

To: Bolton Board of Selectman

From: John Elsesser, SAGE Consulting (**S**trategic **A**dvice for **G**overnmental **E**nterprises)

Re: Goal Setting: Lessons from a day at the Beach held on April 6, 2024

April 30, 2024

On Saturday April 6, 2024, the full membership of the Bolton Board of Selectman gathered at the Bolton Senior Center for a 4-hour goal setting session. This retreat was facilitated by John Elsesser, a retired Town Manager with 42 years of Municipal experience in Connecticut Towns.

In the introduction he reviewed the various concepts of typical goal setting. Major community trends were addressed to set the stage for further discussion. Specifically, student enrollment, population, grand list growth, reliance on State & Federal aid, and Growth Targets detailed in the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development. Highlighted were the steep drop in student enrollment since FY 02, of 280 students (a 28.6% decrease), and a more modest population decrease of 166 persons (a 3.4% decrease).

The group spent a bit of time engaged in a video on Smart Goals and discussed the key components of goal setting and to be effective goals must be:

Specific

Measurable

Achievable

Realistic

Timely

It was discussed that some become overly obsessed with the Smart Goal methodology, but it provides a successful framework in adopting and achieving

success in forward progress on goals. We further discussed the need for open and respectful discussion throughout the session.

We next moved onto establishing categories of issues and the group fully agreed on using the following categories to put Community issues on the table. It was agreed that at this stage it was important to very briefly explain the issue to assist in understanding the concern and allowing a brief discussion and editing, but not lobbying. The Group was very successful in this process. The agreed upon categories were (not in priority order):

1. Community Facility Needs
2. Infrastructure Needs
3. Public Safety
4. Schools
5. Community Communications
6. Parks and Natural Resources
7. Economic Development
8. Governance

This process generated 48 community issues with some overlapping in multiple categories. To help establish priorities each person were given 8 target dots to select their priorities on the 8 separate category charts. They were instructed that they could power vote using up to two dots on a single issue, recognizing that this lessens their reach of topics.

The following category charts show the full voting vote tally. The highest two ranked categories were Infrastructure Needs, and Economic Development with 13 and 12 votes respectfully. Within these two categories of interest the top two issues, with 7 votes each, were assisting in installing public water along the

western portion of Route 44 to RT 384 to enhance economic development, residential growth, and maybe enhanced fire protection from a water tower (allows fire sprinklers). Tied for most urgent issue is addressing the Town Hall/Community Space needs issue including location, size, and accessibility.

Setting Priorities:

It is worth spending a little time going over the full list. There are some issues “Quick Win Issues” which can be coordinated administratively. Other long-term issues may warrant the creation of a Study Team to gather information on projected costs and return of investment and financing means (grants and/or bonding). Some of these next phase study issues may need upfront investment for items such as engineering review, and cost estimates. Therefore, there may be short term budget impacts, but this may be offset by both long-term growth in tax revenues, population, and increased student count. Additionally, the quality of life may be enhanced, and the projects may increase future stability. This can be summed up as an investment in the future of the Town.

I suggest the Board review the voting and look for “Quick Wins” to show the benefits of the process. These can be assigned to Staff, Boards, or Volunteers. I suggest that for the larger long-range projects the Board consider setting up formal Study Committees with a suggested charge and time frame.

To assist in this fine-tuning process, I have taken the liberty to put together suggestions of the “Quick Wins” and several long-term prospects for assignment to a study group. This is only a suggestion list and should be further discussed by the Board and prioritized, especially as additional information comes in. This could be information on a funding source, new laws, or significant roadblocks.

Next steps:

Start with the *quick wins*. The Board can make some assignments to Staff, Agencies, and volunteers. The list for consideration for this category includes:

Communications:

*Establish a semi-annual consortium on the Board of Selection, Board of Finance, and all major land use commissions. Ask each group to submit a one-page summary of activities and issues to go out with the agenda. The Chair, or spokesperson, of the agency, can add substance to the list at the meeting and allow a brief discussion. This approach starts team building and assists in the goal of no surprises for citizens and elected officials. Time control is critical, or the meeting will go too long.

*Discuss with CVC enhanced live (and rebroadcast) videos with a shift to include free YouTube. Look into PEGPETTIA grants available from PURA to update equipment needs. Seek student volunteers (high school and college) to assist community volunteers.

*Enhance interlinks between Town and school website.

*Make better use of the Bolton Bulletin with higher visibility for Town and School websites and enhanced school news and school event coverage.

Schools:

*Establish bi-monthly meetings between Town and School administrations to coordinate future projects (no surprises).

Parks:

*Finish Herrick Park plan

*Start dialogue with Bolton Land Trust on future partnerships on land acquisition...collaboration helps in successful grant applications.

- *Start dialogue with State on Freja Park/Notch parking and illegal graffiti/signage.
- *Explore lighting and energy efficiencies opportunities with Eversource.

Infrastructure:

*Work with CRCOG, CTDOT, and State elected officials to reach a consensus on the RT 6/RT 44 intersection (Their Study is collecting dust) on an agreed upon plan and to get included in the State Transportation plan and lobby to get it funded. Before meeting get accident data from State Police...consider have Fire folks at meeting too to share their experiences. It may also be worth the effort to meet with CTDOT to discuss low-cost left-hand turn lanes at higher traffic intersections on RT 44. They reduce congestion and reduce accidents. The State Police should be able to provide the accident reports. Discussion with CRCOG may also be helpful prior to the meeting.

Economic Development: (some of these issues may be funding dependent)

- *Simplify zoning regulations and streamline approval process.
- * Increase staff hours to allow time for this work (or hire attorneys/consultants).
Review availability of year end funds ...(E.G. snowplow funds from light winter).
- *Need Staff time for marketing vacant businesses, and vacant commercial land.

Governance:

- *Enhancing inter-Board communications should be addressed by issues detailed in Communications.
- *Request Agencies (Directors) to submit annual reports to Board of Selectman.

Major Projects: Consider forming Task/Study groups.

Unlike the “Quick Win” these high priority projects will take time and study, and likely some financial inputs for engineering concepts, and cost estimates. As such a task force of staff and appropriate town and outside agencies should be created. Given community capacity these should be limited to 2 or 3 or they will fail due to lack of time and concentrated efforts.

Therefore, I recommend the following for consideration:

1. Extending public water up RT 44 from west end to 384 area. This could start as a staff project by holding discussions with CT Water and Eastern Highlands Health District to ascertain feasibility, interest, and need. This could include water sampling to look for existing well water quality. Discussions could also be held with the Town of Manchester about the availability of water and discuss working with CT Water (or whether they would consider acquiring or working with Twin Hills water company for supply/storage issues. Even with the possible availability of Clean Water Funds it is likely that significant local matches will be required. Therefore, it is particularly important to include representatives of Planning, Economic Development and consider Housing interests too. A group larger than 5 to 7 is not recommended.
2. The issue Town Hall/Community Space needs should also be a task force. They can pick on all the work that has been done. A broad-based group is recommended, again, because borrowing is highly likely. This group can look at a wide gamut of options including, but not limited to:

*Square footage needs for town office for 25-year period

*Best location

*Available land/building space, including both private & public buildings/schools (with the reductions of students is space available to merge schools and free up space?) Renovation of a private building may also be a cost-effective option due to prevailing wage considerations for full building construction.

* Beyond town office space what other community space may be needed for recreational/cultural uses.

*I suggest without going too far into this project consideration be given to hiring an Architect for a space need study (if this has not been done),

3. School enrollment trends: The significant decline in student enrollment needs to be addressed. The cost per student for the core overhead of building maintenance and administrative Staff overhead will continue to increase and the State Aid will reduce since it is tied to student count. Enrollment in specialized classes will be reduced and become very expensive on a per pupil cost. There will also be impacts on school sports teams too. Since this is under the purview of the Board of Education and School Administrators it would be wise for a meeting of the Board of Selectman and Board of Education (at minimum) to ask them to conduct a study to address this issue and future implications. There are many options they can consider to increase student count or shrink building/staff size. It would be wise to ask them to be prepared to discuss before the budget sessions for FY 25/26.

Final tips & takeaways

Goals setting: lessons from a “Day at the beach”

The Board of Selectman has taken the first step of identifying your community goals. The next steps are reaching agreement on how to proceed with “Quick Fixes” and start the efforts on addressing long term priorities. A template on S.M.A.R.T Goals is included to assist in further refinement of creating action teams. Be aware of the tasks which will need financial assistance and try to line up cost estimates for consideration in FY 25/26 budget.

When creating the task forces make up consider the following:

*Diversity in membership...don't have the same people on all of them. Bring in outside folks (either members of other boards or subject area experts). There is a lot of work, and it needs to be spread out to keep on deadline. This approach of broader community involvement can assist in getting broader community buy-in in the future.

*Set up reporting update deadlines for the task forces to the whole Board...consider quarterly brief updates and reports at the new consortium meetings....and use of newsletter briefs to keep the community engaged. If people are aware of something being studied and interim briefing it will help with getting backing to proceed especially if funding is required, or a significant change is suggested. Citizens do not like surprises.

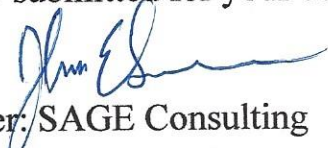
Watch for dangers at the beach. Waves will push you and crash on you.

Undertows will try to pull you backwards, and the Sun will try to burn you.

Additionally, you will have GULLS (Government, Unions, & Local Loudmouths) cawing at you. If you get burned use ALOE (A Lot Of Energy) as a balm. Instead keep the project soaring like a Kite (Keeping Intense Time & Effort).

But spending a day at the Beach is also rewarding. You can take a long walk on critical issues which allows time to think in a fast-paced world. Creating study committees (or task forces) is dipping your toes in the water to take the temperature of the Community. Taking a dive in is always better than the slow painful walk into cold water. Actions on addressing Community needs is a process that invests in the future of the community. Time to take the dive.

Respectfully submitted for your consideration

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'John Elsesser', written over the printed name.

John Elsesser: SAGE Consulting

May 2024

S.M.A.R.T GOALS – TEMPLATE

SMART goals help improve achievement and success. A SMART goal clarifies exactly what is expected and the measures used to determine if the goal is achieved and successfully completed. A SMART goal may be used when drafting Maintenance or a Growth Goal.

A SMART goal is:

Specific: Linked to a job description, departmental goals/mission, and/or overall University goals and strategic plans. Answers the question—Who? and What?

Measurable: The success toward meeting the goal can be measured. Answers the question—How?

Attainable: Goals are realistic and can be achieved in a specific amount of time and are reasonable.

Relevant: The goals are aligned with current tasks and projects and focus in one defined area; include the expected result.

Time Oriented: Goals have a clearly defined time-frame including a target or deadline date.

Examples:

Not a SMART goal:

- Keep our department's website up-to-date

Does not identify a measurement or time frame, nor identify why the improvement is needed or how it will be used.

SMART goal:

- The first Friday of every month, solicit updates and new materials from our department's managers for the web page; publish this new material to the website by 12:00 noon on the following Friday. Each time new material is published, review our department's website for material that is out of date, and delete or archive the out-dated material.

S.M.A.R.T Goal Planning Form

Specific – WHO? WHAT?

Measureable – HOW?

Attainable – REASONABLE?

Relevant – EXPECTED RESULT?

Timed Oriented – WHEN?

BOLTON BOARD OF SELECTMEN
RETREAT
9:00 AM, SATURDAY, APRIL 13, 2024
BOLTON SENIOR CENTER, 104 NOTCH ROAD
In-Person Only

MINUTES

Board of Selectmen Members Present: First Selectman Rodney Fournier, Deputy First Selectman Robert Morra, Mather Clarke, Gwen Marrion, Tim Sadler, Amanda Gordon, Pamela Sawyer

Staff Present: Town Administrator James Rupert, Recording Secretary Linda H. McDonald

Others Present: John Elsesser, Facilitator and Jim Loersch

Facilitator John Elsesser laid the groundwork for the meeting. He talked about setting goals and establishing priorities. He noted some big issues/trends facing the town; i.e., student enrollment trends, grand list growth, state aid, and unfunded state mandates. He recommended that the Selectmen identify all drainage issues in town and suggested the BOS meet with the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) for an update on the goals of the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) and asked if there is an implementation committee for the POCD. The topic of creating attainable housing in town was also discussed.

Referring to the POCD, J. Elsesser reviewed population trends, the land use and zone maps and suggested the town have less zones with broader uses. He noted the state sometimes has unspent funds in the transportation budget at the end of the fiscal year and recommended the town contact district engineers to possibly get free road improvements, such as left hand turns on state roads in town.

School enrollment was discussed. J. Elsesser noted overall town population in the past 22 years decreased by 166 (3.4%) but student population has dropped 28.6% (down 280 students), with the cost per student increasing dramatically. He strongly believes the current direction of the school system is not sustainable and needs significant work and communicated this will impact everything else the town wants to do.

The Selectmen then participated in a brainstorming workshop, listing items/projects in several categories they considered of importance to the future of the town. The items were ranked by priority. The top priority items are as follows:

- 1. Community Facility Needs:**
 - New Town Hall/Community space – consider size, accessibility and location
- 2. Infrastructure Needs:**
 - Getting water up Route 44 – water tower – private vs public
 - Attainable Housing – options for seniors, condominiums, apartments, home ownership
 - Getting the Department of Transportation to prioritize the Rt 6 & 44 intersection

3. Public Safety:

- Address structure of the fire department regarding staffing/volunteers
- Having State Troopers or consider regionalization

4. Schools:

- Collaboration between the Board of Education and Administration

5. Community Communications:

- Have consortium (multi-board) meetings/presentations, possibly quarterly

6. Parks and Natural Resources:

- Leverage the parks – how to increase use at Indian Notch (rent space to store kayaks, create secondary parking)

(After the brainstorming session ended, A. Gordon asked to add Heritage Farms as a priority project to this list.)

7. Economic Development:

- Generating new revenue by attracting new businesses
- Simplification of the zoning regulations
- Director of Community Development needs more time to recruit businesses

8. Governance:

- Ability to apply for more grants

P. Sawyer suggested the BOS send positive messages to the residents involved in helping the town in the form of proclamations or letters of appreciation.

A. Gordon suggested the BOS meet with state and federal officials to let them know the town priorities.

The retreat concluded at 12:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Linda H. McDonald

Linda H. McDonald

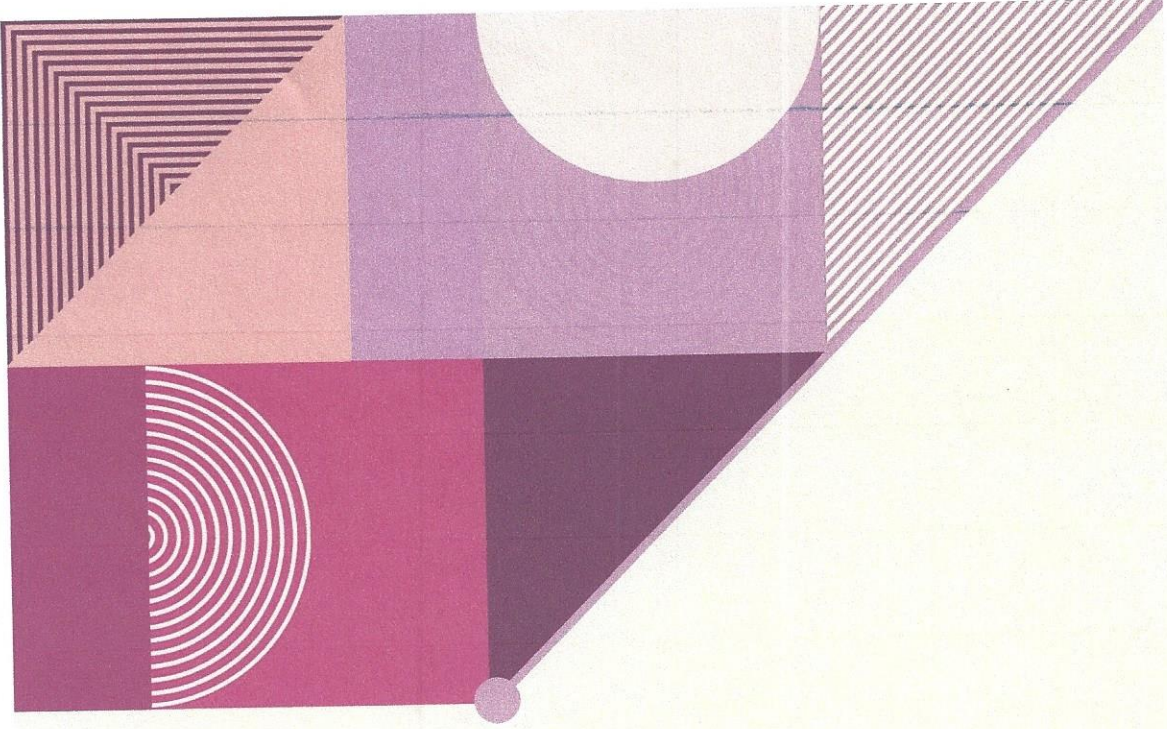
Please see the minutes of subsequent meetings for the approval of these minutes and any corrections hereto.



**TOWN OF BOLTON
GOAL SETTING
4/9/2024**

AGENDA

- Introduction/ground rules
- Smart goals
- Agreement on categories
- Charting issues
- Break
- Setting priorities
- Working lunch
- Next steps
- Final tips & takeaways



SETTING THE STAGE: SOME BIG ISSUES/TRENDS

Student enrollment

Population

Grand list

State/Federal aid

Growth targets

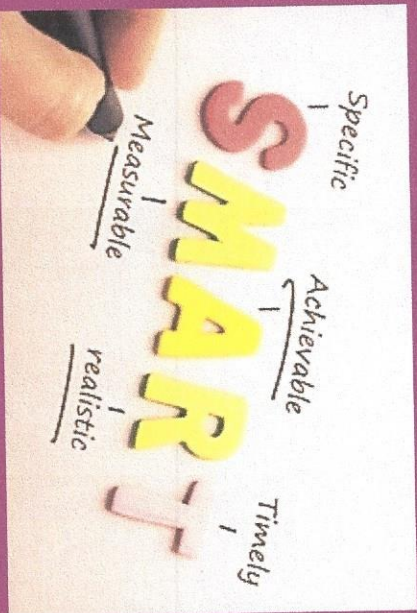
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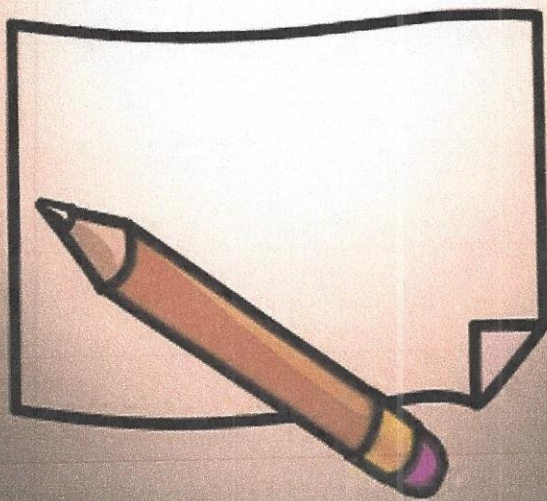
[Affordable Housing Plan Updated Effective 2/20/16.pdf](#)



SMART GOALS



HOW TO CREATE SMART GOALS



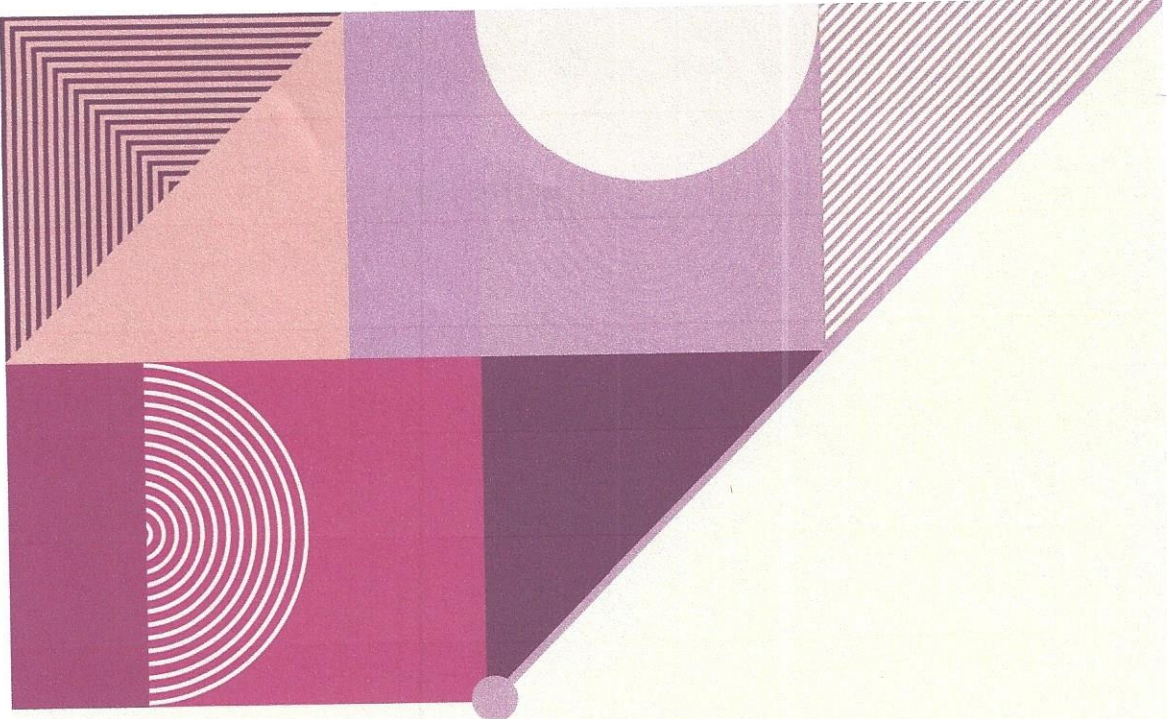
ENROLLMENT

	Students	Population
FY 01/02	979	5,017
FY 23/24	699	4,851

In 22 years, the student population dropped by 280 students.

This is 28.6 % reduction

Population decreased by 166 (-3.4%)



GOAL SETTING: LESSONS FROM A DAY AT THE BEACH

- Watch for waves
- Be careful of undertows
- Don't get burned

42
423
1008
42



ISSUE CATEGORIES

- 1. COMMUNITY FACILITIES**
- 2. INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS**
- 3. PUBLIC SAFETY**
- 4. SCHOOLS**
- 5. COMMUNITY COMMUNICATIONS**
- 6. PARKS/RECREATION**
- 7. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**
- 8. OTHERS**

Getting them on the table

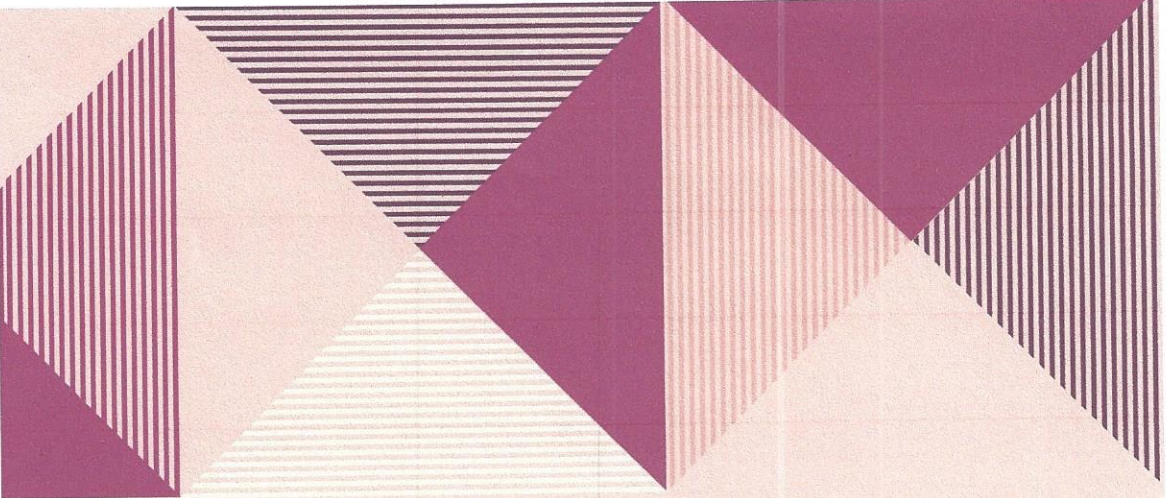
OPEN DISCUSSION OF CONCERNS/ISSUES/AMBITIONS

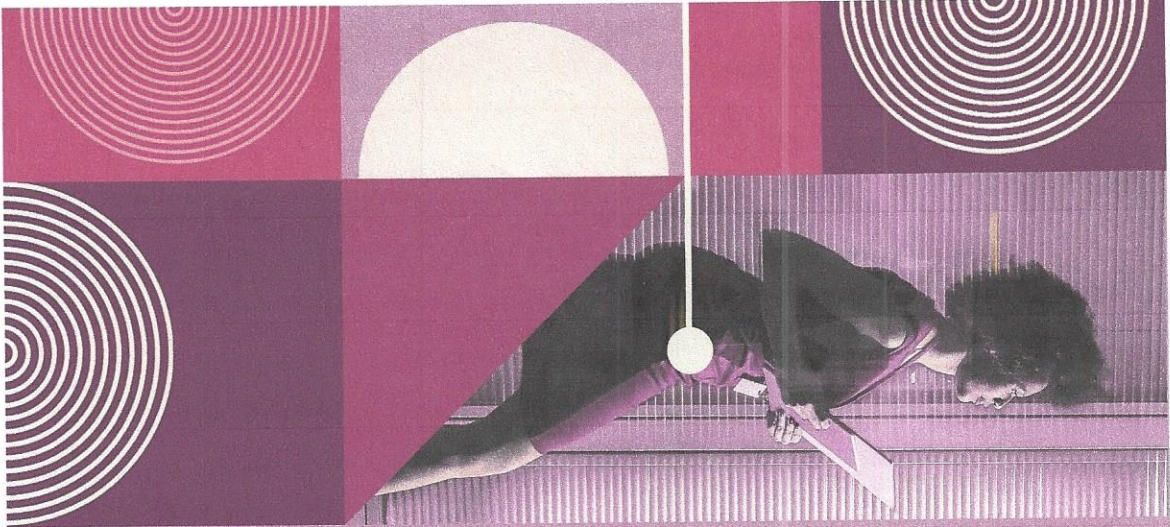
Adding your issues, concerns, and ambitions to the table, and charting under an agreed upon category

As we start prioritizingamending and setting issues aside we can also tweak language.

A brief explanation should be given to allow others to understand your thoughts.

This will be followed by others adding their thoughts....but this more of an additive process than debate.

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- **POCD TERMINOLOGY** Many sections of the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) contain strategies, policies, and action steps. As used in the POCD:
 - A "strategy" is a long-term goal or course of action for Bolton.
 - A "policy" is a principle or course of action intended to help implement the strategy (a policy is an on-going activity that does not generally have an end date).
 - An "action step" is a recommended task that helps implement the strategy (a task has an end date or specific result). Strategy Policy Action Step In the strategy tables in the POCD, each policy and action step also includes a "leader" and may include one or more "partners." The "leader" is the entity considered most likely to bear responsibility for implementing the policy or completing the action step. Partners are other entities likely to be involved in implementation. A legend for "leaders" and "partners" is presented below.



RATING AND RANKING

- Use your Dots to select your top 5 issues.
- You can use weighted selection, but no more than 2 on one category: remember this approach may take away from working on other issues
- Recommend you actively work on only 3... maybe up to 5 priority projects...not enough bandwidth for more...others can be kept in mind for grants, or the door of opportunity opens.

NEXT STEPS

I will provide a written report shortly after getting the minutes.

- You need to agree on how to you wish to proceed:

Who will take which tasks, reporting time frames, resources needing to be gathered and other necessary information to strengthen your familiarity with the presentation

- Communication to public and getting buy in.
- Role of Town Boards/commissions and or need for additional volunteer group,
- Alignment with future budgets e.g. **FY 27**.



THANK YOU

John Elsesser

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INFRASTRUCTURE

Points

Water up RT 44/Tower (private/public	7
Affordable/attainable housing (condo/senior/apartments	3
Natural gas to Georginas	
Sewers to Coventry town line	
Lyman Road Bridge	
Rt 6/Rt 44 intersection modification	3
CDS opportunities	
Drainage mapping (reg compliance	

FACILITY NEEDS

Leverage school space for town shared use	1
TownHall/Community space (size,accessibility,location)	7
NRMC demoiton (use of space)	
Senior Center Use/shared space	
Field/track @ school (3 million)	
BCS Roof	
School HVAC	

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

New Business =Tax revenue (infrastructure needs)	4
Zoning regulation simplification	4
Limited staff hours Dir. Of Community Development (28)	3
4 empty commercial buildings on RT 44	
Marketing ...WHO?	1
Streamline Town (pzc)approvals	
Vacant land near Ice rink	

GOVERNANCE

Need more Grant capability (staff/shared, shovel ready, matching \$)	4
Gov. efficiencies: Review/update Town Ordin. & Commission regs	
Enhance inter- Board Communications	1
Improve Workplace, Project management, accountability	
Directors' reports to be included in Annual report to BOS	
Increase sense of Urgency (when appropriate)	

PARKS & NATURAL RESOURCES

Leverage parks=Revenue\$ increase use(Ind. Notch & add parking)	1
Partner with BLT for acquisitions	
Access to NHC and other trails	
Collab. with neighboring Towns	
Partner with State (Freja Park/Notch/Pond(flag)/Parking security	
Finish Herrick Park Plan	
Lighting /energy efficiencies	

COMMUNITY COMMUNICATIONS

No Surprises for residents (& Selectman)	
Bolton Bulletin: Market availability website link, highlight Hearings/Meetings	1
Live broadcasts via CVC and You tube	
Interlink Town and School website	
Establish Town agencies Consortium meetings (quarterly?)	4
Include school news/events in Bulletin	

SCHOOLS

Increase collaboration between School & Town Administrations	5
Study sustainability of current system (especially High School	
Explore solutions and alternatives	1
Challenge of Special Ed costs	
What is break even for student population?	

PUBLIC SAFETY

STRUCTURE OF FIRE DEPARTMENT: STAFFING/VOLUNTEERS	3
POLICE: RESIDENT TROOPER STAFFING / REGIONAL ALTERNATIVES	3