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MEMORANDUM

To: Bar Harbor Town Council

cc: Department Heads

From: Kevin Sutherland, Town Manager

Date: April 13, 2022

Re: Council Priorities – Information collected at the March 8, 2022 Retreat

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On March 8th, the Town Council met with Department Heads as well as the Chairs of the boards, committees, and task forces of our municipality to review the nearly 40 'challenges' facing the community. In breakout sessions, we worked to narrow the extensive list into a set of priorities for staff and I to focus our attention on. Subsequently, groups worked to develop an understanding of how we can begin to address these challenges by identifying stakeholders, timelines, costs, and impacts in order to solve them. This memo serves as an aggregate of that information.

My hope is that the Council supports these as our priorities so we can develop strategic goals around them.

Goal development would be accomplished by bringing stakeholders to table to help us:
- identify solutions,
- remove hurdles, and
- establish timelines.

In order to gain community support, we will focus on outreach and engagement to:
- educate what we have done and what we are doing,
- listen and gather feedback as to what we aren't doing or haven't done, and
- develop a roadmap for what we hope to do in the months and years ahead.

Retreat Outcome

We identified three top priority areas: Infrastructure, Housing, and Tourism Capacity.

The next tier – Alternative Revenue Streams, Employee Recruitment and Retention, Balancing a Year-Round Community, Schools/Childcare, and Climate Change.

Retreat Process

In the meeting kickoff, attendees were presented with information from staff about past achievements, current challenges, and future efforts. This helped to prime the conversations in the breakout sessions that followed.

The Top Challenges in Bar Harbor – this table shows the outcome of the first breakout session where each group worked to identify their top three challenges (tallies below). And the "stretch and sticker" break between sessions allowed everyone to populate their individual top items from the list created in the first session.

Top Challenges in Bar Harbor	Priority	
	Group*	Individual**
Infrastructure	3 tables	29 dots
Housing	6 tables	23 dots
Tourism Capacity	1 table	13 dots
Alternative Revenue Streams	1 table	9 dots
Employee Recruitment and Retention	2 tables	8 dots
Balanced Year-round Community	1 table	7 dots
Schools / Childcare	2 tables	6 dots
Climate Change	1 table	2 dots

* There was a total of 4 or 5 attendees at each of the 6 tables which represent a Group decision above. For example, all six tables (or groups) had Housing as one of their top three challenges.

**The Individual exercise occurred after the first break out session, where everyone had a chance to take a break, stretch, and then apply 3 sticker dots to the narrowed list of top challenges. Attendees could place all three dots on one challenge, or they divvy them up.

The second break out session was a discussion on the top three topics identified.

We asked the groups to:
a) Identify stakeholders – Who should be involved? Departments, Boards/Committees, community members, organizations, individuals, media, etc.
b) Create a theoretical and realistic timeline to achieve the challenge
c) What might it cost?
d) Identify hurdles
e) How do we engage the community in this?
f) How should information flow to and from Council?
g) Who might be left out or marginalized?
h) Other relevant information

The aggregate responses can be found below and the individual group data that was collected can be found as Appendix A and all of this information is located on the town website.

Including an aggregate of the evaluation forms for the event.

Infrastructure

Stakeholders
Taxpayers
Ratepayers
Businesses
Residents
Regulators state/fed
Loan, Grant, Bond facilitators
Town Council
Municipal Committees
Planning Board
Comprehensive Plan Committee
Parking Solutions Task Force
Climate Emergency Task Force
Town Departments and Key Staff
Town Manager
Public Works, director
Highway Department
Planning Department
Fire Department
Schools
Visitors

Infrastructure Continued

Hurdles
Funding
Communication
Climate Change
Money
Time
Contractors
Staff
Community
How to pay
Alternative Payment Sources
Business/Tourism Impacts
Timeline
ST – 1-2 years
LT – 5-10+ years
Sewer/storm 2024, 2029
Utilities 2029
Solar Array 2024
Transportation ?
Cost
40 Million+
Lots! $$$$
Marginalized
Out of downtown residents
Low income population

Housing

Stakeholders
Municipal Commitees
Planning Board
Comprehensive Plan Committee
Age Friendly
Town Deparments and Key Staff
Town Manager
Planning and Code Enforcement
Finance / Assessor
Housing Authority
Island Housing Trust
MD365
Penquis Capital
Individuals
Developers
Local Banks
Realtors
Property Owners
Citizens/Residents of Bar Harbor
Acadia National Park
Schools
Chamber of Commerce
Major Employers
MDI Hospital
College of the Atlantic
Jackson Laboratory
Hotels
Surrounding Communities

Housing Continued

Timeline
Need to start now
2022 Narrative / Frame the problem
Think of incentives
Short-term 1-3 years
Long-term 5-10 years
Staged Goals (Multi-year goals 1-5+ years)
Hurdles
Public Outreach / Communication
Environmental Concerns
Land availability for Housing (or lack of)
Not in my backyard effect
Property owners not wanting to have limited renting abilities / lost revenue
Property tax assessment issues
Cost of Development
Trade offs with Developers
Land use ordinances are too restrictive
Supply problems
Competing with tourism
Employment of the trades
Cost
$ Out of Pocket
Short-term $$$$
Long-term $ x 8
Cost of Inaction $ x 100

Housing Continued

Marginalized?	
Environment	
Renters	
Engagement	
Press Releases	
What's the story?	
	Agreed upon set of facts
	Definitions
Other	
Can't Direct Demand with Policy	
Capacity Conversation	
Community Outreach is so important	
Trigger/Benchmark	
When CES enrollment declines so much	
that we have to start laying off teachers	

Tourism Capacity

Stakeholders	
Town Council	
Municipal Commitees	
	Cruise ship Committee
	Comprehensive Planning Committee
	Harbor Committee (Ferry Terminal)
	Planning Board
Bar Harbor Chamber of Commerce	
Acadia National Park	
Property Tax Payers	
Voters and Residents	
Business Community	
Town Deparments and Key Staff	
	Town Manager
	Harbormaster
	Communications Coordinator
	Planning
	Public Works
	Fire/EMS
	Police
MDI Hospital	
Island Explorer	
State of Maine	
	Office of Tourism
	Legislature
	Department of Transporation
Surrounding Communities	

Tourism Capacity Continued

Timeline
Short Term 1-5 years Capacity defined
3 years
Comp Plan – ongoing
Multi-year goals (1-5+)
Addressing short vs. long-term goals
Hurdles
Limits to Transportation and Parking options
Buy-in and/or balanced engagement from business and community
Resistance to changes in how we value Tourism
Our relationship with Acadia National Park
Coming together to make a vision
Proactive vs. Reactive Tourism Management
Understanding the Benefits of Tourism
Other
Finding a balance
Perception of Congestion and Capacity
Cost to the Tax Payer
Coordination of growth goals for all aspects of tourism
Info to/from Council
Communications Coordinator
Monthly / bi-monthly updates for Council

Tourism Capacity Continued

Study
Effects of Tourism and change
Successes elsewhere
Get a sense of how many people can this area hold
Does information actually flow
What data do we need – Recency Bias
What part of Town government manages Tourism? Staff Coordinator?
Whose job is this?
Cost
Example: Ferry Terminal
Parking
Building
$ Out of pocket
Marginalized
People who have been (or will be) forced off island
Town employees
Next generation who have left
Lower economic status
How do we engage community?
Communications Coordinator
Facilitated Community Meetings
Staging Community Forums