

Social Service PILOT and Comparative Impact Study Committee
Conference Room 2 7:30 PM Memorial Building Framingham, Ma
Draft Minutes
September 6, 2005

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

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

Meeting called to order at 7:30 PM.

Minutes of 8/30/05 meeting: Minutes discussed and approved as corrected. Vote to approve minutes: 8 in favor, 0 opposed, and 0 abstain

Discussion of Draft Rules and Procedures will be postponed.

Working Groups:

Mr. Berman has asked town counsel for his opinion of the applicability of Open Meeting Rules and our working groups.

The actual logistics of forming such working groups is comprised of two parts: First, the identification of what the working groups should be working on, which is clearly defined by our Action Plan. Second, the assignment of people to those working groups will require more thought.

Suggestions for doing this included Mr. Orr's experience from the Conservation Commission of finding the best sets of people for each task and letting them work independently.

Another idea brought up by Mr. Sanchez was to divide the committee into two and concentrate on just two aspects of our Plan, each group taking one task. This will allow the committee to concentrate and develop critical skills for the rest of the tasks, while allowing us to do a comprehensive job on the two at hand.

Discussion ensued about the nature of the fact finding groups and whether they would be based on interviews or academic studies. Mr. Berman thought that the importance of studies would be in helping us find questions we haven't asked and Ms. Lee thought they would be important when doing the impact and comparison to other towns, more than with the PILOT study.

Ms. Harkness thought we should create work groups based on the topics in our PILOT Action Plan and that assigning 2 or 3 people, or whatever worked, to a particular task made the most sense. This team, which should be ideologically balanced, could meet with the necessary people to find answers and information. Questionnaires or just the list of questions could work.

Ms. Laurora thought that made sense and that we could add to or develop the questions as the teams worked, and do any additional research.

Ms. Lee suggested we go around the room and see who was interested in each main topic in our PILOT Action Plan. The teams might fall out by interest.

Ms. Berman mentioned that we were missing two people and he would discuss this with them, but that we will do the exercise.

For the PILOT Action Plan the breakdown was:

Legal Issues: Dawn Harkness, Bob Berman

Background: Laurie Lee, Cynthia Laurora, Wes Ritchie

Tangible Costs:

Property Values and Income :Nick Sanchez, help offered by Cynthia and Laurie

School : Bob Berman, Steve, Wes, Kurt

Police, Fire, Ambulance : Cynthia, Dawn, Steve, Nick, Wes, Kurt

Misc. Town Departments : Laurie, Steve, Cynthia

Benefits not included in above: Bob, Dawn, Nick, Laurie

There was a discussion about the inclusion of a separate category for benefits as opposed to rolling those questions into the other groups. It was noted there were already questions relating to such benefits in those groups and social service agencies were noted as resources. It was also noted that several of the benefits listed were intangible and actually belonged in the impact study. However, it was pointed out that some of those issues were unclear because of a lack of information and deserved further study.

Town Manager George King's visit to our group is set to occur at the next meeting. We will be meeting with him to hear his thoughts and experience as to what town departments feel the effects of SSA's and programs. This is not a presentation but an informal discussion and brainstorming session regarding the impact on town government.

Mr. Berman talked about his conversation with the BoS task force on social service agencies comprised of Charlie Sisitsky and Dennis Giombetti. They did not think they overlapped our committee. Their main purpose is to establish a line of communication between the SSA's and the town. Any relevant information will be shared. Ms. Lee will find out if they give formal reports to the BoS.

Comparative/Impact Action Plan

Mr. Berman reminded the group that our mission is comprised of two parts. We have already created the PILOT Plan and now have to develop a Plan that looks at the impact of Social Services on Framingham and a comparative study of Framingham to other communities.

Ms. Lee created an outline for the Comparative Impact Study, which can be built upon many of the aspects of the PILOT Plan.

Initial discussion of the legal issues surrounding an impact study or a comparative study generated no direct issue of the legality of such studies. However, Mr. Orr asked if there might be legal agreements between other communities and SSA's. Perhaps there are bylaws regulating the development of facilities or programs in other communities.

Ms. Harkness suggested that we discuss which other communities we should consider in our comparative study: how are we going to compare ourselves and to whom are we going to compare ourselves.

Mr. Berman said that the author of the motion, Ted Cosgrove, was very specific that he wanted to compare Framingham to its neighboring communities.

Ms. Lee said that she came up with a list of communities to consider. The ones that would satisfy Mr. Cosgrove's intentions were Regional and the other list included larger communities with similar demographics to Framingham.

Mr. Sanchez could agree with the first group but not the second.

Mr. Steinberg liked the idea of looking at both sets of communities. The like set of communities would ground us and the regional set would allow us to see how we are like or unlike our neighbors and we can ask why. They might be reasons unrelated to our subject matter.

Mr. Sanchez still disagreed and said it was not a true statistical study to pre pick the communities. He thought a random study would be more appropriate. By consciously choosing we are biasing our study.

Mr. Berman thought it was important to gather information in both categories: two separate studies that are both important to do.

How do we compare to our neighboring communities and how do we stack up to like communities? This information will be useful to our Board of Selectman and our town. Valuable data can be determined from looking at a variety of communities and asking what are the differences and similarities between these communities.

Cynthia suggested that if we do a per capita comparison of social service agencies and programs we can get some interesting data.

Mr. Sanchez objected again because the choice of communities is based on information that we know and is thus biased.

Ms Harkness was leaning towards an unbiased approach. She thought that we needed to do the a) list because they are our geographic neighbors but that we should consult with other sources on how to form the b) list.

We added random to the group. A random number for the group needs to be 6.

Mr. Steinberg told the group that such studies are done by colleges all the time. It is called peer review studies. FSC learns nothing about itself by using University of Michigan as a comparison. They need to benchmark themselves with similar institutions.

So we will not learn anything by comparing Framingham to Florida.

We need to come up with a criteria to pick peers.

The group consensus was that this might be a good discussion to have with the town manager.

Perhaps we could also ask the Housing consultant Judy Barrett or the planning department.

Who does the police department compare us to? The fire department, school, fire, conservation..?

Potential communities

a) Regional Communities:

- Natick
- Ashland
- Marlborough
- Westborough
- Sudbury
- Wayland
- Southborough

b) Other possible communities to consider:

- Worcester
- Waltham
- Hyannis
- Barnstable
- Lowell
- Lawrence
- Brockton
- Chicopee

c) Random Selection of Massachusetts communities

Will the town manager want to know what types of questions or information we will be looking for when comparing ourselves to other towns?

This part of the Comparative Plan was then discussed:

Section II: Comparison of Social Service Agencies and their impact on other communities:

I: Legal Issues:

- Do other communities have any public agreements with social service agencies?
- Are there written or unwritten agreements that SSA's will first consult with the planning or economic department of a community?
- What are the local bylaws for a social service agency opening a facility or running a program?
- Other legal questions we can ask.

Resources:

- Ma bylaws online
- Local Planning Department and Planning Board
- Mayor, town manager
- Local bylaws

II: Background information about Social Service Agencies in selected community:

- a) Create a list of social service organizations/contractors based on our definition. How many total Social Service Agencies, programs and facilities are there?
 - Who are the Social Service Agencies?
 - What individual programs do these organizations run?
 - What are the actual facilities being used for these programs?
 - How many properties are owned by Social Service Agencies? What is the tax status?
 - What buildings are being rented by Social Service Agencies?
 - What are the programs/facilities planned for future?
- b) Does the Assessors office, the Town Manager or Mayor, the Planning Department or Planner have a list of agencies, facilities and programs?
- c) What is the 40B % of subsidized units?
- d) Does the community have a PILOT program?
- e) Determine the total value of all property owned or rented by SSA's, how much of that is taxed and how much is not taxed. Determine the dollar amount of property tax not being collected at this time by the town from such agencies.
- f) How many SSA's and programs are there per capita?
- g) other

Resources:

- Assessors office, [Tax exempt property list](#), [FY03 property list](#), State 40B list
- Town Manager, Mayor, Town Clerk, Assessor, Planning Department
- Ask the SS's for their complete listings and to complete questionnaire
- websites of social service agencies
- Research Internet/Google
- DSS/DPH/DYS/DMR other grant giving organizations
- [Research 2000 census](#)
- www.laurielee.org
- Census bureau reports by SIC
- Commerce.guidestar.org : list of SSA's
- [MA municipal Organization](#), [State Secretary office](#)
- [DHCD](#)
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III. Tangible costs associated with Social Services:

- a) Property Values
Important: Use normalized data. The only complete data set is the FY03 Property evaluations and the 2000 census (discuss research standards)
 - 1) How are property values effected by Social Service Agencies?
 - Properties adjacent to SSA's
 - Properties neighboring SSA's
 - Properties Town/City wide
 - What is the effect on immediate abutters to SSA's?
 - 2) How have property values changed over time (10 years or more) relative to growth of Social Service Agencies? What about decline of SSA's? Is there a relationship?

3) Other

Resources:

- Real-Estate agents
- Bank/mortgage appraisers
- [Warren Group in Lexington](#)
- Academic Studies
- Steve Krueger Study
- [FTP](#)
- Assessor (caution) or planners
- [FY03 property valuations](#)
- [2000 census](#)

Motion to adjourn

8 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstain

Laurie Lee

TMM pct 1

Clerk PILOT/Impact Group