

Bar Harbor Town Council

Vision

The Bar Harbor Town Council is resolute in its commitment to promoting a sustainable and resilient community. Taxpayers appreciate ongoing attention to keep the rate of property tax increase low, with expenses for operations and capital improvement project offset where possible by user-based fees and other revenues. Bar Harbor voters value the role of local government to assure efficient and effective use of public funds in order to improve the quality of life for residents and visitors. Recognizing that much of our economy is based on the natural environment, the Council supports steps to protect those resources. Valuing transparency and mutual trust, town officials and residents work to improve communication so that we all better understand concerns and work through policy choices and practical solutions.

2021 Five Year Goals and Strategies

~ FY21 through FY26 ~

Goal 1: Increase the year-round livability and quality of life for Bar Harbor citizens

Strategy 1a: Work with the Town planning staff and planning board to reduce the cost of home development and increase the supply of year-round housing units for purchase and rental through partnerships with developers, employers and non-profits, and through ordinances that encourage higher and medium density residential development in appropriate zones and stem the conversion of year-round housing to vacation rentals.

Strategy 1b: Work with entrepreneurs, employers and other stakeholders to develop strategies to further improve the year-round economy, including efforts to determine and reduce barriers to development of year-round businesses paying livable wages.

Strategy 1c: Work with partners, including Maine Coast Heritage Trust, Acadia National Park, Healthy Acadia, local businesses, organizations and citizens to develop more walking and biking trails and other recreational amenities that encourage residents and visitors to attain greater health and reduce automobile congestion.

Strategy 1d: Work with residents of the neighborhoods and villages of Bar Harbor to develop practical approaches that increase people-to-people connections and a greater sense of community.

Strategy 1e: Work with citizens and various non-profits to promote the arts as a community-building and economic asset.

Strategy 1f: Work with the Superintendent School Committee to maintain a facility that provides a quality teaching and learning environment for our students, with an emphasis on safety, sustainability, flexibility and community connections.

Strategy 1g: Seek training and education opportunities to better understand the full diversity of our community and determine ways that Town Government can address issues of diversity, equity and inclusion.

Goal 2: Create effective plans for a Sustainable Future

Strategy 2a: Address the climate change emergency with meaningful energy conservation efforts, including:

- Develop a strategic education program to improve Town Council’s “climate literacy” in preparation for adopting a Climate Action Plan. (2021)
- Develop a Climate Action Plan reducing greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 12/31/2030. (Fall 2021)
- Prepare a solar ordinance that will allow free-standing, primary use solar arrays on public and private land. (Town meeting, November 2021)
- Develop a community solar farm on the Higgins Pit lot to power all town facilities and schools and offer low-cost power for nonprofit organizations and low to moderate income households. (2022)
- Replace town vehicles with electric vehicles as vehicle life is reached and suitable vehicles are available.
- Increase electric vehicle charging stations in Bar Harbor.
- Include climate standards for buildings, energy use and transportation in the update of the BH Comprehensive Plan and LUO.
- Develop mitigation strategies for projected impacts of Sea Level Rise to protect municipal infrastructure and public and private property.

Strategy 2b. Begin an update of Bar Harbor’s Comprehensive Plan in 2021, including vision and goals for the future of the town, and, importantly, the basis for a more workable Land Use Ordinance.

Strategy 2c: Create a community-wide conversation to develop an overall approach to cruise ship visitation that will better balance positive and negative impacts on the economy and the quality of life for citizens, business owners and non-cruise ship visitors to our community. Work with the Cruise Ship Committee and other stakeholders to create plans to reduce congestion in the vicinity of the town pier and waterfront by tour busses and various services provided to seasonal visitors, including passengers from cruise ships.

Strategy 2d: Position Bar Harbor as a Green Tourism destination/climate leader through collaboration with the business community, major non-profits, local residents and other stakeholders to develop environmental standards.

Goal 3: Improve the Effectiveness and Delivery of Municipal Services

Council Goals and Strategies

Adopted by Council December 1, 2020

Amended April 20, 2021

Strategy 3a: Building on lessons learned from our collaboration with the Town of Mount Desert for shared police services, explore additional possibilities in public safety, including dispatching services, and other town services/functions (e.g. human resources and finances), where collaboration among towns could lead to greater effectiveness and efficiency.

In 2021, seek to expand discussions among Bar Harbor, the Town of Mount Desert, Southwest Harbor and Tremont to examine ways to collaborate for shared police, dispatch and/or other public safety services.

Strategy 3b: Study space and facilities needs for public safety functions within Bar Harbor, and recommend shorter-term solutions, even as longer-term exploration of strategies for collaboration with the Town of Mount Desert continues. –

Goal 4: Improve and Maintain Local Infrastructure

Strategy 4a: Monitor and improve the town’s seasonal parking and seek additional solutions to on-going parking and congestion problems including promotion of walking, biking and shuttle-bus alternatives to private automobiles in the downtown.

Strategy 4b: Continue to evaluate opportunities for improved broadband service within downtown and areas of the town not currently served.

Strategy 4c: While continuing to develop funding sources for street-scape improvements outlined in plans for Cottage and Lower Main Streets, direct the Planning Board to address elements of the land use ordinance that tend to make such redevelopment more difficult.

Strategy 4d: Continue to explore ways in which application of user-fees from parking and cruise-ship visitors, and the possibility of a local-option sales tax, can address needs for infrastructure and other programs related to costs of tourism that that are currently funded through property taxes.

Strategy 4e: Work with the town’s planning, public works and finance departments to devise a spread sheet/financial model that will allow council discussion and public understanding of pending capital improvement and deferred maintenance projects by the Town, along with their likely impact on property taxes and the Town’s credit rating, and encourage exploration of alternative funding strategies, including grants and a local option sales tax.

Strategy 4f: Work to support our commercial fishing community.

Goal 5: Improve the Effectiveness and Efficiency of our Town Governance and encourage citizen involvement, to engage citizens of diverse demographics and interests, including youth.

Strategy 5a: Continue to improve communications with taxpayers and residents, so that council members better understand the hopes and concerns of residents, and residents better under-

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stand the roles, responsibilities and authority of the council. Reconfigure and increase community engagement staffing to develop regular, creative and strategic communications through social media that supports constructive citizen input.

Strategy 5b: Building on the success of community forums co-sponsored by the Town and various partners in 2018-19, use this format and alternate locations to encourage further citizen engagement to help frame issues, solve problems and collaborate on opportunities that improve life for residents and businesses.