



Minutes of City Council Meeting
Goal Setting Workshop
Saturday, March 27, 2021

ANNOUNCEMENT BY MAYOR HILLIARD

As Chair of the Somersworth City Council, I, Dana S. Hilliard, Mayor find that due to the State of Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and in accordance with the Governor's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, this public body is authorized to meet electronically.

We are utilizing Zoom for this electronic meeting. All members of the Council have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this meeting through this platform, and the public has access to contemporaneously watch by way of our local public access Comcast channel 22 or via live streaming available at our City website Somersworth.com.

ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS

The meeting was called to order at 8:40 a.m. by His Honor, the Mayor, Dana S. Hilliard and, upon roll call, the following Council members were present: Councilors Dumont, Austin, Michaud, Witham, Gerding, Cameron, and Paradis, who were all by themselves.

Councilor Vincent arrived at 10:45 a.m.

Councilor Pepin was excused.

Mayor Hilliard announced that he and City Manager Bob Belmore were in the Council Chambers.

Staff joining via Zoom were, Deputy City Manager/Finance Director Scott Smith Director of Planning & Community Development Michelle Mears, Fire Chief George Kramlinger, Director of Public Works Michael Bobinsky, and Police Chief David Kretschmar.

FACILITATORS

Rick Alpers, Risk Management Consultant, Primex³

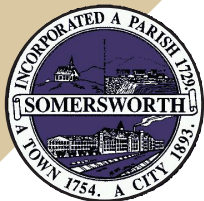
Toni Flewelling, Member Services Consultant, Primex³

MINUTES

The attached summary will serve as minutes from the City Council Goal Setting Workshop.

ADJOURN

The Goal Setting Workshop adjourned at 11:40 a.m.



City of Somersworth



Goal Setting Summary for the City of Somersworth

Attendees

Mayor and Council

Dana S. Hilliard, Mayor

Kenneth Vincent, Ward 2 City Councilor (arrived at 10:45 AM)

Martin P. Dumont Sr., Ward 3 City Councilor

Don Austin, Ward 4 City Councilor

Richard Michaud, Ward 5 City Councilor

David Witham, Deputy Mayor/At-Large City Councilor

Nancie Cameron, At-Large City Councilor

Matthew Gerding, At-Large City Councilor

Crystal Paradis, At-Large City Councilor

City Manager and Department Heads

Robert M. Belmore, City Manager

Scott A. Smith, Deputy City Manager & Director of Finance & Administration

Michael Bobinsky, Director of Public Works & Utilities

Michelle Mears, Director of Planning & Community Development

Dave Kretschmar, Police Chief

George Kramlinger, Fire Chief

Excused: Martin Pepin, Ward 1 City Councilor

The session was facilitated by:

Rick Alpers, Risk Management Consultant, Primex³

Toni Flewelling, Member Services Consultant, Primex³

Purpose and Intended Results

The purpose of this goal setting session was to assist the Somersworth City Council, the City Manager and City department heads in establishing short- and long-term goals that will move the City's vision forward. The goals identified will become part of the Council and management staff's ongoing action plan.

Goal Setting Summary for the City of Somersworth

Identification of Goals

Goals were defined as qualitative statements of what the City intends to accomplish over the next 12-18 months. These are 'big picture' items vital to organizational success. Due to the virtual environment of this facilitation, three individual goals were requested from the participants prior to the session. The participants provided an overview of their goals with the group.

Individual goals identified included the following:

Dave Witham

1. **Infrastructure** – continued progress on streets and facilities
Helps with maintaining costly infrastructure
Helps with ongoing efforts to improve community image
2. **Increase population, attract younger families**
School enrollment numbers are decreasing. Impacts services, programs, etc.
NH is aging. Do our part to curb that trend.
Employee pool is shrinking. Need to attract additional development.
3. **Image.** Continue ongoing efforts to improve community image.
Target areas – tax rate, curb appeal
As to curb appeal, deal with ongoing property maintenance concerns in identified areas – blighted property.

Marty Dumont

1. Selling the **Plaza Parking lot** for development of downtown for housing. Be practical and allow development guided by developer.
2. Open up access to **Mill area through former GE**. Meet with current owner. Include this if necessary, as crucial requirement to accomplish the goal for this to happen.
3. Prepare **National Guard property** for sale. Mitigate all hazardous materials; develop budget for cost to City from completely demolishing building and prepare lot for development. Market for housing. Lease Little League Field – add lights and improvements.

Nancie Cameron

1. In light of the pandemic and the economic impact it had all over, I think we need to focus not so much on three new goals but existing goals we have set. As an election year for us all, the foundation has been set to continue our long-range goals over the next ten years. 1st goal being continued **road, sidewalk, parks infrastructure**.
2. Keeping in tune with "the best kept secret of the Seacoast" attracting businesses and developers to our City. For example, the possibilities in the works – Aclara, Police Station, Armory, Plaza, following through with these plans. Clean up of both will take time and making sure it doesn't take another ten years to get off the ground. The foundation is laid for future council to continue.
3. To continue community involvement in what their opinions are, they do matter. A few ideas thrown out-to continue pursuing **Riverwalk, community center**. The lure of a community is its people who live there. To be able to see the future after pandemic times are set of course. Inclusive programs, however, that looks (recreation) education providing best we can for our future leaders. Public transportation is a must moving forward to look at ways to continue our relationship with COAST.

Goal Setting Summary for the City of Somersworth

Don Austin

1. Ongoing development/revitalization of downtown area, with focus on the **Main Street corridor**.
2. Broad and ongoing process to identify opportunities for the **delivery of community services** with a minimum of duplication of effort and in the most effective way possible while reaching the greatest number of residents of all ages.
3. Continue to move forward with **long-term infrastructure plans**.

Rick Michaud

1. Redevelopment of **Main Street from Franklin to Market**. New stores, businesses and restaurants with affordable/market rate apartments on the upper floors on new buildings. Better access to the mills and mill district from Main Street.
2. Continue investing in our **road and sidewalk repairs**. Investing on complete street projects when needed.
3. Continue investing in our **parks and recreation areas**. Eventually, extend our Riverwalk to include the downtown area. Also, a possible access area along the Buffumsville Road for a canoe/kayak launch on the Salmon Falls River.

Matt Gerding

1. **Expansion of green spaces. Continuous trails connecting to our downtown:**
 - a. Malley Farm – Downtown
 - b. Mast Point – DowntownGreen spaces along river downtown
2. **Increased environmental sustainability:**
 - a. Renewable energy
 - b. Composting and waste management
 - c. Native species/invasives
 - d. Conservation and preservation
3. **Community engagement and activities:**
 - a. Community Center
 - b. Festivals
 - c. Downtown Commons
 - d. Increased activities for youth and seniors

Crystal Paradis

1. **Bring All City Road and Sidewalks Up to Good Repair**

There are roads in our City that have not been repaved in at least 60 years – many of them make “the list” of roads to be paved many years in a row but are eliminated due to grouping by neighborhoods or other factors not directly related to their physical condition. Closing this loophole that leaves some roads and sidewalks in disrepair year after year and decade after decade would be a big boost for our residents. Road and sidewalk conditions are the most frequently named concern by many residents. A goal to address all roads in the next 10 years would be ambitious but a really exciting commitment. Potential Master Plan?

Goal Setting Summary for the City of Somersworth

2. Increase Visibility of Somersworth's Current Offerings

Expand awareness of our City's downtown offerings via wayfinding and signage. Even for folks who drive through our downtown every day, there remains a lack of awareness of our downtown and all its surroundings. Signage in our city center indicating overarching messages like "enjoy vibrant downtown Somersworth; restaurants, café and shopping" along with specific wayfinding like, "dog park, 1.9 miles this way" or "Riverwalk trailhead, .3 miles this way" or "Free parking this way" etc. would signal to folks driving through that there is a reason to stop and enjoy the city.

3. Make Our Library a 21st Century Community Hub.

In addition to the physical accessibility improvements that we are starting to plan for with our current RFP for accessibility audit, our City would be better serviced with more physical space for our library that is fully accessible, and a children's/youth section that is not regularly flooding and locked until a key is requested. Meeting rooms, tech classes, business consultations through SBA, etc., are programming that many other cities have added to boost library use. Some of this requires more physical space (either expanding our library or opening an annex, or relocating but keeping it downtown), some staff increase, some investment of tools. Let's get creative! Our library has many community advocates ready to rally behind a forward-thinking plan.

From the list of goals identified above, we narrowed the list to three (3) common themes, each category with its own sub-goals or descriptions.

The categories were as follows:

GOAL #1 – Infrastructure

- Complete streets
- Sidewalk upgrades
- Parks/green spaces
- Road repair funding

GOAL #2 – Economic Development

- Plaza parking lot
- National Guard Property
- Main Street Downtown corridor
- Signage

GOAL #3 – Community Branding and Engagement

- Image
- Marketing
- Attraction of families and new businesses

Development of Strategic Objectives for Top Goals

Strategic Objectives were defined as short- and long-term quantitative results that directly support the goals. Objectives should be measurable, achievable, and consistent with the goals, and should also align with the City's overall vision, mission and core values. These objectives create the basis for an ongoing action plan going forward.

Goal Setting Summary for the City of Somersworth

As many of the City's initiatives are ongoing in nature, participants identified short-term, attainable strategic objectives for 2021-2022. Identifying attainable goals will allow the Mayor and City Council to continue movement in a cohesive direction.

GOAL #1 – Infrastructure

Complete streets

Strategic Objective: Finalize complete street projects in an effort to be shovel ready if future federal stimulus dollars become available.

- ✓ Future conversation needed to determine if the current road repair budget could be increased at the local level.

Sidewalk Upgrades

Strategic Objective: Develop comprehensive sidewalk plan.

- ✓ City to hire consultant to assess sidewalk repairs throughout the City and to give each sidewalk a priority repair rating.
- ✓ Public Works Environmental Committee weighed in on sidewalks and repair/replacement priority will be given to school walking routes.

Parks/green spaces

Strategic Objective: Revitalization of Ash Street Park.

Revitalization ideas:

- ✓ Perennial gardens
- ✓ Vegetable community garden
- ✓ Dog park signage
- ✓ Review entire parks for complete revitalization

DPW will lead the efforts of the Ash Street Park revitalization.

Future goal could be to connect parks and green spaces via wayfinding and signage for the community and visitors.

The Mayor will be announcing, in near future, the National Monarch Butterfly Challenge.

Participants briefly discussed visions for the River Walk. No short-term goals were identified as City does not own the land. The hope is that whoever buys the former GE building will develop a true River Walk.

River Walk expansion opportunities will require a long-term strategic plan. Continue exploration for further discussion.

GOAL #2 – Economic Development

Plaza Parking Lot

Manager Belmore has met with potential developer.

Council will ultimately decide whether to sell the property.

Goal Setting Summary for the City of Somersworth

▪ National Guard Property

Strategic Objective: Adopt and move forward with recommendations of the task force. Report from task force is expected to be delivered to Council by early fall for a vote.

▪ Main Street Downtown Corridor

- ✓ Indonesia Community Connect (ICC) concept is currently being explored.
- ✓ Former police station facility has received a grant for environmental cleanup. Once completed, property will go back on the market for sale in 2020 - 2022.

▪ Signage

Strategic Objective 1: City staff to work more aggressively with DOT and Executive Council to identify additional highway/road signage from Routes 16 & 95 directing to Somersworth.

Strategic Objective 2: City staff will also identify locations for wayfinding signage to be installed in the downtown.

- ✓ Potential use of signage directing people from Route 9 to the downtown area.
- ✓ Current fiscal budget allows for some wayfinding signage to be installed this year.

▪ GE Property / Aclara

Participants did not feel any goals could be attainable for the former GE Property. Participants would suggest the following:

- ✓ Embrace and support future concepts of property revitalization
- ✓ Recognize that revitalizing this property will have a long-term positive effect in our downtown

GOAL #3 – Community Branding and Development

▪ Image and Marketing

Strategic Objective 1: Cultural welcome banners have been designed. 24 banners in total. The following heritages will be represented on the banners: Indonesia, Indigenous, French Canadian, Irish, Greek, and English.

Strategic Objective 2: Ten historic properties have been identified within City limits that are in need of a state historic marker. Mayor's office to explore.

▪ Attraction of Families and New Businesses

- ✓ Coordinate joint effort with Somersworth Youth Connection for increased programming. Possible community event in the Fall
- ✓ Continue to increase affordable housing inventory
- ✓ Continue to be welcoming as a new community to new businesses
- ✓ Continue to promote school excellence to encourage families to enroll or re-enroll their children into the district
- ✓ Continue to stay on point with messaging of image and branding

Wrap-Up, Recap and Action Plan

The next step following this session will be for the City Manager, department heads, and City staff to work together to develop specific tactics for accomplishing the identified goals and objectives. Tactics describe specifically HOW the goals and objectives will be met.

Concluding Thoughts

Thank you again for the opportunity to participate in this important process. Primex³ appreciates the opportunity to provide assistance to members with goal setting, and to help governing bodies develop paths to achieve their visions. A forward-looking community that is deliberate, disciplined, and strategic in developing and accomplishing its goals illustrates how *"good management is good risk management."*