



**TOWN OF BOXFORD**  
**Office of the Town Administrator**  
7A Spofford Road  
Boxford, MA 01921

**DATE:** November 17, 2022  
**TO:** Select Board  
**FROM:** Brendan Sweeney, Assistant Town Administrator  
**RE: Department Head and Board/Committee Goal Setting**

In late August, a memo was sent from the Select Board to Town department heads and board/committee chairs regarding the Town's ongoing town-wide goal setting process. Specifically, it was requested that these department heads and board/committee chairs formulate the following for Select Board review:

- Key areas of concern, need, and opportunity to consider over the next two years
- Policy and operational goals specific to your board or committee.

To date, the Town Administrator's office has received a good number of submissions from the department heads and board/committee chairs, though not all of them have submitted a response. Listed below are the responses that we did receive, divided between departments and board/committees and arranged in alphabetically order.

These submissions will be utilized by the Select Board, with the assistance of the Town Administrator's office, to formulate the town-wide goals that will ultimately serves as the pillars that guide action by Town departments and board/committees in the future.

**Departmental Submissions**

**Assessing**

1. To successfully obtain Fiscal Year 2024 Triennial Certification in a timely manner
  - This multi-step year long process demands strict adherence to the Department of Revenue's regulations in order to ensure that valuations, adjustments, and growth are approved on time. In the event that towns are not certified timely, actual tax billing is delayed, which affects the town's budget and ultimately all departments in town.
2. To successfully manage the valuation of The Willows.
  - The Willows, comprised of 66 units, will be the largest scaled housing project that Boxford has seen in many years. The ultimate goal will be to provide assessment uniformity and equity, while also maximizing growth. Accurate valuations will also serve to minimize abatements, which can be costly to the town's overlay reserves.

## **Building Inspector**

### Online Permitting

1. Training for the Building Department begins Fall of 2022
2. Live for Residents – January 2023
3. Budget needs
  - CIP Improvement – Portal for residents in lobby at Town Hall, iPad needed for Building Inspector, Gas/Plumbing Inspector and Electrical Inspector

### Zoning Board of Appeals

1. Website improvement - Files are all now uploaded on the website to make it easier for residents to access
2. Storage Room – Goal is to organize the storage room with the ZBA files and remove excess files/duplicates

### Inspections

1. The Building Inspector will be doing inspections daily from 10am – 12 noon
2. Focus on additional health and safety inspections in Town
  - a. Partner with Fire Department on 110 inspections
  - b. Goal is to improve health, safety, and quality of life in Boxford

## **Communications**

1. In the Implementation/Training process of the new CAD/RMS software determine best practices and streamline processes related to CAD/RMS use.
2. Offer expanded training opportunities for Dispatchers to interact better with other Town Departments and best serve the Citizens.

## **Council on Aging (submitted by both the Board and the Director)**

1. Become one of Massachusetts' "Age-Friendly Communities"
  - <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/age-friendly-massachusetts>
2. Installation of sidewalks in the East Village
  - This initiative would help with the safety and well-being of all our residents. On the weekends Elm Street is dangerous to pedestrians going from the fields to their cars. The addition of sidewalks would also help to support a healthier lifestyle not only for seniors but for everyone.
3. Create a place where, in this new reality of a remote workers, Boxford could offer a space where those who work remotely could connect and support each other
  - The empty building at 4 Middleton Road would be the perfect place for a flexible coworking space and its proximity to the community center, Jack's and the Boxford Common would, again, promote the notion of a village hub. (The second floor can remain a historic stage where local theatre groups can perform – there are grants for its restoration)

4. Bike and hike kiosk and bike racks at 4 Middleton Road
  - Boxford is a destination for hikers and bike riders — unfortunately what we’ve seen in recent years is a growing animosity between bikers and cars. By creating a place in Boxford for bicyclers (and hikers) to meet the kiosk can be a place for Boxford to post the “Rules of the Road”, have a map of rides and trails, recommend safer routes, etc. We want to encourage hiking and biking as a healthy pursuit – this may help.
  - We also need to work with BTA/BOLT to restore/redirect the trail system through East Boxford.
5. It’s great that we have an “Earth Day”, but Boxford could really use more of these and more awareness of cleaning up the environment. We propose at least four such days and by working with Masco to enlist community service hungry teens all of us can work together to keep our town clean and green!

### **Library**

Key areas of concern, need, and opportunity to consider over the next two years

1. Fostering community and supporting neighborhood vitality
  - Boxford can be very segregated at times, so hosting and supporting more opportunities for residents to engage and get to know one another would be very helpful.
2. Valuing and supporting the racial, socioeconomic, cultural, and ever-changing religious diversity of our town is important
  - Recognizing different cultural months at town hall/via flag raisings would reinforce the fact that Boxford is a welcoming community.
3. Supporting the educational, cultural, physical, emotional, civic development of our children and young adults by prioritizing and allocating funds for programming that address these needs.

Policy and operational goals specific to your board or committee

1. Resources: Provide robust services, programs, and resources
2. Community Connections: Increase awareness and use of the library and its resources
3. Patron and Staff Environment: Promote a positive environment for staff and patrons

### **Department of Public Works**

1. The DPW needs a new DPW garage to be able to continue to provide the services the town needs
  - The DPW plays a role in just about every aspect of town function ranging from culvert installations to setting up the town hall for voting and everything in between
  - The DPW has outgrown the 50-year-old facility and it was identified in a previous building study as the town building that is most in need of replacement
  - It is imperative that this town-wide collaborative effort is realized and appreciated so that we can continue to serve the community with the high standards we wish to provide.
2. I believe a policy shift needs to be undertaken in the hiring process of independent snow-plow contractors. Together with the Select Board, it is my wish that we develop and implement a more concise and formal policy for working for the town.

- This includes but is not limited to equipment and safety standards, clocking hours of service, call response times, etc.
- As this is a matter of public safety and convenience, it is critical that our expectations are documented properly and that the contractors are aware of our expectations to work for the town.

## **Finance**

### Key areas of concern

1. Retaining and recruiting employees.
  - Boxford has a small workforce. It is important that we offer salaries, benefits and a positive healthy work environment to employees at all levels of the organization.
2. Provide safe and appropriate buildings for municipal government.
  - The DPW facility is not sufficient to meet the needs to the town.

### Operational goals specific to my department

1. With rising interest rates and major projects on the horizon, it will be important to manage debt service.
  - The Treasurer and I will work with our financial advisor to structure debt to minimize impact on tax rate. Currently we plan to issue long term debt in June 2023 for Cole School design (2) voted ATM June 2021, site work project Cole School (anticipated January 2023 Town Meeting), fire truck voted ATM May 2022, remainder of 10 Elm St. authorization, acquisition and demolition 27 Main St voted ATM June 2021.
2. In addition to above potential design and construction of DPW facility, capital improvement plan for Masco and fire apparatus.
  - These projects will have significant impact on the tax rate but we will work to avoid spikes and smooth increases.
3. Communication will be critical in the next few years.
  - Select Board, Finance Committee and School Committees should collaborate so that needs of the community can be met.
  - Anticipated tax increases should be planned and thoughtful.

## **Fire**

1. Evaluate fire department response to improve our on-scene arrival times.
2. Implement new skills (medical & fire) to grow the knowledge of the firefighters and increase our ability to resolve, stabilize or improve emergency situations.
3. Evaluate fire department's ISO (Insurance Services Office) and address changes as appropriate in order to lower our rating if possible.
4. Evaluate the departments staffing model to determine appropriate staffing level in order to best serve the community.

## **Planning/Land Use**

1. Successfully update Boxford's Open Space and Recreation Plan prior to the application deadline for 2023 LAND grant applications

2. Implement at least three regulatory changes identified in the MS4 Community Bylaw Review prior to June 30, 2022
3. Assist Boxford in responding to the MBTA Communities Act requirements by action deadlines as specified

### **Police**

1. To complete the Department accreditation process
2. Update Police Department policies
3. Improve internal record keeping
4. Address Police Station capital improvements
5. Continued collaboration with the following Town Departments:
  - Communications Department
  - Department of Public Works
  - Permanent Building Committee
  - Town Administrator
  - Select Board

### **Town Administrator**

1. Migration of the Finance Department to the Town Administrator's Office
2. Improving/streamlining operating and capital budget planning
3. Improving the Town's human resources functions in the following areas:
  - Compliance
  - Onboarding
  - Training/ Staff development
  - Benefits fair
  - Policy updates
  - Employee Handbook
4. Improved communication
5. Focus on community-building
6. Increase efficiencies
  - Explore opportunities to provide services through regional collaboration
7. Service improvement
8. Technology/IT upgrades
  - Online permitting
  - Software/ application solutions
  - Updating hardware – servers
  - Cybersecurity – training
  - Migration to cloud: Microsoft 365
9. Continued work on special projects
  - Rail Trail
  - Adaptive Reuse
  - Waste Stream Task Force

- Community events at 10 Elm

### **Town Clerk**

Key areas of concern, need, and opportunity to consider over the next two years

1. Improving communication between town government and residents, especially in light of the lack of any local news outlet
2. Retaining outstanding employees
3. Streamlining the operation of town government
4. Providing adequate, convenient space, including storage areas, for the operation of Town departments

Policy and operational goals specific to the Town Clerk's office

1. Create a procedures manual to guide current and future employees, volunteers and election workers in the various functions of the department
2. Seek means beyond the Town website and social media to communicate with residents regarding the responsibilities of the department: census, licensing dogs and businesses, conducting elections, facilitating Town Meeting, creating and providing birth and death certificates and marriage licenses, retaining and preserving Town records from 1685 to the present, and facilitating compliance with the Open Meeting Law, Public Records Law and Campaign Finance Law
3. Continue to digitize Boxford's historical records to enable easy access to the public
4. Create additional opportunities for Boxford students to learn about Boxford history, local government and elections

### **Treasurer**

1. Participate in the implementation of the new Inspectional Services integrated software by enabling a secure and compliant payment and reporting system.
2. Provide assistance to seniors with real estate tax payment issues.
  - Reach out and follow up when payments are missed to avoid the assessment of fees and interest.
  - Encourage application for exemptions, deferrals and payment plans; discuss potential sale of property and other affordable living options.
3. Encourage on-line payment of tax bills.
4. Discuss the options available to those finding it difficult to pay increasing real estate tax bills.
  - Explain the consequences for late and missed payments.

### **Veterans' Services**

1. Improve web footprint on the town website.
2. Complete the Chapter 60 Municipal Assistance Fund application process.
3. Initiate the process to form a committee in town that will promote responsible citizenship and patriotic values throughout the community by effectively planning and coordinating appropriate parades and ceremonies during patriotic holidays and special events.
  - Committee members strive to educate and promote a public awareness of the service and sacrifice of our nation's active-duty military, veterans and their families.

## Board/Committee Submissions

### **Board of Assessors**

Key areas of concern, need, and opportunity to consider over the next two years

1. The Board believes that 2017's town-wide goal to "develop, support, and expand opportunities for our residents to age in community" is still relevant.
  - The Board has been able to make significant progress toward this goal by implementing the new Clause 57 Senior Circuit Breaker exemption, expanding tax relief opportunities to an estimated 100 residents.
  - As housing expenses continue to be a strain on many seniors, the Board is committed to continuing to explore additional exemption options. The Board will continually monitor the exemptions offered by surrounding communities, while being conscious of potential impacts on other residents.
  - The Board will also support aging residents by continuing outreach to seniors through the Council on Aging, town newsletters, and our website. Outreach will include making seniors aware of all exemptions they may be eligible for and providing assistance with the application process.

Policy and operational goals specific to our board

1. The mission of the Board is the attainment of fair and equitable assessments consistent with the Department of Revenue's guidelines.
  - The Board intends to provide better understanding of this mission through taxpayer education.
  - The Board has developed several ideas for newsletter articles detailing the assessment and abatement process, the importance of cyclical inspections, and the effects of building permits.
  - The Board believes these endeavors will provide the transparency that is necessary to build trust in local government.

### **Boxford Cultural Council**

1. Boxford Cultural Council had to provide most of our programs during Covid outdoors or over Zoom. One of our priorities is to **reestablish as many in-person programs as possible** over the course of the next two years.
2. We are very interested in strengthening our ties to the COA & the new Community Center as the home for more of our non-school centered programs.
  - The Community Center availability will also be key in being able to **showcase the arts** that are **produced or delivered by Boxford residents**.
  - A priority will be to collaborate with Community Center staff in providing regularly scheduled programs, events, exhibits & demonstrations to enrich the cultural vitality of Boxford. This will raise the awareness of BCC-sponsored programs & grant awards, as well as encouraging optimal participation by residents in our community events.

3. **BCC grants in the future** could be co-developed with the Community Center to fund the purchase of equipment for showcasing the arts. Once the facility is open & emerging needs identified we are eager to collaborate.
4. **Community Calendar:** A need we have is to coordinate dates with other groups & organizations.
  - For example, last May we scheduled & publicized our **Arts & Blooms Festival** at Lincoln Hall not knowing that the **Community Yard Sale** was planned for the same weekend in the center of town. At times it might make sense to piggy-back events. Other times a Community Calendar could avoid scheduling conflicts.
5. BCC is focused on enriching our community through:
  - **Arts, Humanities, and Sciences:** the study, pursuit, performance, exhibition, and appreciation of cultural activities in the broadest sense.
    - i. Arts refer to the creation of work in the crafts and performing, visual, media, folk, design, literary, and inter-disciplinary arts. In addition, they also include the presentation and preservation of, and education about works in these disciplines.
    - ii. Humanities are types of learning that deal with human values and aspirations, human thought and culture, language, and creativity. Examples include, but are not limited to, history, social studies, philosophy, criticism, and literature.
    - iii. Sciences are types of learning that deal with nature, science, and technology in ways that explain how they relate to people's lives.
6. We are looking for innovative ways to encourage the production & sharing of cultural arts with, and within, our community.

### **Boxford Housing Partnership**

1. Assist seniors to age in place in their own house
  - This goal was realized when, at the 2022 annual meeting, the Town unanimously passed the Boxford Resident Housing Trust Fund which, would establish the Boxford Small Repair Grant Program. It is currently in State Legislature for final approval.
2. Affordable, subsidized (CPA) housing for seniors with low income
  - This goal of affordable senior housing is in process as the Committee explores ways to implement housing in Boxford Commons.
    - i. The first step was to obtain funding from the Community Preservation Committee to hire an architect to examine the feasibility of a cost effective, assessable, senior housing and incorporate public input.
    - ii. If this is successful, the possibility of a development on Boxford Commons will be presented to the Town at a future Town meeting.
3. Moderately priced housing for seniors with mid-level income
  - This goal will likely go beyond two years
4. Market rate housing for seniors with no income restrictions
  - This goal of income unrestricted senior housing has been realized and construction has started on The Willows in West Boxford. This development was enabled by Town approved upgrading of the Elderly Housing District regulations at the 2019 Town meeting.
5. Creation of housing that is affordable for the employees of the Town of Boxford



6. We have seen the need to ensure funding for the Council on Aging and their dedicated staff so they may continue to serve the growing population of seniors.
  - o One specific issue would be to expand transportation services for seniors outside the area that Merrimack Valley Regional Transportation Authority (MVRTA) services. The MVRTA currently provides transportation within the Merrimack Valley, but not to areas outside such as Peabody or Danvers.

#### **Community Preservation Committee**

1. Individuals from larger boards to smaller boards should meet to find out what was happening in each other's boards
  - a. All boards should collectively meet 3 or 4 times a year, perhaps each one sending a representative, to review what we all are doing and how it can best serve Boxford.
2. Need for a vehicle to share the information from one board to the next

#### **Finance Committee**

1. Keep tax increases as close to 2.5% as possible.
2. Assess current town assets, with an eye towards more effective use
  - o E.g., sell the two vacant properties to help fund VERY costly DPW structure.
3. Get more people (younger!!!) involved in Town Government.
  - o Increased outreach to alert residents of opportunities to volunteer
4. Revamp Trash/recycling/compost operations
5. Build limited sidewalk in East Village, connecting Boxford Common, Cole School, church and Holyoke French House
6. Somehow assess exactly what the quality is of our primary schools and Masco compared to other towns of our socio-economic characteristics, and with these evaluations, assess what, if anything, needs to be changed

#### **Permanent Building Committee**

1. Continue to coordinate with the Sustainability Committee to pursue grants and rebates to realize reductions in the life-cycle costs and carbon footprint of capital projects.
2. Provide advice and expertise to the task force that will be considering the future uses of town-owned buildings, specifically the yellow Community Center at #4 Middleton Road and the Gardner Morse school at #188 Washington Street.
3. Coordinate with the Recreation Committee as they seek to develop recommendations for playground improvements adjacent to Johnson Field.
4. Begin long range planning for the relocation of the DPW facility to Area 4 by conducting preliminary soil testing in the vicinity of the access roadway for a two-lane road.
5. Continue to support the asset management program instituted by the Town which will facilitate the timely maintenance needed to protect the Town's investments.

### **Recreation Committee**

Key areas of concern, need, and opportunity to consider over the next two years

1. Renovation of the Johnson Field Playground is necessary as it is a safety hazard, but will require a lot of time and collaboration with the town.
2. Maintenance of the existing playgrounds: is the rec committee qualified to do this or should a contractor be brought in?
3. Ensure proper use of the tennis/pickleball courts.
4. Opportunity to collaborate more with BTA/BOLT and BAA on their needs and events.

Policy and operational goals specific to your board or committee

1. Organize and maintain liaison positions within our committee to ensure all areas that fall under the rec committee are maintained to the best of our ability.
2. Ensure playgrounds are well-maintained and safe.
3. Renovate the Johnson Field playground as it presents a safety hazard to those that use it.
4. Maintain and update the tennis/pickleball courts including signage.
5. Ensure a good relationship with the BAA and BTA/BOLT and Park Program.
6. Review committee bylaws in the next year.

### **Recycling Committee**

1. Making the Recycling Drop-Off Center a priority with the Town and the DPW
2. Pushing the State to pass Extended Product Stewardship requiring producers and distributors to take back products & packages that are hard to recycle or contain toxic materials
3. Re-educating residents on what is recyclable in Boxford and what is trash.
4. Need for younger people to be involved with the Recycling Committee- possibly adding a high school resident to the Committee.

### **School Committee**

(The School Committee and Superintendent are currently working on their town-wide goals. They will be submitted to the Select Board upon completion).

### **Sustainability Committee**

The Sustainability Committee asks that all major decisions on infrastructure mandate a sustainability consideration.

We suggest that the roadmap requires that:

1. All Town buildings transition to electric HVAC and hot water systems.
  - This will take advantage of the surplus electricity produced by the Town's solar array, as well as tap into the substantial subsidies currently available from National Grid and the State to help with these transitions.
2. Where feasible, transition all town vehicles to electric or hybrid, and install the necessary charging stations to support this conversion.

3. Make information available to town residents about how they can reduce their reliance on fossil fuels.
  - Use the town website and cable TV to let residents know of available incentives for installing renewable energy generation and home electrification.
4. Have a point person on staff responsible for overseeing these initiatives.