

**SUMMARY OF TOWN COUNCIL GOALS
AND OBJECTIVES
2018 - 2019**



**STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT
FEBRUARY 22, 2018**

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
New Realities for Local Governments	2 - 7
Environmental Scan	8 - 10
Strategic Planning Questionnaire	11
- Short-Term Goals	12 – 14
- Long-Term Goals	15 – 16
Goals Identified by Council	17
- 12-18 Month Goals	18 – 20
- 3 – 5 Year Goals	21 – 22
Summary	23

Introduction

Members of the Seabrook Island Town Council and administrative staff participated in an annual goal-setting retreat on February 22, 2018 at the Seabrook Island Town Hall. The group reviewed a number of issues addressed in a strategic planning questionnaire and the discussion was expanded throughout the day. The group welcomed new councilwoman Jeri Finke and new town administrator Joe Cronin to this year's retreat.

The following individuals participated in this year's retreat:

Mayor Ron Ciancio

Councilman Skip Crane

Councilwoman Jeri Finke

Councilman John Gregg

Councilman John Wells

Town Administrator Joe Cronin

Bill Taylor, Field Services Manager
(Municipal Association of South Carolina)

Although this portion of the “New Realities for Local Governments” was presented to the council at last year’s retreat it was thought that the newcomers to Seabrook would benefit from this “foundation” of what local governments are facing these days.

NEW REALITIES FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Reality # 1: “McGovernment” Attitude of Citizens

Society has become preoccupied with the “fast food” attitude toward services characterized by:

- Convenient services
- Ease for customer
- Fast & quick response
- Others responsible for actions
- Service “my way”
- Impatience with delays or excuses
- Desire for service NOW

These have become the citizen’s standard for judging municipal services.

The Impacts of Reality # 1 are:

- Citizens have a view of unresponsive government
- Focus on “My” Concerns & N.I.M.B.Y. over what is “best for the community”
- Lack of understanding of local government & services

The Challenge is:

How to inform citizens & gain appreciation for our local government, programs, and services.

Reality # 2: The Empowered 20%

Citizens in a community can be divided into 4 groups:

- **20% positive supporters of local government**
- **30% leaning toward positive attitude**
- **30% leaning toward negative attitude**
- **20% negative toward all actions of government**

The negative 20% are characterized as:

- **Seldom satisfied with local government response**
- **Vocal on any issues – always providing an opinion**
- **Always present monitoring local government activities**
- **Media “darlings” – always willing to offer a quote**
- **Like to use threats to intimidate mayor, council, or staff**

The Impacts of Reality # 2 are:

- **Intimidation by citizens of local government – mayor, council, staff**
- **Control of city agenda, goals, direction, & issues**
- **Emerging as “community leaders”**

The Challenge is:

How to say “NO” and recapture momentum for leading the community by listening to and involving the 80%.

Reality # 3: Less Community Stewards & More Amateur Politicians

Community stewards are characterized by:

- **Willing to do what's best for the community**
- **Willingness to learn**
- **Reliance of staff**
- **Long-term perspective**
- **Stewardship of community resources**
- **Having experience in local government through service on community groups or local boards and commissions**

Amateur Politicians are characterized by:

- **Single issue focused**
- **Have a personal agenda**
- **Unwillingness to learn – already an “expert”**
- **Focus on what is politically expedient**

The Impacts of Reality # 3 are:

- **More reactive to emotional issues**
- **Shorter perspective in making decisions & planning**
- **Increased responsiveness to special interest groups**

The Challenge is:

How to say define issues & make decisions which are best for the long-term future of our community.

Reality # 4: Loss of Civility

Local governments & society in general are in the process of losing their civility. Civility is treating each other with respect & acting in a humane manner. Today the reality is:

- **Personal attacks of each other**
- **Personalization of issues**
- **Arguing over “minor” items**
- **“Bashing” staff & citizens**
- **Using personal threats**
- **Fighting with each other**

The Impacts of Reality # 4 are:

- **Focusing more on minor issues**
- **Setting a negative tone for government**
- **Intimidation of employees and citizens**

The Challenge is:

How to work together with mutual trust and respect.

Reality # 5: Agenda of the Unimportant

- **Councils want to respond to citizens**
- **End up shifting time and resources to address individual requests**
- **Time is spent on relatively minor issues that have limited long-term impact**
- **Issues are usually seen as “fun” and produce immediate results**
- **Long-term or complex issues are often avoided because it’s difficult to see the short-term impact of such long-range planning.**
- **Council’s agenda becomes filled with issues that may be of less importance to the city’s future.**

The Impacts of Reality # 5 are:

- **Focusing more on individual citizen requests**
- **Less time being spent on major policy decisions**
- **Council / staff time and energy being spent on relatively unimportant issues**

The Challenge is:

How to focus on what is truly important for the future of the community.

Reality # 6: Real World vs. Expected Reality

Citizens have a limited understanding of local government. Their expected reality is shaped by the media & characterized by:

- **Limited/negative credibility of government – “Tea Party” movement**
- **Service NOW**
- **More services. . . Less resources**
- **Reducing expenditures of government**
- **Government is “Simple”**

The “real world” of local government is characterized by:

- **Federal & state mandates, i.e., millage caps**
- **Limited financial resources**
- **Complexity of dealing with simple issues**
- **Desire to respond to citizen needs & desires**
- **Cutbacks over the past 10 years with limited impacts to local services**

The Impacts of Reality # 6 are:

- **Increased citizen criticism of local services & council actions**
- **Buffering by professionals of the impact of the real world**
- **Lack of understanding & appreciation of local government**

The Challenge is:

How to manage citizen expectations of local government and to inform & involve citizens.

Environmental Scan

Before discussing any proposed goals or objectives for the upcoming year the council and administrator took part in an environmental scan of the community as well as the Town of Seabrook Island organization. The group was asked about what “drivers” or “outside forces” were present that could affect the community and the town’s organization in the years ahead.

DRIVERS OR OUTSIDE FORCES AFFECTING THE COMMUNITY:

- **Federal & State Mandates (i.e., DHEC baselines on shoreline; Federal regulations on migratory birds/wildlife/dolphins)**
- **Changes in Population / Demographics**
- **Limitations / Challenges with Beach Renourishment / Management**
- **Potential threat of Off Shore Drilling**
- **Climate Change / Rising Sea Levels**
- **Permitting Processes for Roads or other Developments; Cumbersome / Time-Consuming**
- **Increase in Legal Challenges / “Rush to Litigate”**
- **Proximity to Healthcare and Other Services; Influences Residents locating to the Island**

DRIVERS OR OUTSIDE FORCES AFFECTING THE SEABROOK ISLAND ORGANIZATION:

- **Federal & State Mandates**
- **New Town Administrator**
- **Council Leadership / Future of New Councils / Term, etc.**
- **Limits to Growth / Capacity of Utility System**
- **Challenges with Beach Renourishment / Management**
- **Relationship of town with balance of John's Island**
- **Lack of Attention by Charleston County**
- **Isolated from representation on County Council**
- **Small Staff / Any Turnover can be disruptive / Need for Succession Planning**
- **Zero Millage and Current Attorney General's Opinion limits town's ability to levy property tax**
- **Potential impact of any state legislation that would limit the town's ability to collect a business license**
- **Limited ability for growth**
- **Some past council decisions (Growth vs. No Growth) impact the town's future**

**REVIEW OF
STRATEGIC
PLANNING
QUESTIONNAIRE**

SETTING SHORT-TERM

GOALS

A row of five white dice with black letters spelling 'GOALS'. The dice are arranged horizontally and are slightly blurred, giving a sense of depth. The background is dark and textured.

What are the most important issues that need to be addressed in the next 12 -18 months?

- Complete Seabrook Island Road Flooding project
- New FEMA FIRM Maps / Communication with Public
- Incorporate Time for ATAX Committee Reviews Prior to Approval of Annual Budget / Expand Items to Be Considered / Set Priorities
- Comment to DHEC about setback / baseline issues
- Marine Erosion Issues
- Berkeley Electric Proactive Protective Issues
- Annexation of Bradham Property
- 10 Year Comprehensive Plan Update
- Town Hall Upgrade
- Set up Ability to Accept Credit Card Payments
- Auditor RFP

Additional issues identified for the next 12 – 18 months.

- Landscape RFP
- Establish Dolphin Monitoring Program & Have Training Sessions for Beach Patrol
- New Town Website
- Oppose All Off-Shore Drilling Efforts / Permits; Make Sure State Officials Support Coastal Communities on this Issue
- Beach Management Issues / How Town can be More Proactive about Impacts of Rising Sea Levels & Proper Town Response
- Address Upgrade of Water / Sewer Utilities' Capacity to Keep up with Development & Eventual Build-Out of Island
- At What Point Will Financial Needs Exceed Current / Anticipated Revenue Resources
- DHEC Jurisdiction Lines – Comments Due by April
- Improve Resistance to Power Loss & Flooding



What long-term goals, projects should the town address over the next 3 – 5 years?

- Alternatives to Bond Issues for Financing Extensive Clean-Up Following Major Storms
- Consider Levying Tax to Establish Clean-Up / Recovery Fund
- Financial Sustainability / Diminishing Construction Revenues and Non-Recurring Revenues
- Marine & Boardwalk Safety Concerns
- Town “Branding”
- Funding For Beach Patrol
- Plan for SI POA / Town Complex
- Road Issues
- Water Commission Data to Support Town Efforts
- Resolve Utility Capacity Limitations To Assess Potential for Strategic Annexations
- Better Utilization of Planning Commission for Gathering Data to assist with Annexation Discussion / Signage

GOALS IDENTIFIED BY COUNCIL



TOP PRIORITY GOALS FOR THE NEXT 12 – 18 MONTHS

COMPLETE SEABROOK ISLAND ROAD FLOODING PROJECT

- ❖ Flooding is a constant problem and needs to be eliminated.
- ❖ RFPs are already in the works for the project and a majority of the funding is already in place.

RESOLVE BRADHAM PROPERTY ISSUE

- ❖ The town needs to make some final determination on the Bradham property which is located near the entrance onto the island.
- ❖ Once the use for this property is determined it will allow the town to consider potential areas to annex.

TOWN HALL UPGRADES

- ❖ The town hall has adequate space to house current operations of the town, however, certain small upgrades in the building will allow the property to be used for efficiently.
- ❖ Efforts should be made to identify potential upgrades and bid out the improvements during the upcoming year.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

- ❖ The Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Seabrook Island was last adopted in July of 2009 and some portions were revised in March 2015.
- ❖ South Carolina State Code §6-29-510 (E) requires that the town update its comprehensive plan every 10 years.
- ❖ The 9 different elements of the comprehensive plan need to be reviewed by the Planning Commission with formal recommendations for any changes or updates made to the town council.
- ❖ The Council can consider the possibility of utilizing the BCD Council of Governments to assist with this effort.

WEBSITE UPGRADE

- ❖ The town's website is rather cumbersome and difficult to navigate.
- ❖ The Council recognizes the importance of providing a means for citizens and visitors to have easy access to meaningful information that can be found on a local website.
- ❖ An upgraded website can also be used to allow the council to be more transparent by posting key information about local codes, rules, and regulations and financial reports and documents easily accessible to the public.

UPDATE EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK / POLICIES

- ❖ Although the town only has a few employees it is essential that they understand the requirements of their employment and are familiar with the benefits afforded to them.
- ❖ The Municipal Association of South Carolina does have a model employee handbook that can be used by towns in the state.
- ❖ It is recommended that the proposed handbook and manual be reviewed by a labor attorney to ensure legal compliance with Federal and State labor laws.

TOP PRIORITY GOALS FOR NEXT 3 – 5 YEARS

IDENTIFY REVENUE SOURCES TO ALLOW TOWN TO PROVIDE / EXPAND SERVICES (DIVERSIFY REVENUE BASE)

- ❖ As the island is eventually built-out construction will tend to slow down therefore reducing a significant portion of funds from licenses and permits for new construction. The town is reliant primarily on such fees and business licenses along with some funds from the county and the State Local Government Fund.
- ❖ The town needs to review all possible sources of revenue and determine if any additional funds can be realized that would allow the town to expand and/or improve some of the services it is presently providing to its citizens.
- ❖ The town presently has no ad valorem property tax and the State Attorney General has issued an opinion that such cities around the state with no property tax (presently 52 towns) would be prevented from adding a millage rate due to Act 388 which limits cities from increasing their millage by more than the combined total of the current CPI increase from the previous year plus the estimated increase in population. A bill (S618) has been introduced in the SC General Assembly that would allow municipalities without a millage as of January 1, 2017 to impose one and following that would have to abide by the rules of the millage cap under Act 388.

SUCCESSION PLANNING FOR STAFF

- ❖ Last year the town administrator retired after 20 years of service to the town. The clerk has been in place for a long period of time as well.
- ❖ With so few employees in place anyone leaving can take a lot of “institutional knowledge” with them.
- ❖ It’s important that some type of plan be developed to prepare for eventual retirements of key personnel. This might include hiring part-time employees to “mirror” employees once retirements are announced or to identify quality individuals that might possess the skills necessary to carry out those job requirements.

CAPITAL FACILITIES MASTER PLAN / CONSIDER POSSIBILITY OF DEVELOPING TOWN/POA JOINT FACILITY

- ❖ The town has very few actual facilities, however; it should consider the possibility of developing some type of master capital facilities plan on the future use of properties on the island.
- ❖ The current Comprehensive Plan identifies 6 acres of “government land use” within the town.
- ❖ Council could should also consider the possibility of creating some type of joint town and Property Owner Association campus / facility that could serve as a “one stop shop” for local residents and visitors and should also serve as a visitor’s bureau.

SUMMARY

I applaud the mayor and council for getting together again this year to talk about the future of the community and welcome new councilwoman Finke and town administrator Cronin to the organization. Seabrook Island is, indeed, a very special place and it is imperative that the council look at ways to preserve the peace and tranquility that make this such an inviting place to live. There are a number of threats that the council needs to be mindful of as it continues to plan strategically for the future.

It is very evident that each of you have a passion for your island and in your role of “caretaker” want to do whatever you can to increase the quality of life for its residents. I think that it is important that you continue to look at ways to improve and expand the relationship with the Property Owners’ Association and a jointly owned and occupied facility might definitely be a way to improve the communication opportunities with your residents and visitors.

I also think it wise that the council look at ways to possibly increase the resources necessary to support current and future programs and services. This is a never-ending task that all municipalities face year after year. Know that the Municipal Association stands ready to assist you with any technical assistance and training in the future. Please let us know if we can continue to be of assistance to you. I trust that this summary will be helpful as you begin your upcoming budget process and I wish you the best of luck as you continue to lead this great community.

Sincerely,

Bill Taylor