

Natick 360

Honoring Our Past. Planning Our Future.



Joint Boards and Committees Meeting Joint Meeting C * April 5, 2007

On April 5, members of the five *Natick 360* sponsoring boards and committees¹ met to consider focus areas, goals, and policies, programs and projects for the five-year planning horizon of the *Natick 360* community strategic planning process. This meeting was one in a series of three meetings during the week, to provide all 40 members of the five sponsoring boards and committees an opportunity to weigh in on these critical elements of the *Natick 360* process.

During the meeting, participants broke into four small groups to write goals and policies, programs and projects for one of the eight focus areas. Then the small groups reported on their work to the larger group. The facilitators then asked the participants to respond to each small group report by framing their comments two ways: “What you like about this group’s report” (“like abouts”) and, “How to change the report to address a specific concern” (“how to’s”).

The following pages show the results of this process for the four focus areas that were addressed in this meeting:

- Improving public education
- Improving the Natick environment and the health of the population
- Balancing Town financial resources
- Improving the town’s infrastructure and transportation options

These four focus areas were selected by the facilitators, even though they had already been reviewed by joint meeting groups earlier in the week, on Tuesday and Wednesday, April 3 and 4, because they were needed additional consideration. As such, the content developed by the group in Joint Meeting C is supplemental to the content developed by Joint Meetings A and B.

Participants in this meeting included:

- Karen Adelman Foster, School Committee
- Bob Foster, Planning Board
- Carol Gloff, Board of Selectmen
- Tony Lista, Finance Committee
- Stephen Meyler, School Committee
- Josh Ostroff, Board of Selectmen
- Rick Wynn, School Committee
- Anne Zernicke, School Committee

Craig Ross and David Parish, co-chairs of the *Natick 360* Strategic Planning Oversight Committee, also observed the meeting. Phillip Blackerby and Elizabeth Reuthe of Blackerby Associates facilitated the meeting .

¹ Sponsoring boards and committees are: Board of Selectmen, Conservation Commission, Finance Committee, Planning Board and School Committee.

Improving Public Education

Small Group Report: Goals, Policies, Programs and Projects

Continue to improve educational outcomes for students at all levels

- Define, identify and periodically update the community's expectations for the schools
- Provide sustained funding that reflects the community's goals for public education, and supports competitive salaries
- Invest in educational facilities that reflect Natick's standards and price: build a new high school; renovate Kennedy Middle School; maintain current facilities
- Regularly communicate to the community and celebrate school accomplishments

Like Aouts:

- Defining and updating expectations makes everything else easier (several concurrences)

How To's:

- Expand identification of community expectations to the broadest definition; for example, multiple uses of schools
- Clarify policy positions regarding expectations of Board of Selectmen; for example, capital expenses for high school, technology. How to do it (see Balancing Town financial resources)
- Define community expectations for use of school assets
- Define community benefit from education; help community understand what schools do well, as well as what schools need

Improving the Natick Environment and the Health of the Population

Small Group Report: Goals, Policies, Programs and Projects

Build additional sidewalks

- Ensure that all commuter streets have at least one sidewalk which is ADA compliant
- Require through easements and permitting that ADA-compliant sidewalks and bike trails are incorporated into all developments
- Use open space funds or increased trash bag prices to fund sidewalk expenditures.

Reduce Town impacts on the environment

- Undergo Town-wide energy audits for all Town buildings and vehicles
- Establish methodology for measuring car pollution during peak traffic time
- Ensure sewer and storm drainage water is not running off into streams and rivers in estuaries

Increase open space and availability

- Adopt the Community Preservation Act
- Purchase land for green space
- Encourage reuse of industrial sites to preserve existing open spaces by providing favorable (FAR, floor area ratio) conditions to attract development
- Use green space fund to buffer aquifers while providing usable recreation space

Reduce traffic congestion

- Establish a study of traffic patterns and use on major access routes, including Rtes. 9, 16, 27, 30, 135, etc.

Like Aouts:

- Overlays with infrastructure—good!—sidewalks, open space, smart growth principles

How To's:

- Add Oak St. to traffic congestion, and other non-state routes, such as Speen.
- Anticipate and respond to public health issues: substance abuse, domestic violence, health emergency, wellness, referrals, etc.
- Make public health its own stand-alone category
- Capture social and behavioral health issues
- Address green building standards—use of proven green technologies—for public buildings

Balancing Town Financial Resources

Small Group Report: Goals, Policies, Programs and Projects

Actively seek “desirable” businesses to locate in Natick

Use overrides (capital and services) to let taxpayers pay for desired services

Board of Selectmen develop financial policies with input from the School Committee and Finance Committee

Re-establish financial planning process

Like Aouts:

- More collaborative approach in local government
- Overrides as a tool for people to decide what they want

How To's:

- Desirable business is a mix of employees at various levels, low environmental impact; for example, staffing/temporary, call center, incubate start-up technology businesses
- Better utilize industrial park property for business development, as well as housing
- Fix the problem: doubling the cost of trash bags won't fix the problem; neither will the Mall
- Merge pension fund into the state fund
- Collaborate while meeting legal requirement of School Committee to say what's needed for schools; each board and committee has its own responsibilities

Improving the Town's Infrastructure and Transportation Options

Small Group Report: Goals, Policies, Programs and Projects

Improve transportation options

- Board of Selectmen enact decision to join the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA), while maintaining THE RIDE program, door-to-door transportation services for people with disabilities provided by MBTA
- Create bus system along Oak St., Speen St., and Rtes. 9, 27 and 135, for use by the public and school children.

Invest in capital improvements

- Update the five-year capital plan and Town-wide priorities
- Foster private/public partnerships to help finance capital investments
- Use bonding options to finance capital improvements when they would reduce operating expenses by an economically larger amount
- Consider a capital override, a one-year (or multiple-years) property tax assessment to acquire specific capital assets
- Consider opportunities for capital assets to be shared by different populations within the town
- Ensure that operating funds are available to maintain capital assets appropriately
- Identify state and federal funding sources for these assets

Implement four major capital investments

- Senior / community center in downtown
- New high school
- Downtown parking garage, with retail or housing on edge of garage
- Rail trail

Improve traffic flows on major routes

- Engage Wellesley and Framingham in regional solutions for Rte. 9
- Engage the state in solutions for Rte. 9
- Eliminate tolls on the Mass Pike
- Build overpass at Oak St. and Rte. 9 intersection to eliminate traffic light
- Rebuild Rte. 27 and Rte. 9 intersection
- Build pedestrian/bike bridges over Rte. 9
- Complete traffic design plan
- Implement recommended improvements in traffic design plan

Promote bicycle riding

- Dedicate bike lanes on major roads
- Create bike sheds at train station and downtown

Build sidewalks on major roads

- Identify arterial and main roads without sidewalks
- Build sidewalks on main roads, using sidewalk funds

Like Abouts:

- Like all of it (several concurrences)

How To's:

- Make downtown MBTA system accessible to people with disabilities
- Engage the state and federal governments to take action
- Tie needs together; regional system, airport transportation, etc.
- Get the most benefit out of the train station
- Get an effective north-south corridor
- Fix and maintain our roads