

Town of Barnstable Town Council

**Strategic Planning Session
Saturday, September 27, 2014
9:00 AM – 2:00 PM**

**Barnstable Municipal Airport
480 Barnstable Road
Hyannis, Massachusetts**

Meeting Minutes

BACKGROUND

Members of the Town of Barnstable Town Council participated in a strategic planning session on September 27, 2014. Appendix A contains a list of those in attendance and not in attendance. The objective of the meeting was to discuss and decide on priorities to include in the Town of Barnstable Town Council Strategic Plan for fiscal year 2015. The meeting agenda is included in Appendix B.

Eric J. Roberts and Griffin Smith, both with the Consensus Building Institute, facilitated the session.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION OF DEPARTMENT HEAD FEEDBACK ON PRIORITIES

The Town Council reviewed the department head feedback, which described staff initiatives and efforts to achieve the goals of the 2014 Strategic Plan. The group then discussed the progress to achieve the 2014 Strategic Plan goals and identified opportunities where ongoing efforts could be increased or where new work could be started. Councilor discussion is summarized below:

- Economic Development and related issues: Councilors highlighted the need to increase economic development and acknowledged the influence of permitting, zoning, and growth management on economic development. Some councilors suggested the town should change zoning regulations to encourage development and reverse the decline in new economic development in the town and the high number of retail space vacancies. Another councilor suggested reviewing the growth management leadership job description and refocusing it on planning and economic development work. Some identified the need to complete a comprehensive review of zoning, paying particular attention to the development of economic corridors. Others suggested increasing collaboration between the town staff and the Economic Development Commission. The group also acknowledged the importance of working with the town manager and his staff to support any new priority strategies.

Some councilors commented on the link between economic and affordable housing in the area. They noted that some businesses are reluctant to relocate in Barnstable because there is not enough affordable housing available for their entry-level employees to live in. Councilors commented that the lack of affordable housing, in turn, causes some younger citizens to leave Barnstable and dissuades other young professionals from moving to Barnstable. A councilor stated that the tourism industry does not provide young entry-level professionals with a salary base adequate to live in Barnstable. Some councilors suggested greater priority be placed on development of affordable rental homes or mixed-use homes throughout Barnstable but especially in Hyannis. In a related conversation, some councilors suggested Barnstable should focus on expanding tourism since this industry is well established while others thought new industries should be enticed to locate in Barnstable.

- **Permitting and Regulatory:** The group listed several areas of potential improvement related to permitting, many of which focused on the permitting process or overall service delivery. Related to the permitting process, several Councilors identified the need to implement electronic permitting to make the process more user-friendly, efficient, and transparent. Some Councilors noted that residents are starting to think that the town is purposefully avoiding the transition to an electronic permitting process. Some Councilors suggested hiring temporary assistance to implement the electronic permitting process. Related to service delivery, Councilors identified two training opportunities for staff: training to operate electronic permitting software, and professional and cultural awareness training to enhance customer service delivery. Many councilors suggested that the process to obtain permits for regularly held community events should be easier to navigate and that electronic permitting could help make this easier. Some councilors suggested evaluating the potential to hire someone in the permitting office for an ombudsman-like position to guide permit applicants through the regulatory process.
- **Communication:** The group underscored the need for improved communication on several levels. First, the group identified the need for improved communication between the town manager, town departments, and the Town Councilors to ensure accountability to the residents of Barnstable. They suggested that communication between the town manager and council members should occur early (as in when and if issues seem to be rising) and often (as in keeping councilors abreast of ongoing happenings), and germane to decision-making (more information about the issues, less information about ground breaking ceremonies and other public presentations). Some participants also suggested that precinct specific updates such as road repairs or DPW actions would be useful. The group agreed that they should meet together more

frequently, within the requirements set forth by the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law, to improve inter-council relations and communication.

The second level of communication improvements identified by the councilors was between the town and its residents. Some councilors noted the need for the town to better communicate its initiatives to its citizens by using a variety of communication channels (in addition to already utilized channels) including public safety announcements, community groups and message boards, and social media platforms.

SURVEY RESPONSES, KEY PRIORITY TOPICS, AND RANKING CRITERIA AND STRATEGIC PLAN PRIORITIES

Mr. Roberts briefed the participants on the results from the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (S.W.O.T.) analysis and the list of priority topic areas, which were both generated via a survey completed by council members prior to the session. In response, some members of the group noted that the council should focus both on what to improve in the town and what to appreciate and preserve. The Town Council members then listed priority topic areas that Barnstable could work towards in 2015 and briefly discussed criteria to rank the list of priority topics they had identified. The group decided that the list of priority topic areas could not be ranked since all the topics are all important and interconnected, and each contributes to the overall quality of life in Barnstable. Councilor comments are summarized below:

- **Fulfill Council Obligations and Logistics:** Councilors commented that the council should review and update its charter annually as required. Some councilors commented that the Council should review and revise Town Councilor compensation since it has not been revised in many years. Council members also identified the need to review the performance of the current town manager and implement a process to renew his contract or hire a new employee. Some said that if necessary the council should revise the town manager job description before renewing the contract or searching for a replacement. The group also discussed how best to conduct a review of the manager by June 2015. Councilors suggested the manager could conduct a self-review to be evaluated by the council, or the council could form a subcommittee to review the manager's performance. Councilors agreed that the review process needs to be public, should use the same review format as the last town manager review, and be directed by a review committee.
- **Accountability and Communication:** The Town Council emphasized the importance of increasing communication between the councilors and the town manager. Some councilors suggested the town manager's report could be earlier

on town meeting agendas and include time for question and answer about precinct or topic specific questions.

- Access to Quality of Life: The council should focus on preserving and improving the public's access to beaches and parks.
- Infrastructure: The town should further investigate the viability and best practices for beach nourishment and review how best to maintain and regulate the numerous private roadways in the town. In addition, the town needs to balance infrastructure concerns with environmental and endangered species preservation.
- Environment and Natural Resources: Coastal issues, including access to water and boating, require greater attention.
- Permitting and Zoning Review: The town needs to focus on setting up a quality e-permitting system quickly and conduct a comprehensive zoning review to encourage population and business growth. The town needs to plan ahead to consider how best to develop Barnstable's communities. The council should set firm deadlines for these priorities.
- Economic Development: The group discussed reframing the growth management department's role to one of economic development and planning to encourage job and business growth. Council members suggested solutions, including setting stricter deadlines for initiatives, like e-permitting, developing strategies to grow business, creating a body to welcome and orient perspective businesses, improving the attitude and openness of the growth management department's staff, reorganizing the growth management department, bolstering collaboration and communication between the commission and growth management department, using the planning resources provided by the Cape Cod Commission to reduce costs and boost capacity, and updating the charge of the head of the growth management department.
- Committee Leadership: The council discussed reviewing the term limits for committee leaders and implementing rotations as well as revising committee charges and handbooks. These measures could help encourage new ideas and changes, though it could be difficult to find new people for these positions.
- Commitment to Youth and Drug and Crime Prevention: The group noted that over 95% of calls to Barnstable police involve drug addiction cases, and the public pays for this addiction problem and resulting crime through taxes. Legalized medical marijuana could also create a new set of issues, which need to be regulated. The youth of Barnstable need to be brought in for drug prevention

discussions, and the Town Council should forge stronger connections with the Youth Commission.

- Education: The councilors discussed whether education should be included in their charter given that another council oversees it, and the Town Council simply approves the other council. Others noted that, since the council approves the education budget and advises the superintendent, it is important to retain it in the strategic plan.

REVIEW AND REVISIONS OF BARNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL 2015 STRATEGIC PLAN

Mr. Roberts walked the Town Council through the previous Barnstable Strategic Plan for the 2014 fiscal year. Drawing on areas of potential work identified by the department head feedback and the list of priority topics, the council reviewed and revised the Strategic Plan for the 2015 fiscal year. For each priority area, the group revised the goal statements, added new strategies to better meet objectives, and eliminated strategies that were no longer relevant. Changes to the goals and strategies are captured in the Draft 2015 Barnstable Strategic Plan.

The group agreed to create a new committee to review the performance of the town manager during the strategic plan discussion. Fred Chirigotis, Jennifer Cullum, Debra Dagwan, James Crocker, and Eric Steinhilber will sit on the committee.

NEXT STEPS

Based on the dialogue, the next steps are:

- CBI will incorporate councilor comments into a draft 2015 Strategic Plan and produce a meeting report, then distribute both documents to the Council members.
- The Town Councilors will use track changes to complete a 'Red Flag Review' (identification of major omissions and errors as opposed to a detailed mark-up) of the draft 2015 strategic plan and the draft meeting summary and send comments back to Mr. Roberts (eroberts@cbuilding.org).
- Mr. Roberts will incorporate the suggested revisions into the draft strategic plan and return to the Town Council.
- The Town Council will review and vote on the revised Strategic Plan at a future meeting.

**APPENDIX A
Participant List**

Town Council Members Present:

Name	Precinct
Precinct 1, Council Vice President	Anne B. Canedy
Precinct 2	Eric R. Steinhilber
Precinct 3	Paul Hebert
Precinct 4	Frederick Chirigotis
Precinct 5	James H. Crocker, Jr.
Precinct 6	William Crocker, Jr.
Precinct 7, Council President	Jessica Rapp Grassetti
Precinct 8	Debra S. Dagwan
Precinct 10	Sara Cushing
Precinct 11	Phillip Wallace
Precinct 13	Jennifer L. Cullum

Town Council Members Absent:

Name	Precinct
Precinct 9	James M. Tinsley
Precinct 12	John T. Norman

APPENDIX B
Meeting Agenda

Town of Barnstable Town Council
Strategic Planning Session
Saturday September 27, 2014
9:00 am to 2:00 pm

Barnstable Municipal Airport
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Hyannis, Massachusetts

Objectives:

- Discuss and decide on priorities to include in the Town of Barnstable Town Council Strategic Plan for Fiscal Year 2015

- 9:00** **Welcome, Introductions, Review Agenda and Objectives**
- 9:15** **Council Discussion of Department Head Feedback on Priorities**
- 9:45** **Survey Responses, Key Priority Topics, and Ranking Criteria**
- 10:30** **Break**
- 10:40** **Ranking Strategic Plan Priorities**
- 12:00** **Lunch**
- 12:30** **Priorities, Goals, and Strategies Development or Elaboration in Small Groups**
- 1:00** **Discussion of Small Group Work on Priorities, Goals, and Strategies**
- 2:00** **Adjourn**