

Social Service PILOT and Comparative Impact Study Committee
Conference Room 2 7:30 PM Memorial Building Framingham, Ma
Approved Minutes
October 25, 2005

Note: If a word or sentence is blue and underlined click for the link.

Attendance: Yaakov Cohn, Dawn Harkness, Cynthia Laurora., Laurie Lee, Jim Palmer, Wes Ritchie, Nick Sanchez: Steve Orr New Member: John Speranza

Meeting called to order at 7:30 PM. by vice Chair Yaakov Cohn

Chair Yaakov Cohn introduces the question of whether or not we should make a recommendation to the BoS as to whether Kurt Steinberg should be replaced on the PSC.

Steve Orr: Mr Chairmain I would like to make a motion. I move that we recommend to the BoS that they not appoint a new person to replace Kurt Steinberg.

Cynthia Laurora: I'd like to second that.

Wes Ritchie: I think it would be really easy to catch someone up to the place where we are I think having another person around couldn't hurt at all. So I definitely oppose that.

Dawn Harkness: I agree.

Jim Palmer: Could I ask a question? Have the board of selectmen asked our advice on this matter.

Discussion regarding a new appointee was initiated and summarized by Mr. Cohn.

Upon receiving Kurt's resignation the BoS discussed the new appointment and decided to obtain the opinion of the committee. A misunderstanding caused Katie Murphy to report to the BoS Bob Berman's personal opinion, of wanting a replacement for Kurt, as the recommendation of the entire committee.

Jim Palmer said it is up to the BoS and town meeting mandated a 10 person committee.

Mr. Orr agreed but said we are not voting on what they should do or what the mandate is. We are discussing and voting on what the committee's preference or opinion is. The BoS can then take that under advisement and do whatever they decide to do.

Dawn Harkness thought town meeting was clear that this was to be a 10 member panel. 5 by the moderator and 5 by BoS. We have lost one by the selectman, a thoughtful and pro social service person and already misses his vote, and wants someone to replace him.

Yaakov thought we should not replace Kurt because the group is operating well and has developed trust. In addition, it would be hard for a new person to absorb what we have done.

Wes thought we would benefit from another person who can help.

Steve thought it would be difficult to bring a new person up to speed even with the copious notes. He also didn't want to replace someone because of how they might vote. He doesn't think of this as a left or right thing, just a question of what is best for the group.

Dawn pointed out that we were in balance and now a litmus test of the left right balance, would show that we are out of balance. It doesn't surprise her that he doesn't want another person on the committee because it would make votes Steve wants to get approved much easier. Your agenda is clear. Your position does not have anything to do with balance or fairness on this committee.

Jim Palmer thought that a major part of the work is still to be done. The interpretation of responses and data and making a report. The whole committee decides how that report turns out. He doesn't care if you are left right or whatever. He is interested in another person reading the material and voicing an opinion.

Cynthia: One thing I have to say is, Kurt wasn't able to come to a fair share of the meetings for whatever reason and he subsequently resigned. I just think with the nine people anyway that were working on these committees, basically the committees were comprised of who they were comprised of, but I know that on a couple of the committees that he was on with me, he wasn't able to come and we moved along very quickly and I feel that we're making good results, so I don't really feel as if there is a labor shortage at this point, and I feel it's too late now to catch someone up. Secondly, I don't know if we can assume that the BoS is going to necessarily appoint another person that's .. You're saying that the lines are drawn on the committee but are you assuming that they are going to appoint another person because if they are we're making assumptions that we shouldn't be making. I mean how do you know how they are going to vote and how do you know who they are going to appoint? That's what I'd like to know. How do you know this.

Dawn Harkness: I don't know anything, I haven't talked to any of them. I think they have observed the make up of this committee I think that the moderator did appoint the more conservative members of this committee, and that would go along with what I perceive his political bent to be. My perception of the BoS is that they appointed more of the more liberal members of this committee, and they appointed you as well, but I think they were looking for balance and fairness and that's why they appointed the people they did. And they got a balanced committee at that point.

I've found the motion and it says very specifically: This study shall be conducted by a new ad hoc working group comprised of 10 Framingham residents. I think that's what the committee is supposed to be, that's what Town Meeting voted for, and that's what it should have.

I disagree with you that's Kurt's lack of presences got the work done. Because when I was able to come to a committee that he was supposed to be on I was appalled by the slant on the questions, and that it took us a lot more time to work through those. And that was the whole idea of the working groups, that they should be ideologically balanced because that way we can work out a lot of those balance issues outside and not take the

time of the larger group and so we ended up redoing a lot of the work that you guys started and I think came up with a more balanced, I'm thinking of the police department questionnaires, and that will save us more time in the future.

Wes: I hate to quibble over the little but I do disagree with Dawn a little bit about how the committee breaks down. I see the breakdown a little differently if we are talking about an ideological breakdown. I see a 4 to 2 split with 4 swing votes. But I don't think we should even be taking this vote at all. I think this completely beyond our scope. We have a lot of work work work work to do. I think it should be up to the BoS , and so I move that we recommend to the BoS what they do as they see fit.

And just to respond to Cynthia, I think Kurt contributed a lot. I had a great respect for him, And also along those lines, I ran into Kurt at the State House the other day and we had a conversation about how he felt threatened. How he felt pushed of the board. How he'd been harassed. And I think we have redo that I think we have to have someone else come in here. And I don't even like the circumstances that we're having this discussion.

Laurie Lee: I mean everybody has opinions but I though the votes were going to be based on the data and we were going to try to be objective, but forget that. I say that this vote isn't about us. And the rules, that's for the BoS to figure out. Two meetings ago Dennis Giombetti, Ginger, and possibly John, I don't remember, brought up the question of they want to know the opinion of the PILOT committee in terms of appointing another person, and BoS voted on it and they decided that Katie would find out from the chairman what the committee's opinion is. On having a tenth person. To me, that's all that matters. They need to hear from us what our opinion is and then they have to figure out what they are supposed to do. I made a motion that we vote how we feel, 2 3 5 whatever and just send it up to them and then it's their problem. They have to figure out what they're going to do. We cannot tell them what to do anyway. They asked for a recommendation from us so let's just do it.

Dawn Harkness: Then I would move that the vote be recorded by our names.

Wes Ritchie: I second that.

Nick said he would have taken Dawn's position if our Chair had not expressed an opinion that was miss-interpreted. Nick thought we were taking a vote to correct a misimpression, one that Bob Berman has made quite clear: that he was misinterpreted by the chairman of the BoS. It is the case that the chair of our committee was asked a question. He gave an opinion that was interpreted as the opinion of the committee and he agrees he was misunderstood. We are having the vote to correct the misinterpretation. The BoS can do whatever they want.

Jim Palmer suggested the BoS should base their decision on the motion from town meeting. They should interpret the directive of town meting and exercise their judgment.

Nick suggested that these motions are not contradictory or incompatible. If we vote both motions we will correct a misunderstanding and create a compromise.

Motion by Steve Orr: I move that we request the BoS to not replace Kurt

Cynthia Laurora: I want to correct what Dawn and Wes said. I didn't say that Kurt didn't contribute anything. I said that he did didn't come to some of the working group meetings that I was on anyway, the one about public safety. Therefore I didn't feel any need for extra labor. What I'm saying is the committees functioned just the same. We were able to come up with our research and our data just the same without his presence because unfortunately he was not able to make it. So I wasn't saying he didn't make any contributions, I was saying he wasn't there. He wasn't able to attend some of these meetings.

Laurie offered a friendly amendment: I move that we recommend to the BoS that they not replace Kurt.

Laurie Yes

Cynthia Yes

Wes No

Jim No

Dawn No

Nick Yes

Steve Yes

Yaakov Yes

5 in favor 3 opposed

Laurie commented they already know Bob's opinion

Jim Palmer's motion: That the BoS interpret and act as they see fit according to the motion approved by town meeting.

Nick Sanchez would like to make an amendment: If they choose to have 10 members on the committee the search process for the 10th member be open again.

Jim said they already have a list. Are you saying they should open the list?

Wes did not think we should be giving directives. The question of what is legal was discussed. Yaakov thought it was a contradiction to the original motion.

A discussion ensued about the process of appointing and whether they are required to open the process up. Dawn thought they should and would promote fairness, and supported the amendment. Jim also supports it.

Laurie reported that they already voted in a 10th member, John Sperenza.

After a 3 minute recess the group convened.

The group welcomed Mr. Sperenza to the committee and the entire group discussed the issue of the vote that was in process and his appointment to the group and the committee's recommendation to the BoS regarding the appointment.

Mr. Cohn suggested that after the meeting he speak with Laurie who can provide him with extensive information. Everyone discussed how to get the information online, how to reach John through email and his appointment.

Minutes

Motion to accept the minutes from 10/11/05

Dawn objected and asked to have the discussion of Kurt's resignation recorded.

Laurie said she would prepare that for next week.

Jim moved to table the reading and acceptance of the minutes until next week

Minutes of 10/11//05 meeting: Minutes discussed

Motion to table until next week:

8 in favor, 0 opposed 0 abstain

Mr. Cohn noted the agenda had us deciding what communities to consider and going over the public safety questionnaire.

Communities to study

Laurie said she was prepared to speak for the property and income group.

They spent a lot of time considering what communities we should consider.

Laurie passed out information relating to the HUD median income districts. This included the metropolitan areas: [PMSA](#): A PMSA consists of a large urbanized county or a cluster of counties (cities and towns in New England) that demonstrate strong internal economic and social links in addition to close ties with the central core of the larger area. These areas are used to draw districts which fit into a similar economic base.

What area is Framingham in: The Boston PMSA. (The list is on the last page) The income district that Framingham is in includes communities from different Counties, such as Middlesex, Bristol, Essex and Suffolk. What the Property and Income committee considered were those communities with populations between approximately 40,000-100,000 people that are within our PMSA district.

We also considered two not in our HUD district. We have a large list that we are recommending to the group and everything is up for discussion. The list follows:

In HUD Region	population (from Realtor.com)
Beverly	40,709
Salem	41,753
Arlington	42,719
Revere	47,154
Brookline	52,110
Plymouth	54,149
Weymouth	54,469
Malden	57,601
Medford	57,838
Waltham	60,250
Framingham	67,307

Somerville	76,493
Newton	83,829
Quincy	89,883
Lynn	90,694
Cambridge	102,662
Lowell	105,374
Not in HUD region	
Lawrence	73,844
Brockton	97,162

Laurie also mentioned that she emailed with Bob to see what communities he was considering. He said that his list was looking at communities that might also be considered Hubs. Since the group already has several hubs on the list, such as Lowell and Lynn Laurie thought that two others outside of our HUD district with similar population requirements would be interesting to examine and thus the inclusion of Lawrence and Brockton.

Dawn clarified that this list is option # 2 because we already agreed upon our neighboring communities and the random ones.

Nick spoke to the big issue of how the sub group made the decisions for this list. It was a 3 step process. The larger picture of comparability of income was determined by the HUD districts. The other parameter was size and that is where population came into account.

Step 1 : using the HUD districts for the income data

Step2 : using population to choose communities from the list

Step 3 : Include other Hubs with similar situations to Framingham and outside the district

The group thought it was a great list.

Nick asked he could make a motion to accept the list as the second group of towns for our analysis?

Dawn seconded

Wes commented that he liked the list. He asked if the group had actually decided what we will ask.

Laurie thought we did create a comparable impact action plan and that we discussed going into more detail in the task forces when we were doing that study.

Yaakov asked for objections.

Jim Palmer asked for the economic data for these communities. He wanted to see the information before deciding.

Laurie explained that the economic information comes from HUD determining the district.

Mr. Palmer wanted to see if these were like communities. He wanted more economic data.

Wes suggested that he wanted to table the list for further review.

Nick was concerned that the group wanted to get working.

Dawn said there are plenty of other things for people to do and this is a reasonable request.

Motion to table until next week
3 in favor, 5 opposed

Motion to accept the list:

5 in favor, 3 opposed

Wes requested that documents that are to be voted on are submitted through email 24 hours in advance.

Steve Orr agreed but didn't think we needed to vote.

Motion to request that if we are taking a vote on something that the information be sent to the other members of the committee 24 hours in advance.

4 in favor 2 opposed 2 abstain

There was a short discussion about the votes needed to pass a rule change. The consensus seemed to be it passed but the group will confer with the chair when he returns.

Real Estate Survey

Jim Palmer discussed the introduction of the survey where it is saying that the survey will be anonymous. He objects to that. The other social service survey was not anonymous, so this one shouldn't be either. He wants to know who this data is coming from.

Cynthia said that the group was going to deliver packets of numbered surveys to the real estate agencies. The anonymous factor permits the realtors to potentially report things they could not otherwise do. That would enable us to get the best response possible. Cynthia didn't see a problem with individuals identifying themselves but the response might not be as good.

Dawn said that she has been arguing from the beginning that everything has to be verifiable and based on verifiable facts and figures. This does not conform to those guidelines.

If we are requiring other organizations to base information on facts and figures than this has to be verifiable and identifiable.

Yaakov commented that this survey was just a probe.

Steve thought there was value in it.

Wes had objections to questions 1-6 and 9-14. They don't give substantial hard data that can measure anything.

He doesn't understand this committee as being in the business of collecting unsubstantiated data.

Nick said that Dawn has made the point in the past that there is a difference between perception and facts, especially in Framingham.

How can we prove whether that is correct or incorrect?

If we obtain the actual data and obtain the perceptions, we can determine if this is a true or false statement.

He summarized that the idea of this survey, and the value of obtaining perceptions of realtors, is to see if the realtors might be misrepresenting our town. That is a valid piece of information to have. It is incorrect that the survey will be used to make specific recommendations as would actual data analysis. The point is to determine how our town is presented to other people and how perception compares with fact. That is the only role of the survey. The same thinking can be applied to the perception of crime and the facts about crime. What is the actual crime data. What is the perception of crime? This would be very valuable to have and compare.

Nick suggested that the dilemma of this survey, is one of trust of each other. The survey itself is very simple, which is to try to understand the impact of realtor's perception on price values.

Wes liked what was said if we were members of the real estate impact committee. None of the questions, especially 1-6 and 9-14, have anything to do with our committee. We are not the PILOT feelings or perceptions committee; we have no responsibility to get this information. We are not in the business of substantiating fears. People will read whatever our results are with their own feelings going into it.

Nick disagreed stating that it has to be addressed because many times Dawn has stated that there are miss perceptions in the community. That people perceive things that aren't true. Are there or are there not misperceptions?

Wes commented that this group of people were not the ones to be asking about perceptions. If we wanted to find that it should go to a ballot vote. We would find people's feelings, not realtors. But we are not charged to do this, no matter what anyone says about perceptions.

Steve Orr thought there was a gap and I see what it is. He discussed the police department. They collect statistical data. They also keep tabs on how much crime people perceive there is in the community. That is an important, because if crime is low but perception of crime is high, people won't be satisfied with the job the police does. One of the exercises of the CAC housing committee, was to discuss how people perceive Framingham, from inside and out Those feelings translate to the realtors. The attitude of the realtors affects the price of home sales in Framingham. And that is a very crucial component of what this committee is about.

Jim Palmer spoke about one of our first meetings and the specifics of our definition. Nick insisted we have something to back up the definition. The problem he has is that anyone can get a hold of this survey and fill it out. The data will be useless unless we can know where it came from. The data is absolutely useless unless you have a grounding of where it came from and that goes back to our original premise. Just saying it came from real estate agents means nothing.

Nick said that concern would be addressed by Cynthia's comments of delivering to the offices and numbering the surveys.

Laurie said, Let's say we are going to deliver these to Caldwell Banker and that there are 12 agents. We will number these 1-12, deliver to the Secretary and then pick them up from that office and only accept the 12 we gave them. The office is identified. It is just the names of the people themselves that are not.

Jim asked if we hand delivered the social service agency survey's. We need to have a consistent process.

Laurie commented that no we mailed them and we can mail these. It was just an example.

Wes asked Nick for clarification of how this survey would fit into our findings. There is factual information about housing that we are collecting.

Nick said that regrettably housing prices are impacted by real estate agents who are selling them due to their perceptions. Housing prices are impacted by realtors and their perceptions and miss perceptions. This would be a way to check this out and see if there is actually a misperception and see if that might be having an affect on our housing prices. If that is the case it would be incumbent upon our committee to say these are the facts and they are either properly or improperly represented. That might be one impact on our housing prices.

Wes asked if we would then ask shop keepers and other businesses. He thought this survey is irrelevant to our study.

Dawn agreed with Wes.

Dawn asked if we actually included this survey in the action plan.

Laurie said that it came from the plan's investigation into the value of home prices, the impacts of social services on those values, the changes in real estate values. And that the resources included RE agents

Dawn said that she thought we were looking for the hard numbers.

Laurie explained that we are. This is a small part of the study.

Dawn said that these are feelings and perceptions and has nothing to do with our outline. She would have objected strenuously to this back then and she is stunned that we came up with this.

Cynthia mentioned that we discussed this and Bob Berman even commented that he had experience with such surveys.

Dawn thought we were going to ask realtors hard data of how many homes they sell and show. If we ask them about feelings and perceptions it is way out of balance and prejudicial because she doesn't really care what their feelings are. She cares about hard numbers. Either the property values are impacted by SSA's or not. Real estate agents can give us hard data. That is fine But this is like a college psychology test.

Wes said that 7 and 8 is putting in people's mind ideas by listing specifics. These might not be irrelevant but they are crazy.

Mr. Sperenza asked about question number 12 regarding rentals and ownership. How can we differentiate the impact on the community between the rental and purchased properties?

Cynthia explained that the question is not asking that. It is asking if our ratio of rentals to owned property has any bearing or impact, positive, negative or neutral on property values.

Wes said that this is not the mission of our group. This is CAC stuff. Steve disagreed.

Dawn said that this is exactly what happens when we have working groups that are not ideologically balanced. Then we end up having to spend a ridiculous amount of time on this kind of stuff. Where if it had been (balanced), and you can't tell me this one is nearly even close to being ideologically balanced, then this is what comes out of it. Why did we go through the whole planning? This takes it to a totally different level. And a totally different tangent. I can't even agree with a single question on this.

Wes agreed.

Jim asked what we are trying to get at with this. And then he can decide if they are valid. He would like to have the answers to these questions.

Can someone state what we are looking for.

Yaakov said that he thought that has been addressed

Steve said we are all under pressure. We are all on this committee and a bunch of sub committees. These sub committees absolutely have validity to what they produce. Even if he didn't go to that particular subcommittee. We have work very hard in the sub groups. There is a fundamental balance inherent in the process. And you have to trust that.

Dawn disagreed

Steve said that she thinks he is on one particular side but he doesn't think that she is particularly on another side.

Dawn said, she is definitely on a side. She has declared it from the beginning. And the positions are not even close and if he even thinks they are close is so off the wall to her.

Steve said we are trying to evaluate the impact of SSA's on the town. The answer to the question doesn't have anything to do with increasing them, decreasing them or staying where we are. It is just about knowing where we stand. And this includes knowing whether or not the appearance of SSA's in this town is a factor in the real estate prices in this town. RE prices in this town are lower than surrounding communities. We have to find out why or if SSA's have an impact. That is part of what we are doing.

Wes said we are the social services and this survey has nothing to do with social services.

Cynthia said that this is about where we are out.

Jim said 7-8 and 12-13 are related to social services. Other than that he sees nothing that deals with social services.

Cynthia asked if the questions about downtown where most of the SS's are are not valid.

Wes thought that was a leap.

Nick responded to Jim's concerns. When you do a study you have to control some variables. The way to do this is to find information. You can't simply ask the question "Do social service agencies impact this town" you have to ask for a variety of things that potentially have an impact on the issue so you can take account of it.

#12 may very well indicate that the problems in Framingham (housing prices) have nothing to do with SSA's, but rather the issue of rental properties. And that this issue could be what is driving the prices of properties down. So unless, we have controls, we cannot make a finding. SO that is why these questions are valid. Particularly when we are

asking them of people who we assume will give us the best honest answer they can give. I do not think someone on the left or right will bias their opinions.

This is a business sector, made up of professionals, and we are trying to find information from them what they believe all the things that are impacting us. That is why the survey is relevant.

Dawn said she wanted to be sure Steve understood she is not on the same side. She has from the beginning wanted to be sure the committee and its work is fair and is perceived as fair and that in order to do that, all the questions submitted should be fair, objective questions and open ended so the variables can be determined. If we are dealing with hard numbers they need to be verifiable. Every other survey and questionnaire we created we had the requirement of being objective and why is this one different and asking opinion? I do not think we should make an exception for the real estate community when we have real hard data. She does not want to make an exception for the real estate community. The bias in the real estate community will be perceived and there will be no reason for the SSA' to comply with their survey.

She also disagreed that because of the time spent in working groups makes it all of a sudden balanced. We all send a lot of time and lots of our questions get tossed out. Dawn said that she has felt good about the objectivity and verifiability of the other documents so far.

Laurie made a motion to table the survey.

Steve commented that the statistical significance of sending this survey to hundreds of agents gives it validity.

Jim still has a problem with the lack of identification.

Cynthia said we could ask for names.

Motion to table

5 in favor 0 opposed 3 abstain

Public Safety Questionnaires:

Framingham Police Department:

Laurie reviewed the cover letter. It is the same as the previous one we passed except for asking for guidance where appropriate, to find the answers, rather than just answers the following:

One of the approaches we are taking to achieve this goal is to ask a variety of departments, organizations and people provide specific answers related to their role in the town, and where appropriate, for guidance on where to find answers to our questions.

Dawn discussed the questions and said they were very well hammered out. They are objective questions and pared down to information we need.

Wes made Motion to accept documents

8 on favor, 0 opposed 0 abstain

Fire Department Survey:

Laurie passed out the questionnaire

Motion to accept:

8 on favor, 0 opposed 0 abstain

The group discussed the status of the other groups

Yaakov said he wanted to join the education group

Agenda Items for next meeting:

Ambulance questions

Educational group may have a report

Legal committee may have a report

Property /Income will have report on the survey

Approval for additional municipal group

Discuss selection of communities

Dawn asked when the property group meets. She said she wanted to attend. It could save us a lot of time if she joins our group.

If she can make it she will.

Steve brought up the vote we took earlier about the 10th person and the motion we didn't vote on.

The group decided not to pursue the vote.

Motion to adjourn

Vote: 6 in favor 0 opposed 2 abstain

U.S. DEPT. OF HUD FY 2005 INCOME LIMITS AREA DEFINITIONS
STATE LIST OF COUNTIES (AND NEW ENGLAND TOWNS) IDENTIFIED BY METROPOLITAN AND
NONMETROPOLITAN STATUS

PMSA: Boston, MA-NH

MSA PART : Bristol Berkley, Dighton, Mansfield, Norton, Taunton city

MSA PART : Essex Amesbury, Beverly city, Danvers, Essex, Gloucester city, Hamilton,
Ipswich

Lynn city, Lynnfield, Manchester, Marblehead, Middleton, Nahant, Newbury

Newburyport city, Peabody city, Rockport, Rowley, Salem city, Salisbury

Saugus, Swampscott, Topsfield, Wenham

MSA PART : Middlesex Acton, Arlington, Ashland, Ayer, Bedford, Belmont, Boxborough,
Burlington

Cambridge city, Carlisle, Concord, Everett city, Framingham, Holliston

Hopkinton, Hudson, Lexington, Lincoln, Littleton, Malden city

Marlborough city, Maynard, Medford city, Melrose city, Natick, Newton city

North Reading, Reading, Sherborn, Shirley, Somerville city, Stoneham, Stow

Sudbury, Townsend, Wakefield, Waltham city, Watertown, Wayland, Weston

Wilmington, Winchester, Woburn city

MSA PART : Norfolk Bellingham, Braintree, Brookline, Canton, Cohasset, Dedham, Dover

Foxborough, Franklin, Holbrook, Medfield, Medway, Millis, Milton, Needham

Norfolk, Norwood, Plainville, Quincy city, Randolph, Sharon, Stoughton

Walpole, Wellesley, Westwood, Weymouth, Wrentham

MSA PART : Plymouth Carver, Duxbury, Hanover, Hingham, Hull, Kingston, Marshfield,
Norwell

Pembroke, Plymouth, Rockland, Scituate, Wareham

MSA PART : Suffolk Boston city, Chelsea city, Revere city, Winthrop

MSA PART : Worcester Berlin, Blackstone, Bolton, Harvard, Hopedale, Lancaster, Mendon,
Milford
Millville, Southborough, Upton

Laurie Lee

Clerk