

Planapalooza for Town of Concord Senior Management Team

July 27, 2017 8:30 – 10:45AM

Police/Fire Station Training Room, 219 Walden St.

Town of Concord Attendees:

Chris Whelan, Town Manager

David, Wood, Municipal Light Plant Director

Mark Cotreau, Fire Chief

Joseph O'Connor, Chief of Police

Richard Reine, Public Works Director

Kerry Lafleur, Finance Director

Kerry Cronin, Library Director

Marcia Rasmussen, Director of Planning & Land Management

Amy Foley, Human Resources Director

CivicMoxie Team Attendees:

Susan Silberberg, CivicMoxie Principal

Sue Kim, CivicMoxie Project Manager

Karl Seidman, Karl Seidman Consulting, Principal (Economic Development)

Laurie Toscano, Weston & Sampson, Project Manager (Transportation & Municipal Facilities)

Jeff Gonyeau, Jeffrey Gonyeau Preservation Services, Principal (Preservation)

Welcome & Overview of Process and Schedule

Marcia provided some background information, explaining that the last plan was done in 2005 with over 300 action items; 100 having been implemented, 100 to 150 in process of being implemented, and others no longer relevant. Among current Dept. Heads, only Chris Whalen was involved in past Comp Plan.

Since that time, town adopted sustainability principles and new technologies that called for new plan.

Using APA principles. CLRP Committee has been meeting for a year and has done a SWOT analysis as a starting point.

Now, receiving input, collecting information through fall; come back in January with initial proposals.

Susan gave brief overview of process, schedule and Envision Concord website. Asked about questions that department heads have— possibly add them to the next round of text sign questions with all responses going up on the website. Time frame for plan is from now to 10 years out. Short term to long-term.

Questions & Responses

Q1: What is your highest priority for the Envision Concord Comprehensive Plan?

1. Sustainable Finances
 - a. More + more challenging
 - b. \$12k average – 7th or 8th highest tax bill in the state; difficult to afford; no end in sight; people want to build new schools; people moving out of town due to cost
2. Business
 - a. Retention
 - b. Losing them – has impacted us to balance (MLP) rate; see trend continuing
3. Fire/EMS
 - a. Demographics: highest percentage of 65+ living alone
 - b. Infrastructure/service pop – where people are being added is an issue
 - c. "Wicked" increase in service demand
 - d. Need to convert to 24/7 – i.e., add 2nd ambulance for 2nd overnight shift
4. Wastewater/Water capacity – meets needs right now but need to plan for future
 - a. Water resources and Wastewater resources - State storm water regs coming
 - b. Improvement sewer fee needed – businesses don't like it but real costs
5. Police – growth in 65+ visitors (now problem solver)
 - a. Increases and changes in the general population affects them – have been changing from emergency response to problem-solving focus
 - b. Police facilities (bursting & need renovation); headcount hasn't increased since '90s
 - c. Planning decisions affect all parts of police department
6. Parking in Concord Center a challenge
 - a. More public transport options
 - b. Vans – shuttle; bike accommodations
7. Economic sustainability of town businesses
 - a. Traffic and pedestrian safety, high speeds – impacts customers and tourists
8. Increasing connectivity – transportation options
 - a. Improve transit options
 - b. Can we connect beyond to south Acton by trail?
 - c. Make crossing Route 2 safer
9. Human resources
 - a. Retention
 - b. Affordable housing didn't plan for additional service demand
 - c. Allow people to stay in their homes
 - d. Increase budget to senior services but not keeping up

- e. Geographic placement of MEWs at town line – too far away
 - f. Assisted living in downtown works well to get them quick services
10. Resources for staff to meet
- a. New initiatives (sustainability/space) – insufficient space to accommodate staff – growing too fast
11. High daytime service population
- a. Businesses on Baker Ave; health care facilities
 - b. MEWs in WC
 - c. Driver on highway
 - d. Hospital
 - e. Train commuters
 - f. Walden Pond visitors - 600k/year
 - g. Minuteman National Park, etc. visitors
 - h. Compare with Needham or Lexington on service pop
 - i. Departments want to provide exceptional service

Q2: Looking across departments/disciplines, tell us at least one other issue/focus in town that you think needs more collaboration. Between which departments? (Example: tension between affordable housing and land preservation)

- 1. Time for staff to really figure out efficient collaboration
- 2. Things that require sustained effort
- 3. Economic development– coordinate activities for business and recreation, parking, etc. in commercial centers, involving Planning, Recreation, PW and IT Depts
- 4. Municipal building infrastructure – town and school buildings and offices all spread out
 - a. Collaborate and prioritize municipal needs (facilities and location) – harder to fund improvements compared to schools
 - b. Better collaboration with school department
 - c. All town departments in different buildings impedes water cooler talk
- 5. Sustainability – collaborate on the goals, help departments prioritize what’s important, and coordinate how to do something
- 6. Public safety – collaboration happens regularly but would also like to be seen as a resource for issues like design, land use planning, and experience (for business)
- 7. Technical review for development review (new software they have will help) and consolidating reports, studies, documents/files
- 8. Coordinate town facilities and resources for cross-department issues
- 9. Elder service – Coordinate resources well but issue is that demand keeps increasing (i.e., effective hoarding task force consisting of a few cross-department staff people were eventually pulled away for other work). Council on aging works with other departments but so many needs.
- 10. Improve collaboration within staff/managers.
- 11. Balance goals (environment) with infrastructure needs, i.e. widen roads for bikes – good/bad?

Q3: Describe a recent “win” or accomplishment

1. Jail diversion program with other communities and linking people to social and health services
2. Nagog Pond bus facility (West Concord) – PW working with Town Manager and School Dept.
3. Funding for projects (state and federal) - \$7.5M from state for flooding mitigation
4. Identified gap – required fire prevention vs. what they are doing and got another inspector (mostly covered by fees)
5. Installed 5-MegaWatt solar array
6. Getting talented staff
7. Record number at Thoreau event (300+) and other successful programs and activities
8. Library – solar study and property acquisition for expansion (schematic design done)
9. 55 Church St property (soon to be acquired); purchase of Balls Hill Road property
10. Improving collaboration between town and school
11. Bruce Freeman Bike Rail Trail under construction
12. Powder Milk Rd
13. Bridge over Assabet River
14. Automating processes (for potential and existing employees)
15. Training for all the supervisors

Q4: Top trends driving your department’s work?

1. Technology – some people want paper; others want digital
2. Regulatory trends at state and federal levels – water, wastewater, and transportation infrastructure
3. All hazards approach (hazard mitigation plan)
 - a. EMT, emergency service demand
 - b. Access to trails, water, etc. – not cleared anymore (both public and private lands)
4. Changing workforce – aging and retirement of key workers
 - a. Restructuring positions; restructuring of positions
 - b. New staff - expectations, retention
5. People looking for meeting and collaborative spaces
6. Library – safe space
 - a. Collaborative space – heavy use of meeting spaces by users
 - b. Use of digital media
 - c. Heavy use of internet
 - d. Safety net – collaboration with Police and social services
7. Goal to reduce greenhouse gases
8. NIMBY – public wants town to buy land for public but keep people away (dogs)

9. The internet – popular space because it is online; good for attracting more people but also creates controversy

Q5: Tensions between your goals and other town priorities or constraints?

1. "Friends of ..." groups not always helpful or collaborative in helping other groups or the Town
2. Environmental extreme activists who oppose anything
3. Dogs – owners who want unrestricted use of public lands vs residents who want lands preserved
4. Historic preservations (tear-downs of older buildings that may not be specifically designated)
5. Zoning by-laws to promote the smaller house movement (tree bylaw passed)
6. Previous use of wastewater management constraints to control development growth via septic systems in conflict with need to improve wastewater infrastructure
7. Traffic – quality of life
8. Tension between groups – bikes/cars, affordable housing impacts
9. Environmental goals without seeing impacts on businesses, i.e., water bottle and polystyrene bans that town staff must then regulate
10. Funding – public/private
 - a. PPP – differing requirements
 - b. Public expansions through private funds (who's in control)
11. Public records law – providing transparency but take into account amount of staff time
12. Not enough money; not enough time

Q4. Tensions/Priorities

Affordable Housing (as it was a priority at the first public event)

1. Infrastructure
2. More accurate projections of service demands from new development, i.e., MEWS development estimated 55 new students, actual over 100.
3. Seniors – EMS/Services demand
4. Don't want to stigmatize affordable housing – helps qualify people for other needed services
5. "Affordable" housing – does that mean Workforce housing and/or subsidized housing?
6. Affordable unit tax bills high (still can't afford)
7. Not just purchase prices for condos/townhouses (maintenance, taxes, fees)
8. Locations (centers are logical but easier to get approvals on edge)
9. Income limits – qualifying? – workforce or not?
10. Connectivity – transportation
11. CPA spending? 1/3? on historic preservation – housing was not as high
12. Integrating residents into community
 - a. Schools and Recreation Depts. role?

- b. Resident councils with help from property management
- 13. Town employees – some success in getting units through lottery
- 14. Trust funds – to help residents with utilities and taxes
 - a. DEC tax relief appeal
- 15. Past task force on affordable housing; current task force only focuses on financing. Groups working on affordable housing:
 - a. Concord Housing Development Corporation
 - b. Concord Housing Authority
 - c. Concord Housing Trust Fund
 - d. Youth Services Coordinator; Recreation

In January, CivicMoxie will come back to the Senior Management Team and discuss draft elements of the plan. There will be a two-day public event in October. The consultant team may also contact individuals from this meeting for specific questions and discussions.

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