

TOWN of BARNSTABLE
TOWN COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLANNING MEETING: FISCAL YEARS 2024-2025
Thursday, August 10, 2023 | Meeting Notes

Meeting Recording:

Attendance: All Town Councilors were in attendance. Town Manager, Mark Ellis, and staff.

Opening: The meeting opened with remarks from Council President Matthew Levesque and the entertainment of new business with Agenda Item 2024-020 Determination under Section 19 of the Conflict-of-Interest Law regarding participation in matters relating to potential changes to the percentage contributions of the town and its employees for health insurance, which passed. Afterwards, President Levesque continued with the meeting by reminding attendees that this strategic planning session is an opportunity to address the challenges the Town of Barnstable will face going forward by suggesting changes to the Council's strategic plan. He stressed their good fortune to be living in this great community on the Cape and then turned to the CBI Facilitator, Dorit Price-Levine, to explain the structure of the session, which focused on priority for higher level needs of the strategic plan, rather than focusing on details within the plan.

Review of the Strategic Plan, Diagram, and Priority Areas: To begin the discussion, the Council started by examining the structure of the diagram that outlines the strategic plan and its priorities.

- *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI):* President Levesque introduced the notion of ingraining DEI initiatives into the priority areas of the strategic plan, perhaps by adding an extra circle around the diagram for DEI. Many council members noted that this change would and should involve understanding how DEI would relate to each facet of the strategic plan, as well as policymaking.
- *Financial:* Members of the group discussed possible language changes, such as removal of the word “aggressively” in the phrase “aggressively pursuing new growth dollars” which was met with pushback by those who emphasized the importance of pursuing financial growth for the town. Other council members also mentioned how adding language about sustainability could be added to improve the current wording while still emphasizing the importance of growth.
- *Communication:* Some council members suggested that there should be more avenues for the public to provide feedback, while others mentioned utilizing and working with the school districts to improve engagement by disseminating information to the public through school fliers. Council members also suggested partnering with nonprofit organizations and agencies who could support the dissemination of information.
- *Economic Development:* There were calls to strike the first two committees mentioned in the Strategies, the Zoning and Regulatory Committees. Others in the meeting recommended planning with the school district and the College to promote job training to best meet the needs of the Town's workforce, which many said has been lacking due to high housing costs. Members also recommended taking sustainability and climate change into account for planning.
- *Environment and Natural Resources:* Council members mentioned a desire to focus resources towards ensuring proper enforcement of environmental regulations. Other members expressed that the strategy to find opportunities wherever possible to reduce greenhouse gas emissions should be added. Additionally, there were calls to ramp up accessibility to natural resources, such

as beaches, for folks with disabilities and seniors. Council members also suggested elevating the priority of searches for new municipal water sources to the level of priority of wastewater management. Members also sought to remove bullets that refer to specific plans such as the dredge plan and regional policy plan. Some members noted that language could be added referencing the library of plans, rather than removing any mention of plans entirely. Lastly, council members suggested adding a strategy to pursue every opportunity to acquire more land for the Town to be used for open space, housing, or recreation.

- *Regulatory Processes and Performance:* During the meeting, council members mentioned adding language around site plan review ordinances, while also streamlining permitting for construction and business applications. Also, some called for more follow-up after agreements to ensure that the terms of the agreement are properly carried out and that projects comply with regulations. Sentiments were expressed that in general, there is a need for more efficient and simple processes for permitting and applications, as well as proper enforcement.
- *Public Health and Safety:* Some council members suggested that the Public Health and Safety section should be split into two different sections to be able to provide greater focus on specific initiatives. Additionally, some other members thought this section could remain one but be renamed to Human Services and Safety. However, that suggestion was met with pushback that this might require the creation of a new Human Services Department. The original proponents clarified that they only wished for a name change for the section, not the creation of a new department. Some wished to add the word, “wellbeing,” to the goal of this priority area. Members also called for greater intention to protect and promote the expansion of work between water districts to ensure synergy.
- *Housing:* Some requested that homeownership be named explicitly as one of the strategies in this section, particularly in the context of DEI, to ensure that people would be able to live and subsequently work in Barnstable. This led to a discussion of the importance of publicly funded developments, including improving not only the quality of housing but also quantity. However, raised concerns about satisfying building codes. From a development perspective, some proposed strategies that would provide incentives or funding for the building of more affordable housing. Lastly, some council members mentioned partnering with the Housing Trust in ways that would encourage development of new housing.
- *Infrastructure and Assets:* Council members primarily called for further promotion and implementation of CWMP while also further utilizing the Water Resources Advisory Board.
- *Education:* There were discussions around whether the strategy should be to continue to grow funds under Chapter 70, or whether there should be a shift to focusing on monitoring this funding. Some also mentioned a desire to expand funding to support early childhood education, such as preschool.