

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

September 27, 2005

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

Attendance: Bob Berman, Yaakov Cohn, Dawn Harkness, Cynthia Laurora., Laurie Lee,  
Nick Sanchez, Kurt Steinberg, late: Steve Orr, Wes Ritchie

Meeting called to order at 7:30 PM.

**Minutes of 9/20/05 meeting:** Minutes discussed and approved as corrected. Vote to  
approve minutes: 7 in favor, 0 opposed, and 0 abstain

Steve Orr arrived late

Arrangements for HSS Steve Kadish were discussed. Bob Berman will try to set a date  
for the 11<sup>th</sup>, 19th, 20th of October.

Laurie Lee raised the issue of the calendar to clarify expectations of the format followed  
for doing the work ahead. It was clear from the last meeting that the work groups meet  
and go over the Action Plan, make initial contact as is needed with relevant parties, create  
a coherent and comprehensive set of questions which will be brought back to the entire  
Committee for approval. These questions are then sent out to the appropriate people and  
departments.

What was fuzzy was what happens next. The way the calendar lays it out we will not be  
receiving any written answers to those questions or data requested before the hearings if  
at all. Laurie thought we needed to include those items in the timeline and allow each  
work group some time to go through the material and do some analysis before the  
hearings occur. This will allow the group to have some relevant information going into  
the open hearing, ask some follow up questions and make the most of the speakers time.  
In addition, having the answers written will ensure that the minutes as transposed by  
Laurie are not the only written record the group has.

Mr. Orr agreed that everything has to be written.

Mr. Berman suggested that when we submit the questions we try to determine from them  
how long it will take for the information to be compiled. Then we can set a date for the  
written responses and a date further out for the open hearing with the committee. We can  
adjust the timeline according to who will need the shortest time to submit the answers.

All agreed

## **Workgroup Updates:**

### **Public Safety:**

Dawn spoke to the ambulance people AMR in Natick, gave them an idea of what we were looking for, and they thought they would be able to answer our questions. I will be connected with their records keeper.

Laurie reported that the group also reviewed the questions for the Police questionnaire assembled by Cynthia and Laurie. We made corrections, additions and will be doing the same with the Fire Department questions at our next meeting. In addition, the group came up with some Public Safety questions for the social service survey.

Dawn reminded the group to be sure the questions in general are open ended and are not biased towards any position.

### **Legal:**

Dawn reported that she submitted some questions to the Massachusetts Municipal Association asking them to forward any information they have on PILOT programs currently going on in MA. and any legal issues we should be aware of. It was agreed that Framingham belongs to the organization.

### **Background:**

Laurie reported that the group reviewed the [guidestar](#) information. She brought in some examples. The coding system for guidestar is not the same as the SIC codes. They use the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities [coding guide](#) Laurie reviewed the listing of entities for Framingham and found some overlap and a few additional names. Wes is going to do a more thorough survey and report back.

Wes arrived late.

Cynthia is going to do a similar search on [Idealist.com](#).

Wes is also exploring the issue of funding

Yaakov updated the SSA survey. We would like the other work groups to contribute questions. Our goal is to bring this in for the 10/6 meeting.

We started making initial contacts with the agencies on the list to get a head start on getting a listing of properties from them directly. We are also getting the appropriate names and addresses for the survey to go to.

Wes reported that Sannacandro's office got a response from one of the letters re: funding that we sent out. I will give the letter to Laurie and she can post it.

### **Property and Income**

Nick reported that Cynthia is working on a realtor survey.

Nick was working on data collection from the [Warren Group](#). He brought a sample report that he got from the website. The statistics are very detailed Nick discussed some of the information available through this Group. The cost for 150 searches is \$125. It might be worthwhile to purchase this.

It was confirmed that this is accessible through the internet

He is also assembling a complete list of all the individual realtors in Framingham

Nick also brought up the fact that SMOC also describes itself as a community action agency. He was finding a lot of information based on this. Every State has these, and they have very specific requirements. He found a directory of CAA, a serial publication in Massachusetts. This publication is available in only one library. It is a library that is available to our State Representatives. The State library of MA.

It might also have information about grants.

Deb Blumer offered to look into this and find the publication.

Dawn emphasized that we should all ask open ended questions without implying that we know the answers.

Deb Blumer spoke about Community Development Corporations and said that Framingham does not have one. But SMOC is a CAA.

Cynthia asked about CAPS. Ms Blumer said they are no longer funded.

It was geared as a community assistance program for immigrants. Jewish Family Services has been very active in that.

### **Education**

Wes reported that the group did not meet this week. He is working on dates to meet with Dr. Martes.

### **Additional Municipal**

Laurie reported that they had an email meeting. The group has appointments to conduct initial meetings and will write up the questionnaire next week. They will bring those in to the committee.

### **Benefits**

Dawn reported that they met and went over the questions. They decided that a source to find answers to these questions would be the annual reports of organizations which are available on line. They have compiled a list of such organizations URL's. If there is no annual report online they are asking for those in writing.

Nick mentioned that Dawn asked the group to read the SMOC annual reports. and the others as they come along.

Laurie asked if there was going to be any other research conducted that is independent of the social service agencies. She commented that such a study was like asking Merck about the benefits of Vioxx. Since that is the purpose, we need to have an independent view on this issue.

Dawn mentioned that they hadn't planned on that but will be asking each department questions of benefits.

Nick said that he did discuss going to Wellesley and doing some research on scholarly work and particularly if the State itself has performed audits and looked at the efficacy of the work being done by agencies.

Yaakov Cohn asked if the Benefit group could distribute the list of URL's to the entire group.

Nick asked Wes if he could let the entire committee know when that meeting will take place because he wanted to attend as an observer.

The group addressed the issue of observing meetings. Bob Berman felt there was nothing wrong if someone has an interest in a particular area. He thought it needed to be clear what the initial meeting is about. For the school committee, it is to ask if answers to the questions can be given, if not where can we find these answers, and what cannot be answered at all. They will not be getting the actual answers, just an indication of what is answerable.

Laurie asked if written notes would be taken of this meeting. Since all the other work groups are just making general connections with departments and using that information to refine the actual questions, which would then be brought to the whole committee to approve.

Nick felt that if the working group is meeting with an official it should be open to the rest of the group to observe.

Laurie mentioned that we have to be careful about a quorum showing up. Bob suggested we could try to have the meeting at night and post it.

### **Communities for Comparative Study**

Bob opened the discussion with the basic questions: How do we identify the communities that we are going to compare ourselves to.

We have come up with three different ways to do this:

1. Neighbors: anyone contiguous to us
2. Like communities
3. Random sample

Can Deb Blumer offer us any advice on group #2?

The Charter commission looked at communities with similar demographics: roughly the same commercial and residential base, median income. There is no place exactly the same. You can examine issues through census data.

We came up with places like:  
Weymouth, Quincy, Lowell, Waltham, Marlborough, Peabody

If you look at the [Division of Local Services](#) you can use their municipal database to get information about statistics. They may have a list of similar communities.  
The [DOE](#) will give some enrollment information.

Nick suggested that we vote on each group separately  
# 1: Southborough, Marlborough, Sudbury, Wayland, Natick, Sherborn, Ashland

Motion that this committee vote to accept these communities as part 1 of the study.

Dawn suggested that we consider the SMOC service group.  
Nick explained that he just wants to separate out the groups of communities.

Vote:  
9 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstain

#3 Random sampling. What number of communities and how do we get the communities.  
6 communities

Deb mentioned that of the 351 towns most are rural and West of the Connecticut River. It will not give any useful information.

Perhaps it should be random in our local geographical area. Inside 495.

Deb said that if you are doing a random sample, the communities have to be weighted. Otherwise, each person in the community does not have equal chance to be counted. And it is thus a biased sample.

Nick asked what is the unit of analysis. If it is individual people or should we consider the government officials who can make decisions about the communities.  
The level of decision making should be the random unit.

Nick also mentioned that we could consider the maturity of the community.

Deb said the [Department of Environmental affairs](#) did an analysis of land use to determine how much land is still available to build in communities. They answer the questions "How built up are you?" Choosing from those communities might make sense.

We don't have to make decision tonight on this.

Cynthia asked Deb what her to suggest some mature communities:  
Brookline, Somerville, Quincy, Weymouth, Lowell-Lawrence, Peabody, Waltham, Newton (demographics off)

Motion to do a random study, with specific parameters to be determined:  
Vote: 7 in favor, 2 opposed, 0 abstain

#2

How to find like communities:

Laurie passed out a comparison she did based on the 2000 census. She compared population, group home quarters and median income for 20 communities.

Nick developed some ideas of communities. Should we think about what communities are our competitors? Where would people move to if not Framingham?  
Another different idea is to consider what types of communities that we want to model ourselves after. One idea might be Waltham since they have dealt with some of the same issues. Perhaps we could create a vision of what we want this town to be.

Bob commented that he thought the idea a vision is beyond the scope of our agenda. However, it might be interesting to do as the next step, if we are asked to do so. First and foremost, we need to paint an accurate picture of what is going on in Framingham.

Nick suggested that another possibility is to look at all communities along train or who have access to a train. This is based on the statement by many that transportation is important.

The group discussed transportation issues and spending. The costs of running the non train transportation is astronomical. Primarily the lift. We have benefits associated with the transportation profile of the town. But there are pros and cons. How is transportation negatively affected the town? If we are going to include that issue, we have to include both points of view. How is it impacting us negatively as well as positively?

The group continued this discussion, considering what exactly town meeting wanted them to find out: Do they want us to compare ourselves to other towns "like us"?

Should we just agree on specifications and not have this be arbitrary?

Let's see what other departments in town use as comparative communities

Motion to adjourn  
8 in favor 1 opposed 0 abstain

Laurie Lee  
Clerk