

Select Board Special Meeting Agenda
9:00 a.m. August 4, 2023
Memorial Park Field House (Second Floor)
92 Rosemary Street
&
Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81641840123?pwd=UjAvdUVMbmFoZjcvRlRXUjJpT1ZCdz09>

9:00 a.m. A meeting of the Select Board was convened by Chair Marianne Cooley. Those present were Kevin Keane, Heidi Frail, Cathy Dowd, Marcus Nelson, Town Manager, Kate Fitzpatrick, Assistant Town Manager Dave Davison, Assistant Town Manager Katie King, ATM/Operations, and Emily Meyer, Administrative Specialist. Present for the retreat facilitators (Raftelis) were Julia Novak, Julie Gieseke, and Janae Janik

Board members were asked to reflect on the activities of the first day and share their reactions. Board members highlighted their appreciation for the graphical format used to discuss initiatives, the number of previous initiatives that have been operationalized, how well the Board works together, and the amount of work that was accomplished during the previous day.

Using the final goal statements and content from the prior day's activities, Ms. Novak presented a proposed vision statement for the Board to discuss and revise. The Board reached consensus on the following statement:

"Needham is a safe and welcoming town that people are proud to call home, where neighbors care, respect differences, and contribute to the global community."

The Board reviewed the edits made to the goals the previous day:

Goal #1: Healthy and Socially Thriving

Needham residents enjoy plentiful recreational, cultural, and educational opportunities in an environment that upholds human rights, celebrates diversity, and fosters a sense of connection among neighbors, thus strengthening their bond to the community they proudly call home. Needham:

- Cultivates a wide range of recreational, cultural, educational, civic, and social opportunities for all socioeconomic and age groups;
- Supports the physical and mental well-being of its community members;
- Fosters inclusion, diversity, and equity in order to become a culturally responsive, anti-racist, and anti-biased community; and
- Values public art.

Goal #2: Economically Vital

Needham welcomes investment in local businesses and has a thriving local economy that contributes to a growing local tax base to support desirable community amenities and programs. Needham:

- Has a growth mindset and encourages business development and redevelopment;
- Supports an environment for creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship;

- Promotes a well-educated, skilled, and diverse work force that meets employers' needs;
- Fosters a collaborative and resource-rich regional business climate;
- Attracts, sustains, and retains a diverse mix of businesses, entrepreneurs and jobs that support the needs of all community members; and
- Supports financial security and economic opportunity.

Goal #3: Livable

Needham values diversity and a broad spectrum of housing options. The community is supported by well-maintained public infrastructure and desirable amenities that accommodate a variety of community needs. Needham:

- Promotes and sustains a secure, clean, and attractive place to live, work and play;
- Supports an increase of housing, including a variety of types and price points;
- Provides high-performing, reliable, affordable public infrastructure and Town services;
- Encourages and appropriately regulates sustainable development; and
- Supports and enhances neighborhood livability and accessibility for all members of the community.

Goal #4: Accessible and Connected

In Needham, people can easily and affordably travel to their desired destinations without relying solely on cars. Needham:

- Supports a balanced transportation system that reflects effective land use, manages congestion, and facilitates strong regional multimodal connections;
- Offers and encourages a variety of safe, comfortable, affordable, reliable, convenient, and clean mobility options;
- Applies Complete Street principles to evaluate and prioritize bicycle and pedestrian safety;
- Coordinates with state and federal leaders to ensure access to safe, reliable, and efficient public transit;
- Provides effective infrastructure and services that enables people to connect with the natural and built environment; and
- Promotes transportation options to remain an age-friendly community.

Goal #5: Safe

Needham is a welcoming and inclusive community that fosters personal and community safety. Needham:

- Provides public safety in a manner consistent with community values;
- Provides comprehensive advanced life support level care;
- Plans for and provides equitable, timely and effective services and responses to emergencies and natural disasters;
- Fosters a climate of safety in homes, businesses, neighborhoods, streets, sidewalks, bike lanes, schools, and public places; and
- Encourages shared responsibility, provides education on personal and community safety, and fosters an environment that is welcoming and inclusive.

Goal #6: Responsibly Governed

Needham has an open and accessible Town government that fosters community engagement and trust while providing excellent municipal services. Needham:

- Models stewardship and sustainability of the Town's financial, human, information, and physical assets;
- Invests in making Town-owned buildings safe and functional;
- Supports strategic decision-making with opportunities for engagement and timely, reliable, and accurate data and analysis;
- Enhances and facilitates transparency, accuracy, efficiency, effectiveness, and quality service in all municipal business;
- Supports, develops, and enhances relationships between the Town and community and regional partners;
- Proactively reviews and updates Town policies and regulations and ensures compliance;
- Promotes collaboration between boards and committees;
- Values the local government workforce;
- Identifies and implements strategies to hire, support and retain diverse staff at every level of the organization; and
- Prioritizes acquisition of strategic parcels.

Goal #7: Environmentally Sustainable

Needham is a sustainable, thriving, and equitable community that benefits from and supports clean energy; preserves and responsibly uses the earth's resources; and cares for ecosystems. Needham:

- Combats the climate crisis;
- Prioritizes sustainability, including transitioning from fossil fuels to clean, renewable energy;
- Encourages the efficient use of natural resources; and
- Protects and enhances the biodiversity and vitality of ecological systems.

The Board discussed proposed initiatives and developed priorities, as follows:

Initiatives to Begin: Now (0-18 months)

Healthy and Socially Thriving

- Identify ways to institutionalize community conversation around race, diversity, equity, and inclusion, to build relationships and a stronger understanding of different perspectives and lived experiences.
- Make intentional efforts and identify creative ideas for community outreach to diversify the candidate pool for all appointed Boards and Committees; measure progress.
- Complete the Equity Audit, clarify objectives, and determine next steps.
- Provide support to other Boards and Committees on how to apply NUARI principles to their work, including training opportunities and sample goals.
- NUARI: Conduct Board and Committee member orientation sessions to include the Town's race equity vision statement.
- Hold a public hearing and determine if the Town will change Columbus Day to Indigenous People's Day.
- Invite various identity network groups to meet with the Select Board and introduce the work they do and the community they serve.

Livable

- Work with the Planning Board on next steps related to the MBTA Community Housing Guidelines and the update to the Town's Affordable

Housing Plan. Review updated demographics and impact on anticipated transit-oriented development and schools.

- Identify funding for School Master Plan projects and participate in the planning process.
- Evaluate RTS Service Delivery Model to guide long-term investment and review operational efficiencies in the short-term.
- Evaluate next steps for use of the Stephen Palmer Building.
- Evaluate expansion of off-leash dog areas.
- Support for the Needham Housing Authority redevelopment project.

Accessible and Connected

- Implement the Parking Study
- Parking:
 - Update parking payment technologies to allow for credit card and/or app-based payments
 - Ask the Planning Board to update parking requirements in zoning
 - Pilot converting some on-street parking spaces for more active curb use (e.g., short customer visits, active loading areas)
 - Update the Town's parking regulations and permit program (including permit rules, time/day regulations, and pricing)
 - Seek funding for noise reduction/Quiet Zone feasibility, design, and construction.
- Evaluate and make a final determination of the appropriate plan for Downtown Redesign Phase 2.

Responsibly Governed

- Evaluate the need for a flag policy.
- Evaluate the possibility of developing a Community Master Plan.
 - Develop an inventory of Town long-range plans
 - Identify overlaps and conflicts, including other Boards or jurisdictions.
- Establish process to do regular by-law charter review updates.
- DPW phased renovation/construction.
- Capital Facilities:
 - CATH upgrades (including additional parking)
 - Library phased renovations.
- Evaluate ways to increase minority and women-owned business participation in construction, building maintenance projects, and other Town programs.

Environmentally Sustainable

- Prioritize and implement the Climate Action Plan.
- Identify parcel acquisition to comply with Land and Water Conservation Fund requirements.
- Evaluate adoption of net-zero building code; specialized opt-in code.
- Sponsor a tree summit.

Initiatives to Begin: Next (18-36 months)

Healthy and Socially Thriving

- Develop a plan for a community observance of Juneteenth.

Livable

- Evaluate the role of the Affordable Housing Trust.

Environmentally Sustainable

- Explore development of a Town Electric Vehicle (EV) policy, i.e., the default position for fleet replacement should be EVs unless there is a compelling reason to use an alternative.

Initiatives to Begin: Near (36+ months)**Economically Vital**

- Evaluate Chestnut Street redevelopment.

Livable

- Begin the Ridge Hill/Nike Assessment Phase 2 Project, including working with the Community Farm to decide on the long-term plan for the farm at the site as well as considering potential future uses of the site.

Accessible and Connected

- Evaluate funding options for the Rail Trail extension from High Rock Street to Needham Junction.
- Evaluate future use of the rail corridor between Dover and Newton.
- Evaluate the feasibility of a shared use way between Needham Heights and the City of Newton.

The Board discussed other initiatives for Town Staff and other groups, as follows:

- Explore increasing the budget for Town Tree Planting - Town Manager
- Increase NCAC funding in FY2025 Operating Budget and new Arts goal after plan is complete - Town Manager
- Cooling Infrastructure (shade structures at Rosemary playgrounds and playing fields and at Town Common) - Town Manager
- Social Safety Net (increase funding for direct support) - Town Manager
- Food Insecurity (expand food insecurity remediation programs supported by the Town) - Town Manager
- Consider restriction of individual-serving alcohol bottles - Refer to Board of Health
- Procure a level 3 charging station to enable electric school transportation and Town vehicle fleet changes – Refer to Climate Action Planning Committee
- Evaluate the issue of bicycles on sidewalks - Refer to Mobility Committee
- Explore the creation of a mountain biker trail extending south from Kendrick Street and parallel to Greendale Avenue - Refer to Mobility Committee
- Explore opportunities to increase bike infrastructure as possible throughout the Town - Refer to Mobility Committee
- Create a townwide bike route map to use as a planning tool, deciding intentionally which roads would have a bike lane and where to channel bike traffic - Refer to Mobility Committee

The Town Manager will work to operationalize the initiatives and will set up project schedules to move each forward. Raftelis will provide the Town with implementation documents to assist in operationalization.

11:50 a.m. Mr. Nelson moved that the meeting be adjourned. Ms. Dowd seconded the motion. Unanimous: 5-0.

A recording of this meeting can be found at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VgfShearfVA&list=PL3PRZZjHC3yE9AnWTYT5KKdVWYjmXJVug&index=41&pp=iAQB>