

**Somersworth NH Annual Retreat
February 23, 2008**

**Summary
Gerri King, Ph.D., Facilitator**

The city manager, department heads, and city councilors convened for a half-day retreat to focus on the following:

Assessing last year's goals

- What did we accomplish?
- What was not addressed and should remain as a goal?
- What was not addressed and should be removed as a goal?
- What new items should be added to the list?

City Council reactions/feedback was requested on these City issues.

CIP (Capital Improvement Program).

- Comments on improvements made.
- What else needs to be added?
- Workshop date for this year's proposed CIP.

Whether the City should move forward with Impact Fee Legislation and/or focus on Master Plan updates.

In assessing last year's goals, the group concluded the following:

Accomplishments

1. Police Station
2. Elementary School Site
3. Water Plant upgrade
4. Wastewater Plant upgrade
5. Skateboard Park
6. Development of Mills
7. Website Development
8. Channel 22 utilization
9. Moratorium on residential development
10. Consideration of Charter Review
11. Transparency of city government
12. Better communication

To Continue To Be Addressed and/or New Goals

1. Use of old police station
2. Use of Hilltop School
3. Possibility of New Recreation Center
4. Purchase of green space
5. Create new image for the city
6. Improved infrastructure for High St.
7. Exit 10 Funding - though it looks like it won't happen, want to keep it on the list. *One group suggested redirecting the energy to the High St. Corridor.*
8. Tax rate stability
9. Side walk plan/street work
10. Connector (High to 108)
11. Continued mill development
12. Riverfront development
13. Create reasons for young people to stay
14. Improved image/identity
15. Increased volunteer and philanthropic involvement
16. Address railroad concerns
17. Continued website development
18. Continued governmental transparency
19. Continued utilization of Channel 22

20. Review of city policies and ordinances
21. Encourage effective departmental communication, Human Resource Review, and employee education. *Inner workings of the city should be Bob's responsibility and not the Council's.*
22. Review land use
23. Charter review
24. Master plan review and execution
25. Continued effective communication with media
26. Stabilization of tax rate
27. Look for private funding for recreation center
28. On-going newsletter
29. "Business with Bob" on Channel 22
30. An action plan for existing school repairs
31. Turn council goals into city-wide goals
32. Continue School Board/Council communication
33. Better job promoting and marketing for the city
34. Library – ADA improvements and expansion
35. Action Plan for old Police Station
36. Councilor Tapscott expressed concerns about housing and several people contributed to the conversation. It is clear that more attention should be paid to the issues.

Commitments

1. Action plan for the old Police station. The following people will form a sub-committee to begin working on it: Hilliard, Micucci, Messier, & Spainhower.
2. Form an Advisory Review Committee that is independent and will give feedback to the Council on all City facility needs including school issues. They should have a variety of areas of expertise, i.e. citizens who are familiar with HVAC, Electrical, and Construction needs.
3. Improve financial software in conjunction with the school district, if possible.

4. The Major Commitment Resulting From The Session.

Create an identity and image for the city with a time line.

We want:

- **To offer something for everybody.**
- **Become a destination.**
- **Have strong code enforcement that developers abide by and understand clearly.**
- **Landlord and tenant education that fits with our image.**
- **A video walking tour.**
- **A central focus that the community can rally around.**
- **A wonderful work and living environment.**
- **Encourage foot traffic.**

We want to reinvent ourselves!

The following people will begin the process: Dana, Jon & Craig.

The following was discussed and initial reactions and feedback sought.

CIP

There was agreement that it is good document. Suggest the following:

1. A televised workshop after 3/15.
2. Look at the budget first.
3. Include school issues and concerns.

Impact Fee Legislation and/or Master Plan Update

Agreement to shift \$20,000 appropriated for Impact Fee Legislation to completing a Master Plan Update; engage an outside contractor because staff does not have enough time to do what has to be done and an outside consultant will provide a better product.

Apply for a \$15,000 grant, which, if successful, will bring the available total to \$35,000 for a Master Plan Update.

Facilitator Response

The following is a reiteration of the preamble to last year's comments. As an outside facilitator, I share the following observations and suggestions in the belief that the city manager, department heads, and city councilors hold enormous expertise and knowledge about their community. In that spirit, it is assumed that you'll accept what makes sense, discard what does not, and "put on the shelf" what you might want to take down some day.

As always, it was a pleasure to work with your group. Your willingness to be involved and work hard was very much appreciated.

I wish you the best of luck in the coming year and especially in your resolve to create and publicize a cohesive and exciting identity for the City of Somersworth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gerri King". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gerri King, Ph.D.

Observations and Suggestions

1. I was struck by how much you've accomplished from last year's list. Those things that remain are, for the most part, not within your control or have taken on less importance.
2. The goals of **stabilizing the tax rate and Exit 10** are, in one sense seemingly impossible, yet in another, clearly important to leave on the list. It shows intent to persevere despite obstacles that are not within your control. As I said last year, I'm sure that the citizens of Somersworth expect both to remain a priority.
3. **Quality of life** issues, again, ranged from the specific (skate board park, green space, and mill development) to broader considerations such as creating reasons for young people to stay and looking at the identity of the community. Your commitment to continue discovering what will retain your younger cohort is important because, without it, that focus will be lost along with them.
4. If one accomplishment stood out it was last year's resolve to become more transparent. It has clearly become part of the fabric of your underlying values and mission. It sounds like media relations have improved even more. Beyond that, the vehicles of newsletter, web site, televised hearings, and expanded use of Channel 22 are being utilized and remain on-going options.
5. Finally, moving from "wanting to improve your image" to a commitment to articulate what the image should be and exactly how your identity will emerge is a major step. There were a number of small and big ways you suggested that could happen. It is the beginning of a conscious effort to recreate what is already a solid and important NH city.