

Working together is success.
— Henry Ford



Town of Merrimack
New Hampshire

Facilitated Goals and Objective Work Session
Summary Report
July 23, 2015



Promoting Excellence in the Public Sector

DRAFT

Purpose and Intended Result of the Session

The intent of the July 23, 2015 session with the Town Council and Senior Administrative staff was to review the progress the Town of Merrimack made over the year on any of the outstanding goals, and to look forward to 2015-2016. Primex³ was pleased to be a part of this process to assist the Town in this important endeavor.

The report is not intended to be a verbatim account of the discussion, but rather to capture these major points and concepts.

Participants

Nancy Harrington, Chairman

Thomas Mahon, Vice-Chairman

Dan Dwyer, Councilor

Thomas Koenig, Councilor

Finlay Rothhaus, Councilor

William W. Boyd III, Councilor

Jody Vaillancourt, Councilor

Eileen Cabanel, Town Manager

Paul Micali, Finance Director

The exercise was facilitated by:

Rick Alpers, Member Services Consultant, Primex³

2015 Goal Review Discussion

NED Pipeline

- **Town Manager's responsibilities**
 - ✓ General discussion around how much time Town Manager should be spending on tasks related to the NED Pipeline.
 - ✓ Town Manager noted things seem to be winding down, but many things come up that only she can handle. It was important for Council to know that she is busy and that she's not sitting around doing nothing.
 - ✓ It was discussed that the NED Pipeline may be interfering with the Town Manager's abilities to do her job and she stated that the subject matter can make for a very busy day.

- ✓ Town Manager estimated that ¾ of her day is spent on NED Pipeline matters.
 - ✓ Town Manager noted that no one at Kinder Morgan is giving her straight answers about what is going on.
 - ✓ She expressed interest in protecting groundwater and emphasizes that the Town's largest employer, Fidelity, should be made aware.
 - ✓ Council concluded that the Town Manager should be the point person for NED Pipeline issues, but when she has a lot going on, said issues need to wait.
 - ✓ Council additionally concluded that it is okay if Kinder Morgan has to wait for a response from the Town Manager so that she can tend to general Town business.
 - ✓ It should be noted that the Town Manager has the support of the Town Council and everyone agrees she is doing well.
- **Monetary limits**
 - ✓ There is hesitancy on what the monetary limit should be.
 - ✓ It may come to needing more time in order to conclude.
 - ✓ It was suggested that once a month the Town Manger updates Council with an explanation of what and why certain amounts were spent on legal.
 - **Town involvement going forward**
 - ✓ A map was passed around that is not endorsed and it was noted that well heads were not addressed.
 - ✓ Kinder Morgan has concern about the railroads due to vibrations and/or how close they actually are to the railroad.
 - ✓ There was question about whether the Council should communicate with the MVD.
 - ✓ Council noted they will all be present for the scoping meeting.

2015 Goals and Beyond

INFRASTRUCTURE

The group discussed the following areas around the Town's infrastructure and current projects that are in place.

Public Works Garage

- **DPW Garage plan of attack**
 - ✓ Town Manager suggested the potential use of fund balance (\$1.5 million) to offset the cost of the garage.

- ✓ If the \$1.5 million is not allocated to this, it will go into the unfunded balance.
 - ✓ \$1.8 million for garage bond (total cost of \$3.3 million – use of fund balance \$1.5 million)
 - ✓ Town Council anticipates the public will prefer one bond to finish before another begins.
 - ✓ Council questioned what plan B will be after the DPW Garage plan has been voted down three times.
 - ✓ Council also questioned whether it would be a good idea to wait another year and see if discussion with the architect has changes.
 - ✓ It was noted that if a new garage is not built, the Town must move forward with renovations because conditions are deplorable.
 - ✓ There is consensus to move ahead with the plan for this year, but there is concern about the public voting it down due to higher taxes.
- **South Fire Station plan**
- ✓ Council questioned whether a new station is needed, or if renovating would be a better route. Council also questioned whether they should do nothing.
 - ✓ It seems unlikely that the Town will vote for a new station.
 - ✓ It is discussed whether South Station should become a paramedic/EMS response station with fire backup.
 - ✓ It is also discussed whether going forward with the DPW Garage place should inhibit them from moving forward with South Station.
 - ✓ It seems that renovating and adding an addition will cost more than building a new building, but the first portion of renovations will be the costliest.
 - ✓ Council noted that the Chief should remain at the Central Station and South Station is considered a substation.
 - ✓ As far as mutual aid goes, Merrimack responds to Bedford more than Bedford responds to Merrimack.
 - ✓ The thought of joining forces with surrounding towns is unlikely at this time.
- **Staffing needs town wide**
- ✓ Additional staff of two new police officers in the 2015 budget.
 - ✓ There has been difficulty keeping dispatchers.
 - ✓ Staffing does need to be addressed at the Fire Department

Parks

- **Wasserman Park**
 - ✓ Many goals have been accomplished at the Park including a new parking lot.
 - ✓ Town Manager suggested a revolving fund for Parks and Recreation Director that way he can make decisions and if the money is not available, updates cannot be made.
 - ✓ Council concluded they need to hear more from Parks and Recreation Director regarding the revolving fund. They are expecting this at their August 20th meeting.
 - ✓ Council discussed putting some money towards the park and the function hall, particularly the sprinkler and heating system.

- **Watson Park**
 - ✓ The Council continues to make monetary investments in the Park.

Town Hall Complex

- **Ambulance Garage**
 - ✓ The Council discussed the current needs of the building and they are as follows:
 - Siding
 - Roof
 - Windows
 - Entry door
 - ✓ Council approves the need to spend \$34,000 to restore the building.

Roads and Bridges

- **Church Street/Pizza Man**
 - ✓ Church Street/Pizza Man is looking to add additional parking and has made arrangements with the Church for said parking.
 - ✓ Informally, Council wants to close Church Street in order to add a sidewalk and question what the numbers would look like to do so.

- **Continental Blvd.**
 - ✓ Council questioned who owns what regarding Continental Blvd.
 - ✓ It is noted that the Town will take over Continental Blvd. when exit 11 is eliminated and the Bedford toll plaza is moved.
 - ✓ It was concluded that any questions around Continental Blvd. are not of immediate concern.

Library Building

- ✓ Council moved this topic to the September/October agenda because they are not planning to propose a new library any time soon.

Infrastructure other

- ✓ No news was noted.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Revenue Systems

- ✓ A Developer is interested in constructing a 70 to 80 foot sign, but said Developer would not disclose what business they intend to cultivate.
- ✓ A question is posed from the Developer as to whether the Council can get behind the tree and toll removal.
- ✓ Council agreed there is no harm is taking down the trees because any business going into that space needs to be visible.
- ✓ At this time, the drafted letter of support cannot be sent to the State. The noted Developer needs to address the Council and answer their questions.
- ✓ There is worry that this Developer will construct a Wal-Mart or Dollar Tree etc.
- ✓ It was noted that the Developer is willing to come before Council and provide more information.

Parks and Recreation Department

- **Elderly Services**
 - ✓ There is a need to find a place for the elderly.
 - ✓ Parks and Recreation Director has developed programs for the elderly.
 - ✓ Some of these programs can be run by the Parks and Recreation Director, but others will need to be hired using the revolving fund mentioned earlier.
 - ✓ It was noted that Council supports this update.
- **Merrimack Youth Association (MYA)**
 - ✓ The question posed was whether the Town can absorb the MYA?
 - ✓ It was concluded that the Finance Director should work with the MYA to determine the above question.

Communications

- **Increasing Voter Turnout**

- ✓ It was noted that signs should be assembled again.
- ✓ The location of the signs last year was fine.
- ✓ The same no-cost agreement should be worked again.
- ✓ Council expressed interest in placing a sign at Watson Park or the Fire Department.
- ✓ Voting should be advertised at public places and the use of voter's guides and PSAs/TV is appropriate.

Quality of Life Issues

- **O'Gara Drive Facilities**

- ✓ At this time, Council is waiting to hear about whether the fences at the tennis courts will be torn down.
- ✓ The consensus of the Council is to rectify the site and bring it back.
- ✓ The School Board should be approached about the tennis courts and Council intends to let them know they are willing to beautify the site.

- **Griffin Street Boat Launch**

- ✓ There is tons of potential for a boat launch on Griffin Street
- ✓ Council concludes that a letter should be sent to Fish & Game because the town needs a boat launch.

- **Parking on Amherst Road**

- ✓ There is interest in crushed asphalt, striping and getting the circle back.
- ✓ No parking on the street.
- ✓ Hope to "bring it back to the way it used to be."
- ✓ Finance Director is "on it."

Other

- **Solar Opportunities**

- ✓ There is a need to reach out to EPA about Wright Avenue
- ✓ Council questions why the closed landfills aren't solar.
- ✓ The District needs to be contacted and asked whether they'd like to be involved.

- **Excess Town-owned land**

- ✓ There is interest in selling the Atherton Road/5 John Lane property as a house lot if it is not going to be used as a ball field.
 - ✓ Council questioned whether there are more parcels like this.
 - ✓ An inventory of the Town properties needs to be updated and then sent to department heads inquiring what is known about them etc.
- **Is the Town adequately staffed for the future?**
- ✓ Non-union wage study
 - Employees have been lost because of money.
 - Staff is disappointed about having to pay 10% of health insurance without receiving a raise
 - Human Resources is in the process of comparing Merrimack wages to other bedroom communities/similar towns.
 - Council suggests Town Manager comes before them with wage suggestion and they advise she can give wage increases.
 - Council feels that non-union wage increases have not been discussed.
 - It is noted that the Town should become more regular in wage increases and continue the wage study.
 - The Town Manager should put annual non-union wage increases.

There are numerous recommendations throughout the report. These recommendations were derived from the groups discussions around each item listed. This report should be used as guide for the Council and administration to help prioritize long standing items that need to be addressed. This report will also give great guidance to the administration on how to implement some of these decisions.

It was a pleasure to assist you in this important process. If I can help again in the future, please do not hesitate to call.

All the best!

Respectfully submitted,

Rick Alpers
Member Services Consultant

Center for
Public Sector
Advancement

DRAFT

Primex
NH Public Risk Management Exchange

Bow Brook PLace
46 Donovan Street
Concord, NH 03301

603-225-2841
800-698-2364

www.nhprimex.org

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