



TOWN COUNCIL – AGENDA REQUEST FORM

THIS FORM WILL BECOME PART OF THE BACKGROUND INFORMATION USED BY THE COUNCIL AND PUBLIC

Please submit Agenda Request Form, including back up information, 8 days prior to the requested meeting date. **Public Hearing requests must be submitted 20 days prior to requested meeting date to meet publication deadlines** (exceptions may be authorized by the Town Manager, Chairman/Vice Chair).

MEETING INFORMATION

Date Submitted: December 29, 2014
 Submitted by: Town Manager Eileen Cabanel
 Department:
 Speakers: Eileen Cabanel

Date of Meeting: January 8, 2015
 Time Required: 20 minutes
 Background Info. Supplied: Yes: No:

CATEGORY OF BUSINESS (PLEASE PLACE AN "X" IN THE APPROPRIATE BOX)

Appointment:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Recognition/Resignation/Retirement:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public Hearing:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Old Business:	<input type="checkbox"/>
New Business:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Consent Agenda:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nonpublic:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>

TITLE OF ITEM

Goal Update

DESCRIPTION OF ITEM

The Town Council to be presented with an update on the current goals of 2014 and beyond.

REFERENCE (IF KNOWN)

RSA:	Warrant Article:
Charter Article:	Town Meeting:
Other:	N/A

EQUIPMENT REQUIRED (PLEASE PLACE AN "X" IN THE APPROPRIATE BOX)

Projector:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Grant Requirements:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Easel:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Joint Meeting:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Special Seating:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Laptop:	<input type="checkbox"/>	None:	<input type="checkbox"/>

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name:	Eileen Cabanel	Address:	6 Baboosic Lake Road
Phone Number:	424-2331	Email Address:	ecabanel@merrimacknh.gov

APPROVAL

Town Manager: Yes No: Chair/Vice Chair: Yes No:

Hold for Meeting Date: _____

Current Goals - 2014 and Beyond

The Council's agenda for this session broke the areas for discussion into four main headers: Infrastructure; Communication; Quality of Life Issues; and Other. The items were addressed in that order.

Infrastructure

a. i. Public Works Garage – Voted Priority #1 by Group

The bond to build a new Public Works Garage failed – it needed 66 percent of the vote but received only 57 percent. However, the Council noted that the majority of voters did approve, so there is already some momentum behind the project. Councilors agreed to go forward with the same project again and explore the following ideas in order to build the necessary voter support:

- Survey* voters to better understand their thoughts on the new garage. If they didn't approve, why? (*Note: Council agreed that any surveys done should combine all questions on any desired subjects, not just the PW garage.)
- Be more proactive about marketing the project and spreading information. Explore use of reader boards, door-to-door visits, meetings with local civic organizations, social media, etc.
- Explore ways to scale back the project, "sharpen the pencil" and bring down the total cost
- Revise the artistic rendering that was presented to voters – consensus that the original image gave residents an unrealistic idea of the scope of the project
- Seek assistance/advice from existing contacts (one is at Harvey Construction; one is a local PR/consultant with experience on other local projects)
- **Town Council requested the Town Manager to advertise for a new committee to review the cost and project. As of this date we only received one person who is will to serve on this committee. The Town Manager has not included the Bond in the 2015-16 budget request that was recently sent to the Town Council. It is included in the CIP to be funded in 2016-17. It is scheduled to be discussed more formally at the January 15th budget meeting.**

ii. Next Generation of Vehicles

The group received a list of all Town-owned vehicles. Many of the newer cars are computerized, and standard maintenance has become more challenging – everything is code-based and requires specialized equipment to read the

codes. Additionally, there is concern that routine practices are not keeping up with these changes (e.g. using regular oil in synthetic oil cars).

Council reached consensus to look into working with other communities on the purchase of necessary mobile equipment, or possibly outsourcing the maintenance. The Council would also like to collect data on the DPW activities and assigned tasks for clarity and to identify potential areas for process improvement.

- **The finance department is in the process of reviewing all work orders processed by the Equipment Maintenance division and will be bringing these finding forward to the town Manager shortly. The Town Manager has asked PWD to put together a cost analysis and explore potentially contracting out various types of vehicle repair and maintenance.**

- b. Fire Department Study for Future Needs – Voted Priority #2 by Group
The “South Fire Station” topic was expanded to include a more complete look at the current and future fire and other public safety needs of the community, and how these needs relate to any building/facility needs. Data has been collected on FD calls: type of call, location, etc., and the Council wants to hire a consultant to analyze this data and present a high-level overview of Merrimack’s current and future Fire/EMS needs. Other possibilities discussed for the future included the following:

- Expand current services to offer walk-in type care (blood-pressure checks, wound dressing changes, etc.)
- Consolidate Police and Fire Departments – “Merrimack First Response” or “Merrimack Public Safety”
- Require new firefighters to also be trained as EMTs to address community’s evolving needs
- The group noted the importance of being transparent with the Fire Department and with all affected stakeholders as this study is conducted.
- **The Town Manager has assembled a group of individuals to begin sorting through the computer information we currently have. Once this group has compiled the data, they will be working toward understanding the needs of the department and how it has changed over the last 7 to 10 years and what they foresee the future of the Fire/EMS department to be.**

- c. Parks

- i. Wasserman Park – Voted Priority #3 by Group

The future of, and vision for, Wasserman Park continues to be an area of focus for the Town Council. The new Parks & Recreation director has provided a report with suggestions for the

park's future, but Council needs to provide direction as to what should be done with the park's buildings, many of which are in disrepair. The Finance Director gave the Council an update on the status of various buildings and the maintenance they currently require. He estimated that total repairs for the entire camp (not including electrical upgrades) would total approximately \$20,000. Priority repairs for the Summer of 2014 were identified as the following:

- Paint cabins
- Repair roof of summer day camp office
- Find and patch leak in roof of Arts and Crafts building
- Paint MYA Soccer storage building

Total cost: \$6,000 – currently in budget

- **The Town Council has appropriated \$55,000 to fund several projects to help enhance Wasserman Park. The P&R director has put together a plan to complete these tasks as well as provide additional parking along with easier access to the waterfront while continue maintenance on the grounds.**

The group reached consensus to propose a recreation revolving fund (authority under RSA 35-B:2 Tax and Appropriations) to cover maintenance and repairs needed for the park. This would be a ballot item. Other Comments Regarding Wasserman Park:

- **The Town Council will be considering whether or not to include a revolving fund on the April 2015 Town Ballot.**
- Lions Club would like to adopt one of the buildings for repair – explore the idea of challenging other civic organizations to do the same
- Council would like P&R Director and Committee to review and conceptualize expanded road access in the park, and then bring a plan to Council
- Council would like P&R Director to evaluate storage space in basement of park's function hall
- Suggestion to change the sign at Wasserman Park (and all Town parks) to include new logo
- **The Town Council received a maintenance plan from The P&R Director to accomplish these goals at the December 18th meeting. He will begin looking into the cost to change the sign at Wasserman Park to include new logo.**

ii. Watson Park

There has been discussion of bringing an ice skating rink to this park, and the group is supportive of this idea – it would bring strong visual appeal to the area. There is some concern about bringing electricity to the park in a way that will not be an eye sore; the group agreed that they do not want a pole in front of the park or near an entrance, but it could be placed in a back corner of the park. (Solar power is also an option to be explored.) The group noted the need to be mindful of the park’s neighbors and any impacts to them before implementing any changes.

- **Electricity has been brought to the pavilion. The Town is awaiting the decision on the tennis courts before moving forward with moving the ice skating park.**

d. Town Hall Complex – Ambulance Garage – Voted Priority #4 by Group

The Ambulance Garage is currently being used as storage space for various Town departments. The options for this garage are either to undergo extensive repairs (new roof, new doors, new windows, and new garage doors) or tear down the facility. The group agreed not to repair the garage at this point – recommended tear down and purchase of shed for storage. This will be an item for next year’s budget. The group noted that there may be some citizens who are concerned about tearing down this facility, and they agreed that the historic marker inside should be preserved.

- **This item will be presented to the Town Council in a meeting in the near future. Currently all Fire equipment and apparatus have been removed from the garage. There are two vehicles stored in the garage, Building and Grounds and Police CSI vehicle.**

e. Roads and Bridges – Continental Boulevard

The State has the authority to declare this road no longer a state highway, at which point the Town would have no recourse and may need to close the road. Closing the road would have widespread impacts throughout Town. Councilors suggested finding out whether the State would at least assist with reconditioning of the road; right now it is on an as-is basis. The group discussed the potential of holding a public hearing to discuss the dilemma and how the Town should handle it – phrase it as “possible road closure.”

- **The Town has not heard anything further on this topic from the state.**

f. Sewer Expansion

The group discussed whether sewer expansion is a current priority for the Council. The consensus was that it is on the Council’s radar, but is not an urgent need. The Town Manager informed the group that this no longer needs to be funded through the general fund; it can be funded through the WWTF going forward.

School Sewer Line – A development wants to go in near the middle school. The Town never accepted the sewer line there as it is not built to specifications or in the right-of-way. There is uncertainty here – it may require discussion between the Council and the SAU.

- **This project went before the school board and the developer agree to proceed with a traffic study before going to the Planning Board for approval. The Developer would like to begin the repairs during the summer of 2015 when school is out.**

Sewer Access Fees – The current access fee for some land parcels (hotels, restaurants) is \$500,000, and there is fear that this negatively affects the marketability of the land. The Council is set to see a new proposal in May that involves a tiered fee system and the fees are greatly reduced.

- **This has been approved the Town Council**

g. Library

Brief discussion only – other priorities take precedence right now.

h. Infrastructure Other

Depot Street Pump Station – This station is located on Town property, but the only way to access it is through private property. The private property owner is requesting that it either be repaired or removed. The group decided to invest a small amount of money (under \$500) to secure the pump station until a decision is made on how to proceed. Long-term repairs would include a new roof, which would cost between \$4,000 and \$6,000 to replace. The group also agreed to seek input from the Town's Heritage Commission as they may want to preserve the pump station for historic purposes.

- **This building has no historic significance and will be demolished in the spring.**

Storm Water Permit – MS-4 – Merrimack joined with other communities to hire attorney to challenge the EPA, and the EPA has not yet responded. This item is currently in limbo.

- **The Town is still monitoring these developments and if anything changes we will bring them forward to the town Council.**

Communication

a. Survey Monkey

The group discussed the idea of using both electronic and paper surveys to solicit public feedback on a variety of issues, and agreed to reach out to an expert over the summer to assist with developing good questions.

- **Town Council decided against conducting a survey at this time.**

b. Increasing Voter Turnout

In an effort to encourage more residents to vote, the group is in favor of using increased promotional signage prior to Town elections, and to using this signage both inside and outside of the center of Town. There was agreement to look into renting signs and asking local businesses to use their signage as well.

- **The Town will be renting message boards for the April elections as well asking businesses along the major corridors to remind voters of the upcoming elections.**

Quality of Life Issues

a. Tennis Court Issue

Tennis courts are currently being evaluated by the State, with a decision to come sometime in June (the courts are expected to fail inspection). The Council agreed to remove asphalt if requested to do so by the school board, but not to do anything else at this time. If the State requires additional work, the Council will address it then.

- **Still waiting for a decision from the state/federal government**

b. Sidewalk discussion

i. Sidewalk master plan? Other communities have a “sidewalk fund” and a sidewalk master plan that designates priorities. In order to put this in place, the planning board will need to be on board and will also need funds to develop a master plan. There was some discussion as to which areas of town need sidewalks, and which do not (there was not complete agreement in this area).

- **The Planning board has formed a sub-committee to look at the sidewalk master plan. They believe a draft will be presented to the Planning Board in mid-summer and then will be forwarded along to the Town Council for their input.**

ii. Church Street closing? There was group consensus that Church Street is dangerous and should be closed, but that this discussion should wait until Wire Rd. Intersection discussion, which will be reviewed again in a few years.

- **This project is on hold and will be reviewed when the construction of the Wire Road intersection and widening of the US route 3 Bridge project begin. The Bridge project is scheduled to begin in 2018-19.**

c. Explore a Boat Launch Off of Griffin Street

There is an area off Griffin Street that may be a logical spot to put in a boat ramp for access to the Merrimack River. The Town owns this property now, and the group agreed it needs more attention and occasional police patrol as it has been neglected for a while. The group agreed the Parks and Recreation Director could be tasked with having the State review whether a boat launch can be located there.

- **Bob L'Heureux met with Fish & Game in June 2014 and this project has been removed from their priority list. He suggests we send Fish and Game a letter expressing the reasons for the Town's continued desire for access to the Merrimack River as well as informing them that the Town has set aside funding for the Town's portion of this project once the state funds become available.**

d. Rev. Wright Property

General update only – no action at this time, but this item will eventually require input/guidance from the Council.

- **No New developments**

e. Parking on Amherst Road

The group discussed the need for additional parking on this road to accommodate sporting events on nearby fields. The group agreed that the Parks and Recreation Director should work with the Public Works Department to develop options for increasing parking in this area, and then present the options to the Council.

- **This item is pending and will be reviewed and worked on during the next six months**

Other

a. Explore using the Wright Avenue property (plating site) and the landfill to generate revenues via solar

Councilor Boyd told the group that there is grant money available for municipalities to develop solar farms on economically disadvantaged property. This would theoretically generate enough electricity to power some Town buildings, and/or "sell back" some of the electricity to the power company. There are several challenges with logistics (transmitting electricity and line loss),

but there was some interest in the group about exploring this idea. Councilor Boyd agreed to gather additional information and bring it back for the Council's review.

- **The EPA once again met with the Finance Director in October of 2014 to discuss this property. They informed the Finance Director there were people interested in buying the property. The Finance Director mentioned that this may be a good site for solar farm. EPA was excited about this idea and said they had to do more work on their end and will be in touch with the Town.**

b. Discussion Question: Are we adequately staffed for the future?

The Town Manager told the group that she is currently brainstorming regarding succession planning in several key roles throughout Town. The larger discussion surrounded the need for analysis of how Merrimack is growing, and what the Town will need to do in order to accommodate that growth. There is also a need to determine whether the current skill-set is proportionally adequate (Police, Fire, EMT, DPW, WWTF, etc.) for the community's needs, both now and in the future. The group agreed that this item should remain on the radar.

Additionally, there was consensus that the Town should develop a comprehensive, cross-departmental crisis-management response plan in case of a larger-scale crisis or emergency (the recent Brentwood officer shooting was used as an example). Members of the group said that a smaller Town group has been effective in dealing with smaller-scale incidents, but that a larger plan is a significant need.

- **The Town Manager will continue to monitor the needs of the community with the help of the Departments as it relates to staffing adequacy. Any staffing needs will be brought to the Town Council during the budget process. If a need arises outside the budget process the Town Manager will bring it the need at a Town Council meeting.**