

# Town of Exeter



## Long Range Planning Session Summary Report

April 12, 2013



Trust. Excellence. Service.

# Table of Contents

▪ Introduction	3
▪ Purpose and Intended Results	3
▪ Participants	3
▪ Goals	3
▪ One Year Goals	6
▪ Three Year Goals	6
▪ Five Year Goals	6

## Introduction

The intent of the April 12, 2013 session with the Board of Selectmen and Town Manager was to review the progress the Town of Exeter has made over the year on any of the outstanding goals, and to look forward to 2013-2014. Primex<sup>3</sup> 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 the major points and concepts.

## Purpose and Intended Result

The purpose of the session was for the Board and Town Manager to come together to lay the horizon for the Town and establish goals and strategies that will help guide the Town over the next twelve (12) months, three (3) years and five (5) years.

## Participants

Donald Clement, Chairman  
Dan Chartrand, Vice-Chairman  
Julie Gilman, Clerk  
Matt Quandt, Board of Selectmen  
Frank Ferraro, Board of Selectmen  
Russ Dean, Town Manager

The exercise was facilitated by:

Rick Alpers, Primex<sup>3</sup> Member Services Consultant

## 2012-2013 Goal Review Discussion

The session began with the Board of Selectmen and Town Manager reviewing the goals for 2012 and to highlight two goals that the Town achieved by doing well and two goals that the Town could have done better, and to continue working on along with the goals identified for 2013-2014.

### Goals Done Well

Economic Development

- Laying the building blocks for additional businesses to come to the Town of Exeter
- Water and sewer infrastructure
- Communication improvements to website

### **Goals that the Town Still Needs to Work On**

- Centralized Purchasing Policy
  - There is a purchasing policy but not centralized purchasing
  - Need to centralize?
- Sidewalk Plan
  - 2010 was the last plan and currently working on this plan
  - Priority for new assistant engineer
- Communication Plan
  - Can only control half of it
  - Communication is key to success

### **Review of One Year Goals**

- Budget Expectations for 2013
  - The Board did not require level funding the budget and it passed overwhelmingly by voters
- Planning Board and Economic Development Committee (EDC)
  - The Board did not meet with the Planning Board and EDC, and a meeting will be planned in the future
- Meeting with HERON
  - The Board will continue to meet with HERON
- New Revenue Streams for Taxes
  - The Board will be reviewing the fees and other areas of revenue
- Need for Volunteers
  - There have been 32 new volunteers assigned to committees and to continuing to recognize volunteers is vital to retention
- Regionalization
  - EMS Services to the Town of Newfields and other areas
  - Efforts with the Town of Stratham on water/sewer
- Street Lights
  - Currently there is no plan for the lights (702)
- Purchasing Policy
  - Possibility of having an intern review the current purchasing policy
- Department Report
  - Should department be re-established
  - Currently the Board has department heads attend BOS meetings when there is a project involving their department

### **Top 2-3 Priorities for the Next 2-3 Years**

1. More Balanced Tax Base
2. More interaction Between all town boards
3. CIP Review

4. Addressing staffing concerns
5. Regionalization of services
6. Completion of Projects/Goals

#### Balanced Tax Base

- Housing currently geared towards work force housing and tax advantaged condos
- Tax burden on the residents is an issue
- Do not drive the commercial business out and how to increase value of the property which is developed
  - “Open for Business” - Downeaster a plus
  - Easier for people/businesses to come to Exeter
- Multi-board meetings
  - Planning Board is following town regulations and not driving away commercial businesses

#### Interaction between the Boards

- Review of the Master Plan needed

#### CIP Review

- Review of top rated projects by Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, Budget Recommendations Committee
- Sub-committee no longer exists for more project time on details
  - Department meet with Town Manager
- Capital projects to be on the BOS agenda in Fall.

#### Staffing Concerns (Potential New Positions)

- Assistant Town Planner
- Grant Administrator
- Economic Development

#### Regionalization

- Changing the culture
- Legislative issues
  - To make it easier to regionalize – support?

#### Completion of Projects/Goals

## Potential Goal Areas

### Facilities

The Board of Selectmen and Town Manager discussed the current status with the town facilities, and identified which buildings are in need of repairs and improvements, or new facilities.

#### Current Town Facilities

- Public Safety Building built in 1979
- Library long range plan (renovations) built 1979
- Park and Recreation Building
- Senior Center
- Town Office
- Town Hall
- DPW
- Waste Water
- Water Treatment
- Recreation Park built 1970
- Train Station
- 47 Front Street
- Raynes Barn

All town buildings have received an energy audit and some work has begun to incorporate the audits, as well as continuing with a maintenance plan. A list of some of the improvements includes the following:

- Heating changed from oil to gas
- Roof improvements including AC unit systems
- Continue to fix/repair as needed before something breaks – preventative maintenance

#### Fire Station and Sub-Station

In 2007, a report was developed for a plan to build a new public safety complex and a sub-station. The Board agrees that the original plan needs to be reviewed and changes made if necessary. The following was discussed for new options.

- Would the new building be located in the original location?
- A new evaluation needs to be completed
- What about having the location be Epping Road?
- Are we building a public safety complex or a fire station?

The Board also discussed about having a long range plan to be aware of other projects that are to come and what are the new projects down the line. It was agreed that there needs to be a proposal from an outside organization to review the state of the current facilities and to make recommendations to the Board.

#### Infrastructure

Discussion on the current infrastructure needs and what is desired for improvements and expansion.

#### Current Infrastructure

- Sidewalk plan to coincide with road plan
- Drainage
- Review of paving plan
- Storm drains
- Culverts

The Board of Selectmen and Town Manager agreed that the sidewalks and roads need to be considered as one, and this is to include the repair, as well as the replacement plan. The sidewalks also need to be pedestrian friendly, including bike paths and walking paths. Regarding improvements to either the roads, sidewalks, drainage, etc both the planning board and the Department of Public Works (DPW) need to have the same view on each of the projects. Also, the Board of Selectmen and Town Manager agreed that the paving plan needs to be reviewed and the sidewalks need to be integrated into the plan.

#### **Water**

The Board of Selectmen and Town Manager discussed on going conversations with the Town of Stratham regarding the wastewater treatment plant and to also discuss the town well that is on land owned by Phillip's Exeter Academy. The town is currently working on the Portsmouth Ave water and sewer expansion/replacement and need to finish this project. There was also discussion, regarding the Great Dam and how that is a major water supply for the Town of Exeter. In addition, the Lincoln Street water line was also discussed. Regarding the water issues for the Town, it was recommended that the Board review the current Master Plan and the recommendations for strategic expansion. .

#### **Wastewater**

Currently, the Town is under a deadline of 2018 to have a new wastewater treatment plant. The town is waiting on a new design proposal and an update from the DPW Director in May of 2013 regarding where we are and what are the next steps. It is estimated date for construction to begin is within the next 2 years. The Board of Selectmen and Town Manager agree that there are lessons to be learned from other towns in the area from similar projects. The town is currently having discussion with the Town of Stratham for both water and waste water. Also, the town is looking to work with UNH and NOAA to have an integrated management plan and to look at a regional standpoint for storm water. The town is also looking to establish an I & I plan for the CSO.

#### **Communication and Technology**

Regarding communication, the Board of Selectmen and Town Manager agreed that the BOS needs to communicate directly with the citizens of Exeter. The following are examples for what may be a possibility for the BOS to work on for improving communication.

- Newsletter with updates
  - Weekly or monthly
- continue to enhance current website with more information for citizens
- Opportunity for the citizens to share their opinions or suggestions (Listening Sessions)
- Updated TV Guide for Channel 22 and 98

The Board of Selectmen and Town Manager did agree that if there is to be a press release, the approval needs to come from the Chairman or Vice Chairman, and each BOS needs to remain 1 of 5 when speaking to the public. Also, the Board of Selectmen and Town Manager believe that there needs to be communication with legislators.

### **Town Events and Organizations**

The Board of Selectmen and Town Manager agree that there needs to be a review of the current fee structure for the use of town buildings and services, and this is to be completed within a year. The fee structure needs to cover the costs of town services (Police, Fire and EMS, and DPW).

### **Development**

For the Town of Exeter to continue to attract positive development, the following was discussed.

- Zoning Ordinance to be reviewed and identify the limitation
- Site Plan Regulations need to be reviewed
  - Including zoning amendment on voting ballot is mandated
- Conditional use permit should be reviewed – is it working
- Meeting with the Planning Board to discuss what the vision is for the Town of Exeter
  - How much growth is expected and will there be impacts on the services?
- To have a joint board meeting with BOS, Planning, EDE, HDC and Heritage Commission
  - To create synergy and support for overall Board vision

### **Housing**

With Exeter's location and the services that are provided for the citizens, the Board of Selectmen and Town Manager had discussion on housing and is the town meeting the needs for our citizens? The Board of Selectmen and Town Manager agree that the housing policy needs to be reviewed. The EDC needs to discuss with current employers and potential employers of Exeter that current housing diversity meets the employees' needs, or is there a need to increase more options.



Other options regarding the housing needs for the Town of Exeter, is do we expand the water and sewer to accommodate development?

## **Transportation**

The Board of Selectmen and Town Manager discussed the current forms of transportation available in Exeter, and they include the following.

- COAST
- Lamprey
- Meals on Wheels
- Cab Vouchers
- Downeaster

The Board of Selectmen and Town Manager discussed how to increase transportation options for it residents.

- More public transportation available to different areas
- Apply for grants
- Bike/walk paths available
- Expanded town loop (COAST)
- Regionalization
- Create linkages to the downtown for Downeaster
- Inter-modal
- What impacts will be on the budget

Having a Downeaster stop in Exeter is a real plus; this brings a number of great opportunities to the town. One suggestion was to work with HERON to have a trolley run during the peak times of the year to bring visitors to explore the many options of downtown Exeter.

## **Growth**

What is Exeter's projected population growth? Will we be able to provide current day services for similar cost? What role does the BOS, EDC and Planning Board play in determining the town's growth? A larger discussion need to take place on growth and service level sustainability.

The following are potential positions for 2014 budget.

- Assistant Planner
- Grant writer
- Economic Development Position

## **Recreation, Trails, Parks and Open Space**

The Board of Selectmen and Town Manager agreed that there needs to be a maintenance plan for current trails open, and having open space is important for the Town.

### **Natural Resources**

The Town of Exeter has a number of natural resources available and need to consider how to tie those resources into the recreational areas. The Board of Selectmen and Town Manager agreed that they need to consider how to protect for the quality and quantity of the town's water supply. The current town natural resources include the following.

- Great Bay
- Town Forest
- Swasey Parkway (and park area).

### **Park and Recreation**

The Board of Selectmen and Town Manager discussed the Park and Recreation Department, and current services that are offered a potential bubble for the pool was discussed and a financial breakdown would need to be provided to ensure that the project is viable.

### **Economic Development**

The Board of Selectmen and Town Manager discussed what opportunities could bring more to the Town. The BOS is looking to add resources in 2014 for economic development and to support the EDC. Also, the BOS agrees that there needs to be a joint board meeting to discuss the issues and project prior to have a larger meeting. The town is looking at a TIF, a form based code and to have a flexible zoning to promote desirable development. Some opportunities for economic development would be to have a welcome center at the train station, and to have an opportunity for visitors to explore the downtown (Downeaster to Downtown). Other opportunities include Epping Road and West-Ex Development.

### **2014 Budget**

The Board of Selectmen and Town Manager has discussion regarding the preparation for the 2014 budget, and what the message will be to the department heads. For the 2013 budget, there was not a message to the department heads. The BOS also needs to consider what the town will be face with for the future which include the following.

- Fire station and sub-station
- New positions (part time and full time)
- Retirement costs
- Health insurance costs
- Lincoln street water line and improvements

- Portsmouth Ave reconstruction project
- Culverts – Court Street and Linden Street construction

The BOS agrees that the budget for 2014 needs to be both level funded and serviced. For the budget to pass, the bonds will need to be limited. Overall, the process for the budget needs to start like last year.

### **Next Steps**

The BOS and Town Manager will review and categorize the goals into the 1 year, 3 years and 5 years goals, and the BOS will make the final recommendations.