



**Town of Amherst
Town Council Retreat
Saturday, September 21, 2019 9:00 a.m.
Hitchcock Center for the Environment
845 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 9:09 a.m.

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

Councilors absent: Councilor Schreiber

Councilors participating remotely: None

Others present: Town Manager Paul Bockelman, Assistant Town Manager David Ziomek, Clerk of the Council Athena O'Keeffe

Councilors' individual top priorities for the remainder of their term

Councilors compiled the following individual priorities:

Capital Plan

- Breaking ground on at least one project
- 4 major projects
- Well-publicized plan
- Capital Improvement Plan
- Honest
- Maintenance

Zoning & Master Plan

- Form based zoning
- Inclusionary zoning
- Comprehensive downtown plan
- Revise and vote master plan
- Green/accessible
- Parking
- Arts downtown

- Revitalize village centers
- Clarifying definitions
- Vision

Housing

- Affordable
- Clustered housing
- Homelessness

Process

- Balance of power
- Open working discussions and fact finding, work groups
- Fully functioning Council committees with clear duties and responsibilities
- Structure rules practices, support and educate future council membership to encourage a variety of councilors of a variety of means and experiences
- Deliberative fact finding

Outreach

- Black & Latino communities
- Generate public confidence – reach goals
- Strengthen ties with UMass
- Support solutions that bring residents to meetings & etc.
- Mentoring and community support
- Making use of what we have, including talents of our residents

Finance and Resources

- Public understanding & knowledge of finances
- Plan to generate additional resources
- Economic development goals
- Systems & policy - thinking & integrated thinking

Appointments

- Transparent & robust process to appoint Planning Board & ZBA
- Transparent inclusive – all appointments
- How people can learn about how to participate in committees

Climate Action

- Consideration in decision making

Charter

- Promises of the charter
- Areas needing change

Town Attorney

- Relationship between councilors and attorney
- Councilors discussed the possibility of changing to in-house counsel, possibly getting more service for the money, pointing to Northampton as an example of that model

Adoption of Goals

Councilors discussed the relationship between the Council goals and the Town Manager goals, discussed how Town Manager goals should fit with the Council goals, the differences in the relationships between the Town Manager and Select Board and the Town Manager and Council.

Councilors proposed creating an ad hoc committee to set the Town Manager goals, incorporating that work into the current Council Goals Ad Hoc Committee's work, or an individual Councilor working on a document and bringing it to the full Council for discussion at a meeting.

The Town Manager is key in helping the Council achieve its goals; the list of Town Manager duties in the Charter should also inform the Town Manager goals.

Timeline to adopt Council goals is December, the Town Manager goals is the end of October.

Committee Liaisons and Members from the Council

Councilors discussed the process by which a committee would bring an item to the Council for action, the differences in process with the new form of government, and the need for liaisons in helping committees prepare for that process. Councilors discussed the potential role of liaisons to committees, what liaisons would and would not do during Town committee meetings. Councilors discussed a potential rule clarifying what Councilors may and may not do at Town committee meetings.

Councilors discussed the relationship between the Council and other elected bodies.

Councilors discussed the groups of committees proposed by the Ad Hoc Rules Committee, with priorities for liaisons to committees that would bring action items to the Council.

Councilors placed colored stickers indicating their preferences for committees that should have liaisons (orange), committees whose meetings they have attended (green), and committees that they would like to serve as liaison (yellow). The charts with stickers were collected by the Outreach, Communications, and Appointments Committee to inform their decisions in recommending committees assigned liaisons.

Communicating with the Town Manager and Town Staff

Councilors discussed addressing questions and concerns to the Town Manager, and cc the Council President rather than directly to Town staff.

Councilors can contact Community Participation Officers directly to coordinate district meetings.

Best practice is to copy the Town Manager on emails to any staff so that there is awareness of what Councilors are asking of staff.

Councilors discussed monthly meetings for a full Council work session or dialogue about a selected topic.

Councilors discussed how to aggregate questions from Councilors, or let the rest of the Council know a Councilor is interested or working on a project.

Councilors discussed access to background information, the need to make well-informed decisions at Council meetings with additional information, and making packet materials available on an earlier timeline.

Relationship with Town Attorney

The Town Manager stated that Councilor questions for the Town Attorney should be directed to the Town Manager.

How to Achieve the Goal of Ending Meetings by 10 PM

Councilors discussed strategies of meeting the goal of wrapping Council meetings by 10 p.m., potentially limiting agenda items. Meeting length may be a barrier to people who would otherwise run for office.

Councilors discussed curtailing the discussion prior to a referral, as Councilors with questions regarding a referral could be sent to the committee chair, and shared questions would be addressed at the committee meeting.

President Griesemer adjourned the retreat at 1:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Athena O'Keefe
Clerk of the Council

Record of Agenda Packet Materials and Documents Presented

Agenda - Retreat 9-21-19

Agenda Planning September 2019 as of 9-17-19

Council Goals Activities Timeline - as of 9-2-19

Possible Committee Liaisons as recommended by Rules of Procedure (002) - MJH comments

Post Its from BID Block Party 9_19_19