

Town Government Study Committee

Recreation Building: Room 216

March 25, 2015

Committee: Chair Katherine Babson, Vice Chair Rose Mary Donahue, Stanley Brooks, Arthur Goldberg, Ann Marie Gross, Richard Page, Linda R Perlmutter, Anna Sereiko, Thomas Ulfelder

Chair Katherine Babson called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm. She announced that the meeting was being televised by Wellesley cable and requested that Committee members speak loudly so as to be heard on the televised program. Linda R Perlmutter was appointed secretary pro tem for the Meeting.

Chair Babson noted that no one was present to address the committee during Citizen's Speak.

Anna Sereiko led the TGSC in a discussion of strategic planning. Attached to these minutes is the in depth analysis Ms Sereiko prepared as a basis for the discussion. The discussion focused on several major areas:

- What is a strategic planning concept for Wellesley
- The definition of a comprehensive plan; who uses it and why; its interface with a strategic plan
- Why a strategic plan
- Background on previous TGSC's recommendation for strategic planning
- The BOS support of a strategic planning process; what their role could be in development and implementation
- The Planning Board; responsibility for the Comprehensive Plan, opportunity for collaboration

What is a strategic planning concept for Wellesley?

*The Town would use the strategic plan as a way to determine Wellesley's core values through outreach to the Town's residents.

*The strategic plan would set priorities and goals for the Town

*Strategic planning would drive collaboration by including all Town Boards in the process

*Strategic planning could have impact on budgetary considerations

Strategic planning would require accountability from responsible parties

The definition of a comprehensive plan; who uses it and why; its interface with a strategic plan

*Every city and town in the Commonwealth is required by statute to have a comprehensive plan, which encompasses the long-term physical development of a city or town.

- *A strategic plan should have impact on current and future budgetary considerations such as schools, services for seniors, snow plowing, etc.
- *A strategic plan helps understand the dynamics of the comprehensive plan. Integrating the two plans with the town-wide financial plan and five year capital plan builds a fully integrated response to the needs and values of the Town.
- * The comprehensive planning process includes listening to residents, collecting and analyzing pertinent data and developing general goals. Those goals have a large set of values to work towards. For example, the implementation plan for those goals spurred on the affordable housing bylaw and the large house review process.
- *The development community refers to the comprehensive plan for guidance. The plan does affect services in town such as transportation i.e. bus service in Town.

Why a strategic plan:

- *Creates an opportunity for Town boards and committees to collaborate and set priorities on town-wide issues. This need for an overarching plan has been a repeated concept in our discussions with town boards and committees.
- *Wellesley is facing major decisions in the near future, North 40, 900 Worcester, Schools, facilities, Town Hall renovation , and continuing financial challenges over contract negotiations and employee benefits, to name a few.
- *Integrate existing department strategic plans (Schools, WFL, DPW, COA) and the Comprehensive Plan under one umbrella.
- *Identify and/or reaffirm the Town's key values and objectives.
- *Create a working platform for a collaborative budget development process.

Background on previous TGSC's recommendations on strategic planning:

The #1 recommendation of the 2004 TGSC was an Annual town-wide strategic planning process. TM, as a result of that recommendation, voted instead for the development of a town-wide financial plan that has been implemented. A strategic plan can be viewed as the next step in the evolution of TWFP, which has been an essential tool for the Town

Schools' success in its Strategic Planning Process

- *Provided an opportunity for broad-based public discussion of values in education
- *Involvement of many members of the public, both parents and other residents, in the focus groups and in response to surveys
- *Resulting strategic plan has been the guiding principle in setting priorities for the schools

The BOS role in a strategic planning process:

- *In Acton and Lexington, the BOS initiated the process by appointing a committee comprised of elected officials of all town boards.
- *Other towns used Planning Board or Town Manager staff to provide support to the process.
- *Initiating a strategic planning process creates additional work for the BOS.

*TGSC concludes the benefits of that additional responsibility far outweigh the initial development process as described in the preceding comments.

*Strategic planning could take place with or without a change in the executive management of the Town.

*TGSC envisions a committee, appointed by the BOS, comprising members of other boards including the Planning Board.

The Planning Board; Responsibility for the Comprehensive Plan, opportunity for collaboration.

*The Planning Board has extensive experience in long range planning. Broadening that planning process to include strategic planning benefits the Town for all the reasons previously identified.

*The Planning Board is requesting funds in FY 2015-16 to begin the comprehensive planning process.

*Many elements of the comprehensive planning process are identical to a strategic planning process, e.g. resident surveys and focus groups.

In further discussion, TGSC members underscored the need to build into the plan accountability for implementation and a mechanism for reporting to the Town/Town Meeting on a periodic basis. Members recognized the “put on the shelf” issues and believe that any strategic plan must be accompanied by steps for accountability, implementation and periodic reporting.

TGSC recommends the BOS start a discussion with the Planning Board on a combined Comprehensive Plan and Strategic Plan effort.

Next steps: Anna Sereiko and representatives of the TGSC will present the TGSC’s findings and recommendations to the BOS before the Selectmen retreat on April 29, 2015.

Executive Functioning Working Group: Tom Ulfelder

Primary focus of their discussions centered on the Town’s budget process. A central question in the working group’s discussion is if the TGSC recommends a change in the Town’s executive management whose budget will be presented to TM and how will that differ from our current process. Discussion to continue.

Land Use: Rose Mary Donahue

The working group has arrived at a consensus on what a Land Use Division would look like. Discussions will continue with the Board of Appeals, NRC, Wetlands, and Planning.

History of Town Elections: Katherine Babson

Using as reference a chart (see attached) detailing elections in Town from 2000-2015 the TGSC discussed how many of the seats for the 10 elected boards and two elected official positions were competitive. History shows the BPW hasn’t had a contest since 1998. BOH, the last contest was in 1999. Board of Assessors last contest was in 1997.

The point was made that Boards that require technical expertise and specialized knowledge result in less competition.

The Planning Board has the most turnover in seats suggesting that 5-year terms may be too long.

The chart helps analyze the question of elected vs. appointed boards. It provides data for the TGSC to make recommendations.

Wellesley Media Bylaw: Arthur Goldberg

Article 20A of the Town Bylaws is the Telecommunications Advisory Committee. Arthur Goldberg representing the TGSC worked with Town Counsel and Peter Marks, chair of Wellesley Media, to draft a revised bylaw that reflects this name change and which accurately describes what the committee now does..

The TGSC raised several concerns with the bylaw. Before voting on the revised by-law the TGSC asked for a "red lined" copy of the existing language.

This matter will be taken up in subsequent meetings.

Effective date of Town elections: Rich Page

The TGSC raised the question of whether or not a change in the date newly elected Town Board members take office would benefit them and/or their board. Currently Town elections take place the first week in March. Newly elected officials begin to serve as soon as they are sworn in, typically the day after the election .

The concern was that it might be difficult for new board members to come up to speed on budget, contracts, and specific board business prior to the Annual Town Meeting which traditionally begins on the last Monday of March..

Upon review of our cohort communities Wellesley's current practice is consistent with the majority of Towns we have surveyed. Only two Towns, Reading and Acton, have Board members sworn in after TM.

It became clear during Page's analysis that in Wellesley the entire Board, new and existing members, are responsible to implement the will of TM. It appears that when voters elect new Board members it expects those newly elected officials to be on the Board during TM.

Chairman Babson entertained a motion: Maintain the effective date currently in our system. Rich Page moved the motion and Lee Brooks seconded it. The motion passed unanimously

May 11, 2015 Meeting

The TGSC will solicit feedback for a month after the meeting. Members of the committee will work to meet with all elected Boards in early June.

There was discussion about how to provide TM members and citizens with the information to be delivered on May 11. It was agreed that the process be two fold.

A taped program on the TGSC findings as well as an article in the Townsman is used as education tools. Information session(s) would be scheduled for TM members and citizens together to solicit their feedback on the TGSC's work to date.

Open sessions with staff will also be scheduled with the Director of Human Resources and Pete Hechenbleikner attending.

Chairman Babson complimented the TGSC on their work to date. It will serve as an excellent foundation for the committees recommendations.
The meeting was adjourned at 10:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Linda R Perlmutter, Secretary pro tem