



Final Report of ESC Consultants to Wellesley Natural Resources Commission (NRC)

I. Introduction

ESC has been engaged since May 2013 in a project for the Town of Wellesley Natural Resources Commission (NRC) in developing a strategic plan that would be a resource for the NRC members and staff in order to effectively fulfill their statutory and other responsibilities.

As a Town agency the NRC is unique in that it consolidates in one body the oversight of municipal activities (parks, conservation, trees and pest control, and town forests), which in other Massachusetts towns with the exception of Concord, are established as separate departments. Its creation in 1978 by special legislation followed a three-year study and recommendation by a special open space committee to address 1) land management problems, 2) an ineffective conservation committee, and 3) conflicting goals and accountability by the Board of Public Works.

This is ESC's Final Report that summarizes the undertaking of a two-phase project. The first phase involved assembly and review of background information on the NRC and interviews with Wellesley officials and members of other Town boards, commissions, and committees in preparation for a four-hour evening retreat of the NRC members and staff that was held on June 18, 2013. The intended purpose and outcome of the retreat was development of broad strategic goals and delineation of NRC members and staff responsibilities to accomplish the goals and to serve as the basis for development of a tactical implementation plan in the next phase that concluded with a second retreat of NRC members and staff on March 28, 2015.

II. Summary of First Phase

The first phase was followed by an interim report, a copy of which is attached as Appendix A, that summarizes the preparation and outcome of the June 18, 2013 retreat, which showed that the overarching challenge for the NRC is to fulfill its charge as steward of the Town of Wellesley natural resources, which encompasses multiple responsibilities and numerous activities, but is constrained by the limited capacity of its personnel and other resources under its direct control.

A. NRC Priorities

Given the challenges imposed on the NRC members and staff what emerged in an energetic and productive discussion at the retreat was the consensus that the NRC must establish priorities in its work load that more properly align with its capacity by:

- **Managing the Work of the NRC Board**

In addition to setting priorities, it was concluded that the board can manage its work more effectively through clarity about board expectations and responsibilities.

- **Education and Advocacy**

It is recognized that the NRC can broaden its influence and to some degree its capacity, through education and advocacy. This will serve to create a culture within the Town that encourages residents' stewardship of their natural resources and help achieve and amplify the board's efforts to ensure adherence to its mission and policies.

- **Establishing Relationships with Other Town Agencies**

The NRC also can expand its capacity through collaboration with other Town agencies with which it has working relationships and through coordination with local grassroots groups to accomplish its mission.

B. Strategic Goals

Based on these priorities the following strategic goals were approved to more effectively fulfill the NRC's responsibilities:

1. Manage the work of the board by establishing priorities and clarity about board and staff expectations, responsibilities, and capacity.
2. Through education and advocacy, create a culture within the Town that will encourage good stewardship of the Town's natural resources to achieve and amplify the board's efforts to ensure adherence to its mission and policies.
3. Expand the NRC's capacity to meet its stewardship responsibilities through collaboration (e.g., Fuller Brook Park and Morses Pond projects).
4. Utilize the collaborative management of the Fuller Brook Park and Morses Pond projects as a model in managing other projects, including work with DPW.

III. Summary of Second Phase

Initially, the second phase was to be completed with a second retreat in early 2014, but this was delayed due to staff organizational changes eventually resulting in the hiring of a new Director in October 2014. However, in the interim the ESC Consultants continued to maintain contact with the NRC leadership. In April 2014 the ESC Consultants participated in a meeting with the leadership of the Department of Public Works, which led to an understanding relative to collaboration in managing Wellesley's natural resources under the NRC's jurisdiction as well as reviewing the revised job description for the position of Director.

A. Development of Implementation Plan

1. Preparation for Retreat

In February 2015 the ESC Consultants worked with a joint ESC/NRC steering committee consisting of Heidi Gross, NRC Chair; Raina McManus and Lise Olney, NRC members; and Brandon Schmitt, NRC Director, to plan the second retreat scheduled for March 28, 2015, with the objective of developing a tactical implementation plan. The steering committee met on February 11 and 25, and March 11, 2015 at which it prepared materials for the retreat that included a PowerPoint presentation providing an overview of the NRC and a draft "Outline of Goals, Objectives and Action Steps." Attached as Appendices B and C, respectively, are the retreat agenda and PowerPoint presentation. The Outline of Goals, Objectives, and Action Steps, as revised, is incorporated in B. Implementation Plan, below.

2. March 28, 2015, Retreat

The half-day retreat was held at the Wellesley Free Library on March 28, 2015, and was attended by four of the five NRC members and the NRC Director. The PowerPoint presentation provided an overview of the NRC, its mission, unique history, regulatory authority, function, organization, operations, budget, and activities. This presentation was followed by a review of the ESC Interim Report and, more particularly, the strategic goals established at the earlier retreat. In preparation for the retreat the steering committee had developed more specific objectives underlying each goal, which identified "Actions Taken" and "Potential Actions" relative to each objective.

The overview of the NRC and other materials served effectively to inform the discussion relative to proposed action steps that would serve to implement the goals established by the board in June 2013: *1) management of the board's business; 2) education and advocacy; and 3&4) establishing relations with other town agencies.*

While each of the goals speak to specific issues identified in the 2013 retreat, these goals were viewed as integral parts of a single objective, namely, to enable the NRC to fulfill its charge as steward of the Town's natural resources with the constraints of a small staff and the resources under its direct control.

The discussion of action steps reflected an appreciation for the NRC's origins, its uniqueness as a municipal agency, and the magnitude of its authority and responsibilities over the Town's natural resources. The action steps also take into account that in order to effectively

manage these resources, the NRC must have confidence in itself as a body and, most importantly, the confidence and unqualified support of the Town's residents and other stakeholders (e.g., other town departments). Building that confidence or credibility and projecting a positive image of the NRC is a theme that runs through all of the action steps ranging from deliberations, decision-making, educational initiatives, and collaborations with Town departments and grassroots organizations. A suggestion at the end of the discussion was to develop a statement of principles that will guide the NRC in the exercise of its responsibilities.

B. Implementation Plan

The discussion at the March 28, 2015, retreat resulted in an energetic and productive discussion that led to a consensus relative to action steps subsequently approved by the NRC members to implement the goals, as follows:

Goal 1: Management of work of the board by establishing priorities and clarity about board and staff expectations, responsibilities, and capacity.

Objective 1. Increase knowledge and effectiveness of board and staff in meeting multiple statutory and administrative obligations and responsibilities.

Actions Taken:

- Establish annual calendar of regular NRC board meetings and regular NRC subcommittee meetings, key town-wide dates (e.g., town elections, budget hearings, town meeting, etc.) and regular statutory obligations (e.g., election of officers, budget preparation, etc.) and perennial education/outreach and stewardship events.

Potential Actions:

- Develop core guiding principles and board norms.
- Create measurable goals.
- Develop/review role descriptions for board members, chair, vice chair, secretary.
- Review/revise existing staff structure, including position descriptions.
- Provide orientation for new board members, including review of relevant laws, policies and regulations, Open Meeting Law, overview of other Town agencies and introduction to key town elected and appointed officials, tour of NRC-owned natural resources (land and water bodies), and update on major projects.
- Develop communication plan for pending Town projects. Distribute relevant agendas to NRC board.
- Annual (or as needed) review of relevant laws, policies, and regulations.
- Annual (or as needed) review of inter-board representation/communication and assignment/renewal of NRC representatives or contacts.
- Annual (or as needed) review of strategic plan.
- Annual (or as needed) project update (Fuller Brook, e.g.).
- Hold annual "retreat" of NRC board and subcommittees.

Objective 2. Improve efficiency of board meetings.

Actions Taken:

- Provide written agenda and all meeting materials in advance of meetings, including where possible written staff reports and inter-board representative reports.
- Establish a bi-weekly meeting schedule.

Potential Action Steps:

- Confirm attendance by board and staff members.
- Establish guidelines for adhering to agenda timelines.
- Set regular agenda deadlines and process for establishing agenda.
- Revise board meeting thematic structure.
- Supply draft motions in advance.

Objective 3. Review management of special projects, including staff and board responsibilities/oversight/expectations.

Potential Action Steps:

- Outline assignments for staff vs. board.
- Develop clear deadlines.
- Outline opportunities for administrative approval, including budgeting.
- Develop process for approval of auxiliary (Town) projects by board (co-sponsorship).

Goal 2: *Through education and advocacy create a culture within the Town that will encourage good stewardship of the natural resources to achieve and amplify the board's efforts to ensure adherence to its mission and policies.*

Objective 1. Raise level of awareness of Town residents, visitors, and other town departments in NRC mission, policies and procedures, to promote interest and support for acquisition/expansion/maintenance of natural resources to improve overall quality of quality of life.

Actions Taken:

- Expand use of social media.

Potential Action Steps:

- Establish NRC as primary source for information about natural resources directly and through outreach.
- Develop visual identity/symbol.
- Develop common definitions and language consistent with NRC mission.
- Create consistent messaging through social media, regular email newsletter, press releases, etc.
- Organize regular public events including forums and conferences (possibly in collaboration with other boards and grassroots groups).
- Create relationships with schools, senior center, etc. (Wellesley Green Schools).
- Establish relationship with college communities.

Objective 2. Leverage Town residents' and visitors' interest and knowledge of good stewardship to support maintenance and management of Town natural resources through voluntarism.

Potential Action Steps:

- Develop guidelines for volunteer projects.
- Collaborate on outreach with related boards and committee (e.g., Trails Committee, Wetlands, Sustainable Energy Committee).
- Recognize examples of good stewardship.
- Strengthen ties to grassroots groups such as Sustainable Wellesley, Friends of Morses Pond, Wellesley Green Schools, and other organizations in the Green Collaborative, possibly through development of joint initiatives and events.
- Establish Boy Scout and high school senior project opportunities, either in Town or through other organizations.
- Utilize Wellesley Media resources.

Objective 3. Promote NRC as model town agency for stewardship, education and advocacy for preservation of open spaces resources to inspire similar agencies and statewide/national interest in NRC as leader in stewardship of local natural resources.

Potential Action Steps:

- Raise organizational stature through networking.
- Connect with state and national organizations with similar goals.
- Host and present at leadership events, presentations.
- Increase publication of information and board opinion in newsletters, letters to editor, etc.
- Enhance NRC branding and publicity through use of "free" media and outreach.
- Use regular, existing communications with the public (such as letters regarding the Tree Planting Program and Tree Protection bylaws) to educate the public about issues of importance.

Goal 3: *Expand the NRC's capacity to meet its stewardship responsibilities through collaboration (e.g., Fuller Brook Park and Morses Pond projects).*

Objective 1. Leverage material, personnel resources and expertise of other Town departments to support responsibility for initiating, planning, design, and oversight of special preservation/construction projects.

Potential Action Steps:

- Identify stakeholders and contacts for potential projects and initiatives.
- Schedule/Host “Friends Group Forum” possibly with Green Collaborative.

Goal 4: *Utilize the collaborative management of the Fuller Brook Park and Morses Pond projects as a model in managing joint DPW/NRC projects.*

Objective 1. Leverage partnership with the Department of Works, including its material, personnel resources and expertise relative to the regular maintenance of NRC-owned natural resources.

Potential Action Steps:

- Schedule routine meetings with DPW to discuss NRC/DPW projects.
- Review/establish guidelines for standards of use, development, and maintenance of NRC-owned natural resources.
- Organize NRC/DPW joint planning committee and delineate roles and responsibilities.
- Develop tactical implementation plan, including identification of tasks, resource allocation analysis, and timelines.
- Develop oversight protocol and timeline for NRC/DPW projects.

C. Next Steps

Next steps for the NRC are to implement the actions steps, some of which already have been adopted particularly relative to the first goal involving management of the work of the NRC board. The third and fourth goals, which are similar in scope and approach, are maintained as separate goals because one focuses on collaboration with the DPW relative to maintenance of NRC property and the other focuses on collaboration with the DPW and other agencies relative to special projects, which may involve project-specific guidelines. The second goal, which relates to education and advocacy resources “*to achieve and amplify the board's efforts to ensure adherence to its mission and policies*” is perceived to have the greatest significance and is likely to be greatly enhanced by the addition of an educational coordinator to the NRC staff.

IV. Conclusion

ESC is pleased to be a partner with the NRC in its strategic planning and appreciates the cooperation afforded to us by the NRC board and staff and most especially the members

of the steering committee. Moreover, we look forward to following the NRC as it moves forward in its mission to provide the Town of Wellesley with the highest quality of environmental leadership, planning and management, establishes sound environmental policy, and protects and improves the Town's natural and outdoor recreational resources.

Respectfully submitted,

John V. Woodard

Sheila Ardery

ESC Consultants

May 2015

Appendices

Appendix A. ESC Interim Report

Appendix B. Retreat Agenda

Appendix C. Retreat PowerPoint Presentation



Appendix A

Interim Report of ESC Consultants to Wellesley Natural Resources Commission (NRC)

Introduction

ESC has been engaged since May 2013 in a project for the Town of Wellesley Natural Resources Commission (NRC) in developing a strategic plan that would be a resource for the NRC members and staff in order to effectively fulfill their statutory and other responsibilities.

ESC recommended a two-phase project. The first phase involved assembly and review of background information on the NRC and interviews with Wellesley officials and members of other Town boards, commissions and committees in preparation for a four-hour evening retreat of the NRC members and staff that was held on June 18, 2013. The intended purpose and outcome of the retreat was development of broad strategic goals and delineation of NRC members and staff responsibilities to accomplish the goals. The intention is that the goals developed at the retreat will serve as the basis for development of a tactical implementation plan in the next phase, which will conclude with a second retreat of NRC members and staff in the fall of 2013.

Discussion

1. Preparation for Retreat

A project steering committee was formed, which included Ursula King, NRC Chair, Heidi Gross, NRC Vice-Chair, Janet Hartke Bowser, NRC Executive Director, and ESC Consultants John Woodard and Sheila Ardery. Preparation for the retreat involved the assembly and review of background information about the NRC, including its history its statutory authority, regulatory authority, role and responsibilities, its mission statement, the NRC's organizational structure encompassing the board, sub-committees and staff, its representation on other Town boards or communication with such organizations and liaisons with other Town conservation-related groups, the NRC's operations and capital budgets and range of activities.



In addition the ESC Consultants interviewed a number of individuals suggested by the NRC steering committee members. These included some officials and members of other Town boards, commissions and committees with which the NRC board and staff interact.

The background information, which was summarized in a PowerPoint presentation, coupled with the information developed in the interviews served to shape the agenda for the retreat.

2. Summary of June 18, 2013 Retreat

At the retreat, initially the NRC members and the Executive Director shared what they believed was the unique perspective each offered to the work of the NRC. This followed with a PowerPoint overview of the NRC's authority, organization, operation and activities, which led to discussion that focused on the NRC's challenges in 2013, its responsibilities, activities, capacity, resources and relationships. In two small groups there was discussion of how to meet these challenges that followed with discussion and formulation of goals elaboration of which will be the focus in the next phase.

❖ NRC Board and Staff Perspectives

The discussion showed the NRC board members and Executive Director's deep commitment individually and collectively to the mission of the NRC as well as the unique perspective each offered. The NRC board members and Executive Director are encouraged to share this personal information on the NRC's web site that likely will interest fellow residents and Town officials as well as lend "authority" when acting and speaking in their NRC role.

❖ NRC Challenges

While the NRC has broad authority and responsibilities for the stewardship of land and water resources under its jurisdiction (namely the use, preservation and protection of these resources), the major challenge for the NRC is addressing these responsibilities with its limited capacity: a five-member board, and full-time staff consisting of the Director, Assistant Director and Secretary, and part-time Environmental Education Coordinator (10 hours), who also supports the Morses Pond Management Program with an additional nine hours.

The NRC's operating budget (\$363,860) covers its personnel (\$163,870) and office expenses (\$18,575). However, the balance of its operations budget (\$160,415) funds the



annual costs of the Morses Pond Comprehensive Management Program, one of two major projects managed collaboratively with other Town boards through the Morses Pond Management Committee (MPAHC). It is anticipated that the NRC's future operations budget will include the annual maintenance costs of the Fuller Brook Park Preservation Project, the other major project similarly managed collaboratively with other agencies through the Fuller Brook Park Coordinating Committee (FBPCC).

Its capital budget (\$205,000) supports specific projects approved by the Town Meeting for which the NRC is responsible. While it is expected that the work in most cases will be performed by the Department of Public Works (DPW) and in a few situations by outside contractors, the NRC staff are responsible for overseeing these projects along with the maintenance work carried out by the DPW on other natural resources (1000 acres of land and 11 water bodies) under the NRC's jurisdiction.

Other responsibilities of the NRC include proposing for acquisition privately held natural resources that would add to the natural resources under its jurisdiction and studying and making recommendations for the stewardship of natural resources under the jurisdiction of other Town boards.

The NRC also serves as an information resource and performs a number of related responsibilities. These include research into environmental and land management issues and responding to requests for information from residents, homebuyers and sellers, realtors, mortgage companies, contractors, students and governmental agencies. In some weeks the staff may respond to as many as 120 citizen and other inquiries.

In addition to these responsibilities, the NRC holds public hearings, issues permits and undertakes enforcement responsibilities and establishes policies and regulations, which include general policies to be implemented by the DPW and others relating to the maintenance, tasks, and work affecting natural resources.

The NRC appoints and oversees five sub-committees; the Wetlands Protection Committee, the Trails Committee, the Public Shade Tree Committee, the Pesticide Awareness Committee and Encroachments. In addition to attendance at monthly NRC board meetings, board members and staff attend meetings of other Town boards or committees and citizen groups as NRC representatives or liaisons.



❖ How NRC Can Meet Challenges

The overarching challenge for the NRC is to fulfill its charge as steward of the Town of Wellesley natural resources, which encompasses multiple responsibilities and numerous activities, but constrained by the limited capacity of its personnel and other resources under its direct control.

Establishing Priorities

Given this challenge imposed on the NRC board and staff what emerged in the discussion is the consensus is that the NRC must establish priorities in its work load that more properly align with its capacity.

Comments by Participants:

- ✓ 65% of what we do is [mandated]; 35% is discretionary.
- ✓ Prioritization is the important thing, but from the 30K level, maybe we come up with categories such as crisis, Morses Pond, etc. Maybe the starting point is [to] prioritize the major categories and if work comes in and doesn't fit the categories we say "no." With that, we can look at a situation and see how it fits in. We need a list of questions to make sure that the project fits into our priorities. We could have a citizen survey to find out what priorities they have.
- ✓ One of the ways to meet the challenges is to think about how we prioritize communication and outreach. In Fuller Brook Park and the encroachment the collaborative effort brought understanding of the NRCs concerns.
- ✓ Need to begin to recognize that to try for perfect we'll never succeed, but to get something that's good and doable and frees you up for the next thing. Not to get bogged down in stylistic issues.
- ✓ You have to be realistic about how much time things take and you have to have a robust enough process to truly work.
- ✓ If you prioritize your outreach and education to the community you benefit because you get "buy in." This is with boards, town meeting, etc.
- ✓ We do ourselves a disservice by not being more public.



Education and Advocacy

It is recognized that the NRC can broaden its influence and to some degree its capacity, through education and advocacy. This will serve to create a culture within the Town that encourages residents' stewardship of their natural resources and help achieve what otherwise consumes a lot of the board's time and efforts to ensure compliance with applicable laws and its policies.

Comments by Participants:

- ✓ One objective is to lessen the workload. In the long run, education will make the NRC work easier. Education can grow capacity among citizens.
- ✓ We do ourselves a disservice by not being more public. Education and advocacy will benefit us by town support.
- ✓ We want to have an education plan written to give us more visibility. Consensus on challenges...not enough resources. Use of volunteers also needs resources.
- ✓ Education is a tool to meet our stewardship goals.
- ✓ You need to educate to change the culture for stewardship.
- ✓ Our core mission is preservation of the town's natural resources and regulations come after that. Where you can't enforce, you need education.
- ✓ If we educate on the policies we set forth, it becomes easier to regulate.
- ✓ Education of the Town is a long-range goal.
- ✓ Education permeates everything you do.
- ✓ Its advocacy and public relations as well.
- ✓ So many phases of education . . . people have different priorities and you have to target a system of messages.
- ✓ It's [about the NRC's] regulatory [and] stewardship responsibilities and that's the fundamental [thing]. Education and advocacy makes it easier to do.



Establishing Relationships with Other Town Agencies

The NRC also can expand its capacity through collaboration with other Town agencies with which it has working relationships and use of volunteers to accomplish its mission.

Comments by Participants:

- ✓ [NRC's] major relationship is with DPW, The fact is for both sides the relationship could be much better to benefit all. We act through them. Both have the same issues of insufficient resources. It is difficult to act on a board/board level. But taking the experience of the Fuller Brook Park Management Plan, it has the potential to address the limitations that currently exists. It becomes a plan of what could be done and what resources are available to achieve common goals.
- ✓ There is a need for improved communications with DPW. Fuller Brook Park and Morses Pond could be seen as a collaborative model.
- ✓ Fuller Brook Park has a potential of being a template or model.
- ✓ Have a communication pattern that lends itself to not having people feel threatened when you suggest meeting.

Managing the Work of the NRC Board

In addition to setting priorities, it was concluded that the board can manage its work more effectively through clarity about board expectations and responsibilities.

Comments by Participants:

- ✓ Need more definition of the Board as a working board. How many hours are expected? What are the responsibilities of members? This year we put in writing a policy of what responsibilities we have and now need to define expectations of members.
- ✓ One, build a model on the specific skills of each person. Another is to have staff that is to support the activities of the committees.
- ✓ We don't compromise [because] we have standards.
- ✓ We don't get the same level of political "operativeness" as other boards.



- ✓ Need to be more clear about what roles the board and staff have on education. My experience is that the staff does mission-critical work and board takes on pet projects.
- ✓ Board would plan what education would be so that the staff could implement it. The Board gets to set priorities and you have to be realistic of staff ability to execute.
- ✓ Board and staff resources should be realistically aligned to priorities.

Summary

1. Goals

Overall the retreat resulted in an energetic and productive discussion that led to the consensus that to more effectively fulfill its responsibilities the NRC's goals should be:

- Manage the work of the board by establishing priorities and clarity about board and staff expectations, responsibilities and capacity.
- Through education and advocacy create a culture within the Town that will encourage good stewardship of the Town's natural resources to achieve what otherwise consumes a lot of the board's time and efforts to ensure adherence to its policies.
- Expand the NRC's capacity to meet its stewardship responsibilities through collaboration (e.g., Fuller Brook Park and Morses Pond projects).
- Utilize the collaborative management of the Fuller Brook Park and Morses Pond projects as a model in managing other projects, including work with DPW.



2. Objectives of Phase II and Next Steps

The objective in the next phase is to develop a tactical implementation plan for achieving these goals, including action items, tasks, resource allocation analysis and timelines, which will be the focus for discussion and action by the NRC members and staff at a second half-day retreat to be scheduled in the fall of 2013.

John Woodard
Sheila Ardery
ESC Consultants

July 2013

Appendix B

Town of Wellesley Natural Resources Commission Strategic Planning Retreat

Saturday, March 28, 2015

9:00 am – 1:00 pm

Location: Wellesley Free Library - Arnold Room

Participants

NRC Representatives: Heidi Gross, Chair; Stephen Murphy, Vice Chair; Joan Gaughan, Lise Olney, Raina McManus, Members; Brandon Schmitt, Director

Facilitators: ESC Consultants John Woodard and Sheila Ardery

Agenda

9:00 - 9:15 Arrival - Light refreshments

9:15 -9:30 Introductions - All participants

9:30 - 9:45 Review ground rules and retreat objectives - ESC Consultants

9:45 - 10:15 Summary of NRC June 18, 2013 Retreat

- Review Overview of NRC - Brandon Schmitt
- Highlights of ESC Interim Report - ESC Consultants
- Review of Strategic Goals - ESC Consultants

10:15 -10:45 Review outline of strategic goals, objectives and action steps - ESC Consultants

10:45 - 11:00 Break

11:00 - 12:30 Group discussion – Development of action steps - All participants

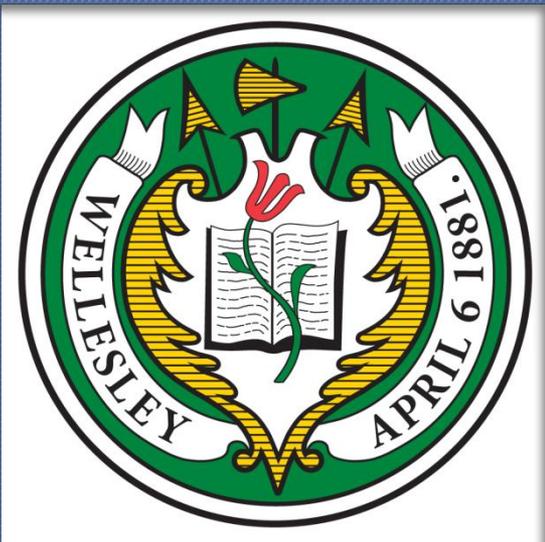
- Goal 1: *Management of work of the board by establishing priorities and clarity about board and staff expectations, responsibilities and capacity.*
- Goal 2: *Through education and advocacy create a culture within the Town that will encourage good stewardship of the natural resources to achieve what otherwise consumes a lot of the board's time and efforts to ensure adherence to its mission and policies.*

- Goal 3: *Expand the NRC's capacity to meet its stewardship responsibilities through collaboration (e.g., Fuller Brook Park and Morses Pond projects).*
- Goal 4: *Utilize the collaborative management of the Fuller Brook Park and Morses Pond projects as a model in managing other projects, including work with DPW.*

12:30 – 1:00 Wrap-up of group discussion and next steps - All participants

1:00 Adjournment

NRC Strategic Planning Retreat: 3/28/2015



Wellesley Natural
Resources Commission

Introductions



Ground Rules



Overview of the NRC

● MISSION

Provide stewardship, education and advocacy of the town of Wellesley's park, conservation, outdoor recreation and open space resources so that the full value of the Town's natural assets can be passed on to future generations.

NRC's Unique History

- **1975; 3 year Open Space Committee findings:**
 1. Land management problems
 2. Ineffective Conservation Commission
 3. Conflicting goals and accountability under BPW
- **The NRC was created in 1978 by special legislation**
- **The NRC is one of only 2 organizations like it in MA.**

NRC Regulatory Authority

- The NRC is charged under MGL Chapters 40, 45, 87, 131 and 32 with the statutory responsibilities of:
 - Park Commissions
 - Conservation Commission
 - Tree Wardens, Shade Tree and Pest Control Officers
 - Town Forest Committee



NRC'S Function

- Land/Water Resource Mgt.
- Policy Development
- Acquisition
- Research and Information

NRC Organization

- NRC Board
- NRC Sub-committees
- NRC Inter-board Representation
- NRC Liaison Relationships
- NRC Staff

NRC Operations

- FY16 Operations budget
- FY16 Capital budget
- NRC regulatory/policy-making responsibilities
- NRC activities

NRC FY16 Operations Budget

TOTAL BUDGET	\$370,642
Personnel Services	\$197,848
Expenses	\$23,400
Morses Pond	\$149,394



NRC FY16 Capital Budget

TOTAL CAPITAL BUDGET	\$320,076
Capital Projects	
Public Tree Replacement	\$40,000
Porous Pavement	\$5,500
Trail System Improvements	\$5,000
Lighting Abatement	\$5,000
Carry-Over	
Morses Pond "LID"	\$84,000
IPM	\$18,600
Encroachment	\$5,000
Park Path Repair	\$36,976
CPC Funding	
Comprehensive Pond Mgt. Plan	\$100,000
Morses Pond Erosion Study	\$20,000

NRC Activities

- ◉ Open space and natural resources protection
- ◉ Climate protection actions and legislative efforts
- ◉ Recreational land use planning/management
- ◉
- ◉ Land and water resources protection
- ◉ Educational efforts
- ◉ NRC's Wetland Protection and Trails Committees

Strategic Planning Efforts



Strategic Planning Interim Report

⦿ NRC Challenges

- Broad Responsibilities with limited resources
- Efficiency Issues

⦿ Meeting those Challenges

- Managing the work of the Board/Staff
- Setting Priorities
- Education and Advocacy
- Establishing Inter-departmental/board relationships

Strategic Goals

- ① Goal 1: *Management of work of the board by establishing priorities and clarity about board and staff expectations, responsibilities and capacity.*
- ② Goal 2: *Through education and advocacy create a culture within the Town that will encourage good stewardship of the natural resources to achieve and amplify the board's efforts to ensure adherence to its mission and policies.*

Strategic Goals

- Goal 3: *Expand the NRC's capacity to meet its stewardship responsibilities through collaboration (e.g., Fuller Brook Park and Moses Pond projects).*
- Goal 4: *Utilize the collaborative management of the Fuller Brook Park and Moses Pond projects as a model in managing other projects, including work with DPW.*

Group Discussion

- Establishment of Objectives and Actions



Goal 1: Management of work of the board by establishing priorities and clarity about board and staff expectations, responsibilities and capacity.

Objective 1: Increase knowledge and effectiveness of board and staff in meeting multiple statutory and administrative obligations and responsibilities.

Objective 2: Improve efficiency of board meetings.

Objective 3: Review management of special projects, including staff and board responsibilities/oversight/expectations.

Goal 1, Objective 1: Increase knowledge and effectiveness of board and staff in meeting multiple statutory and administrative obligations and responsibilities.

Actions Taken:

- Establish annual calendar of regular NRC board meetings and regular NRC subcommittee meetings, key town-wide dates (e.g., town elections, budget hearings, town meeting, etc.) and regular statutory obligations (e.g., election of officers, budget preparation, etc.)

Potential Actions:

- Develop core guiding principles.
- Create Measurable Goals
- Develop/review role descriptions for board members, chair, vice chair, secretary
- Review/revise existing staff structure, including position descriptions
- Provide orientation for new board members, including review of relevant laws, policies and regulations, Open Meeting Law, overview of other town agencies and introduction to key town elected and appointed officials, tour of NRC-owned natural resources (land and water bodies) and update on major projects
- Develop communication plan for pending Town projects. Distribute agendas to board
- Annual (as needed) review of relevant laws, policies and regulations
- Annual (as needed) review of inter board representation/communication and assignment/renewal of NRC representatives or contacts
- Annual (as needed) review of strategic plan
- Annual (as needed) project update (Fuller Brook, e.g.)
- Hold annual “retreat” of NRC board and subcommittees

Goal 1, Objective 2: Improve efficiency of board meetings.

Actions Taken:

- Provide written agenda and all meeting materials in advance (days?) of meetings, including where possible written staff reports and inter-board representative reports
- Bi-weekly meeting schedule

Potential Action Steps:

- Confirmation of attendance by board and staff members
- Establish guidelines for adhering to agenda timelines
- Set regular agenda deadlines and process for establishing agenda.
- Revise board meeting thematic structure
- Supply draft motions in advance

Goal 1, Objective 3: Review management of special projects, including staff and board responsibilities/oversight/expectations.

Potential Action Steps:

- Assignment of staff and board
- Development of deadlines
- Outline opportunities for administrative approval, including budgeting
- Develop process for approval of auxiliary (Town) projects by board (co-sponsorship)

Goal 2: Through Education and advocacy create a culture within the Town that will encourage good stewardship of the natural resources to achieve what otherwise consumes a lot of the board's time and efforts to ensure adherence to its mission and policies.

Objective 1. Raise level of awareness of Town residents, visitors and other town departments in NRC mission, policies and procedures to promote interest and support for acquisition/expansion/maintenance of natural resources to improve overall quality of quality of life.

Objective 2. Leverage Town residents and visitors' interest and knowledge of good stewardship to support maintenance and management of Town natural resources through voluntarism.

Objective 3. Promote NRC as model town agency for stewardship, education and advocacy for preservation of open spaces resources to inspire similar agencies and statewide/national interest in NRC as leader in stewardship of local natural resources.

Goal 2, Objective 1: Raise level of awareness of Town residents, visitors, other town departments and other stakeholders in NRC mission, policies and procedures to promote interest and support for acquisition/expansion/maintenance of natural resources to improve overall quality of quality of life.

Actions Taken:

- Expand use of social media

Potential Action Steps:

- Establish NRC as primary source for information about natural resources directly and through outreach.
- Develop visual identity/symbol
- Develop common definitions and language consistent with NRC mission
- Under media, create consistent message
- Hold forums and conferences
- Create relationships with schools, senior center, etc. (Wellesley Green Schools)
- Establish relationship with College communities.

Goal 2, Objective 2: Leverage Town residents and visitors' interest and knowledge of good stewardship to support maintenance and management of Town natural resources through voluntarism.

Potential Action Steps:

- Develop guidelines for volunteer projects
- Encourage volunteer groups (E.g., Trails Committee, Wetlands)
- Recognize examples of good stewardship
- Establish high school senior project opportunities, either in Town or through other organizations
- Strengthen ties to grassroots groups such as Sustainable Wellesley, Friends of Moses Pond, and other member organizations in the Green Collaborative, possibly through development of joint initiatives and events.
- Utilize Wellesley Media resources

Goal 2, Objective 3: Promote NRC as model town agency for stewardship, education and advocacy for preservation of open spaces resources to inspire similar agencies and statewide/national interest in NRC as leader in stewardship of local natural resources.

Potential Action Steps:

- ⦿ Raise stature through networking
- ⦿ Connect with state and national organizations with similar goals
- ⦿ Host and present at leadership events, presentations
- ⦿ Increased publication (newsletters, letters to editor, etc.)
- ⦿ Enhanced NRC branding and publicity

Goal 3: Expand the NRC's capacity to meet its stewardship responsibilities through collaboration (e.g., Fuller Brook Park and Moses Pond).

- Objective 1. Leverage material, personnel resources and expertise of other Town departments to support responsibility for initiating, planning, design and oversight of special preservation/construction projects.

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Potential Action Steps:

- ⦿ Identify stakeholders and contacts for potential future projects
- ⦿ Schedule “Friends Group Forum”

Goal 4: Utilize the Collaborative management of the Fuller Brook Park and Moses Pond projects as a model in managing other projects, including work with the DPW.

- Objective 1. Leverage partnership with the Department of Works, including its material, personnel resources and expertise relative to the regular maintenance of NRC-owned natural resources.

Objective 1: Leverage partnership with the Department of Works, including its material, personnel resources and expertise relative to the regular maintenance of NRC-owned natural resources.

Potential Action Steps:

- ⦿ Schedule routine meetings with DPW to discuss NRC/DPW projects.
- ⦿ Review/establish guidelines for standards of use , development and maintenance of NRC –owned natural resources
- ⦿ Organize NRC/DPW joint planning committee and delineate roles and responsibilities
- ⦿ Develop tactical implementation plan, including identification of tasks, resource allocation analysis and timelines

NEXT STEPS?

