



**Town of Amherst
Town Council Retreat
Saturday, February 2, 2019 8:00 a.m.
R.W. Kern Center, Hampshire College
893 West Street, Amherst**

Minutes

1. Call to order and declaration of a quorum

President Griesemer declared the presence of a quorum and called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

Councilors present: Councilors Bahl-Milne, Brewer, DeAngelis, DuMont, Griesemer, Hanneke, Pam, Ross, Ryan, Schoen, Schreiber, and Steinberg.

Councilors absent: Councilor Swartz

Councilors participating remotely: None

Others present: Town Manager Paul Bockelman, Clerk of the Council Margaret Nartowicz, Facilitator Jeff Nutting

President Griesemer explained no votes will be taken, and there will be no public comment period.

2. Discussion –Facilitated by Jeff Nutting, Town Administrator of Franklin, MA

Discussion included:

- Impressions of working with the Council so far
 - Setting a standard for dignity and respect
 - The Master Plan
 - Work flow
 - The need for Councilors to become more informed regarding finance and the budget
 - Education regarding capital projects, how decisions are made, transparency
- a) **What should the Council accomplish over the next year?**
- b) **What goals should the Council set for the next 3-5 years?**

Councilors discussed the following long- and short-term goals:

- Master plan & Zoning
- Capital projects: DPW, Fire Station, School, etc.
- Station Road Bridge
- Solar farm, solar for Town buildings
- Downtown parking
- North Common improvements
- Energy conservation, sustainability, community choice energy
- UMass strategic partnership agreement
- Minimal tax increases
- Establish goals & evaluate Town Manager
- Create a strategic plan

3. Discussion – What would you like to know more about, understand, or suggest regarding the Town Council’s education?

Councilors discussed:

- Finances generally, and long-term fiscal plan—operating & capital; budget—legal & financial management practices, rules, & policies
- Zoning & Planning generally
- Council basics: rules & norms; relationships between Councilors, with professional staff, & multiple-member bodies; chain of command; building trust; meeting length & meeting time management; community engagement & education about the community; how to evaluate Town services; Council education about how the Town operates, field trips, and presentations from departments
- Other: workshop on trust & team building, economic development in similar towns, long-range plans with higher education institutions, internships, staffing for Council
- 3-5 year goals: sustainability, preserving Amherst, business permitting, revitalization of the Downtown & village centers, transportation, housing, ranked-choice voting, universal preschool, library, IT operations, minimal tax increase

4. Working Lunch – Standing Committees of the Council

a) **The “Committee to be Described and Named”**

1. Introduction by Councilors Pam and Schreiber

Draft Charge of the “Community and Economic Development” Committee was presented and described by Councilors Pam and Schreiber as a committee to work in the missing aspects of the other committees.

Councilors discussed:

- Composition of the committee
- Adding the ability to conduct research on topics
- The purpose of reviewing zoning changes, and its charge in general as a committee to bring together proposals of other committees of the town.
- Whether the town needs a non-Council Economic Development Committee

2. Discussion

b) Discussion of other Standing Committees and their Charges

1. Finance Committee – Councilor Steinberg, Chair

Presentation by the Committee’s Chair. The Chair identified numerous challenges facing the committee, including how it would review JCPC recommendations, how to obtain the information it needs to do its job, figuring out its relationship with other committees, and how to meaningfully involve resident members. The Chair stated that the Committee was looking towards Northampton for guidance.

2. Communications, Outreach and Appointments Committee – Councilor Swartz, Chair

Presentation by the Committee’s vice chair, Councilor Brewer. Councilor Brewer stated that the Committee was looking to change its name to Outreach, Communications, and Appointments in order to avoid confusion with the Council on Aging, which also has the initials COA. The Committee is currently working on producing a number of decision trees for the various types of appointments it will be reviewing. It’s also looking into coordinating district meetings and the setting of boundaries between executive and legislative authority. One of the challenges it is facing is that the Committee hasn’t been receiving applications of those who have applied for appointments.

3. Governance, Organization and Legislation Committee – Councilor Hanneke, Chair

Presentation by the Committee’s Chair. The Chair identified numerous challenges facing the committee, including the limiting nature of the charge itself, the need to define what “clear, consistent, and actionable” means, and issues with whether the Committee is in charge of the draft while it is reviewing it.

5. Other Items

a) Communications with the Press and Residents

The President expressed the need for all press inquiries to be referred to the President, and if the President desires, the President can delegate some of them to other Councilors. Communications with residents should be one-on-one. If a resident emails all councilors, it is ok for a councilor to

respond, but the councilor should never copy the rest of the councilors in the response (other than the President's acknowledgement of receipt).

b) **Amherst Media – What meetings should we broadcast?**

1. **Public Forums**
2. **Finance Committee**
3. **Other Committees**
4. **District Meetings – Special (like the schools)? Regular?**
5. **Recruiting our own volunteers to tape meetings**

Councilors discussed which meetings Amherst Media should tape. The general desire was for Amherst Media to tape, if possible, all Standing Council Committee meetings, special meetings of the Council, and required public forums. Regular District meetings do not need to be taped.

c) **Timing of Public Comment**

Councilors discussed:

- The need to make public comment accessible
- The desire to have some public comment during some action and discussion items
- How many times to allow public comment on a single issue, when that issue is discussed at multiple meetings
- Whether to interact with the public during the public comment period.

d) **Consent Agenda**

Not Discussed

e) **Other items not included or anticipated**

None

6. How are we doing?

a) **Councilor Bahl-Milne**

b) **Please Do and Do Not (attachment)**

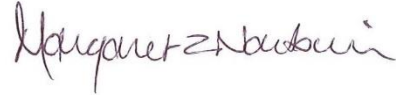
Councilors discussed in small groups, then summarized in larger groups, the values the Council would like to abide by and how they believe the Council has been doing so far.

7. Adjourn

MOVED: It was moved and seconded to adjourn.

VOTED unanimously to adjourn at 2:40 pm on February 2, 2019.

Respectfully submitted,



Margaret Z. Nartowicz
Town Clerk & Clerk to the Council

Record of Agenda Packet Materials and Documents Presented

Agenda 2-2-19 Retreat FINAL rev. 1-31-19

11-15-18 Council Workshop Post-It Exercise

Questions in advance of the Retreat

values handout (00000002)

Amherst Council Retreat Workshop