

Report of Entry Findings

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Summary

- The purpose of this plan is to inform town officials and residents of entry findings as analyzed by the Town Administrator
- The Report of Entry Findings serves as evidence of executive investigation and will be used to inform a long term strategic plan for executive functions
- This is not just an executive exercise, but the start of a conversation that should result in a vision for Hubbardston 2024

Entry Plan Goals

- Learn about key events, issues and concerns as it pertains to sustainability
- Learn about the norms, values, expectations and goals of the community that should ultimately drive governmental processes
- Develop a written assessment of the town's sustainability that is available to the public and capable of steering future actions in a coherent manner
- Develop objectives with specific priorities and action steps that will guide future initiatives

Data Collection Methods

- Reviewed published materials to include studies, regional reports, old emails, old files and a comprehensive review of guidance documents from similarly situated towns
- Structured interviews with town staff, elected officials, volunteers, residents and applicable third-party actors
- Held directed conversations with Select Board, Planning Board and Board of Health
- Reviewed town infrastructure and existing public projects
- Started discussions with town groups, committees and businesses

Areas of Analysis

- Operations (Department Level)
- Human Resources
- Budget
- Financial Management
- Economic Development
- Infrastructure
- Communication

Operations Analysis

- Observations

- Committed and capable employees across the departments
- Strong department heads, little overall cohesion (due to turnover)
- Some departments need more staffing/vision clarity

- Current Interventions

- Establishing cohesive, goals-based culture
- Investing in professional development
- Documenting policy and procedure

- Future Goals

- Published departmental improvement plans
- Create sustainability/best practice plans

Human Resources Analysis

- Observations

- HR organization is highly dependent on the skill of the administrator
- A need for professionalized service is nearing to limit liability, increase organization
 - Regional
 - Contracted
 - Internal stipend

- Current Interventions

- Rewriting policy and procedure
- Addressing wage/salary parity and schedules
- Investing in HR professional development

- Future Goals

- Publish comprehensive HR policy
- Outsource HR function

Budget Analysis

- Observations
 - Limited policies and procedures to guide budget creation
 - Year-to-year budgeting strategy versus long-term approach
- Current Interventions
 - Empowered finance team
 - Publishing best practice financial policies
 - Communicating budget goals to town officials
 - Creating long-term plans (forecasting, capital, reserves, etc.)
- Future Goals
 - Publish and continually update financial policies
 - Solidify forecasting and planning process

Financial Management Analysis

- Observations
 - Heavy turnover on the finance team
 - Few published policies
 - Short-term focus (event to event)
 - Little cross-department communication
- Current Interventions
 - Cross-training staff
 - Publishing policy and procedure
- Future Goals
 - Update and publish all policies
 - Focus staff training on long-term financial planning

Economic Development Analysis

- Observations

- Strong effort on multiple fronts with little overall coordination
- Few supports for existing business, especially during start up periods
- Move towards “regional” growth is a step in the right direction
- Infrastructure limits overall growth potential

- Current Interventions

- Grant-funded economic development coordinator
- Coordinating activities through increased town communication

- Future Goals

- Coordinate all economic development functions
- Regionalize Hubbardston’s economic development
- Invest in an economic development coordinator (or empower the TA)

Infrastructure Analysis

- Observations

- Recent investments in infrastructure are paying off with projects starting to move
- Inventories and project management must improve
- Hubbardston is nearing a critical situation with its building infrastructure as identified in dozens of reports published since 1988

- Current Interventions

- Creating inventories and project checklists
- Cross-training employees on project management
- Updating building infrastructure improvement plans

- Future Goals

- Create project management policies and procedures
- Nest all projects and plans into one Master plan used by all boards, committees and staff

Communications Analysis

- Observations

- Engaged community with few mechanisms for communicating
- Multiple communications fronts are necessary
- Current efforts are resulting in greater awareness and transparency

- Current Interventions

- All Department and All Board Reports
- Commitment to the town Web site integrated with Social Media
- A more transparent and robust budget process

- Future Goals

- Publish additional information in local media outlets/blogs
- Create additional reports/styles to ensure residential awareness
- Make all town activities as transparent as possible

Conclusions

- Hubbardston is stable with a strong foundation from which to build
- The most pressing issue for the executive office is bringing cohesion to the various activities of the town in one concise vision
- Sustainability is paramount and must be grounded in transparent/published policy and procedure that can survive employee turnover and economic downturns
- Communication from town to resident is vital

Recommendations

1.) Strengthen policies and procedures related to the town's financial management in order to serve as a model for financial best practices. This includes tying all decision-making to clarified goals revolving around the following:

- Financial Forecast, Capital Planning, Reserves, Debt management, Financial Management

2.) Continue to improve communication mechanisms from town to resident

3.) Upgrade building infrastructure

4.) Invest heavily in improving driving surfaces

5.) Commit to coordinating economic development function through a dedicated employee with a primary focus of coordinating existing business to attract new investment

6.) Finalize the Master Plan

7.) Consider operational budget override once sustainable practices are in place to secure town's future

Next Steps

- Develop Department Improvement Plans for FY20
- Publish policy and procedure from Department to Strategic Level
- Continue to implement goal-based operational evaluations
- Create a 5-year strategic plan (Hubbardston 2024)