sewer project committees have discussed designating someone as the local point of contact for the public. The board directed the Town Administrator, Town Counsel, Sewer Policy Committee Chair Scott Hayward and Sewer Building Committee Chair Chris Ashley to meet and finalize the proposed sewer policy and procedures for the board to approve at an upcoming meeting. Clark anticipates the Sewer Building Committee to take on responsibility of the project until a formal Sewer Commission is appointed. The board is hopeful to appoint a commission by the end of June.

Board of Selectmen Policy and Procedure

Agenda procedures

The board made a minor change in the agenda procedure. They changed acceptance of agenda items by the Wednesday prior to the meeting week instead of Thursday.

Annual Appointments

They discussed annual appointments and decided to advertise re-appointment positions as well as vacancies. This will allow a greater opportunity for those interested to be appointed and allow the committees/boards the ability to recruit new members. Tim

Clark said tenure on committees/boards can be valuable or detrimental. All members agree volunteerism is essential and it is important to have new and fresh ideas.

Relations with other board members

Marie Sobalvarro commented on the importance trust is among members. The board members agreed. Ron Ricci suggested the board hold a monthly “discussion” meeting. This will be a time for the members to inform the others about what they are working on with no votes or decisions made.

Municipal Buildings Committee

Board members received a memo from the existing Municipal Buildings Committee describing items on the critical path, key points of coordination, overall schedule, mission and charge, committee composition and cultural center at 7 Fairbanks Street.

Topics discussed:

- Short timeframe to accomplish schematic designs for Town Hall and the Hildreth House
- Process to hire Owners Project Manager (OPM): short term focus group or committee to continue through entire project
- Development of mission statement
- When to appoint committee, make up of committee, how committee will proceed.
- Scope of work: entire site or just specifics to each building
- Understanding of *Statement of Intent* voted on at the Annual Town Meeting
- Distinct differences in each project
- Significance to follow critical path outlined in memo

Devens Economic Analysis Team (DEAT)

The board briefly discussed how this committee may be able to assist in understanding the financial ramifications of Trinity Financials proposal for redevelopment of Vicksburg Square. Ron Ricci will work on a request for more information from Trinity and will follow up with the School Committee.

Town Planner

Bill Johnson suggests the board investigate possibly hiring a part-time planner to assist the Planning Board, work on Master Plan updates and to be involved in future commercial development initiatives.

The members decided to hold their first “discussion” meeting on Wednesday, May 25th at 9:00am in the Town Hall Meeting room. They will discuss items on this agenda they did not get to.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30pm.