

GOVERNANCE AND BALANCED SPENDING

A Transparent Town Government Integrates the Community into Decision-Making



VISION:

Our fiscally responsible and transparent Government manages growth and development to honor the town's authentic character and balance revenues to sustain public services and infrastructure.

“What? I didn't know about that!”

Context

Throughout the Visioning and Master Plan processes, residents repeated concerns about a “lack of transparency”; many people don't understand how decisions are made, by whom, or the criteria for a final decision.

A majority of residents support new commercial development that boosts tax revenues to help pay for needed capital improvements (water, sewer, seawalls, and other facilities).

“What is the Process?”

Town Government must work with the Community to agree on strategies for balancing spending with revenues; in order to work through this and other important decisions, the Town should clarify the decision-making process, expand communications, improve the quality of information, and encourage thoughtful community engagement.

Every issue or project in town generates many resident questions but many go unanswered...

What is the Issue? Why is this solution being proposed?

How will a decision be made? *“Who's Responsible?”* What is the timeline?

What are the costs? (*fiscal, social, environmental*)

“How Do We Pay For It?”

Recommendations

- **Communicate Effectively**
 - Manage Town communications to the Community through a single channel (staff or consultant)
 - Regular communication from Town to all households (e.g. BOS newsletter)
 - Standardize regular external and internal notices (standards for content, format, and timing)
 - Standards for new agenda items (Issue Summary, Fact Sheet, Alternatives, Community Outreach)
 - Expand alternative community engagement (flyers, message boards, e-notices, social media)
 - Annual campaign to publicize information resources, emergency alerts and personalized e-notices
 - Encourage residents to regularly engage and educate themselves regarding Town business
- **Review and document Manchester's existing organizational structure “Who's Responsible?”**
 - Document responsibilities for process, administration, maintenance, and enforcement.
- **Review and document existing governance processes “How do I...?”**
 - Document and Diagram Public Processes (Step-by-Step, by Department, from Permitting and Parking Tickets to Town Warrant Articles).
- **Develop and implement a strategic plan for the LCD to allow more commercial and residential opportunities capable of producing significant tax revenues**
 - A strategic plan will evaluate development potential and identify the uses, scale, density and style of development supported by the Town, with protections for natural resources.
- **Revise Zoning in the General District to generate more commercial and residential opportunities downtown**
 - Incremental, village-scale development that, compatible with the existing character, will create a vibrant mixed-use downtown.
- **Develop long-term plan and funding for public facilities (Town and MERSD) and infrastructure systems. Inventory, map, assess and create Operating and Capital Plans for all public assets**
- **Assess the need for new public facilities**
 - The 2017 Facilities Master Plan found that the DPW facilities, Police Station, Town Hall, Library, and Waste Water Treatment Facility need improvement or replacement within 20 years. A new Senior Center and Harbormaster facility should be considered.
- **Renovate Town Common to improve design, circulation, and connection to the harbor (in design)**
 - This project is an opportunity to strengthen public connections; the redesign should consider a harbor walk and walking path connecting Town Hall parking to downtown.
- **Optimize opportunities for shared services to improve the provision of services and increase efficiency**
 - The Town should increase collaboration across jurisdictions and explore regionalization for sharing services or facilities for potential operational efficiencies and/or cost savings.
- **Undertake a Cemetery Assessment to determine existing and projected capacity**
- **Identify recreation needs and create a Recreation Fields Master Plan**
- **Identify and protect lands that contribute to local and regional trail networks**
- **Explore and implement ways to make the town more bike and pedestrian friendly while assuring the roadway network continues to work effectively for all modes of transportation**
 - The Town's transportation infrastructure, policies, regulations and operating procedures should be coordinated to support a bike and pedestrian friendly community.

Effective self-governance requires that community members work together in good faith with each other and with town employees.

MANCHESTER MASTER PLAN
A Stronger Manchester Starts With Us