

Working together is success.

— Henry Ford



Town of Merrimack

Goal Setting Session

Buckley's Great Steaks

June 17, 2019

(Approved: September 12, 2019)

Participants

Eileen Cabanel, Town Manager

Paul Micali, Assistant Town Manager and Finance Director

Thomas Koenig, Chair

William W. Boyd, III, Vice Chair

Peter Albert, Councilor

Nancy Harrington, Councilor

Barbara Healey, Councilor

Finlay Rothhaus, Councilor

Lon Woods, Councilor

Purpose of the Session

The Council gathered with their most Senior Staff for their yearly facilitated Goal Setting Session. The Council was provided with a working agenda and binder filled with back up material for each agenda item.

Goal: Town Buildings

1. Maintenance
 - a. The Council reviewed the Town-wide building maintenance plan that was based on not moving ahead with a Public Safety Building and Library project. If the thought of a Public Safety Building was to come off the table this report shows what needs to be updated and renovated for every building in Town. The current plan shows much work will need to be done to the current Central Fire Station and the Police Department.
2. Establishment of a Capital Reserve Fund (CRF) verses Capital Expenditure Fund (CEF)
 - a. The Council asked Finance Director Micali to obtain a legal opinion from Town Counsel explaining in detail how these funds work and the benefits and shortcomings of them are as well. This item was tabled for now.
3. Reeds Ferry Station
 - a. Council would like the true ownership of the land the station sits on to be further researched to see if GE still owns the land or St. Gobain does.
 - b. The facility currently needs about \$300k worth of renovations and repairs. These repairs were put on hold till the decision on the Public Safety Building is determined. At the minimum Council will vote at a future meeting to complete about \$16k worth of repairs are emergency repairs.
 - c. Further research will also need to be completed to ensure the Shedd–Harris Fund is in the Town’s control or was it turned over to the Merrimack Village District with the water system.

4. Highway Garage Sign

The Council has opted for a generic sign to be installed on site stating the name: Town of Merrimack Highway and Maintenance Complex.

5. Public Safety Building

- a. A space needs assessment of the Fire and Police departments has been completed by a professional firm.
- b. The Shaws North property seems to be the most ideal. The Town Manager is currently working with owner of the land to see if it is feasible.
- c. The Council agreed to vote, form, and authorize a Public Safety Building Committee at a July/August meeting. The committee would be comprised of Councilors Albert, Healey and Harrington. Along with the Town Manager, Finance Director, Police and Fire Chief, representatives from both Police and Fire unions and a member of the public.
- d. The Council also wants to study the cost of the building but also study the costs of building two independent buildings to show as a comparison.
- e. The potential North Fire Station was also discussed. Should it be located off of Exit 12 near Bedford and Davis Roads? This will be a future discussion for the Council as it dives deeper into the Public Safety Building location.
- f. Funding options besides general taxation is \$650K MPO Fund, \$1.2M Shedd-Harris Fund, \$400k Land Bank Fund, sale of the current PD and FD buildings as revenue offsets.

6. Parks and Recreation Buildings

- a. The Council reviewed a detailed report written by the Town's Building Department on the state of the buildings at Wasserman Park. The report showed what needs to be done to bring many of these buildings up to code.
- b. Council wants to visit Wasserman Park to see the state of the buildings to help make a determination regarding future funding.
- c. Council asked that the report from the Building Department be shared with the Parks and Recreation Committee and obtain feedback regarding the idea of razing unused buildings that are in poor repair. Committee to report back to the Town Council with their findings.
- d. Council would like a visit or a report from Director Casparius detailing his vision for the future of the Parks and Recreation Department and its programming goals as it pertains to the use or ongoing need for any of the cabins at Wasserman Park.
- e. Eight roofs could be replaced this summer at Wasserman Park with a cost of \$30k. This will be tabled until the Council can visit with Director Casparius, except approval given to proceed with the re-roofing of the Arts and Craft building.

7. Library Project Update

- a. Finance Director Micali provided an update to the Council regarding the Library's hopes for a possible renovation/addition in about two years' time.

Goal: Roads Bridges, and Infrastructure

1. F.E. Everett Turnpike (F.E.E.T.)
 - a. The Council would like to keep encouraging the State of New Hampshire to reconsider their denial of sound barriers during the Everett Turnpike Widening Project in interest of their residents.
2. Culverts and Sidewalks
 - a. The engineering interns are about to begin inspections throughout Town.
 - b. The Council would like to see a plan, with costs, to complete gaps in our current sidewalk system within the urban compact. The Town Center Committee and Public Works Dept. in conjunction with NRPC data, to perform a complete analysis of filling in or completing sidewalks from the Merrimack 360 Plaza to Bedford Road, along the west side of the Daniel Webster Highway. Analysis should also include itemized costs associated with each segment. Town Manager Cabanel, Finance Director Micali, along with the Public Works Director to present a plan at a future meeting.

Goal: Budget Issues

1. Gravel Roads and Funding of paved roads
 - a. Council was presented with an update on the state of the gravel roads in Town along with any maintenance planned on these roads.
 - b. Road maintenance funds should continue to focus on paved roads based on the matrix used by the Public Works Department.
2. Drainage
 - a. A detailed report was given to the Council from the Public Works Director showing the various drainage systems throughout Town and the scoring used to prioritize maintenance and repair.
3. Wages and Benefits
 - a. A wage and comparison study was completed by Town personnel researching wages for the Town's non-union employees. Currently the non-union employees do not have a step system. Each non-union position has a wage scale but not a step system.
 - b. The Town Manager reviewed and shared the study with the Council
 - c. Town Manager Cabanel will bring forward a step system proposal for all non-union employees and management team this budget season.
4. Solar Exemptions
 - a. The Council believes the Town should offer an exemption for its citizens who install a solar system on their property. The belief is it should be a 100% with a cap. The cap was not determined at this time.
 - b. The Council will discuss at a future meeting if the Council should make this decision for the community or should it be placed on the warrant for Town Meeting and allow the voters to decide.

5. Veterans Tax Exemption
 - a. The Council was updated about the current law that allows the Town to add an additional exemption under the Town's Veterans Exemption. As in the previous discussion regarding solar exemptions, the Council will decide at a future meeting to either vote to update the exemption or place it on the warrant for the voters to decide.
6. Merrimack Youth Association (MYA)
 - a. The Council was updated on the revenue discrepancies in the MYA's books. The Town is currently withholding the final payment of their subsidy to the MYA due to the lack of follow up from the MYA Executive Board to address the audit findings.
 - b. Town Manager Cabanel will also begin negotiating a new contract with the MYA that will look different from the current at Councilor Boyd's request.

Goal: Athletic Fields

1. Existing fields needs and a plan
 - a. If the Elbit property is sold the Town would need to consider potential new land for future athletic fields for the Town.
 - b. Explore the use of the Horse Hill Preserve with Parks and Rec. regarding athletic fields.
 - c. Charge the Park and Recreation Committee to help come up with some future field options
 - d. Could the land on West Chamberlain be used for future field development?

Goal: Parks


1. Repairs have been made to the Skateboard Park that were recommended by Primex³.
2. Per the Council, proceed with using \$5k to make additional repairs with the money coming from end of the year budget balances.
3. A proposal has been brought forward to replace the docks at Wasserman Park that has a cost of \$42k. The Council likes the proposal and would like it to be placed in the 2020-21 budget for consideration rather than finding the money in this year's budget.

Goal: Town Departments

1. The Council would like to discuss the impacts of fees at a future Council meeting.
2. Council reviewed current staffing levels by department and discussed what future staffing needs by department may be needed.
3. Council would like to hear from Department Heads what the potential ramifications are if the community continues to grow as it is and these requests are not met.
4. Town Manager Cabanel to track the status of HB641 and if appropriate, authorize her to send a letter of support to the Governor at their next Town Council meeting.



Goal: Fund Balance

1. The Council discussed with Town Manager Cabanel and Finance Director Micali the potential use of fund balance for one-time expense i.e.: Public Safety Building.
 2. Council reviewed its fund balance policy and along with the current amount in the fund balance. The current number exceeds the maximum expected under the policy.
 3. The Council will consider the use of the fund balance to help offset the cost of a new Public Safety Building limiting the amount to be raised by general taxation.
 4. The Council also discussed using end of the year 2018-19 budget surpluses for a few projects that need to be completed around Town, i.e., the Skate-park upgrades and roofs at Wasserman Park.
 5. Town Manager Cabanel and Finance Director Micali will have a list of potential projects for Council to consider at their last meeting of the fiscal year in June.
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