
INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: WELLESLEY SUSTAINABLE ENERGY COMMITTEE
FROM: ELLEN KORPI
SUBJECT: PROPOSED MODEL TO INTEGRATE CONSIDERATION OF ISSUES RELATED TO ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY INTO TOWN GOVERNMENT
DATE: JUNE 24, 2015

Purpose of Memo: To provide the basis for a discussion regarding a possible recommendation for a town government structure that would integrate environmental sustainability in the Town's strategic planning and decision-making process.

Proposed Recommendation: Create an Environmental Affairs Division. The Director ("EA Director") would report directly to the Town Director/Administrator/Manager. The mission of the Environmental Affairs Division would be:

- To integrate environmental sustainability into the fabric of Town government, including strategic planning and decision making at all levels;
- To protect and enhance the Town's natural and recreational resources;
- To actively engage and educate all Town departments, residents, businesses and other entities concerning issues of environmental sustainability that affect the community.
- To monitor progress on the Town's carbon footprint reduction goal, report this progress annually to Town Meeting and conduct outreach initiatives that support this goal.

The EA Director would manage the staff of the Natural Resources Commission (including the Wetlands Protection Committee) and provide staff support to the Sustainable Energy Committee. A person with strong collaborative skills would be critical to success.

Rationale:

Shared Mission Within Town Government – The SEC, NRC, and WPC are uniquely responsible in Town government for representing issues related to environmental sustainability. As demonstrated by the recent success of the 3R Working Group, the SEC and NRC have overlapping missions which are best served through coordination and joint effort. By combining all environmental affairs in one division, the synergy between the NRC and SEC would be institutionalized as part of the structure of town government, and would elevate the interests of both entities.

Town-Wide Perspective – Reporting directly to the Town Director/Administrator/Manager would give the EA Director a seat at the table with other Division Managers allowing the EA Director to be aware of developing priorities, decisions, and challenges. The EA Director would have the opportunity to voice concerns related to environmental sustainability, to encourage inclusion of sustainability goals within each Division and to influence key decisions.

Empowerment – Reporting directly to the Town Director/Administrator/Manager, the EA Director would have the necessary support of the top-most level of Town government. This structure would provide the EA Director with the potency required to be a credible voice in town-wide strategic planning, decision-making, and resource allocation.

Best Practices – The attached matrix outlines how nearby communities are incorporating concern for environmental sustainability into the structure of their town governments. There are many different models; Dedham and Natick seem closest to what is proposed here. Both people in the positions equivalent to the proposed EA Director in these two towns have a direct line to the Town Director/Administrator/Manager, and both feel that this relationship is essential to their effectiveness. In the cities of Newton and Melrose, this position reports directly to the Mayor and both in these positions report a sense of empowerment to execute their responsibilities.

Recommendations Regarding Other Town Entities: There are many mission-critical areas in which the EA Division would coordinate with other town entities. Some of these relationships are described below.

Location of the Wetlands Protection Committee – The WPC is a necessary part of the Natural Resources Commission, but the WPC is also an integral part of the Town permitting process. The Town Government Study Committee has proposed that the WPC (and, therefore, the NRC) become part of a proposed Land Use Division that would coordinate all permitting functions. An alternative solution is to maintain the WPC as part of the Natural Resources Commission (in the EA Division) with a dotted line connecting it to the Land Use Division. Full coordination with the permitting process could be achieved administratively and through the development of permitting software under the Land Use Division.

Relationship to Department of Public Works– The EA Division would have an important coordinated relationship with the DPW on maintenance of park and conservation land, public shade trees, waste management issues (including recycling and food waste), and other related areas.

Relationship to Municipal Light Plant– The EA Division would have an important coordinated relationship with the MLP on all energy issues.

Relationship to Wellesley Public Schools – The EA Division would have an important coordinated relationship with WPS on construction projects, transportation issues, educational initiatives, and other related areas.

Relationship to Facilities Maintenance Department – The EA Division would have an important coordinated relationship with the FMD on all sustainability issues relating to facilities maintenance.

Conclusion – Independence seems to foster isolation and marginalization. Direct support of the “person at the top” seems to foster inclusion, integration and empowerment.