

South Hadley Selectmen Planning Initiative

The South Hadley Board of Selectmen and Town Administrator, with assistance from Municipal Resources Inc., engaged in a facilitated planning effort designed to help them set goals and develop plans and initiatives to improve and enhance municipal services.

The process was initiated in the summer of 2010 with a two step on-line survey process which solicited ideas and input from local officials and municipal employees. The initial survey (appendix A) was designed to identify perceived overarching issues and challenges that face the community in the next three to five years. The results of the initial survey were tabulated, analyzed and organized into 5 general focus areas:

- 1) Community & Economic Development;
- 2) Communication & Community Engagement;
- 3) Increasing Organizational Efficiency;
- 4) Restructuring the Model of Local Government, and;
- 5) Financial Planning

The second survey (appendix B) was designed to help drill down into some of the more critical issues and provide direction, focus and priorities for action in the next few years.

The results of the second survey were compiled, analyzed and incorporated into a work-session agenda which involved the Selectmen and Town Administrator in two facilitated sessions where the major issues and challenges facing the community were discussed and deliberated; the first was a day long meeting involving the Board, the Town Administrator and the consultant; the second was a tele-conference involving the same participants. During the working sessions it was determined that the action items for the immediate future can be incorporated in 3 specific focus areas:

- 1) Community & Economic Development
- 2) Leadership, Governance and Organization
- 3) Financial Planning

The following items represent the final conclusions and action items agreed upon by the Selectmen and Town Administrator at the conclusion of the planning process:

Community & Economic Development

1. **Community Development** – Initiate zoning changes and modifications to various land-use regulations to bring them into alignment with long term Master Plan goals and vision.

2. **Economic Development** – Initiate research to clarify existence of local Industrial Development Authority and take steps as necessary to create / revitalize an active viable entity in South Hadley; **Frank DeToma & Paul Beecher are responsible to complete and report back by 12/31/10;**
3. **Economic Development** – Initiate a Business Retention Effort: a) as a first step complete an inventory of existing businesses within the community - (including the creative economy) **Jeff LeBecque is responsible to complete by 3/1/11;** b) as a second step initiate a business outreach effort which involves visiting at least 2 businesses per month to identify threats and opportunities – **Frank DeToma is responsible to initiate start up by January 1, 2011 & report back each month;**
4. **Economic Development** – Explore & evaluate approaches & collaborative opportunities to create tourism attractions around the Canal & related regional assets; **The Town Administrator will initiate in cooperation with UMA**
5. **Economic Development** – Explore & evaluate the possibility and viability of creating a business incubator; independently or in association with the College; **The Town Administrator will initiate and report to the Board by October 2011**
6. **Economic Development** – Develop composite / impact maps for the Falls area to assist with planning efforts; initiate a design charette for the Falls area; **The Town Administrator will develop a conceptual approach in time to secure funding from Town Meeting in May 2011**
7. **Economic Development** – Nourish the relationship with E-Ink in an effort to identify key vendor / suppliers that might be attracted to locate in the community; **The Town Administrator will initiate**
8. **Economic Development** – Invite the municipal electric company to collaborative in economic development activities as appropriate. **The Town Administrator will follow-up as appropriate**

Leadership, Governance & Organization

1. **Organizational** – Research, identify and document how the Town Manager Plan can be adopted within the provisions of state law and local charter; **Initiate action in conjunction with the Department of Revenue assessment to be conducted in 2011**
2. **Organizational** – Research, identify and document how each specific elected Department head position can become an appointed position within the provisions of state law and local charter; **Initiate appropriate action following the preparation and issuance of the Department of Revenue report in 2011**

3. **Organizational** – Research & identify opportunities to advance regional approaches either through the COG or through inter-municipal agreement; starting with public health services, building inspections and code enforcement, & property tax assessing & dispatch services. **This will be an on-going effort for the Town Administrator; however he is expected to present a conceptual plan for regionalizing health services by July 1, 2011**
4. **Community Engagement** – Pursue use of social networking & other internet opportunities to expand and enhance communications with and engagement of the community in local government activities. Initiate neighborhood outreach efforts to engage and educate the community. **This will be an on-going effort for the Town Administrator; however he is expected to present evidence of progress on social media networking efforts by March 1 & outreach by July 1, 2011**

Financial Planning

1. **Financial** - Focus on targets of opportunity including: rejoining the COG; regionalizing Health, Assessing & Dispatch. **The Town Administrator will request an appropriation of \$ for 2011 membership in the COG; see # 3 leadership, governance & organization**
2. **Financial** - Focus on building cooperative and trusting relationship with the school district with an eye towards collaboration and eliminating redundancy; follow-up on recommendations from the Ad Hoc Committee report on Town / School Cooperation including such things as joint fuel purchases & consolidated building maintenance; **The Town Administrator will initiate appropriate action following issuance of the DOR report & report progress to the Board**
3. **Financial** - Focus on ways to help the community better understand the financial challenges that must be faced in the next 5 years so they are more open to explore viable solutions; **per # 4 leadership, governance & organization**
4. **Financial** - Implement the CIP&B as presented in 2007 – **The Town Administrator will prepare by March 1, 2011**
5. **Financial** - Develop 5 year financial forecast and anticipated expenditure plan – **The Town Administrator will develop by May 1, 2011**

