

**City of Framingham
Transition Team Report
Prepared for
Mayor Charles Sisitsky
January 2022**

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Executive Summary of the Chair

In late November of 2021, Mayor-elect Charlie Sisitsky announced the formation of a transition team consisting of nine subcommittees and incorporating almost 60 Framingham residents and stakeholders. The composition of the subcommittees as well as the process provided a rich mix of ideas, thoughts, and experiences. The resulting Transition Report suggests areas of focus for the Mayor and provides recommendations and suggestions on wide-ranging topics

Subcommittee co-chairs were given some guidance but were given flexibility and freedom as to how to conduct their meetings, gather and coalesce ideas and information, and present their findings, based on a consensus of their subcommittee members. Many subcommittees reached out to additional residents if they felt the need for a broader perspective, however, the method and amount of feedback was limited by the capacity of the subcommittee members. Also, because the previous administration was preparing their own transition report, sub-committees were asked not to reach out to current city employees.

We encouraged the committees to present aspirational and creative suggestions and solutions – to think and dream big without capacity limits – though we emphasized that the administration would have capacity limits such as money, time, and human resources. These and other obstacles would limit what could be accomplished. The report is guided more by brainstorming ideas than by instructions or demands for implementation by the Mayor.

Co-chairs and subcommittee members worked for over two months and the completed report reflects their passions, expertise, experiences, and talents. Included are diverse voices from both inside and outside of the subcommittees, and a rich assortment of recommendations and ideas for the improvement and future success of Framingham. These efforts are emblematic of Framingham's true treasure, the varied and valuable resources of its residents.

Framingham's transition from town to city occurred over four years ago, and as Mayor Sisitsky has said, "It's time to get to work, together." We need to work collaboratively to effectively address the nine areas focused on by the subcommittees: diversity, equity and inclusion; economic development; education; environment; health; intergovernmental affairs; operations and personnel; recreation and cultural affairs; and senior affairs.

Within the nine sub-committee reports, many common themes emerged. Some of these are highlighted below:

- The city needs to be more welcoming and accessible. From making Framingham truly business-friendly through simplification of regulations and processes, to focusing on city wide customer service for residents and organizations.
- The city should increase diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. Whether it be diversity in hiring or thought, sensitivity training, or adding multiple language signage, we need to include often overlooked segments of our population.
- The city needs to take more action to improve the safety and ease of mobility of traffic in Framingham. Traffic affects everything from quality of life of residents, to business development, to environmental issues and more.
- The city needs to improve communication to residents. We need to make information easily accessible to all residents and utilize methods best targeted for seniors, new residents, non-English speakers, and others.
- The city needs to establish, strengthen, and improve connections and partnerships with business, organizations, and community groups to improve economic development, education, and health, as well as other areas of concern.
- The city should focus on ADA compliance and accessibility of our open spaces and buildings to improve the quality of life and work for residents, tourists, and visitors.
- The city must continue to address the critical need of managing Covid, including mask, vaccine, and testing issues, as well as addressing other critical mental health issues such as substance use disorder and homelessness.

What follows are great ideas and suggestions for consideration. It would be impossible to do it all in one day, year, or even one term. As John Lewis said:

"Ours is not the struggle of one day, one week, or one year. Ours is not the struggle of one judicial appointment or presidential term. Ours is the struggle of a lifetime, or maybe even many lifetimes, and each one of us in every generation must do our part."

Respectfully submitted,

Cathy Miles, Transition Committee Chair

Executive Summaries of the Subcommittees

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

We often hear that one of Framingham's advantages is its diversity; but how does the city better embrace, support and problem-solve with the wide-ranging groups in Framingham that are often marginalized or face inequality in access, treatment and representation?

As a small committee facing these massive issues, we brought our own experiences and knowledge to the table, then reached out to a number of external individuals and groups to incorporate other perspectives and voices. To honor these voices and not overlay our own prejudices or biases on their message, our report allows these voices to speak for themselves. We acknowledge that in our particular sub-committee, attempting consensus or synthesizing viewpoints would not serve well. We wanted to present the mayor with the unadulterated thoughts of our residents and stakeholders, and encourage him to actively and purposefully engage in continued deep conversations with our diverse residents.

Our committee focused on four groups for the report: Disability, BIPOC, LGBTQ and Immigrant. These by no means incorporate all of the groups in the city who need to be better supported and represented, but we necessarily had to make choices given our limited time and resources. Our committee members and external responders have provided an abundance of insight and ideas for the mayor to review and consider.

Several concepts had commonality across many of these groups. One was that our government must be more visible, accessible and welcoming to all groups that struggle to have a voice or are inhibited by uncertainty or fear. Whether through being out in the community, more intuitive and user-friendly websites, or hosting open houses, the city must make the effort to provide a welcome and safe place for all.

The importance and advantages of filling the Citizen Participation and DEI officer roles were also noted across groups and we encourage the new administration to move forward with filling and defining these positions.

We were deeply honored to have served on this committee and wish the new administration great success.

Economic Development

Framingham is an untapped powerhouse that is ripe to become the engine of sustainable economic growth in the Metrowest and the entire Boston metropolitan region. A multi-pronged economic development strategy can position Framingham as both an incubator for immigrant owned businesses and small startups, center of research and development in life sciences and engineering, and as the ideal location for national and international corporate headquarters. With an asset-based approach to

economic development, the City can enhance its economic competitiveness in the region. A razor-sharp focus on Framingham's socio-cultural, educational, and geographical assets, and the most important asset of all, its people. should be the underpinning of the City's economic development strategy and business recruitment and retention efforts.

Four pillars guided the Economic Development Subcommittee in its internal discussions, stakeholder outreach, and recommendations: ***Revamping the Regulatory Environment; Inclusive and Equitable COVID Emergence; Building Successful Institutional, Cultural, and Business Partnerships; and Short and Long-Range Economic Development Strategies.*** Under each pillar, action-oriented recommendations were formulated to support the mayor in his vision for sustainable economic development for Framingham. Four recommendations were highlighted by the Subcommittee members as being the utmost priorities: ***creating a more streamlined, intuitive permitting and regulatory landscape; parity in the tax structure for commercial and industrial properties; development fruitful partnerships with local institutions, small businesses, and the large corporate entities; using quality data analytics to understand future market forces and real estate trends.***

Education

Based on the initial years as a city, public feedback and various sources of data, we identified six areas of focus, for how the Mayor, in his role, can improve education in Framingham: COVID-19 Pandemic Management, Equity in Education, Operating Budget, Capital Infrastructure, Climate Change, Environment and Sustainability, and Government Process Improvements. Each area has a narrative and a number of recommendations. Some are short-term, while others will take longer to implement. Some are procedural, while others represent an examination of values and a shift in priorities.

Top Near Term Recommendations:

- Launch a youth-based COVID-19 vaccine education awareness and clinic initiative
- COVID-19 testing expansion and coordination adjustments
- Equitable access to healthcare, food security and broadband internet access
- In FY23, repair the \$4.4 million recurring structural deficit to the FPS operating budget
- Begin a multi-year plan to repair chronic infrastructure underfunding in the FPS capital budget
- Convene stakeholders, use public meetings strategically, and formalize written structures for interdepartmental coordination

Top Long Term Recommendations:

- Build a new PreK-5 Early Childhood Center south of Route 9
- Expand Adult ESL+, out of school time programs, and cross-sector collaborations with Pre-K-higher education
- Recruitment and retention of BIPOC Staff
- Ensure access for all language needs
- Expand student engagement on the environment

We wrote our report with Framingham’s proud legacy of diversity and pursuit of equity in mind. Education is a strength in the City of Framingham and must continuously improve. All stakeholders must continue to work together to evaluate what is and is not working in education in Framingham, and collaborate to improve it. Now, by working to enact our recommendations, we feel that the Mayor, on behalf of our city, has the best chance to make multiple tangible education-based improvements to help our residents and students thrive.

Environmental

Committee Co-Chairs: Aimee Powelka & Ron Chick

Committee Members: Judith Grove, Claudia Ruiz-Gustafson, Isabella Petroni, Luciana Soares, Ken Weiss

The Environmental Transition Committee recommends the following on issues of Climate Change, Environmental Justice, Open Space and Waste Reduction:

- 1) Expand communication, education and outreach;
- 2) Engage with our diverse communities to promote access to our natural resources and learn their environmental priorities;
- 3) Support creation of a climate action plan and demonstrate commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions through community choice aggregation, municipal electric vehicles and solar;
- 4) Create a vision for Framingham as a regional “Trail Hub”, including the Bruce Freeman Rail, Upper Charles and Chris Walsh Memorial Aqueduct trails and connecting Farm Pond to downtown;
- 5) Prioritize neighborhood input to remediate Cedar Swamp;
- 6) Remediate toxic waste sites including Mary Dennison Park;
- 7) Make Lake Waushakum accessible year round.
- 8) Present easily accessible, comprehensive water quality testing data to the public;
- 9) Identify and prevent further PFAS and PFOA contamination from artificial turf and elsewhere;

- 10) Implement incentives, such as more rapid reviews, for developers using net zero building codes;
- 11) Allow accessory dwelling units to be “built by right” to preserve open space and increase affordable housing;
- 12) Support energy efficiency to lower energy costs for our residents;
- 13) Provide education and enforcement resources around single-use plastics reduction for local businesses; 14) Improve recycling through multilingual and visual charts on residential recycling bins;
- 15) Identify and protect Harmony Grove as an important community landmark;
- 16) Issue a Framingham Meatless Monday proclamation;
- 17) Establish a curbside food scrap collection;
- 18) Create a residents swap shop; and,
- 19) Expand community gardening and designate a City contact.

Health

Providing all residents with the resources needed to be well in mind, body, and spirit is a fundamental role for municipalities in Massachusetts. Although Framingham is rich in health care and social services, not all residents have easy access to these services. New, collaborative and coordinated strategies towards building upon, enhancing, and enriching existing structures are needed to eliminate barriers so that health care and services are equitable, inclusive, and proactively addresses the needs of all Framingham’s residents.

To this end, the Health Transition Committee has identified four key objectives for the administration of Mayor Charlie Sisitsky to consider as he formulates plans for the city. They are:

1. Strengthen Public Health Services Available to Framingham Residents
2. Strengthen Access to Behavioral Health Services for all Framingham Residents
3. Strengthen Basic Services and Supports for Framingham’s Most Vulnerable Populations
4. Strengthen COVID-19 Response

Intergovernmental Affairs

The Intergovernmental Affairs Transition Team discussed and made recommendations on how the Sisitsky Administration could further partner with our state and federal legislative delegation, city council, school committee, and community partners. Our intent was to develop processes and to set expectations for communication and collaboration between all parties. We anticipate that the Sisitsky Administration will regularly communicate with elected officials at all levels and is aware of unfinished business items and time-sensitive opportunities. As is outlined in our larger report, we recommend a clear chain of command and process between all electeds and their offices. We look forward to a productive and collaborative partnership.

Operations and Personnel

The Operations and Personnel Committee reviewed segments of our current government and policies, and suggested and/or supported organizational changes, efficiencies and synergies, as well as overall cultural enhancements. As we move forward as a city, responsive, transparent, inclusive and efficient leadership, along with a commitment to providing outstanding service to its residents, should be the critical goals that drive decisions and strategy.

Included in our report are suggestions for restructuring the mayor's office, including shifting reporting relationships, clarifying roles, and morphing positions into ones that make more sense for the city and are less cumbersome for the mayor and staff. We also highlighted the importance of improved customer service to our residents, and offered ideas such as a constituent services role in the mayor's office and an official and well-implemented customer service policy

The importance of better, creative outreach to our varied populations is also highlighted, along with the need to have more multi-lingual, public-facing staff. We also support and encourage the filling of the CPO and DEI positions.

A number of ideas to find efficiencies in government are offered or supported, including finalization of the restructuring of our critical Planning and Community Development department, developing an in-house legal team and coordinating with Framingham Public Schools on possible synergies with Facilities, Capital Projects, Sustainability and Buildings and Grounds.

More areas are touched upon in the full report, and we thank the mayor for the opportunity to provide these recommendations and suggestions.

Recreation and Cultural Affairs

The Recreation and Cultural Affairs Subcommittee met three times in December and early January.

Each member submitted responses to a request for feedback that addressed the following areas as requested by the mayor: identification of issues, opportunities, and ideas, recommendations to the mayor for 2022, recommendations to the mayor for 2023 and beyond and highlighting successful recreational and cultural programming.

Co-Chair Michael Bower assembled the valuable feedback from each committee member into this composite report.

The report contains a wish list of items which would enhance the already impressive array of recreational and cultural offerings in the City of Framingham.

The subcommittee recognizes that the city's capacity to fund the various items which have been identified is limited and that these recreational and cultural items will need to be prioritized along with all the other needs and wants outlined in the overall transition team report.

Our highest priority recommendation for the mayor's team is to conduct comprehensive surveys of community stakeholders and the citizenry at large to round out the wish list of items and establish a community-based prioritization of these items.

We respectfully submit our subcommittee report for the consideration of the mayor, his team, and the community at large.

Senior Affairs

Framingham is one of 200 Massachusetts communities designated as an Age and Dementia Friendly City. To live up to that commitment, we must work together to make our city better and more livable for people of all ages. Being an Age and Dementia Friendly community means ensuring seniors and their families access to key services, quality health care, affordable housing options, reliable transportation, and open spaces in which to gather. It also means helping seniors to live as independently as possible, with opportunities to work and volunteer within the community.

The Seniors Subcommittee submits the following suggestions in five top areas of need:

COVID

- Maintain mask mandate for all public spaces

- Provide easier access to rapid tests

COMMUNICATIONS

- Create a city website destination portal, with an accompanying information phone line, geared toward older adults
- Structure protocols to enable the Director of Elder Affairs to increase oversight into programs and services for seniors
- Better utilize city public access television to communicate with seniors

SERVICES

- Work with Age Well Framingham, municipal and community partners to conduct a detailed needs assessment on (but not limited to) transportation, health and wellness, housing, and food insecurity

TAX RELIEF AND RELATED JOB OPPORTUNITIES

- Use the tax bill to communicate information
- Creatively reinvigorate tax-work off program

HOUSING

- Create a project to identify, analyze and increase availability of reasonably priced housing for middle-class seniors
- Collaborate with local housing organizations to identify a broader range of housing options, allowing residents to age either in place or within the community

Mayor Sisitsky and the city is deeply grateful to all of the people who dedicated their time, energy, and expertise by sharing their opinion, responding to questions or filling out surveys. We are especially thankful for all the committee members who spent countless hours during the holiday season in order to produce this valuable report. We have heard from so many voices and are once again reminded of the rich diversity of Framingham and all that live, work, or play here. Our city is richer because of you.

Dr. Milagros Abreu
 Andrea Dunne Adrian
 Noval Alexander
 Rick Anketell Co-chair
 Rabbi Sam Blumberg
 Mike Bower Co-chair
 Dennis Cardiff
 Ron Chick Co-Chair
 Marty Cohen

Robert Cohen
 Anna Cross
 Nicole Doak Co-chair
 Clyde Dottin Co-chair
 Maureen Dunne
 Pat Dunne
 Geoffrey Epstein
 Richard A. Finlay Co-chair
 Adam Freudberg Co-chair

Liz Garrigan-Byerly
Dennis Giombetti
Sheryl L. Goldstein Co-chair
Judith Grove
Sarah Guernsey Co-chair
David Hornfischer
Kristina Johnson Co-chair
Donna Kilcoyne Orthoefer
George P. King Co-chair
Janet Leombruno
Jack Patrick Lewis Co-chair
Brian Li
Rick MacPherson
Rick McKenna
Dave Miles
Cathy Miles
Susan Nichol
Nancy Novo O'Connor Co-chair
Philip Ottaviani
Shivang Patel Co-chair

Mauricio Perea
Isabella Petroni
Evelyne Philita
Aimee Powelka Co-Chair
Angela Randolph
Brandale Randolph
Whitney Retallic
Jen Rich, Co-chair
Maria Duaine Robinson Co-chair
Claudia Ruiz-Gustafson
Abrielle Salloway
Adam Sisitsky
Luciana Soares
Priscila Sousa
Mike Spring
Doug Stephan
Cheryl Tully Stoll
Ken Weiss
Donna Wresinski, Co-Chair
Mary Wu McGuire

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Subcommittee
Mayor Sisitsky Transition Team

Co-chairs: Sheryl L. Goldstein and Richard A. Finlay

Noval Alexander
Liz Garrigan Byerly
Whitney Retallic
Priscila Sousa

On behalf of the Diversity Equity and Inclusion subcommittee, we appreciate the opportunity to be part of this important work for the City of Framingham. This report was compiled by members of the community that have experiences working or living with diverse identities and backgrounds. It is fair to say that not all identities in Framingham have been reported by this committee. We feel that it is prudent for Mayor Sisitsky to continue to solicit information as it relates to inclusivity for diverse community members.

Our report contains the following information:

Disability
BIPOC
LBGTQ
Immigrant

Again, thank you for the opportunity to participate in this important work for the City of Framingham. Should you have any questions please feel free to reach out to us.

Respectfully,

Sheryl L. Goldstein
Richard A. Finlay
Co-Chairs, Diversity Equity and Inclusion Subcommittee
Mayor Charlie Sisitsky Transition Team

Disability

Suggestions - Disability Community

1. We recommend that you follow the Charter Commissions recommendation to have a full time ADA Coordinator that reports solely to the mayor. In this recommendation we strongly feel that the ADA coordinator should be involved in any citywide projects from the start to finish, and be involved with the sign off of any city projects from each department. This includes any licensing permitted through the city to make accessibility a priority (which will avoid any potential grievances and lawsuits). The ADA coordinator will work with all the city departments to provide sensitivity training, communication training, access awareness and education. The ADA Coordinator will also provide updates to each department employees regarding applicable federal and state rules and regulations which must be followed. The ADA coordinator should also be responsible for annually updating the self-evaluation and transition plan. ** Please see ADA Coordinators Role provided by the federal government - Title II** Furthermore, *we also recommend the access compliance inspector remain in the Building Department.*

For reference, the ADA Coordinator role is defined as follows:

Title II of the ADA requires all state or local government entities with 50 or more employees to appoint a responsible person to coordinate the administrative requirements of ADA compliance and to respond to complaints filed by the public. The name and contact information for the responsible person is required to be publicly advertised.

Title II of the ADA stipulates five major administrative duties:

- Publicize the name and contact information of the designated ADA Coordinator responsible to oversee compliance.
- Administer and write self-evaluation of the programmatic barriers in services offered by the local government.
- Establish a complaint/grievance procedure to respond to complaints of noncompliance from the public.
- Develop a transition plan if structural changes are necessary for achieving program accessibility.
Retain the self-evaluation for three years.

2. Expand the disability commission budget to open up training to different department budgets. Furthermore, recommend to continue to fund and support Blue Dag ADA evaluation and compliance initiative software <https://www.bluedag.com/>, as well as training for the ADA Coordinator and ADA Access Compliance Inspector. Build a city wide capital budget for every

department per the ADA transition plan, which includes side walk repair and access for public city parks and buildings.

3. Prioritize capital plans in each department in order to fulfil the requirements of the ADA transition plan. We would like to see each year, each department do something for the ADA transition plan.
4. ADA Grievance form and Public Notice on the city website - on how to appropriately file a grievance (See, Click, Fix is not appropriate).
5. Captioning for government channel, city wide programming as well as online Zoom platforms.
 6. Foreign language interpreters and sign language interpreters should be present with the mayor or with at any city wide sponsored event in order to provide proper communication within our community.
 7. Allow the commission to operate a Facebook page to disseminate information.
 8. Give the city commissioners Framingham email addresses.
 9. ADA Anniversary (July) should be celebrated and recognized by the city and school community annually.

Look at the City of Worcester Department of Equity Inclusion and Accessibility as a model for the future of Framingham Accessibility and Equity issues

www.Worcesterma.gov/accessibility

Other cities and towns with accessibility pages that are done properly:

Trinidad Colorado <https://www.trinidad.co.gov/> link at the bottom of page goes to <https://www.trinidad.co.gov/ada>

Denver Colorado <https://www.denvergov.org/Home> link at bottom of page goes to <https://www.denvergov.org/Accessibility>

Newton Massachusetts <https://www.newtonma.gov/> link to the Disability Commission goes to <https://www.newtonma.gov/government/planning/boards-commissions/commission-on-disability>

Medford Massachusetts <https://www.medfordma.org/> link on bottom left of home page goes to change settings on webpage for various disabilities <http://www.medfordma.org/departments/disability/>

For your consideration, the following are suggestions and responses the committee collected through questionnaires and surveys:

- “Provide trainings and public service announcements (PSA’s) for educating the public on rules and regulations for persons with disabilities and preferred language (person first language), service animals (where they are and not allowed), and handicap parking procedures (obtaining a placard and parking lines).”
- “It would be great to see regular (annual) inclusive activities within the city that are catered to those that are cognitively and physically disabled (ie. Adaptive dance, adaptive skating, and swimming programs)”
- “Increase in braille and audio books in our libraries (and Book mobile)”
- “Although we have a busy website, there should be more information about services provided based on the need of residents (Financial, disability, housing, food insecurity).”
- “Repair of sidewalks and crosswalks that are out of compliance.”
- “I would like to see something innovative done in Framingham such as a mobile city hall on wheels. This would be an interesting concept to explore as it provides limited yet expanded access to city services (with a language interpreter) and less travel for residents to pay bills, get trash removal sticker, and register with the clerk (for voting, obtaining licensing).”
- “Having a more robust website fully assessable to all. When communication goes out have in multiple languages. When something is televised make sure we utilize the closed caption software that was purchased all the time for anything broadcast on the government channel. Have a language interpreter with you and a sign language person with you at all public gatherings or when speaking.”
- “Build a budget that supports the updating of the ADA every year. Have a fulltime ADA coordinator as the charter suggests.”
- “Public education about mental illness. (Same for poverty and the impacts on individuals)

- Encourage representation by people who have experienced mental illness in committees and in government. (Same for poor people.)
- Develop ways for people with conditions like major anxiety, personality and mood disorders, to communicate with their city's leaders and community. Perhaps engage people and organizations who work with these populations to help develop these strategies. (Same for poor people.)
- Enhance police/social worker partnership by adding follow-up protocols.”

Suggestions - BIPOC

Issues Raised

- Local government is "inaccessible"
- Lack of representation and cultural sensitivity
- Website is difficult to navigate – unless you're tech savvy, city services require a lengthy visit to city hall
- The mayor should spend as little time inside the Memorial Building as possible. The best way to engage with the population is, simply put, by going out and engaging with the population. Additionally, it is suggested that the mayor engage with voters via Facebook live regularly, with transmissions being translated simultaneously translated to Portuguese and Spanish. Mayor Sisitsky should also have a rotation of departments featured in these livestreams with frequently asked questions, in order to familiarize residents (especially those with inequitable access) with city departments.
- Constituent-facing services such as clerk's office, building department, assessors, etc. should do quarterly “office hours” outside of the memorial building where residents are encouraged to come with their questions and get general guidance on how to resolve their issues in the memorial building. Not only will this demystify the complex processes of the memorial building, but it also creates an opportunity for residents who speak different languages to establish relationships with their local government.
- Mayor Sisitsky should also utilize existing community connections by planning a series of visits to local churches, local radio stations, local nonprofits and community groups on a listening tour. The office of the mayor has been incredibly insulated over the past four years and the population, to a certain degree, needs to be re-educated on how to communicate with the executive branch of

the government. Mayor Sisitsky's calm and inviting demeanor will be excellent to advancing that goal - we just need to get him in front of people.

- The mayor's staff MUST have someone that speaks Portuguese and Spanish. The first step is to make government more accessible and one cannot do that if a majority of the taxpayers in Framingham cannot comfortably communicate with their local government.
- Signage in the buildings and outside the buildings can also be friendlier. Simple decisions like that can facilitate outreach for diverse populations and create a more welcoming environment to the local government.
- We would be surprised to learn how many issues to targeting diverse populations come down to just poor communication skills. The development of more thoughtful communication will help drive outreach solutions for diverse populations. All the outreach in the world won't help us if our customer service skills are lacking.
 - Suggestions revolve a restructuring of two roles in the community:
 - Citizen Participation Officer
A citizen participation officer should spend as much time as possible engaging the public. The idea that we've had a CPO work from home for a majority of her time over the past year when citizen participation was so pivotal during the pandemic is simply unconscionable. As we advertise and hire for this position, the applicants need to know that they will spend a majority of their time outside and engaging with various organizations, population sectors, etc. This position needs to know intricacies the population, nuances and be able to tell the mayor details about the diverse populations of the city. The CPO should essentially be the population expert the mayor needs in order to increase engagement across the board.
 - Chief Diversity Officer
Diversity is a major component of Framingham but often misunderstood. The job description of the CDO should include helping educate the public about diversity issues facing the city. Perhaps through occasional live-streams on social media or short views regularly released explaining things such as "BIPOC" as a term, etc.
 - Engaging populations should include outreach in houses of worships, restaurants, grocery stores, local radio, and government channel. All city communication should

be multilingual to include sign language on government channel and closed caption TV.

- Go recruit city ambassadors, through the CPO, to do outreach compensated with gift cards to local restaurants.

For your consideration, the following are suggestions and responses the committee collected through questionnaires and surveys:

- “Framingham focuses on Spanish and Portuguese, but ignores the AAPI community.”
- “Local government should reflect the community. Those in leadership positions should represent and understand the community.”
- “Diversity should include a broad spectrum of races, specifically Asian Americans. There's been a huge increase in Asian American hate crimes and attacks on Asian Americans since COVID (mostly targeted to those who look East Asian like Chinese/Japanese/Korean) We have been harassed on streets, in the car, on the train, etc. Asian Americans are Americans but treated like foreigners, who don't belong.”
- “Diversity should focus on WOC (Women of Color) as we are the one with the most disadvantage in society. [WOC definition is a women who is not white](#)”
- “The leadership in the school and city doesn't represent the population of Framingham in terms of diversity. Although I'm an educated, smart & competent WOC, my input is not sought anywhere.. Asians Americans, as a whole, are treated as the invisible minority. Aside from Maria Robinson, where are we even represented anywhere in the administration or leadership roles?”
- “Assess the community. Meet with leaders, businesses, groups and public services. Let them know what the City is able to provide to the diverse populations. Use Census data to determine the geographics.”
- “Develop marketing and educational materials in the languages of the community you are attempting to engage.”

- **“City Open House:** Invite members of your community to City Hall. Let them tour and interact with staff Show them what you do and let them ask questions.”
- **“Presentations:** Reach out to key community groups and ask if you can present at a meeting. Learn about what different groups in your community are doing and how you can partner with them. ”
- **“Work with Local Media:** Partner with the local newspaper to get a featured article or reoccurring column. Advertise events and volunteer opportunities on your local public access channel. Reach out to local radio stations about your outreach events.”
- “Send out a community survey. Ask for feedback about the City. See how different members of the community view the City. Identify areas for improvement and ways you can connect with your community.”
- “Create an inclusive social group”
- “Whether you’re engaging a specific minority within your community or using an inclusive engagement consultation for multiple minorities within your community, make sure you take the time to understand the various cultures.”
- “Start at the top, the Sisitky administration lacks the diversity and inclusion it would like this committee to oversee. The committee itself lacks the diversity and inclusion that makes up its members. For this administration to succeed on this topic you need to integrate with brown and black faces. These are people who understand lack of diversity, racism and non -inclusive agendas.
(I am not talking about Brazilians here. For some reason Framingham considers them poc)”

Suggestions - LGBTQ

- Feedback from a trans Framingham youth:
 - Partner with the school GSAs (middle and high school)
 - Framingham Youth Council, possible liaison to LGBTQ+ youth
 - Youth representation on transition teams/efforts
- Maintain tradition of Pride Month activities (and year-round, as the Beyond Pride group had aimed to do), raise Progress Flag (it was shared that this was actually a very positive, emotional experience for some, who felt seen in their City)

- Note with some time-sensitivity: **The flag-raising event should be planned for the first weekend in June, so it is flying for the month of June.** The Beyond Pride group is poised to start working on this soon if the City confirms that the event will happen again this year.
- We need some mechanism to plan activities and work on LGBTQ+ issues in the City. It doesn't have to be the Beyond Pride committee that has worked on this in the past year, but it is REALLY important that someone from the City has accountability for supporting, maybe even heading up, these efforts.
- Members of the Beyond Pride group believe it is IMPERATIVE that the City fill the Chief Diversity Officer and Citizen Participation Officer roles and that both of those positions are essential to furthering DEI initiatives in the City. To be sure those people are equipped to lead and/or participate in efforts around LGBTQ+ issues, we'd like to see a representative from LGBTQ+ community on search teams for these positions or involved somehow in the processes.
- Need to be more inclusive in the buildings (particularly, but not exclusively the bathrooms, making sure there are all-gender options).
- Framingham Public Schools need to take a look at the systemic ways that they are not serving/supporting LGBTQ+ students and engage in system-wide training and policy/procedure updates

For your consideration, the following are suggestions and responses the committee collected through questionnaires and surveys:

- “The schools are the functional area of the City that have the greatest opportunity to interact with and support the LGBTQ+ youth in Framingham. Additionally, particularly during the COVID pandemic, use of the City’s public spaces for outdoor programming could be a great opportunity. Transportation to OUT MetroWest’s programs can be a challenge for some youth. There could be some opportunity for partnership between the City/schools and OUT MetroWest in that area. The Beyond Pride Committee’s decision to continue to meet beyond Pride Month (June) to try to work on events and initiatives for the LGBTQ+ community year-round was a good move. I hope this committee can continue to meet and support initiatives that make Framingham more welcoming to LGBTQ+ residents (youth and adults alike).”

- “Regarding LGBTQ+ youth, training is needed at all levels of the school system to better protect students’ rights; effectively address harassment/bullying when it occurs; consistently use students’ correct names and pronouns; ensure sufficient facilities for students of all gender identities; and eliminate policies, practices, and curriculum of anti-LGBTQ+ bias.”

Suggestions – Immigrant Community

- Set up listening sessions with members of the immigrant community (provide translation services and ask each to recommend 2 other groups/people to meet with; not all immigrants are connected to religious organizations, but it's a good place to start). Have sustained conversations and presence in & with immigrant communities
 - St. Stephen-Spanish language based Catholic church; ask to meet with deacons (Ivan is one) as well a pastors
 - St. Tarcisius is Portuguese language Catholic church
 - BRACE (social services embedded at St. T)
 - Voices of the Community Project (MWHF/MWNN partnership doing deep listening on southside; Margie Rosario is lead; margieann2212@gmail.com)
 - Greater Framingham Community Church
 - New Life Presbyterian Church (Brazilian Protestant)
 - Voz de la Comunidad
 - Islamic Society of Framingham
- Individuals to talk to/add to this group
 - Jackie Escobar Herrera—Latina, Framingham resident, social worker
 - Margie Rosario—Latina, Voices of the Community project; discovering Hidden Gems co-Founder community; margieann2212@gmail.com
 - Guimel DeCarvalho, VP of People & Culture & leader of the DEI work at Wayside
 - Kevin Lopez, program manager at Hoops & Homework
- Tri-lingual staff readily available in City Hall and at public events
- Fill the Chief Participation Officer and DEI positions ASAP with folks who can connect with these communities in a sustained way
- Address whether the Welcoming Immigrant Ordinance will be completed
- Explore models of immigrant engagement in other cities, like Somerville
- Restart the "Welcoming immigrant" Committee meetings

For your consideration, the following are suggestions and responses the committee collected through questionnaires and surveys:

- “EDIC
 - The immigrant community is incredibly entrepreneurial but Framingham is not "business friendly"”
- “Transportation/Traffic
 - Major issue affecting immigrants throughout Framingham. Because of traffic, children take too long to get to school. Because of traffic, their jobs are compromised. Because of traffic, many are at greater risk of accident as they drive unlicensed.”

- “All city communications need to be in multiple languages—starting with Portuguese and Spanish. But we need to not only translate the English versions, but create the content from within the cultural and language context. We have a lot of local nonprofits doing a great job with this from whom we can learn.”
- “Sustained, committed presence in the neighborhoods/community spaces & groups, especially geographically on the southside and within immigrant communities. Community members need to see their city councilors and mayor and city staff in their neighborhoods, not just for photo ops, but for real conversation, participating in the events/conversations that those communities want/need. City leaders need to invite leaders from within these communities to meet with them regularly and literally have a seat at the table.”
- “The Welcoming Immigrants Task Force struggled to stay organized and focused. While the need for such a policy was “of the moment” when ICE was more aggressively targeting immigrants, the need is still there for such an ordinance. Another point of tension was that some wanted to make this a broader, all encompassing DEI statement. We need that, but this is separate. I’m hopeful that if/when we have a DEI staff member, we can have a more comprehensive approach to DEI instead of trying to tack it onto specific tasks. Also, the police department never participated, making it hard to be partners with them. All the branches of City government need to be invested in DEI work, and working together on it.”

- “I’ve been consistently impressed with how FPS has continued to do this work. 1 example: McCarthy front office staff now are fluent in English, Portuguese and Spanish; when we started 5 years ago, none were. I know that they are working on every level, from staff trainings to looking at curriculum. The City can learn a lot from FPS.”

- “A sustainable, holistic plan for downtown that includes our immigrant communities and intentionally makes space for people of all socio-economic situations. A gentrified downtown would be a failure in my mind. But we do need to address some of the

consistent challenges of the downtown corridor, including the need for social services as well traffic.”

- “We need to get City staff on board whose primary focus is to do this. I haven’t followed all the ins and outs of city staffing, but I think that is the Community Participation Officer (who should at least be bilingual, if not trilingual), and the DEI officer.”
- “The Mayor needs to show with his actions that he is committed to DEI and to getting to know and work with these communities. Setting up weekly listening sessions in the communities that are well publicized is a good start.”

More Considerations:

“Seniors: Keeping it simple is best- outreach via phone calls or postal mail. This way you can accommodate – language, access to internet, vision (by using appropriate print/coloring) and hearing issues.”

“Not saying that engagement via computer is a bad thing, its part of it, and it’s a way family can assist (for those who have them) but also the younger ‘seniors’ are very facile with the computer.”

“Another big part of engagement is in person connection- which can be hard during covid. Meetings and outreach to community partners that work with the older adult population but in non-traditional ways is important (i.e., Religious institutions, agencies like BRACE and LIHP or even Hoops and Homework – you can reach grandparents or folks that take care of their kids and their parents (the sandwich generation).”

Economic Development Subcommittee Transition Report

This report was prepared by the **Economic Development Subcommittee** of Mayor Sisistky's Transition Team. This report provides a framework of action items to posture the City of Framingham for sustainable and equitable economic growth and investment. The Subcommittee extends its sincerest gratitude to all who participated in our subcommittee meetings and discussion including ***The Economic Development Commission, Framingham Superintendent of Public Schools, Chair, Framingham School Committee, The MetroWest Chamber of Commerce, Councilor Michael Cannon, Chair, City Council Economic Development Subcommittee, Meredith Harris, Executive Director, Marlborough Economic Development Corporation, and Richard Braga, Executive Director, Downtown Hudson Business Improvement District***

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Asset-Based Economic Development

Framingham is an untapped powerhouse that is ripe to become the engine of sustainable economic growth in the Metrowest and the entire Boston metropolitan region. A multi-pronged economic development strategy can position Framingham as both an incubator for immigrant owned businesses and small startups, center of research and development in life sciences and engineering, and as the ideal location for national and international corporate headquarters. With an asset-based approach to economic development, the City can enhance its economic competitiveness in the region. A razor-sharp focus on Framingham's socio-cultural, educational, and geographical assets, and the most important asset of all, its people, should be the underpinning of the City's economic development strategy and business recruitment and retention efforts.

Examination of Key Assets and Strengths

Any new economic development strategy and branding efforts should focus on how the City can capitalize on its assets. Highlighted below are some of the City's key assets:

- **People-** With an estimated resident population of 71,232, the city of Framingham offers a highly educated, skilled labor force. Nearly half of the population 25 years and older, 47% or 23,400 residents, holds a Bachelor's degree, exceeding the Massachusetts (40%) and the U.S. (30%) rates. One fifth of this population, 20% or 9,800 residents, possess a graduate or professional degree, that is similar to the state (19%) and higher than the nation (12%).¹
- **Geography/Transportation Network-** With two exits on Interstate 90 (MassPike), an MBTA Commuter Rail Station, a local bus network, and a Logan Express Bus Station with a parking facility, Framingham is well positioned within the Boston Metropolitan Region.
- **Downtown-** Framingham's downtown is a walkable neighborhood that includes a mixture of housing, office, retail and/or other amenities integrated close to public transportation.
- **Corporate Headquarters-** Headquarters location of large national/global corporations (TJX, Bose, Staples, Etc.) and the ancillary location of large national global corporations (Genzyme, Phillips, Nestle Waters, Etc.).
- **Educational Resources-** Framingham has a well-respected K-12 and vocational school system, and is the home of Framingham State University and Massachusetts Bay Community College.

¹ [MERC - Framingham Employment Report 2020](#)

- **Recreation and Open Space Assets-** Framingham has a rich network of open space and recreational assets.
- **Medical Institutions-** Metrowest Medical Center and Medical Arts sector located adjacent to Downtown.
- **Housing Stock-** Framingham has a diverse housing stock that includes (but not limited to): turn of the century Victorians, Campanelli ranches, over 55 housing, traditional single-family subdivisions, and multifamily.

Revamping the Regulatory Environment

Local regulations--zoning, licensing, environmental, etc.--are in place to protect the health, safety, and welfare of Framingham citizens. Yet, the City's regulatory landscape has become incomprehensible and difficult to navigate. Efforts to market Framingham as "business friendly" will be nothing more than empty platitudes if the City does not actively take steps to address the complicated and overly bureaucratic permitting and regulatory environment. A more streamlined, intuitive permitting and regulatory landscape will set up Framingham to attract and retain both small startups and large corporations. The regulatory environment should work for all who are doing business in the City of Framingham.

Recommended Action Items:

- Create an ambassador model at City Hall for a single point of contact to assist any new or existing business looking to conduct, expand or renew doing business in the City, to walk them through the system and process.
- Recodify Zoning Ordinances to enhance the experience for all users—residents, businesses, the Zoning Board of Appeals, Planning Board, and Building Commissioner.
- Analyze the existing tax rates for commercial and industrial properties to achieve a more equitable structure. More parity in the tax structure will help facilitate local investment and help small businesses who lease spaces in larger commercial buildings.
- Analyze use regulations, density, setbacks, parking ratios, etc. in commercial and industrial zoning districts to identify opportunities for incentivizing private investment that is both sustainable and tax base positive.
- Identify permitting processes that can be conducted at the staff level without the need for extensive filings and review with the Planning Board or Zoning Board of Appeals.
- Identify opportunities for the Framingham School Department to be a participant in the review process for all proposed housing. Adopt language in the Zoning Ordinances and/or Planning Board regulations that outlines formulas (based on the School Department's demographic projection models).

Inclusive and Equitable COVID Emergence

COVID-19 has had an unprecedented and extremely disruptive impact on Framingham's local economy, small business community, and workforce. Those who were at risk of losing their jobs and businesses due to COVID were assisted via the Small Business Grant Program; however, the pandemic has left the future of both public and private revenue streams uncertain.

Recommended Action Items:

- Direct Economic Development Staff and other partners, such as Downtown Framingham INC to work with businesses on a COVID needs assessment, surveys, one on one interviews, etc., to understand short term and long-term needs and priorities for businesses Downtown and within the Villages.
- Identify opportunities to deploy ARPA (recovery Act funds) for neighborhood businesses (including Downtown) and minority Businesses. Potential uses include: façade improvement program, financial assistance to impacted small businesses and nonprofits. Technical assistance or other services for business planning needs.
- Identify priority development opportunities in South Framingham and adjust zoning uses to help attract quality, private investments.

Building Successful Institutional, Cultural, and Business Partnerships

Framingham's assets are the diverse institutional, cultural, and business sectors within the City. Decision-making on critical planning and economic development efforts should be guided by strong partnerships between the municipal government and these three sectors. A municipal focus on building and nourishing these partnerships will establish new opportunities for creative thinking and problem solving with respect to economic development in the City. To develop these successful partnerships, a sense of trust must be conveyed by the municipality along with a willingness to work collaboratively.

Recommended Institutional Actions: Framingham Public Schools

- Explore ways to better align the decision-making processes of the Public Schools and the City government.
- Coordinate the demographic projections for school enrollments with the development review process for all housing being proposed in the City. During this process, work collaboratively where developments are located and discuss appropriate mitigation measures when an increase in enrollments are projected.

- Establish a workforce development/partnership between the public schools and the business community to promote the recruitment of Framingham students into STEM, life sciences, and vocational and technical trades.
- Commence the process to build a new elementary school south of Route 9.
- Investigate the use of Nevits Hall Space for a performing arts space that offers low-cost options for students who want to perform and rehearse. Establish a strong connection between the schools and the local creative economy.

Recommended Institutional Actions: Economic Development Commission

- Tap the EDC to manage complex land assembly for larger properties and other redevelopment efforts on behalf of the City.
- The EDC should take the lead on managing the 61 Lincoln Street property and establishing a strong medical arts corridor.
- The EDC in partnership with Economic Development staff should identify blighted and landlocked buildings in Downtown with no parking and strategize on redevelopment opportunities.

Recommended Business Partnership Actions:

- Immediately establish a roundtable working group of business leaders from Downtown and Villages. New Director of Planning and Economic Development to facilitate meeting and report needs and priorities to the Mayor.
- Immediately establish contact with the City's largest corporate entities to understand current and post COVID workforce trends.
- Immediately establish contact with the largest property owners Downtown. Establish rapport and gain an understanding of past relationships with the City government. Meet one on one with existing businesses (including nonprofits) to understand the good and bad they have experienced about locating and operating a business in Framingham.
- Explore other funding options for Downtown Framingham INC. to expand their reach, as Community Development Block Grant funds are highly restrictive. Direct Economic Development staff to work with the EDC and Downtown Framingham Inc to explore the feasibility of creating a Business Improvement District.

Short- Term and Long-Range Economic Development Strategies

It is critical that Framingham take control of economic development planning and prioritize policies and programs that set clear, attainable objectives to move the needle in a positive direction. Without any near term and longer-term strategies, our economic future will always be reactionary, placed solely in the hands of outside forces. While it is impossible to control and predict market forces and real estate trends, it is possible, with good data analytics, to make reasonable projections about local, regional, and national economic trends. Framingham State University researchers should be consulted as they produce annual reports about the state of our local and regional economy.

Recommended Action Items:

The City is currently undertaking an economic development master planning process and has engaged a real estate economist and urban planning consultant. The scope of work should be reworked with a focus on the following priorities:

- Understanding the short-term and long-term impacts of COVID-19 on office and commercial uses.
- Assessing the market conditions and testing the financial feasibility of transit-oriented development (TOD) scenario (s) for the MBTA station area. Ensure MBTA and the MWRTA. *FYI: The Department of Housing of Community Development recently released TOD regulations and requirements for MBTA communities as part of last year's Zoning reform effort.*
- Identifying priority parcels that are ripe for repurposing for Class A industrial flex-space. Gain an understanding of the square footage and infrastructure requirements.
- Creating a hospital and medical arts district.
- Identifying parcels or development corridors for the expansion of the City's life sciences/biotech footprint and the creation of incubator spaces.

The City should immediately initiate an update of the Golden Triangle study with the Town of Natick to:

- Understand the immediate and longer-terms trends and forecasts for the retail and office sectors and what that means for their corporate footprints in Framingham and Natick.
- Identify the underutilized parcels and properties that straddle community lines with split zoning.
- Develop strategies for the disconnected development patterns that add to traffic delays and transportation and car-free mobility initiatives;
- Conduct an audit of current zoning which may preclude sustainable development patterns fostering transportation and mobility options, economic growth, and

resiliency. Adjust the land use regulatory framework to support these goals while also incentivizing new investment.

Investment in Transportation Infrastructure

Effective and efficient multimodal transportation networks are vital to the economic vitality of Framingham because they link people with employment, public services, shopping and entertainment opportunities, and businesses to labor, consumer, buyers and supply markets. While there is no panacea to solving traffic congestion, cut through traffic, and funding constraints, the City should take a place-based and people-first approach to how the City prioritizes its multimodal transportation infrastructure needs. This approach should be three pronged: protecting the livability of our neighborhoods, enhancing the City's economic competitiveness, and expanding access for cyclists and pedestrians for all ages and abilities.

Recommended Action Items:

- Collaborate more closely with the State Legislation Delegation and the Massachusetts Department of Transportation to discuss priority investments for projects serving both local and regional economic development needs.
- Re-evaluate the design alternatives for the Route 135/126 intersection/MBTA Crossing. Ensure that the design alternative advanced does not isolate downtown businesses and neighborhoods.
- Immediately commence negotiations with CSX and identify funding to acquire necessary parcels to complete the Framingham link for Bruce Freeman Rail Trail.
- Collaborate with the Commission on Disabilities to update the City's ADA Self Evaluation and Transition Plan and implement recommended transportation improvements, including addressing sidewalk conditions and ADA-compliant ramps and tip downs.
- Collaborate with the Traffic Commission to develop and implement a City-wide "Safe Streets/" Vision-Zero" program that prioritizes managing speed increasing safe, healthy, equitable mobility for all users of the roadway system. The Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act of 2021 passed in November creates a new grant program called Safe Streets and Roads for All to support local initiatives to improve active transportation and prevent death and serious injury on local roadways. It's possible that local governments could apply directly, or the money will flow through the State Department of Transportation/ Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), of which Framingham is a voting member.
- Conduct an update of the Downtown parking study to understand current usage and develop strategies for optimizing and managing the existing system.

**Education Transition Report for the
Mayor of Framingham Charlie Sisitsky**



January 27, 2022

Submitted by the Mayor's Transition's

Education Subcommittee

Adam Freudberg, Co-Chair

Sarah Guernsey, Co-Chair

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Genoveffa Grieci

Donna Kilcoyne Orthofer

Education Subcommittee

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Introduction, Process, and Scope of Work

This report was prepared by the Education Subcommittee of Mayor Sisitsky's Transition Team. The report is intended to provide the Mayor, his new Administration, and all education-based stakeholders with an analysis of the top issues we see facing our city's educational infrastructure, along with a series of recommended action steps for consideration.

All recommended action steps come from the following top six areas of focus we determined were essential to elevate to the new Mayor. Education is a broad, far-reaching domain; it is embedded into almost every aspect of a community. Trying to narrow our focus was our first task. In the end, we chose these six areas of focus based on:

- an analysis of educational-related work, progress, and challenges during the first four years as a city;
- the role the Mayor has as fiscal policy leader and School Committee Member;
- the detrimental impacts stemming from the ongoing pandemic;
- data on student achievement and demographics; and
- public feedback.

The areas of focus (in no particular order) which we cover throughout this report are:

1. [COVID-19 Pandemic Management](#)
2. [Equity in Education](#)
 1. Equitable Access to Community-Based Resources (Physiological Needs)
 2. Equitable Access to School-Based Resources (Safety Needs)

3. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Priorities within schools (Belonging and Esteem Needs)
3. [Operating Budget for the Framingham Public Schools](#)
4. [Capital Infrastructure and Budget for the Framingham Public Schools](#)
5. [Government Process Improvements](#)
6. [Climate Change, Environment and Sustainability](#)

The Education Subcommittee began their work in mid-December 2021 after being appointed by the Mayor-Elect. As directed, the group's scope was to cover all aspects of education in our city from preschool through workforce, including both public and private education-related efforts. It is important to note that while our scope was broad, a large focus of the report will be Framingham Public School (FPS) focused. This is due to a variety of factors such as the Mayor's role as a Member of the School Committee, the Mayor's role in recommending the annual operating and capital budgets for FPS, and the expertise and/or personal ties that all subcommittee members currently or previously have had to the public school district.

Individual members in some situations also worked with a variety of other subcommittees of the Mayor's Transition Team to coordinate. This includes but is not restricted to the Mayor's Transition Subcommittees on Intergovernmental Affairs, on the Environment, on Health, and on Economic Development.

Throughout the report we aimed our recommended action steps to be tied to where the Mayor has a formal role and/or can utilize the position as a convener and leader to bring focus and make progress on key topics of interest. While the Mayor has an important role, the type of action items we recommend will also often require co-leadership from city department heads and staff, the FPS and Keefe Tech Superintendents, higher education, private schools, industry associations, the City Council, and School Committee to all respectively work together on areas of mutual interest.

Stakeholder Engagement Process

From December of 2021 through mid January of 2022 the subcommittee sought feedback from a variety of stakeholders. This was inclusive of organizations such as:

- Framingham Public Schools (FPS)
- FPS Bargaining Units
- Keefe Tech Leadership and School Committee
- McAuliffe Leadership and Board
- Private PreK Network
- Learning Center for the Deaf
- St. Bridgets
- Framingham State University and MassBay
- Parent-Teachers Organizations (PTO), City Wide PTO, Framingham Families for Racial Equity in Education (FFREE), Framingham Special Education PAC, Dual Language PAC, Bilingual PAC
- School Resource Officers
- Disability Commission

- Other outside services (Brazilian-American Center, Boys & Girls Club, YMCA, Hoops and Homework, etc.)
- Greater Framingham Community Church, Interfaith Council
- Adult ESL+

The request for feedback offered the public the following guiding questions we developed:

- What would success look like in the area of education?
- In what ways has that vision been met?
- What has supported that success?
- What are the current barriers to that success?
- What can be done, in Mr. Sisitsky's capacity as mayor, to remove those barriers?
- What are other issues, factors, opportunities and voices that are relevant to the incoming Mayor's efforts around education?

All were offered the chance to submit feedback by email, a phone call, Zoom, or formal survey utilized by the Mayor's Transition Subcommittees. Translation support was offered to anyone if requested. In order to ensure responders felt as comfortable as possible, all had the option to submit anonymous feedback through the survey, or email directly with their name known.

See **Appendix B** for a summary of the themes and topics offered to us during the public engagement process.

We are grateful for all who took the time to fill out the survey or provide inputs in another way.

Special Thanks

The Education Subcommittee is grateful to Mayor Charlie Sisitsky for appointing us to serve in this important advisory role. Additionally, we wish to thank Transition Chair Cathy Miles, Transition Volunteer in 2021 and now Chief of Staff to the Mayor Susan Nicholl, Framingham State University, MassBay Community College, the Framingham Public Schools, Keefe Regional Technical School, McAuliffe Charter School, PTOs, educators, and all others who offered suggestions to us throughout the process.

Top Areas of Focus & Action Items

COVID-19 Pandemic Management

As we approach two years of pandemic life, the virus is working harder. At the time of this writing, the Omicron variant has changed multiple public health related approaches and needs a continued robust and strategic response. In response, the government too must ramp up and work even harder to keep community spread down as low as possible, and keep schools open, and the workforce and economy supported.

Recommended Actions on COVID-19 Pandemic Management:

1. *COVID-19 Project Beacon Testing Site Access Expansion:* The Mayor and Department of Public Health should work with the Framingham Legislative Delegation to seek testing expansion and coordination adjustments in conversations with state government decision makers. As noted, this can include expanding hours and remaining open on holiday weekends, an improved, collaborative notification process, and establishing a permanent location.
2. *On and Off Ramps for Mask Mandates and High Quality Mask Availability:* Establish a set of metrics for mask mandate on and off ramps, launch an effort to offer high quality masks to all education employees and students in the city, and launch a community-based art contest to solicit design options to safely add to high quality masks.
3. *Mental Health Support:* Increase funding to establish additional full and part time support for school nurses, counselors, and social workers. The Mayor can convene healthcare, non-profit, industry, and educational institutions for discussions on how to address regional gaps and proactively support residents with mental health services.
4. *Vaccines and Boosters for Youth:*
 1. It is recommended that the Mayor announce a youth-based vaccine education awareness initiative in multiple languages and new series of youth-based vaccination clinics led by the City Department of Public Health, in coordination with numerous educational and non-profit partners
 2. Department of Public Health to launch and oversee a long-term student focused vaccination and booster education effort matched with consistent mobile and/or other kinds of vaccine clinics at all FPS school buildings, private preschools, and accessible community sites.
 3. Creation of the Mayor's Advisory Council on Youth COVID-19 Vaccination and Boosters to govern and monitor progress, fiscal needs, partnerships, challenges, and deliver and communicate results.

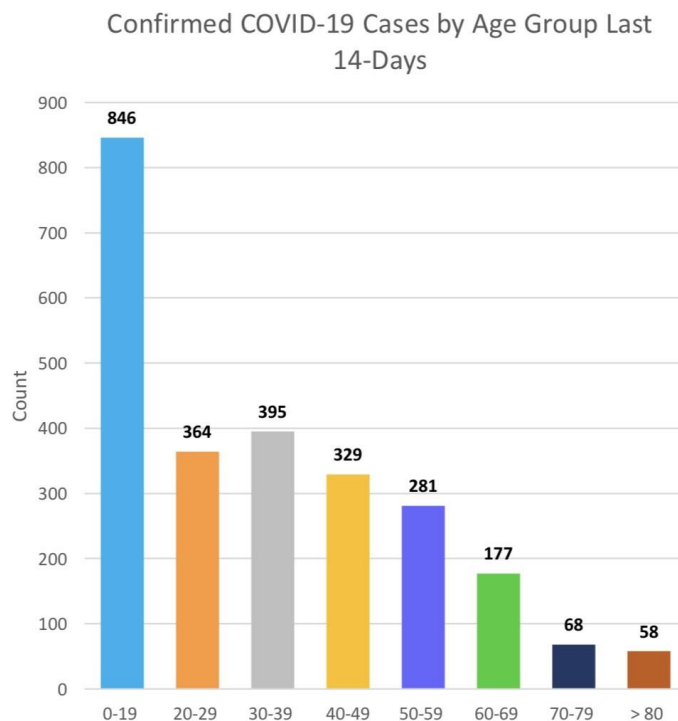
Background on COVID-19 Pandemic Management:

1. **COVID-19 Project Beacon Testing Site Access Expansion.** Securing the Commonwealth's site in Framingham for the long-term is essential and would have an impact on the education community as well. A reliable, trusted, and free PCR site has proven to be a need in our city. While we recognize that the city does not run this site, we do have recommendations for the Mayor and Department of Public Health to seek adjustments in conversations with decision makers. Based on lessons learned, we see a way to improve testing in the city at this site by:
 1. Expanding Hours and Remaining Open on Holiday Weekends: Access to PCR testing should be seen as a critical, and timely public health measure. Employee shifts can be staggered, holiday pay increases provided, and greater alignment with the city health and school staff

should be explored in a series of attempts to expand the hours testing is offered.

2. **Notification Process:** When the site does need to close, a formal notification process should be established so all education institutions are notified. This is essential and came to mind because when the site closed on multiple occasions last winter, FPS was never notified, was caught off guard, and therefore was unable to shift public health mitigations and school communications to the families they serve.
 3. **Establishing a Permanent Location:** in 2020 and 2021 the testing site moved from place to place too many times to count. Recently, the stability at the St. Tarcisius site is important and has been well received. If that site or another accessible site can be announced as the permanent site for as long as COVID-19 testing remains part of our lives, it will truly help our entire community - including the education community.
- 2. On and Off Ramps for Mask Mandates and High Quality Mask Availability.** The January 2022 temporary city wide indoor mask mandate is necessary as currently enacted by the Mayor and Board of Health. Future reviews are recommended to be tied to percent positively, cases per day, and tests per capita metrics in order to keep the priority on keeping school buildings open, and protecting those vulnerable such as kids too young to be vaccinated. When metrics drop in the city, there is an off ramp for masks to be optional. If a surge returns, masks are required. Additionally, it is recommended that the Department of Public Health and all education institutions work together on a plan to provide all staff and students with the option of a high quality medical masks, and be encouraged to wear them until metrics on community spread and the government says otherwise. Maybe the thrill of cool designs that are tied to cloth masks can somehow be added to higher quality ones without negatively impacting filtration.
- 3. Mental Health Support.** Framingham is not alone with the worldwide impact the pandemic has done to exacerbate the mental crisis which already existed prior to the pandemic. As noted by the FPS Superintendent, "While there is much that is offered through the Framingham Public Schools in the way of mental health support for students, expansion of this effort and synergies between the School Department and the Department of Public Health is possible given the strong working relationship between both departments." The Mayor has an opportunity to make supporting resident's mental health needs a priority. While the government's role is limited here, the convening opportunity to determine gaps in the city as well as the MetroWest region, and work towards solutions is an option. For youth, additional resources are necessary to expand staff to student ratios at educational institutions.
- 4. Vaccines and Boosters for Students.** The forthcoming approvals expected for FDA emergency use labels for certain age ranges, along with expanded eligibility to children younger than five years of age are expected this calendar year. The Mayor can use these two important steps as the opportunity to convene stakeholders and direct city resources to launch a youth-based vaccine education awareness initiative in order to seek to boost up youth vaccine rates. Vaccines and boosters not only keep our education-based institutions more safe

by reducing infections and shortening the time people are infected - but when people unfortunately do get the virus it is more likely to keep them out of the hospital or worse, reduce symptoms, and get people back to work and school sooner. The City Department of Public Health needs to take a leadership role and ramp up activities as the lead organization when it comes to vaccinating and boosting our residents. Each respective educational institution has an important role to help with logistics such as approving space, seeking volunteers, and coordinating communications and authorization forms. Yet truly the City Department of Public Health should be aggressively taking the lead on booking clinic after clinic after clinic, targeting youth populations with education on the benefits of vaccines and boosters, coordinating with Providers and pharmacies, and driving up numbers far more than they currently are for all ages, but especially school ages where data shows Framingham needs to do better. This is also about protecting children from the detrimental impact the virus can have on them, such as long COVID-19. This light blue graph indicating the number of new cases by age group in the 0-19 range is highly alarming.



Source: [City of Framingham Public Health Department Weekly COVID-19 Report, January 26, 2022](#)

If funding is needed for staff support, this is the perfect opportunity to utilize federal funds, as well as other government resources. For example, more than \$10 million in federal American Rescue Act Plan funds specifically for the Mayor and City Council in order to deal with the pandemic have yet to be allocated. Additionally, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has been offering municipalities the opportunity to book mobile

vaccine clinics at schools for months - it is time to consistently and strategically bring them to Framingham.

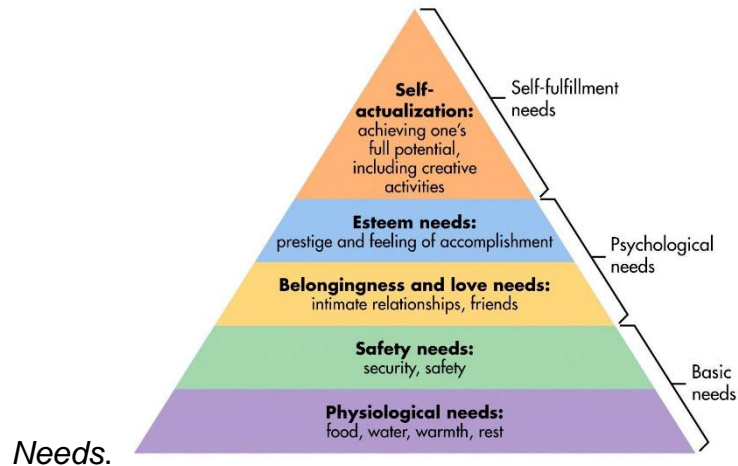
Equity in Education

There are three areas in which municipal departments, the school department and the community can work to increase the level of equity in education:

1. Equitable Access to Community-Based Resources;
2. Equitable Access to School-Based Resources; and
3. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Priorities within Schools.

These strategies are centered around the Framingham Public Schools, though many of them can apply to other educational areas in Framingham as well.

These are written as if they are sequential in nature. This is not the case; they can be done contemporaneously, and should be addressed as each is possible. However, it is important to consider Maslow's *Hierarchy of*



Needs.

The highest priority is to meet people's physiological and safety needs, then their psychological needs. When all of these needs are met, people - including students - can reach their full potential. It is with this framework in mind that we present our thoughts about Equity in Education.

Throughout this section of our report, we have used the term "equity". It is important to draw a distinction between equality and equity; often, the two terms are conflated. Equality is making sure all students have access to the same book; equity is ensuring all students have access to the book they need. This could mean some students are not given a book, because they already have it. This could mean some students are given a different book than others are given because that is the book that is right for them. All of this should be done with justice as the ultimate goal. We should strive to eliminate barriers, rather than ensuring we compensate for those barriers in an equitable way.

Recommended Actions on Equity in Education

Actions on Equitable Access to Community-Based Resources (Physiological Needs)

1. *Access to Physical Health, Mental Health and Dental Services:* Fast track the planning and construction for the Community Health Clinic to open at the Farley Building.
2. *Food Security:* Review the food distribution efforts enacted during the COVID-19 pandemic to determine strategies for reducing food security challenges.
3. *Environmental Improvements:* Prioritize transparency in the General Chemical cleanup process.
4. *Broadband Internet Access:* Increase Broadband access across the community.

Actions on Equitable Access to School-Based Resources (Safety Needs)

1. *Universal PreK and Expansion of Adult ESL+:* Build a new Early Childhood Center south of Route 9 to increase access to early childhood programs. Expand Adult ESL+ offerings.
2. *Transportation:* Identify strategies to increase and improve transportation services, both to/from school and throughout the broader community.
3. *Programs for Out of School Time (OST):* Expand Out of School Time programs, both during the school year and in the summer through collaborations with industry, Parks Department, FPS, and more.
4. *In-Depth Exploration on the High School Dropout Rate:* Review the Evening Academy Program at Framingham High School, explore FPS evening partnerships with Keefe Tech, and greater alignment with FSU and MassBay to support multiple options for career paths.

Actions on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Priorities Within Schools (Belonging and Esteem Needs)

1. *Recruitment and Retention of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color) Staff:* Increase efforts to recruit, support and retain BIPOC staff.
2. *Anti-Bias Professional Development for Staff:* Increase professional development opportunities for municipal and school department staff, particularly in the area of Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Pedagogy.
3. *Ensuring Access for All Language Needs:* Collaborate with FPS and other educational institutions around strategies for communication, particularly with multilingual families and other members of the community. One recommended strategy is to establish an Office of Translation and Interpretation to support customer service requests from residents, businesses, and all meetings of public bodies, including educational organizations.
4. *Dual Language Programming:* Support the expansion of Dual Language programs within the Framingham Public Schools.
5. *Communication:* Encourage Municipal Department Heads and other appropriate staff to hold standing meetings with stakeholders to support linguistically and culturally and diverse community members.

6. *Collaboration with Higher Education:* See Recommended Actions 2, 3, and 5 in the Government Process Improvement Section.
7. *Usage of Data:* Use data strategically to focus on tangible outcomes for student achievement.

Background on Equitable Access to Community-Based Resources (Physiological Needs)

On a foundational level, students need to come to school, ready to learn. Projects such as the Harlem Children's Zone highlight the educational benefits of ensuring every student is in an environment and has the resources that support learning. These are some areas that would ensure all students are equally prepared for coming to school.

1. *Access to Physical Health, Mental Health and Dental Services.* Students in our community face a variety of health challenges that impede their academic progress. Students with chronic conditions, such as Type I Diabetes, miss school because they are not able to manage those conditions. Others miss school because they cannot get timely appointments for challenges that could be quickly addressed or prevented with adequate wellness visits. Having these services available in the schools would be ideal; expanding resources so all children in Framingham have adequate access will be a big step towards educational equity. Recent legislation granted \$250K to FPS to help start the planning and construction of a Community Health Center at the Farley Building. The city should quickly request that those funds be delivered so the clinic can open as soon as practicable.
2. *Food Security.* Children who are hungry or do not have adequate nutrition are not able to attend as well as their peers in school. For the 20-21 and 21-22 school years, all students in Framingham Public Schools were able to have breakfast and lunch, free of charge. Daniel's Table has provided freezers in many schools to provide meals to families outside of the school day. As we look towards the 22-23 school year and beyond, we need to ensure we maintain the progress we have made towards food security.
3. *Environmental Improvements.* When students live in a healthy, safe environment, they are able to play outside, which provides both physical and mental health benefits. Having a healthy, safe environment around a school is equally essential. Addressing gun and other physical violence concerns improves the environment in which children live and learn. The General Chemical site is a specific example of an environmental situation that impacts student learning. While we recognize this is a state government led effort, the city still has an important role to play. The Director of Public Health reports to the Mayor; therefore, we recommend that the Mayor request that the Director's report at monthly Board of Health meetings regularly list this topic on the agenda in order for public updates to be provided often. School Committee Meetings provide an additional venue for the Mayor and participants to track progress and challenges with this important environmental justice clean up.
4. *Broadband Internet Access.* In the spring and fall of 2020, we realized just how important internet access is; it has become an essential utility, like heat and electricity. While increased access to broadband internet will benefit students as they work on assignments outside of school, it also will benefit families as they access their own work and necessary services. In addition, families are more able to

engage in two-way communication with the schools when they have broadband access. In general, the school district issues wireless hot spots to those who need internet access and ask for help. Each hotspot may support around 25 Mbps downstream and 3 Mbps upstream. It is not clear how effective these are at scale, as over 1000 are currently deployed, and the number of children per hotspot can vary. Further unclear is the cost per low income household. In addition, some students have reported that their homes do not have grounded outlets, so Chromebooks cannot be charged by students. The whole question of broadband internet access for education is involved here, but there is the much broader question of how can a low income family function in a modern society without broadband internet access? That connects to city objectives. This area is a key domain for fruitful collaboration between city government and all educational institutions, especially FPS. The issue of equitable high quality internet access is fundamental to educational progress in Framingham and action on this is long overdue.

Background on Equitable Access to School-Based Resources (Safety Needs)

Once students' physiological needs are met, we need to ensure that students feel safe and secure coming to school.

1. *Universal PreK and Expansion of Adult ESL+*. Upon first look at MCAS scores in grade 3, people often ask, "What are you going to do to address the achievement gap we see in these results?" What teachers realize is that the achievement gap that becomes visible in grade 3 *has* shrunk; the opportunity gap walks in the door in Kindergarten. From the first assessments conducted in Kindergarten, we can see the gap in performance among students with disabilities, from low-income households and from homes where English is an additional language. It is well-documented that access to high quality early education is essential to closing the achievement gap. The Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) stated that children who attend high-quality preschool programs are 40% less likely to need special education services or be kept back a grade, are 30% more likely to finish high school, and twice as likely to attend college. Increasing access to high quality preschool - either private or public - would help to narrow these learning gaps later in school. The new FPS [Partnership for Early Learners](#) is an important new effort to monitor impacts, as it seeks to be a "PreK expansion pilot program for Framingham-based families whose four year old children are not currently enrolled in an early childhood program due to lack of access, resources, finances or opportunity." The proposal to build a [new Early Education Center south of Route 9](#) is also an important step to see through to fruition. Similarly, expanding Adult ESL and GED access would increase families' capacity to support their children at home, which will improve students' performance in school.
2. *Transportation*. Students need a reliable way to get to school. Whenever possible, Framingham Public Schools provides transportation to students throughout the district. Some students are not able to access a bus; others don't have a "backup plan" when they miss the bus. A robust and equitable transportation system within the city would benefit students as well as other community members. Currently, students who don't meet the state criteria for free transportation and don't qualify for

free/reduced lunch pay a fee for transportation. Working with FPS administration, the Mayor should review the feasibility and impact of eliminating bus fees. Additionally, the Mayor, in his procurement role, has oversight on the bus contract serving FPS. It is recommended that he meet with the staffs of NRT Bus Inc. and FPS Finance & Operations in order to build a personal relationship and open the lines of communication with a goal of mutually beneficial progress, improvements, and consistency for all students and their families who rely on busing.

3. *Programs for Out of School Time (OST)*. Framingham Public Schools has a strong program for students outside the regular school day - both before/after school during the year and during the summer. In addition, there are private programs that provide support and enrichment to students and families, particularly during the summer and in the areas of arts and athletics. Increasing access to these programs - through a combination of reduced/eliminated cost for economically disadvantaged families as well as increased enrollment - would benefit the community, support families, and increase equitable access to education. One possible strategy for this is to expand industry partnerships. The Town of Brookline has a model in which the Parks Department contracts out activity management in multiple areas to the private sector in order to provide greater ranges of activities for youth; the Mayor might want to explore this model to determine its feasibility for Framingham.
4. *In-Depth Exploration on the High School Dropout Rate*. There are many reasons a student might drop out of high school. Together, FPS, Keefe and City departments can analyze the data to determine the reasons students drop out of high school. During the 20-21 school year, the Office of Multilingual Education and Framingham High School developed an evening program to support students who struggled to access remote learning during the school day. The city and district should review this program to evaluate its impact and effectiveness and determine the impact and feasibility of sustaining and/or expanding the program.

Background on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion priorities within schools (Belonging and Esteem Needs)

Even when students come to school with the same set of physiological and safety advantages, there is work to do within a school system to ensure equitable access to education. There are structural inequities that impact students within and beyond the classroom. It is the responsibility of a school district, with the support of the community and municipal government, to address those inequalities so that all students can reach their full potential.

1. *Recruitment and Retention of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color) Staff*. Representation matters. Racial, linguistic and gender affinity contribute to a students' sense of belonging. City and district resources should be combined to recruit, support and retain talented BIPOC staff, particularly in building-based positions.
2. *Anti-Bias Professional Development for Staff*. BIPOC staff members cannot be the only ones to carry the responsibility of ensuring an equitable environment for all students; white educators share in this work. In the past two years, Framingham Public Schools has made strides by providing introductory learning on anti-racism and other areas that address equity in education. Municipal and school department

resources should continue to be put towards these initiatives so they can expand to more areas and deeper levels. This should include resources for evaluating the cultural sensitivity of schools and classrooms, as well as communications with families. Much of this professional development can be done in conjunction with municipal departments when that affords the city some efficiencies. However, there are other components (such as curriculum development and review, and instructional support for teachers) that would only apply to school department personnel. The budget allocation for the schools needs to provide for this work to be done intentionally and systematically, not incidentally by volunteers.

3. *Ensuring Access for All Language Needs.* For generations, Framingham has been home to people from all over the world; currently, there are over 70 languages spoken within the Framingham Public Schools, and there are many immigrant businesses in the city that have supported the city/town economy for a very long time. This is also connected to the anti-bias professional development mentioned above; many multilingual families face xenophobia and racism in addition to challenges related to language-based challenges. Municipal, school and community resources can collaborate to support students and families within and beyond the school day. This collaboration could involve programming for families and students, connection to social services or other supports that help ease multilingual families' transition to Framingham.
4. *Dual Language Programming.* One way to address these first three items is to increase support for Dual Language programs throughout the district. These programs help with the recruitment, support and retention of high quality staff. The multicultural goals of the programs help create an actively anti-racist school community for students and staff. An additive dual language program improves students' long-term academic outcomes. Budgetary allocations from the city should provide resources needed to support staffing and materials in these programs. In addition, procurement processes recently enhanced through the acquisition of a P-Card can be continued in order to allow for the purchasing of native language materials from Brazil and Spanish-speaking countries and reduce the burden for employee reimbursements.
5. *Communication.* The Mayor's Office's Chief Information Officer working in collaboration with other educational organizations has an opportunity to support better information flows for FPS and non-FPS education communities. Overall, information should be communicated by personnel in each respective educational institution before it is communicated by the media.
6. *Collaboration with Higher Education.* Framingham is fortunate to have two institutions of higher education: Mass Bay Community College and Framingham State University. The Mayor has a unique opportunity to bring together the leaders of these two institutions, along with FPS, Keefe, McAuliffe, The Learning Center for the Deaf, St. Bridget's and other schools, to ensure a smooth PreK-16 experience for students and families who choose to stay in Framingham. In particular, one area to explore this collaboration could be to find efficiencies among the organizations that would allow all of them to more effectively meet the needs of their students and families.

7. *Usage of Data.* All data - summative and benchmark assessment data, attitudinal data and attendance data, for example - should be disaggregated on a variety of demographic categories as a matter of course. Albert Einstein said, "Not everything that can be counted counts and not everything that counts can be counted." This is particularly helpful to remember when it comes to educational statistics. We need to ensure that time and money are being used to collect data that improves educational access for all students; just because data is easy to collect and analyze does not mean it is meaningful to student achievement.

Operating Budget for the Framingham Public Schools

Recommended Actions on the Operating Budget for the Framingham Public Schools:

1. *Structural Deficit:* Repair the \$4.4 million recurring *structural deficit* in the FY22 operating budget in the FY23 budget cycle.
2. *Annual Special Education Carry Forward:* Recognize the importance of the *annual carry forward* of an out of district special education tuition reserve fund of \$1.5-\$2 million at the end of the fiscal year to the next fiscal year, and put an end to the inaccurate view by the previous administration that it is a surplus to be returned to the city.
3. *De Facto Reserve Fund:* Cease past city practice which views the school district operating budget as a *de facto reserve fund* to draw on to solve cityside budget shortfalls which occur during the fiscal year.
4. *Health Insurance:* Cease trying to shift *health insurance* costs to the schools.

Background on the Operating Budget for the Framingham Public Schools:

1. Structural Deficit. The Framingham Public Schools (FPS) operating budget has two pieces: Chapter 70 state aid, amounting to about \$57 million in FY22, and the city local contribution, amounting to about \$90 million in FY22. Over the last four years, Chapter 70 state aid annual increases have been well aligned with Framingham needs, accurately reflecting growth in student population size and shifting demographics, and keeping pace with inflation. In contrast, the city local contribution annual increase over the four years has been dramatically reduced, failing to keep pace with inflation or increasing student numbers. This is starkly illustrated by the fact that in the last four years as a town, the local contribution annual increase averaged \$3.6 million, compared to \$1.2 million as a city. On face value, that suggests that there is an accumulated shortfall of \$9.6 million in the FPS operating budget. However, in the last four years, the FPS budget process and school district management have been completely overhauled and numerous improvements made to the effectiveness of school district spending, so that the actual shortfall lies in the vicinity of \$4.4 million. That number is arrived at by looking at the growing dependence of the FPS budget on reserves. The use of reserves was \$0.5 million in FY20, \$1.5 million in FY21, and \$4.4 million in FY22 (which included \$1.4 million in federal funds deployed to make up for the former Mayor's late and impactful FY22 budget reduction). Apart from the federal piece, all of these reserves came from one-time cost savings due to the pandemic, such as lowered spending on

transportation, field trips, and staff stipends. This \$4.4 million funding gap will have to be repaired in the FY23 budget if FPS is to continue on its current upward trajectory in line with their long-term strategic plan, contract obligations, and new student and staff needs brought on by the ongoing needs of our schools including the pandemic.

2. Annual Special Education Carry Forward. For many years the school district has followed best practices recommended by the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), and carried forward an amount in the vicinity of \$1.5 - \$2.0 million, drawn from the end of year operating budget balance, as a reserve for out of district special education tuitions to handle unexpected move ins of students with high needs, or reduced state circuit breaker funding. This best practice was subject to recurrent attack by the prior city administration, even though it had been consistently supported by town government. The prior city administration characterized this vital reserve incorrectly as a surplus, which should be returned to the city at the end of each fiscal year, rather than being carried forward. The situation deteriorated to the point where the School Committee felt obliged to write a new policy on this particular matter to make clear its importance and its alignment with DESE and the state Division of Local Services best advice. It is important to have the current city administration explicitly affirm its support for this policy, and recognize that by using this practice it reduces the need for the city to come up with new resources and avoids detrimental layoffs and/or city wide cuts to schools. For more information on this topic, [click here](#).

3. De Facto Reserve Fund. Over the course of the last four years, the school district found itself pressured by the former Mayor and former CFO to return operating budget funds to the city to fund capital projects and solve non-education based water and sewer problems in the Department of Public Works. Specifically, funds were supplied from the school district operating budget for:

- a. BLOCKS Juniper Hill Building Preschool Roof Repair: \$490,000
- b. Water & Sewer Enterprise Fund shortfall: \$411,000

Capital project costs and water and sewer financing are all explicitly cityside expenses which should not be funded by cuts in the school district operating budget. The FPS operating budget is not a convenient 'reserve fund' for the city to draw on when it has cityside shortfalls. The city has free cash, federal funds, and the untouched Stabilization Fund to handle such contingencies. To us, considering the legislature's intent for Chapter 70 funds to support education, it seems reasonable for the practice of viewing the school district operating budget as a de facto reserve fund to cease. Although funding of water and sewer projects is obviously a city prerogative, it does seem that the current approach of funding these projects through water and sewer rate increases has an inherent major inequity issue where all homeowners bear the water and sewer project cost burden equally, rather than the more equitable normal capital project funding through the tax base and/or typical bonding process.

4. Health Insurance. During the last four years, there were multiple attempts during city administration consideration of the school district budget, to shift employee health insurance costs to the school system. For efficiency, and for a variety of other reasons,

the practice of having all municipal and school employees be funded from a city line item outside of the school budget, has been standard practice dating back to the Town Meeting days. This recent attempt in FY21 and FY22 ended up not happening as part of the typical spring budget cycle, but in the FY21 supplemental budget after an off cycle Chapter 70 allocation from the state, the funds the legislature allocated for education was reduced by \$630,000 to pay for education and non-education health insurance costs and a new staff member in the former Mayor's Office. The former Mayor and CFO's justification was that this was a one time interim shift which would be reversed in the FY22 budget, but that was never explicitly reversed. The persistent attempts to shift health insurance costs to the school district have been very troubling.

Capital Infrastructure and Budget for the Framingham Public Schools

Recommended Actions on Capital Infrastructure and Budget for the Framingham Public Schools:

1. *Structural Deficit*: Repair the large *structural deficit* in funding of the school district capital budget, and include in all capital planning, accurate estimates of the true cost of deferred maintenance. In this effort, the goals and scope of the school district capital budget should be revisited and revised as appropriate, in the context of city wide capital project planning.
2. *Replacement/Repairs of 14 School Roofs*: Plan and fund the *replacement of 14 school roofs* in the next several years to both prevent costly roof failures and to enable solar roof installations to begin prior to the end of 2023.
3. *Repaving and Stormwater Management for School Parking Lots*: Plan and fund *repaving and stormwater management for seven school parking lots*, to both comply with EPA mandates and enable solar parking lot installations to begin prior to the end of 2023.
4. *New PreK-5 Early Education Center South of Route 9*: Plan and fund a *new south side school*, with attention paid to the option of doing this project without MSBA funding but using the MSBA approach.

Background on Capital Infrastructure and Budget for the Framingham Public Schools:

1. Structural Deficit. The school district annual capital budget is designed to cover building maintenance, including exterior envelope and roof replacements, parking lot repair and maintenance, building security upgrades, HVAC upgrades, environmental hazard remediation, code compliance and so on. Largely speaking, the goal is to make enough capital investments to keep school buildings and grounds in sound shape and in compliance with changing building codes and other requirements.

There is no doubt that the school district capital budget is underfunded, as in the usual school side annual process, projects needing attention are pared down by a factor of 2 prior to submission to the city and then the city cuts that by a further factor of 2 to arrive at a typical annual funding figure of around \$3-4 million. That sets the size of the annual schools capital budget deficit at from \$8 million to \$16 million.

That figure can be greatly impacted by settling the exact goals and scope for the school district capital budget. What should be handled on the school district side and what should be handled on the city side? School district capital planning needs to be done in coordination with the broader citywide capital planning effort. Consideration on the cost to bond each project, cost avoidance by doing projects sooner due to construction escalation, use of federal funds, free cash, and the stabilization fund to save funds over the long-term, and the scale of FPS buildings in comparison to other departments should be considered by the Mayor and CFO.

2. Replacement/Repairs of 14 School Roofs. Fourteen school roofs are in need of imminent or near term replacements or major repairs. The scale of these projects, which are estimated to cost about \$60 million, is far beyond the annual school district capital budget capacity to accommodate in a timely manner, even with a factor 2 improvement in annual capital budget funding, and that scale is also far beyond the school district's ability to manage the logistics. These roofing projects also gate solar roof installations whose incentives end in 2023, so climate change action and utility savings are also dependent on rapid action. For more information on roof estimates and costs over time, [click here](#).

3. Repaving and Stormwater Management for Seven School Parking Lots. Here we need to have completion of seven school parking lot paving and stormwater management projects, at a cost of \$3.5 million, in sufficient time to enable solar canopy projects to be initiated before the end of 2023. There is the further problem that while complying with EPA storm water management mandates is a city responsibility, the cost for the storm water management portion of these projects has been shifted to the school district. If projects are to be done all at once, there could be procurement related savings, as well as the cost avoidance reflecting a \$1.8 million increase if deferred for a decade. For more information on paving/stormwater estimates and costs over time, [click here](#).

4. New PreK-5 Early Education Center South of Route 9. While feasibility studies have been approved, the further issue of acquiring an appropriate property, such as Bethany, needs to be addressed, and also the city has to decide whether the only path forward is through MSBA funding. That is a structural problem which the city has to face as a long term policy issue, as it is highly unlikely that all future schools could be funded by the MSBA in the timeline we will need for replacements. With annual construction escalation around 4-6% and compounding each year, it may even be more affordable and more urgent from an equity perspective to build this school without the MSBA. For more information, [click here](#).

Climate Change, Environment and Sustainability (CCES)

Recommended Actions on Climate Change, Environment and Sustainability:

1. *Tree-Plenish Program*: Expand student *Tree-Plenish* tree planting programs to include city property, especially schools and parks, and to investigate the feasibility of building on such efforts to increase the tree canopy in low income areas to further environmental justice objectives.
2. *Environmental Science Educational Programs, Out of School Activities and Student Civic Engagement*: Engage students in other citywide activities which support and expand their *environmental science educational programs and out of school activities*, focused on climate change action, environmental action and sustainability efforts. These may include creating natural channels for student input to city government bodies on these key issues, in line with school district efforts to develop *student civic engagement*.
3. *Solar Roofs*: Coordinate school roof replacement projects with the school district to maximize the number of *solar roof* projects which can be underway by the end of 2023.
4. *Solar Canopies*: Push ahead with *solar canopy* projects in school parking lots, which are already compliant with stormwater management regulations, to make sure these projects are in progress by the end of 2023.
5. *School Parking Lot StormWater Management*: Accelerate *storm water project* completion for the remaining school parking lots so that solar canopy projects can be underway there too, by the end of 2023.
6. *Paper Use Reduction*: Collaborate across all education institutions to share best practices and pursue greater progress on digital information management approaches to *reduce paper use*.
7. *Municipal Aggregation*: Complete the process of bringing *Municipal Aggregation* to the city for the benefit not only of residents, but for the school district and other eligible education institutions to lower utility costs and reduce carbon footprint.
8. *Composting*: Make citywide *composting* a reality, and engage that composting company to provide services to schools to reduce their trash stream and enhance student gardening efforts at schools.

Background on Climate Change, Environment and Sustainability:

Within the context of the Framingham Public Schools, there is a rising awareness of the importance of climate change, environment and sustainability. It impacts finances, facilities management, teaching and learning, health and wellness, equity and student civic involvement. That broad reality was recognized when the School Committee created a Climate Change, Environment and Sustainability subcommittee at the start of 2020 and that subcommittee conducted a review of the various areas within its scope, and especially paid attention to rising student engagement in those areas. A Climate Change, Environment and Sustainability (CCES) policy framework was created towards the end of 2021 and a draft policy first went through subcommittee review, then student forum feedback and is working its way through further review by the FPS administration, staff and the student body at large, before final enactment is scheduled by the School

Committee. Although the city is developing its own policies and action plan for climate change, environment and sustainability, there are opportunities for collaboration and mutual benefit for the city and the school district, which will be addressed here.

Student education and student involvement have played an important role in the CCES policy development. While it is obvious that we have a start on climate change action with the Fuller and Brophy solar projects, students have played leadership roles in focusing attention on recycling with their involvement with streaming [The Story of Plastic](#), and with their work on tree planting and elimination of styrofoam from school cafeterias.

The financial implications of climate change, environment and sustainability action are also very substantial for the school district and the city. There are utility savings to be had through Power Purchase Agreements, and savings through energy efficiency improvements, paper use reduction, improved transportation management, composting, local supply sourcing and so on. All of these have counterparts on the cityside, so collaboration with the school district on all of these endeavors is very important.

1. **Tree-Plenish Program.** In May, 2021, students from Framingham High School planted 270 trees in residents' backyards as part of the [Tree-Plenish program](#) . Efforts such as these can be expanded with student involvement, given this great start. There are many potential tree planting sites on Framingham school properties and this activity offers a way to engage students of all ages in a significant climate change mitigation effort. The Tree-Plenish effort was focused on residential locations, so it seems very reasonable to involve the city in scaling the effort out to include city owned properties. One especially important fact to keep in mind is that the tree canopy in Framingham is very sparse on the south side. There are various environmental justice efforts across the U.S. to increase tree canopy in low income areas, with multiple benefits to residents, including reducing summer time ambient temperatures. There is a real opportunity here for the city to make significant environmental improvements and to stimulate community engagement.
2. **Environmental Science Educational Programs, Out of School Activities and Student Civic Engagement.** There is growing student interest in Environmental Science courses and in related out of school activities, such as the high school Environmental Awareness Club. Already, student input has helped move the school district to eliminate styrofoam from its cafeterias. There is significant potential to foster this interest by forming a whole-of-Framingham view of environmental projects which can engage students of all ages. We have various cleanup days, but a more strategic citywide approach, which ties to a raft of environmental opportunities, may not only benefit the city, if capitalized on, but expand student opportunities for both civic engagement and career development. There are opportunities for city/school district governance Climate Change, Environment and Sustainability collaboration with the City Sustainability Committee and/or the City Council's Subcommittee on the Environment along the

lines of those developed by the joint meetings of the City Council Finance subcommittee and the School Committee Finance & Operations subcommittee. That would create a natural path for student input to city government on all of these key issues, and reciprocal city government support for the school district as it expands its efforts in this area which is so vital to its students' future.

3. **Solar Roofs.** It is obvious that solar panel installations will be largely driven from the city side in terms of planning, staging and execution, but it is worth noting that a tremendous opportunity exists for multiplying school district roof solar by more than a factor of 10 beyond the planned Fuller project. Thirteen school roofs are coming due for replacement in the next several years, and integration of solar into those new roofing projects poses a logistical challenge, especially as the federal government's current incentive window for reaping utility savings for the school district closes at the end of 2023.
4. **Solar Canopies.** The same 2023 time frame applies to solar canopies, but here parking lots offer an immediate path for solar installations, as many have already had their stormwater management upgrades and are shovel ready for solar. Even the unfinished stormwater management projects at: Framingham High School, Walsh, Cameron, McCarthy, Barbieri, Harmony Grove and Hemenway, might be accelerated to allow associated solar canopy projects to be underway by the end of 2023, for each eligible site based on sun angles and tree cover. Note that all solar canopy projects can have integrated charging stations for electric vehicles.
5. **School Parking Lot StormWater Management.** Seven school school parking lots are lined up to have EPA mandated stormwater management and repaving: Walsh, Cameron, McCarthy, Barbieri, Harmony Grove, Hemenway, Framingham High School. The cost is currently estimated at \$3.5 million. Finishing these projects gates the installation of solar canopies, so they are critical to attend to if the end of 2023 deadline for solar project starts is to be met.
6. **Paper Use Reduction.** There has been a substantial effort underway in FPS to reduce paper use to save money and as a CCES action. There is potentially a lot of commonality in the approaches used by FPS to achieve its aims in this area, and cityside practices, and there may be a significant mutual benefit to sharing best practices between city government and all educational institutions. Paper has been a large budget item in FPS for years, but the paper reduction effort has had a significant impact on the annual operating budget. Savings in this area are recurring, and are aligned with the ramp up of digital education which accelerated during the pandemic. As part of this effort, attention has been paid to more efficient use of paper through better layout design and tools to track usage.
7. **Municipal Aggregation.** Municipal Aggregation is an established approach to bring greener energy into the city with options for selecting the percentage of green energy delivered and the cost per KWh. Multiple other municipalities have been able to complete agreements to implement such schemes, but Framingham seems to have been unable to get to target on this. If the Mayor and City Council can finally bring Municipal Aggregation to Framingham, it will provide the school district and other eligible educational sites the options to lower utility costs and increase the percentage of sustainable energy.

8. **Composting.** School cafeterias generate a lot of compostable waste which offers an opportunity to reduce the school district trash stream. However, currently there is no citywide approach to this issue. In other communities, composting companies have been engaged to provide municipal composting services at reduced cost to residents and to expand the base of composting users. Such companies can also be engaged to handle school district composting for the greater benefit of the environment and the school district budget. There seems to be no impediment at all to rapid progress on this issue. Within the school district context, there would also be a clear benefit to students who are very interested not only to have composting become a reality, but could use the products of composting to enhance their gardening efforts, where they exist in the schools.

Government Process Improvements

Based on an analysis of educational-related work, progress, and challenges during the first four years as a city; the role of the Mayor as fiscal policy leader and School Committee Member has; and from public feedback from FPS and non-FPS partners, the following recommendations on government process improvements are:

Recommended Actions on Government Process Improvements:

1. *The Mayor's Role as a Non-Voting, Ex-Officio Framingham School Committee Member:* Attend all School Committee Meetings, or send a staff designee when absent. Arrange at least one public meeting, early in the budget planning cycle, of the School Committee's Finance & Operations subcommittee with the Mayor and CFO in attendance, as part of the budget process.
2. *The Mayor's Role as a Convener to Coordinate Amongst All Educational Institutions in the City:* As a suggestion, it is recommended for the Mayor to have recurring meetings with all educational institutions in the city in order to build relationships, check in on timely topics, and organize around actionable items for sustained and new partnerships. The business community can be brought in as needed.
3. *Using Public Meetings to Advance Progress:* Work with public bodies to bring transparency to the policy development and partnership process. Utilize the Mayor's role in the Charter to have a seat at the table of all public bodies when necessary to facilitate agenda items and discussions leading to actionable improvements. The City Council's Education, Library, Arts & Culture Subcommittee provides a potential previously untapped option.
4. *City Procurement Efficiencies to Benefit All Stakeholders:* Assign Procurement Responsibility for Schools to the School Staff, rather than the city procurement office. Continue the authorization for FPS to utilize a P-Card to order educational materials, inclusive of out of country purchases of necessary books in foreign languages.
5. *Interdepartmental Collaboration:* 1. Complete the [feasibility study](#) of merging school and municipal administrative services and/or creating additional opportunities for collaboration and efficiency. 2. Require that the City's

Community and Economic Development Division coordinate with the school department when reviewing new housing proposals in advance of Planning Board and/or Zoning Board meetings. 3. Quarterly Joint Public Meetings or Forums with the Superintendent and Department of Public Health and School Committee and Board of Health on pandemic and non-pandemic topics of mutual purview. 4. Draft and release a document outlining the FPS and Parks Department specific responsibility at all school sites so there is no uncertainty about roles, responsibilities, scheduling, and more. 5. Invite the FPS Superintendent to municipal Department Head meetings, and non-FPS stakeholders when necessary. 6. Communicate needs with state and federal elected and appointed officials when necessary to move the Mayor's goals forward.

Background on Government Process Improvements:

- 1. The Mayor's Role as a Non-Voting, Ex-Officio Framingham School Committee Member.** Mayor Sisitsky said it well in a campaign statement which we agree with, "Show up. I will be an active, present Mayor who will attend School Committee meetings, PTO meetings, and school-related cultural, athletic, and artistic events as I have for the last fifty years in Framingham. I will be the biggest fan, cheerleader and advocate for our schoolchildren, their coaches, teachers and administrators and school staff – because that's what a Mayor should be," and "Work with the School Committee and Superintendent on the annual operating and capital budget process to ensure transparency, collaboration and buy-in from all relevant stakeholders in order to equitably fund our school system."
- 2. The Mayor's Role as a Convener to Coordinate Amongst All Educational Institutions in the City.** Examples in other cities have reflected that success comes from an active Mayor who convenes stakeholders and brings them together to take actionable, mutually beneficial steps for their community. Together, the Mayor and partners can build on past successes and tap into existing relationships and models that continue joint efforts to create pathways for students to gain opportunities for career trajectories. This can be done through FPS, Keefe Tech, McAuliffe Charter, private schools including PreK, vocational and technical education, FSU, MassBay, and industry partners such as the Rotary Club, Framingham Business Association, and MetroWest Chamber of Commerce. Public feedback came in, stressing that it is important for the Mayor to see education as a whole, and not as separate units.
- 3. Using Public Meetings to Advance Progress.** The Mayor can use his role to influence agenda setting on a variety of public bodies which have purview on education related activities. This includes but is not limited to the City Council, School Committee for FPS, Keefe Tech School Committee, Board of Health, Disability Commission, and Parks and Recreation Commission. One untapped mechanism to publically vet new concepts and bring stakeholders together is the Education, Library, Arts & Culture Subcommittee of the City Council. The scope

of this subcommittee outlined in their rules include the following, “Engagement with educational institutions beyond the Framingham Public Schools including private preschools and elementary and secondary schools, Christa McAuliffe Charter School, Keefe Regional Technical School, Mass Bay Community College, Framingham State University, and other educational programming in the City of Framingham; Examination of educational matters with significance for racial, geographic, and economic equity; Guiding community engagement on educational issues of importance to Framingham residents without a direct connection to the public school system; and Supporting long-range capital planning process including potential school construction as needed. During the first two years this group existed there were no agenda items relating to higher education, libraries, private preschools, or industry partnerships. We recommend the Mayor collaborate with the new members of this committee to consider if this existing scope provides for a venue for the Mayor to partner and facilitate further progress.

4. **City Procurement Efficiencies to Benefit All Stakeholders.** We concur with the FPS request for procurement responsibilities for all School Department related matters fall under the purview of the FPS Executive Director of Finance & Operations who also holds a procurement license in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This will help to minimize delays that have stalled many district contracts with vendors and which have negatively impacted students, staff, and overall school operations.
5. **Interdepartmental Collaboration.** Continuing the practice of including the FPS Superintendent at municipal department head meetings and on email lists is important. Other non-FPS education partners can be brought in when necessary. Overall, coordination across municipal departments occurs, and can always be improved. This coordination can lead to efforts such as streamlining payroll, facilities, and HR services to further save staff time and potentially funds; requiring FPS and other educational stakeholders to have a reviewing role for all new residential developments; pandemic safety measures; and education/parks department activities.

Conclusion

Our recommendations are embedded in each area of focus above:

- [COVID-19 Pandemic Management](#)
- [Equity in Education](#)
- [Operating Budget for the Framingham Public Schools](#)
- [Capital Infrastructure and Budget for the Framingham Public Schools](#)
- [Climate Change, Environment and Sustainability](#)
- [Government Process Improvements](#)

In addition, we offer the following general recommendations.

1. *Broad collection of community input.* Throughout this process, there were many people with both general and specific thoughts about what is working within the Framingham Public Schools and other educational institutions and areas that could be improved. The Mayor, Superintendent, and other respective educational organizations (when appropriate for a Mayor to get involved) should work

together to have a clear process by which this feedback can be collected, analyzed systematically, and identify ways where the city can support progress.

2. *Expansion to other educational organizations.* Much of the analysis and recommendations in this report are focused on Framingham Public Schools. In some ways, this makes sense; it is naturally the greatest portion of the City's budget due to the required essential mission, large number of facilities; and has a higher enrollment than other educational organizations. However, a more comprehensive education-wide conversation outlined in the Government Process Improvement section about other organizations would benefit the city in general, and the mayor specifically.

When former President Clinton visited Framingham High School in 1994, he said, "We wanted to come here because this school has a reputation for academic excellence and because it is so diverse, because it's a school that really looks like America." We wrote our report with Framingham's proud legacy of diversity and pursuit of equity in mind. Now, by working to enact our recommendations, we feel that the Mayor on behalf of our city has the best chance to make multiple tangible education-based improvements to help our residents and students thrive.

Appendices

A. FPS Feedback on Mr. Sisitsky's Campaign Statements:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/15UZN1rMAI9qowDIqoeDIb5voSMfiObCBurLdKh38KCK/edit?usp=sharing>

B. Summary of Feedback Received from the Public Engagement Process

In order to ensure responders felt as comfortable as possible, all had the option to submit anonymous feedback through the survey, or email directly with their name known. The following is a summary of the public feedback received by the Education Transition Subcommittee:

COVID-19 Pandemic Management:

- Praise for the new policy to double recess in grades K-5, schools remaining open, mask requirements, and COVID-19 testing for staff and students in FPS
- COVID-19 vaccine mandate for staff recommended
- COVID-19 vaccine mandate for students participating in extracurricular activities recommended

Equity in Education:

- Focus on the challenge of structural/institutional racism
- Attract and retain a diverse staff, including guidance counselors and therapists of color
- Equitable opportunities provided to all students in the district without relying on one-size-fits-all policies and micromanagement
- Allow high school athletes to also participate in after school clubs
- Focus more on struggling learners

- Updating the curriculum to reflect BIPOC history and not just European history
- Impact of police in schools on students and families of color
- Increase diversity on those who participate in the FPS SAGE program for gifted students
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion professional development for the School Committee
- More antiracist education or culturally responsive teaching
- Expand access to PreK
- More emphasis on raising critical thinkers who can challenge what is unjust

Operating Budget for the Framingham Public Schools:

- Competitive salaries for staff to support retention resulting from teachers feeling valued, respected, supported, and fairly compensated
- Hire more staff who provide direct services to students (coaches, counselors, educators), rather than in the Central Office
- The new administration should be sure the Framingham Schools receive proper budgeting support
- Publish a detailed and frequently updated data dashboard showing what funding is spent on, beyond the annual budget book narrative with a one time year in review

Capital Infrastructure and Budget for the Framingham Public Schools:

- Multiple responses in favor of building a new Early Childhood Center PreK-5 south of Route 9

Climate Change, Environment and Sustainability:

- Make an environmental-related science class a requirement for high school or middle school students

Government Process Improvements:

- This feedback is so important for our education leaders to consider and act on
- Continue efforts to create pathways for students to go on to productive careers
- Important for the city to see education as a whole, and not as separate units. The Mayor should meet on a regular basis with all educational institutions in the city
- The collaborations have been many and the cooperation has been outstanding, but we will need to keep focused on our shared goals and the opportunities that we can pursue together. The new Mayor should place on his (probably rather long) list of priorities engaging with each of the partners and with them together, as well as attending to the critical role of education pathways in helping the least fortunate gain opportunities to career trajectories
- Communicate updates to staff/families before media
- Better relationships with community organizations
- You have rare gems in the Superintendent and the Chair of the School Committee. Hold on tight to them
- Listen, observe, and learn from teachers

Environmental Subcommittee Recommendations

Committee Co-Chairs: Aimee Powelka & Ron Chick

Committee Members: Judith Grove, Claudia Ruiz-Gustafson, Isabella Petroni, Luciana Soares, Ken Weiss

January 18, 2022

Mayor Sisitsky,

Thank you for this opportunity to provide recommendations to help establish the Environmental priorities for your administration and to talk about our goals for Framingham. Below are our recommendations based upon the themes, current strengths, common barriers, and opportunities that arose across all of our conversations and priorities. We present a one-page summary followed by detailed recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Declare climate change, environmental justice and waste reduction as key priorities
2. Promote and celebrate our natural resources and a vision of Framingham as a “Rail Trail Hub.” Appoint Pedestrian and Trails Committee members.
3. Create a plan to address deficiencies to remediate pollution in our lakes, ponds, brooks and rivers
4. Prioritize the south side and diverse communities in appointments and projects to begin addressing the existing imbalance of open space and natural resources in Framingham
5. Expand communication, education and outreach with our diverse communities, starting with Spanish and Portuguese, to learn their environmental priorities
6. Support and utilize the skills and resources of the Sustainability Committee
7. Convene monthly inter-departmental sustainability meetings with participation at the executive level to ensure progress and implementation and maximize collaborative efforts
8. Add sustainability criteria and incentives to all procurement processes and cost analyses

CURRENT STRENGTHS

- Dedicated staff in the Capital Projects, Planning and Economic Development, Conservation and Parks Departments
- Significant grant funding and resources successfully secured by the staff
- \$12 million in state funding to finally clean up toxic waste at the former General Chemical site
- Framingham Public Schools communication and outreach capabilities, including the Adult English as a Second Language program
- Numerous, committed volunteer groups leading our citizens in environmental efforts
- Diverse natural resources including lakes, ponds, trails, forests and open spaces
- Exciting opportunities to acquire and deploy clean energy funding and develop rail trails

BARRIERS & OBSTACLES

- Need for executive-level commitment and vision to establish Framingham as a Massachusetts “Rail Trail Hub”, clean energy leader and environmental justice and equity champion
- Absence of sustainability criteria in public procurement and selection
- Cutting or deferring current projects to avoid spending in the coming year even if that project will save funds for taxpayers in future years
- Insufficient communication to the public regarding efforts and successes
- Public materials and services not available in Portuguese and Spanish
- Limited financial & personnel resources to support grants, project management and outreach
- Silos between departments limiting progress and creativity
- Change aversion and the initiative to question “that’s the way it has always been done”
- History of insufficient funding for Framingham Conservation and Parks & Recreation

PRIORITY SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS (in alphabetical order by category)

- **Climate Change and Resiliency**
 - Support creation of a climate action plan that includes extensive public outreach in multiple languages
 - Demonstrate Framingham government’s commitment to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions
 - Install solar on all suitable city and school buildings, parking lots and open spaces.
 - Institute an electric vehicle-first as policy for all new municipal vehicles with available models. Hybrid electric as a secondary preference.
 - Plan for transition to 100% renewable energy procurement for municipal and school use.
 - Community-wide greenhouse gas reductions
 - Move aggressively forward with community choice aggregation to provide a residents a reliable and cleaner electricity supply
 - Introduce “Framingham Meatless Mondays” as a cost-saving way for residents to reduce their own emissions
 - Identify and make publicly available a list of commercial parking lots >100 spaces for solar carports.
 - Building codes & new development
 - Implement incentives, such as more rapid reviews, for developers using net zero building codes for new development.
 - Push for adoption of the forthcoming stretch energy building code and/or a net zero building code.
 - Allow accessory dwelling units to be built by right to accommodate the need for more affordable housing without consuming additional open spaces.

- **Environmental Justice and Equity**

- Work with federal and state delegations to secure funding to fully clean up toxic waste sites
- Preferentially protect open spaces in south Framingham and northeast Framingham
- Prioritize utilization of the existing plans for the remediation and re-design of Mary Dennison Park.
- Open access to the Sudbury Aqueduct west to Farm Pond and east to Natick
- Appoint to the Planning Board and the Zoning Board of Appeals equal representation across north/south, language and cultural diversity in the City
- Language access
 - Provide sustainability education and outreach in multiple languages
 - Conduct a marketing program in multiple languages warning of higher costs with non-Eversource provided electricity supply
- Energy Burden
 - Lower income populations pay a higher percentage of their income for their energy needs
 - Promote programs, such as the Mass Save Community First Partnership, that work to reduce energy costs through energy efficiency
 - Conduct extensive outreach to landlords to make our rental units safer and more affordable for Framingham's renters
 - Support Community Choice Aggregation as a reliable source of affordable electricity for all of our residents
- Food
 - Expand and support community gardening, especially in low-income communities
 - Designate a DPW employee to act as the contact for our community local gardens
 - Success story: Daniel's Table received a grant to donate blueberry bushes to low-income families

- **Open Space and Natural Resources**

- Make Lake Washakum accessible year round
- Prioritize neighborhood input to create a plan to remediate Cedar Swamp
- Create an opportunity for additional green and open spaces, through funding such as the Community Preservation Fund, by making the "Tax Default Property" list available to the public
- Identify and protect the open space of Harmony Grove as an important community landmark
- Identify new funding sources to remediate pollution in our lakes, ponds, brooks and rivers
- Review and make accessible water quality assessments for Framingham's lakes, ponds, brooks and the Sudbury River

- Install an ADA dock on the Sudbury River in Saxonville using Nyanza funding being held by the non-profit OARS
 - Appoint and support the “Pedestrian And Trails Committee” members
 - Secure available trail rights to the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail and others
 - Develop the Representative Chris Walsh Memorial Aqueduct Trail
 - Acquire Parcel C in Cushing so that we can expand the park and stop future development
 - Link the Upper Charles Trail from Milford to Farm Pond
 - Support a publicly accessible trail around Farm Pond
 - Provide access/dock on Farm Pond for canoes, sailboats, kayaks
 - Support the acquisition of 11 acres of open space property at 103 Guild Street for neighborhood trails
 - Formalize walking trails along the Sudbury aqueduct and the Weston aqueduct and link the latter to Callahan State Park
 - Upgrade the Carol Getchell Trail and connect it to the Cochituate Rail Trail on the Saxonville Levee
 - Purchase the “Old State Lumber Property” in Saxonville for a multigenerational Riverside Park
 - Monitor and protect Framingham’s water resources including a federally designated “Wild and Scenic” Sudbury River
- **Zero Waste**
 - Provide education and enforcement resources around single-use plastics reduction for local businesses
 - Improve recycling by applying visual charts to residential recycling bins and through multi-lingual education and outreach
 - Create a Swap Shop for residents to donate and receive items from others in the community
 - Issue an RFP for city-wide curbside food scrap collection service. Benefits include reduced trash costs to City and reduced composting rates for residents

Public Survey - Responses Received by 1/18/21

The environmental subcommittee received comments from 20 respondees, the most of any committee. The unedited responses are included here as an indication of public sentiment.

1. To legitimize this committee, there should be an annual budget. (editor's note - presumably they mean the Sustainability Committee rather than the transition committee)
2. I'm a current student at Framingham High School and the amount of plastic used in the cafeteria is unsustainable in the long term. There's also the matter of recycling as the high school has recycling bins but doesn't actually recycle the material in said bins and just combines trash and recycling.
3. Create a better green city by having charging stations for electric cars and ebikes.
Initiatives to have public building utilizing solar power.
4. The city should make environmentally conscious decisions and events known to emphasize that it's a priority. The high school's environmental club does a good job of this if you need any inspiration on actions.
5. The city needs to prioritize solar panels where ever we can put them. Additionally, we need to get our building roofs in good enough condition to put solar panels on them. If this is too costly, solar companies will replace the roofs for a share of the solar credits. This NEEDS to happen. The city buys solar from outside sources and has rapidly decaying buildings. The personal "need for control" by some department heads should not impact doing the right thing for our city.
6. Please move the City toward policies that protect the environment and reduce our impact on climate change. Discourage sprawl and encourage more dense housing development on land that has been previously been developed and where there is easy access to transportation and amenities, stores and services. Allow ADUs (accessory dwelling units) to accommodate need for more affordable housing, without the need for sprawl. Encourage weatherization, heat pump technology and other energy savers. Enhance passive recreation and trails.
7. It would be nice to have activities planned along the rail trail (think Natick's fire pits along the CRT on New Years Eve - encouraging exercise, outdoor activities for all ages), scavenger hunts, lunch and learn, nature workshops ... plus activities having to do with the waterways (Farm Pond, Sudbury River, Lake Cochituate) that bring people closer to nature, which will encourage them to be better stewards as well. They could incorporate history, the arts, etc. These events could be free, run by volunteers. Also, companies could be invited to sponsor sections of the CRT or areas along the waterways to keep them clean of trash. See what the group Keep Framingham Beautiful has done.
8. Framingham should declare a Climate Emergency. All decisions should then flow from that emergency declaration -- no project, proposal, or spending plan should be considered without paying close attention to climate mitigation and carbon reduction. This is the responsibility of government at all levels in the face of the crisis we often try to ignore.

We also need to pay special attention to environmental justice. Whatever climate mitigation or

carbon reduction plans we pursue must keep marginalized communities front and center. For example, if you have to choose, electrify school buses (helping all children breathe cleaner air) before adding individual charging stations for wealthier electric car owners (but don't wait too long on those either)!

Your work is very important; thank you for serving.

9. We need to get the weeds out of the Sudbury River.
10. It is important for the city to make visible steps in reducing its carbon footprint and modeling sustainability to its residents. Easy wins in this regard can be advocating for more solar installations on city buildings, building solar canopies on city owned parking lots, and replacing current fleets of city vehicles with EVs and hybrids. There is no reason that most vehicles could not be transitioned to less polluting vehicles ASAP. It would also be great to have a curbside composting program encouraged by the city. Many neighboring communities are embracing this, and Framingham could do so as well. Framingham has long had a posture of being afraid of being a pioneer in various avenues -- and that is unnecessary! How exciting would it be to see one of the state's largest communities lead the way in putting some of these choices front and center! Please don't hesitate on this -- we cannot wait!!
11. Revive programs and initiate new ones, ie Rainbarrel program, home composting, noise reduction programs from increased delivery trucks in neighbourhoods, fines for blocking roads while performing home deliveries. Framingham could become a leader in this. Educating the public, improve communication/outreach with residents. Reduce tossed trash by increasing presence of trash barrels and signage to show pride in keeping Framingham looking great. Increase use of public transportation by building sidewalks, effective crosswalks. I would like to see a sidewalk on Fountain Street (West of Winter St) to allow for safe walking and biking to the train and or to the downtown for students as well as residents, Thank you.
12. Please drive Environmental improvement in our City:
 - 1) Solar
 - 2) Heating - push state insulation and heat pump initiatives
 - 3) As we replace roofs, add insulation
 - 4) promote electrification of transit through adding charging stations
 - 5) start electrifying City fleet, and look to minimize diesel
 - 6) seek to add transit options (more MWRTA, add train frequency, try to add a train to Tech park
13. Framingham has in the past too often taken it's significant natural resources for granted, only to see them lost to uncontrolled development or irreparably damaged by the effects of such development. It is important that the City invest in environmental quality improvements to ensure that all the City's residents have access to clean air and water and opportunities to experience natural settings.
14. This group should get in touch with the new Community Preservation Committee to see where they may be headed. We certainly need to preserve open space and replace use of fossil fuels wherever possible. The City should embrace the use of Solar power on its own buildings and look into consolidation of alternative energy supplies for both commercial and residential use.

Enhancing the use of electric vehicles by the City would help and also setting up more EV charging stations at key locations in the city would be good.

15. I'm a District 2 resident of Framingham. For me, there are a couple of key priorities that I'm interested in seeing Framingham continue to pursue in relation to the environment (as well as pedestrian and bicycle transportation).

1.) Creating a Levee Connector between the CRT & Carol Getchell Trail - Now that the Cochetuate Rail Trail (CRT) has officially connected downtown Natick and downtown Saxonville, it is really important to find a way to connect the CRT with the Carol Getchell trail via a levee connection trail. It would be great to see the city's support of this project.

And then 2.), Bruce Freeman Trail - bringing the Bruce Freeman trail to Framingham would be an incredible addition to Framingham bicycle network, and would be an economic lift to Framingham by allowing bikers to visit our community from all the way up in Lowell. Thanks!

16. Extend the pension liability paydown date from 2030 to 2040. That would free up \$10 million in annual recurring capital to rapidly replace most school roofs and enable rapid roof solar installations to be built out. Same for completing the school parking lot storm water management, including the huge HS parking lot, so we could rapidly install solar parking lots in all schools. Plant huge numbers of trees on city property.

17. There are currently a number of positive feedback loops that are accelerating climate change. We need to make a rapid change to renewable energy, energy conservation and dramatically reduce greenhouse emissions in the next ten years or our climate stands a good chance of swinging out of control.

A good place to start this rapid transition is at the community level. Every decision being made and every project being undertaken at the City level should take this into account. The City buildings all need to be made more energy efficient, solar energy needs to be rapidly expanded, electric vehicle use needs to be promoted. An electricity aggregation program should be established in Framingham where residents can opt in for 100 renewable energy or for lesser amounts.

The position of the Sustainability Coordinator in Framingham should be strengthened so that the City can lead this transition by example. Every environmental project being considered by the City should not have to be overly scrutinized for its profitability. The future costs due to climate change will far outweigh any extra costs being spent now to move the City to renewable energy.

18. Become more intentional about ways to be greener.

19. The Cochetuate Rail Trail (CRT) has been a great success - providing open spaces for public, recreational use and raising the quality of life for city residents. This is clearly a good use of taxpayer money for the benefit of all city residents. Therefore, I'd like to see similar projects proposed and developed as quickly as possible. For example, connecting Cushing Park to Farm Pond via a pedestrian bridge (like the one over Rt. 30 on the CRT) and developing Farm Pond into an attractive (multi-seasonal) recreational area - the use of which could draw many people to frequent businesses (restaurants, etc.) in downtown Framingham.

20. LEAD BY EXAMPLE - the city is a designated Green Community - communicate its current

accomplishments and build on its successes and start talking about going beyond Green Community status with renewables to generate energy for city operations.

FOLLOW THE SUSTAINABILITY ORDINANCE - this already outlines much of the organization that the City needs to do (task force etc). Also the Sustainability Committee's responsibilities are outlined in the Ordinance.

DON'T REINVENT THE WHEEL - there are many great examples of established sustainability goals and sustainability plans (ex. net zero and electricity aggregation) completed by other Communities and Organizations - use them; the Sustainability Committee has been meeting with other towns, that is a good start. Resolutions may sound nice but are not very effective - Town Meeting was long on Resolutions and short on results.

ESTABLISH YOUR WORTH - it's important to establish the Sustainability Committee as a value added group willing to help both the city government and its residents in reaching a sustainable future. (For example - renewables and energy conservation saves money and reduces greenhouse gas emissions; by looking at and then finding ways to eliminate unnecessary waste, we saved money and lowered regulatory liability).

SUSTAINABILITY IS IMPORTANT AND IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY - the Sustainability Coordinator position should be raised to a Director position in City Government with staff assigned in each department to help with sustainability responsibility (for example, attending the internal energy/sustainability) task force meetings. At a minimum, the current position should report to a high level manager who is familiar with the concepts and who has experience with Sustainability Planning and projects so that the City gets the most for its efforts in this area, including savings in both dollars and emissions. For example, the City Council should stop micromanaging contracts (such as PPA for solar) that are typical and with which other municipalities have already worked.

REGULATORY COMPLIANCE: systems should be set up to monitor compliance with environmental regulations in City operations and should continue to look for ways to consolidate actions and lessen the impact on the environment (Environmental Management Systems - the Mayor knows about this from Natick). Efforts should be made to consolidate environmental local bylaws under one group such as Conservation.

OPEN SPACE: Continue to seek out and secure open space in Framingham which is rapidly disappearing. In particular, more open space is needed on the south side and in Environmental Justice areas in particular.

EJ: Ask DEP to make meaningful inroads in assisting the City in improving environmental conditions in EJ areas.

Health Subcommittee Transition Report

Submitted to Mayor Charlie Sisitsky
January 20, 2022

Introduction

As noted in the City of Framingham's 'Long Range Strategic Plan 1.0' issued on December 30, 2020, Health and Human Services is listed as one of the 5 Core Competencies of Municipal Government and is charged with "Providing all with the resources needed to be well in mind, body, and spirit." Although Framingham is rich in healthcare services, not all residents have easy access to these services. New, collaborative and coordinated strategies towards building upon, enhancing, and enriching existing structures are needed to eliminate barriers so that healthcare is equitable, inclusive, and proactively addresses the needs of all Framingham's residents.

The Health Transition Report defines health and wellness as anything that affects physical and mental well-being and has identified four areas of focus – 1. public health services, 2. access to behavioral health services, 3. services and support for vulnerable populations, and 4. the pandemic. Strategies for addressing each area of focus have been outlined as well as actions the City can take to improve the health of its residents.

Nicole Doak, Co-chair
Shivang Patel, Co-chair
Marty Cohen
Anna Cross
Brian Li
Dr. Milagros Abreu
Dave Miles
Evelyne Philita

Strengthen Public Health Services Available to Framingham Residents

To address current and future needs of residents as they deal with COVID-19, influenza, childhood vaccines, lead testing, chronic diseases (such as asthma, diabetes, prediabetes, or some types of cancer, like prostate), and other health conditions (such as Hepatitis, TB, lead testing, childhood vaccines, substance use, and other public health needs).

Strategies:

- Add to the Department of Public Health a Nurse and Nurse Manager capacity
- Review salary schedules to ensure that they are competitive and can attract qualified professionals
- Add capacity to secure federal, state, and other grants directed toward public health
- Improve local public health data gathering and dissemination
- Enhance community outreach and public health strategies using trained community health workers
- Integrate Framingham Public Health Department activities with those of other municipal departments and community agencies to better address social determinants of health (such as food insecurity, access to healthcare, poverty, housing, etc.)
- Look for opportunities to participate in MA Department of Public Health shared services models for local public health
- Support collaboration among the Framingham Public Health Department, local community-based organizations, and Framingham Public School Department during public health emergencies

Actionable Items:

A. Establish a “Healthy Framingham Coalition”

- Create an efficient and effective coordinated, facilitated central body to connect organizations, advocates, and experts together to proactively and collectively address immediate or emerging health trends and issues that are impacting the overall health of the community.

- Bring community agencies, nonprofit organizations, the Framingham School Department, and advocates with deep ties to specific populations within the community (i.e. youth and families, elders, immigrants, ESL, veterans) together regularly to identify community health challenges and gaps in services, share information about resources and best practices, identify potential solutions, and discuss who is best positioned to meet the need.

B. Improve and Enhance City Communication Strategies

- Create a transparent and robust, multilingual, multi-network communications list that expands the “communications circle” to include trusted community members who can be contacted in a coordinated, systematic way to get accurate information out to the community when needed.

- Create a communications protocol for all city information outreach that ensures that communications are inclusive, accessible, jargon-free, and understandable to all citizens of the community.

- Identify and provide translation of materials in the most frequently used languages in the community based on the 2020 census. All translated materials should be created to meet the needs of our diverse populations (culturally appropriate and sensible).

- Provide a variety of information and outreach materials in multiple languages (flyers, laminated self-adhesive pamphlets, etc.) that can be shared with businesses, community agencies, city departments, etc., that include contact numbers for essential services.

- Increase visibility of the City of Framingham Information Line (508-532-5411) initiated during COVID-19 and located at the central library. The line operates Monday through Friday from 8:30AM-3:30PM. Add resources to include more multilingual support staff. Explore the feasibility of creating a community-wide resource directory.

- Coordinate communication between the City Information Line and the MetroWest Care Connection Service Navigation Line (844-528-6800). The MetroWest Care Connection Service Navigation Line helps match behavioral and social services and is active Monday through Friday. Consultation calls are returned within 24 hours. Multilingual support is available.

C. Reflect Up-to-Date Information on the Framingham Public Health Department's Website

- Ensure the Framingham Department of Public Health's website provides correct and up-to-date information.

D. Hire a Nurse for School Parent Information Center

- Hire a multilingual nurse at the Parent Information Center who can administer childhood vaccines to ensure new students are fully vaccinated, perform the required lead testing, and provide follow-up care (some vaccines require multiple doses). Since the pandemic, Framingham's school and daycare program vaccine compliance rates have dropped significantly from their pre-pandemic compliance rates (according to the MA Department of Public Health).

- Foster collaboration with the school nurse and local nonprofits to connect individuals to medical care. There are community-based organizations helping individuals apply for medical coverage and assisting with navigation into the medical system.

2. Strengthen Access to Behavioral Health Services for All Framingham Residents

To ensure that all residents of Framingham have timely access to culturally and linguistically appropriate mental health and substance use services.

Strategies:

- Work to ensure the timely and effective implementation of the MetroWest Care Connection platform across municipal agencies
- Work with the Framingham Public Schools to assess and ensure the adequacy of behavioral health supports available to students and their families, and improve opportunities for social and emotional learning across all grades, including pre-K
- Expand community outreach and engagement efforts to support those with substance use disorders so that they can receive timely and appropriate services on demand
- Expand access to Naloxone (Narcan) across the city and support individuals and families who are dealing with opioid dependency

Actionable Items

A. Increase Availability of and Training for Narcan

Expand access to Naloxone (Narcan) across the city and support individuals and families who are dealing with opioid dependency.

B. Increase Syringe Disposal Sites

C. Create a Supervised Injection Site

D. Offer Training Active Bystanders (TAB) Program

Offer Training Active Bystanders training for all City employees. This program is offered through Jewish Family Services and Open Spirit. The training offers powerful, actionable tools that can be used by community members when faced with harm-doing (bullying, discrimination, racial injustice, etc.) in our community.

E. Increase On-Site School Nurses, Social Workers, and Psychologists

Schools are in a position to recognize mental health issues. Although the ultimate responsibility lies with parents/guardians, this would be a great first step in attending to the students' needs. Increase staff in schools, but have these positions funded by the City, pulled out of the school budget. Children are citizens first, students second. School staff needs a way to immediately loop in and refer parents/guardians to resources where issues can be addressed as soon as possible.

F. Increase Support for Older Residents

Coordinate with the Callahan Center to have a Health Professional on-site or on-call to work with older residents who may exhibit symptoms or self-report.

G. Anti-Vaping and Adult-Use Marijuana Education

- In each Host Community Agreement between the City and adult-use marijuana locations, require individual vaping canisters to be clearly labeled or distinctly colored if they contain marijuana. Packages of multiple canisters are required to be labeled, but not individual canisters.

- Refer to recreational marijuana as "adult-use marijuana." Studies have shown that the simple change in terminology has resulted in less underage usage.

- Partner with regional networks and non-profits to ramp up education efforts for parents, guardians, students, educators, and the community.

3. Strengthen Basic Services and Supports for Framingham's Most Vulnerable Populations

To ensure that municipal agencies and community providers are working collaboratively to develop and implement best practices for addressing basic human needs.

Strategies:

- Work to provide housing, medical care, and counseling services to the City's single adult homeless population
- Seek ways to connect isolated older adults, including those with disabilities, to socialization activities
- Better coordinate services for new immigrant families
- Improve the community response to food insecurity through greater collaboration, planning, and access improvements
- Develop neighborhood-specific and community-wide initiatives to address positive youth development
- Ensure that equity and inclusion are part of the foundational decision-making from the start so that healthcare is accessible to disproportionately-affected residents

Actionable Items:

A. Increase Support for Residents Experiencing Homelessness

- Increase targeted outreach and support
- Increase access to needed items like weather-appropriate clothing, food, and personal care items in places where those who are experiencing homelessness congregate
- Offer work opportunities on a transactional basis as many of those experiencing homelessness may not have the means to apply for traditional jobs
- Improve community outreach to persons experiencing homelessness

B. Hire a City of Framingham Social Worker

- A City of Framingham Social Worker would be responsible for responding to and coordinating requests for assistance through the City Information Line. A social worker also could coordinate insurance navigators, SNAP coordinators, referrals to MetroWest Care Connection and MetroWest Food Collaborative, and collaborate with agencies and community partners to address some of the issues that are identified by the Health Coalition.

C. Create Welcome Packet for New Residents

- Create a "Welcome to Framingham" multilingual packet of information containing pertinent information relating to American culture and community for new residents to be shared and distributed by various organizations including the Framingham Public Schools Welcome Center. Several nonprofits have similar packets already developed that could be enhanced or consolidated to create the City of Framingham packet.

D. Utilize and Support Framingham Library Resources

- Build upon and add resources to support the structures already in place (City Information Line, Bookmobile, Business Center, Literacy Center) at the Framingham Library and re-institute the Framingham Welcome Center that was located in the library.

E. Use Community-Based Outreach Model to Improve Access to Healthcare

- Improve and build upon the successful community-based COVID-19 outreach model Framingham has in place. The COVID-19 outreach model utilizes community-based organization with ties to disproportionately-affected residents. Framingham can use that model to make healthcare more accessible.

F. Understand and Eliminate healthcare barriers for disproportionately affected residents by:

- Increasing access to primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention
- Ensuring adequate public transportation to medical care
- Assisting with applying for medical and dental insurance coverage
- Screening and offering self-management support for chronic diseases and underlying medical conditions
- Assisting with federal nutrition programs
- Coordinating and assisting with appointments and follow-up appointments
- Educating parents and new immigrants
- Increasing cultural representation in health care professionals
- Increasing access to free testing for COVID-19, flu, or any future pathogens impacting public health

4. Strengthen COVID-19 Response

To ensure that municipal agencies and community providers are working collaboratively, effectively, and quickly to mitigate the spread of the pandemic, and to provide appropriate support for all residents, especially those disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

Strategies:

- Increase free testing sites
- Improve communication and information
- Improve vaccination and testing rates
- Increase contact tracing support
- Expand targeted efforts for those disproportionately-affected

Actionable Items:

A. Distribute High Performance Masks

Provide high performance masks to Framingham Public Schools students and residents in need.

B. Consider Vaccine Mandates

Consider mandating COVID-19 vaccinations for municipal employees and Framingham Public School students.

C. Track Cases by District/Neighborhood

Internally track COVID-19 cases by district or neighborhood to facilitate supporting areas with high transmission rates.

D. Increase Testing Resources

- Framingham residents need more free testing sites, specifically drive-thru sites, that are not affected by weather conditions.
- Increase access to free testing sites through more flexible hours (9AM to 9PM) and include multiple testing locations throughout the city.
- Publicize free COVID testing kits available from <https://www.covidtests.gov/>

E. Mandate Return of Pooled Testing Consent Form

55% percent of high school, 46% of middle school, and 20% of elementary school students haven't returned the opt-in pooled testing consent forms. Mandating the return of the consent form may increase the number of students participating in pooled testing.

F. Increase the School COVID-19 Team

The school COVID-19 team was disbanded in May 2021. It's been reinstated, but not with the same number of people or capacity. The team needs to grow to meet the increased demands. A public health representation from the Framingham Public Health Department as well as a representative who can advise on DESE guidance should also be included.

G. Increase School Contact Tracing

There needs to be more support for school testing and contact tracing. We are not sufficiently or appropriately testing or contact tracing. We need to revert to notifying vaccinated students and staff if they are a close contact, not just unvaccinated students and staff. Schools are not contact tracing over long weekends or vacations. Meaning, families in the classroom of a student who tests positive on a Friday aren't being notified until school resumes.

H. Accept Testing Support from CIC

The CIC offered regional support to school leaders in various communities, but Framingham has not requested support from the regional testers. Accepting testing support from CIC could help meet the increasing demands on testing capacity.

I. Distribute masks, hand sanitizer, and COVID-19 information for businesses to have available on-site**J. Expand Vaccine Equity Group Updates**

Provide regular data updates on how Vaccine Equity Group is meeting its goals (number of clinics being held, number and identity of organizations providing services, number and identity of locations targeted for outreach, etc.)

K. Expand Targeted Efforts for Disproportionately-Affected Residents

- Effectively trace individuals and businesses exposed in disproportionately affected communities
- Support COVID-19-positive individuals and employers with resources and services. This is critical in order for the exposed individuals to comply with the recommended local public health quarantine guidelines
- Continue to target disproportionately affected residents through the Vaccine Equity Program by using community-based organizations that are trusted sources of information to disseminate information and implement interventions and policies intended to reduce the spread
- Invest in community-based organizations working with high-risk populations to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and promote efforts to reduce high-prevalence of underlying conditions and the impact of COVID-19 through screening and treatment

L. Increase Community Vaccine Clinics

- Increasing the number and locations of community vaccine clinics increases community access to the vaccine.

Memorandum

To: Charles Sisitsky, Mayor-Elect, Framingham

Intergovernmental Affairs Subcommittee

Membership of the team includes:

- City Councilor At Large Janet Leombruno
- State Representative Jack Patrick Lewis
- Mary Wu McGuire, SMOC
- City Councilor, District 6 Philip Ottaviani
- State Representative Maria Duaine Robinson

Representatives Lewis and Robinson co-chaired this committee with the intent of developing processes and setting expectations for discussions between governmental and government-adjacent entities. We have developed the following principles and recommendations for the transition team with the hope of a productive working relationship between all involved by laying out initial thoughts and goals for our work together.

Intergovernmental Communication

Under this heading, we anticipate that the Sisitsky Administration will regularly communicate with elected officials at all levels.

1. All electeds: We hope that the Administration will reach out formally or informally when important events are occurring in Framingham. Similarly, should the Administration choose to testify or attend events on Beacon or Capitol Hill, advanced notification is anticipated. Electeds would appreciate heads up before any major announcement and will respect any “embargoed” releases until they are officially released from the Administration.
2. City Council: The Council would like the Administration to be responsive on email and to be available for short reports at the beginning of council meetings. There is not an expectation for the Mayor’s office to attend the entirety of Council meetings unless specifically requested in advance.
 - a. There is an expectation that the Chair of the Council will inform other members of information as received from the Administration.
3. School Committee: Per the Mayor-Elect’s platform, we anticipate he will attend regular school committee meetings as an ex-officio member and communicate any concerns to the chair thereof.
 - a. Similarly, there is an expectation that the Chair of the School Committee will inform other members of information as received from the Administration.
4. Legislators: Any forthcoming policy items, such as Home Rule petitions or major statewide policy positions from the Administration, should be communicated to legislators in advance, either formally or informally. Legislators appreciate being included on any grant requests and are always happy to send in letters of support for grant requests, which can increase the probability of award.

Unfinished Business Items

As part of the transition, both city and state officials are aware of unfinished business items from the Mayor's office.

1. Funding opportunities: State officials are aware of funding opportunities, either through bond bills, local earmarks through annual budget bills, or other state-funded opportunities that have yet to be accessed or maximized. A partial list is available here as an Appendix. Acknowledging that between ARPA funding, BIF funding, and potential BBB funding, the City has an unprecedented opportunity to work on previously unfunded projects, including major capital projects. Understanding the priority of requests from the city (and potentially the schools) will be key for assisting other governmental organizations.
2. Policy Measures: The City Council is aware of outstanding ordinances sent to the Mayor's office in previous terms. A partial list is available here as an Appendix. We recommend the Mayor discuss these items early with the new Council to understand the top priorities for quick passage.

Constituent Services

The Sisitsky Administration has been clear that constituent services and responsiveness will be a top priority. To ensure that this process will be successful, we recommend a clear chain of command and process between all electeds and their offices. We have laid out expectations below; should any of these need to be revisited, we anticipate the Administration will reach out within Q1 of 2021 to set new processes.

1. City Council: Councilors expect that they can discuss constituent needs with Department Heads and that the Department Heads will be responsive to requests. We do not anticipate that City Councilors will reach out directly to other City employees.
2. State Legislators: Legislators expect there to be a single point of contact within the Mayor's office for local constituent needs that cannot be resolved at the state level. Similarly, we anticipate that same point of contact will pass on any state-related questions or concerns to our offices directly. We anticipate this person will be within the Mayor's core front office team and will be identified in Q1 of 2021. This person may also want to be looped in to City Councilor constituent requests.
3. External organizations: With additional needs for social services for residents throughout Framingham, SMOC and other service providers would like to be in regular contact with the Administration about constituent needs. We anticipate that the same point of contact for Legislators may be the point of contact for service organizations.

Long-Term Planning:

1. Charter Review: The Administration should consider the forthcoming 2023 charter review and what kind of intergovernmental involvement will be included. We acknowledge that this may be a lengthy and contentious process, but we hope the Administration will be willing to engage other entities fully to maintain a robust and effective process.

- a. Our recommendation of involvement includes but is certainly not limited to a subcommittee of three appointed City Councilors, at least two legislators, and representatives of major civic organizations.
2. Capital Planning: One item that became clear to this subcommittee was that there is no central entity bringing together major organizations to do capital planning within Framingham. This includes but is not limited to state projects (courthouse, prison), city projects (parking garages, Memorial Building), K-12 education (new elementary school), higher education (MassBay and FSU), civic organizations (SMOC, Advocates, Wayside), quasi-governmental groups (MWRTA) and more. We highly recommend that leaders from these groups and others identified by the Administration have a regular working group to discuss and inform each other of long-term plans for growing capital projects in Framingham. We recommend that the Mayor's office pulls this planning together and helps to steer the long-term direction.

Immediate Action Items:

1. A meeting with the state delegation and the Mayor's policy team to discuss funding opportunities and the Home Rule process.
2. A meeting with the Council (or Council President) to discuss existing passed policy priorities and upcoming funding opportunities.
3. A regular working group of major entities within Framingham to discuss capital projects and planning within the City.

Operations and Personnel Subcommittee

Mayor Sisitsky Transition Team

January 2022

Co-chairs: George P. King and Nancy Novo O'Connor

Members:

Dennis Giombetti

Susan Nichol

Adam Sisitsky

Doug Stephan

Cathy Miles

When Framingham transitioned from town to city four years ago, many significant changes and modifications were necessary in the structure and function of our government. As we move forward as a city, responsive, transparent, inclusive and efficient leadership, along with a commitment to providing outstanding service to its residents, should be the critical goals that drive decisions and strategy. It is natural and desirable that shifts within our structure and culture occur in the pursuit of these goals, as we learn what is effective, what is unproductive, and what becomes necessary in response to change.

This Operations and Personnel Committee reviewed segments of our current government and policies and suggested and/or supported organizational changes, as well as increased focus on certain areas and issues. Included in our report are changes to the organizational structure of the mayor's office, clarification and suggestions regarding certain key positions, the importance of a focus on diverse and bilingual staff, suggestions for efficiencies and a desire to see significant, increased emphasis on customer service for our residents, as well as collaboration among departments and divisions. We acknowledge that due to the timing of the transition report completion and the beginning of Mayor Sisitsky's term, some items may already be completed, initiated or rejected by the time the full Transition Team report is disseminated.

The committee is grateful for the opportunity to provide our ideas and suggestions to the new administration, and wishes them success in the next four years of Framingham's growth as a city.

Currently unfunded positions

- We recommend the mayor request the council fund the current unfunded positions – Human Resources Director and Planning and Community Development Director - as soon as possible in January.

Mayor's Office Organization and Key Positions

- We recommend the reorganization of the mayor's office, where the current Senior Advisor position will morph into a Chief of Staff. This will alleviate the current cumbersome flow of all the positions reporting directly to the mayor. We attach a simple organizational chart of the proposed new structure.
- We recommend the following positions, which currently report directly to the mayor, report to the Chief of Staff: Citizen Participation Officer; Public Information Officer; Licensing Officer; and Super Records Access Officer.
- We recommend the following positions report directly to the mayor: Chief of Staff; Chief Operating Officer; Chief Financial Officer; Executive Assistant, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer, and City Solicitor.
 - Note that though currently the CFO reports to the COO, the committee strongly recommends the CFO report directly to the mayor, as the city's budgetary and financial issues should be arbitrated at the highest levels, and direct contact should be routine.
 - The committee also recommends the Executive Assistant have dual reporting responsibility, with a "dotted line" to the chief of staff. The Executive Assistant will deal with more than just the mayor's issues and activities, and some responsibilities may appropriately reside in the chief of staff's sphere, or have overlap.
 - We recommend the DEI Officer report to and have access to the mayor, but this particular position should have relationships and consistent communication with the COS, the COO, others in the mayor's office, and department and division staff. It should not be an island, but part of a collaborative team working together to accomplish diversity, equity and inclusion goals across the city. We expect the DEI position to develop and change over time, as the city's needs and resources transform over time, and the role's relationships and connections to other staff should not remain stagnant, but be flexible and grow with the job.
- The following Divisions and Departments should report directly to the Chief Operating Officer: Police, Fire, Human Resources, Health, Inspectional Services, Planning and Community Development, Parks, Recreation and Culture, Department of Public Works, Library and Capital Projects and Facilities.
- We recommend the city retain the position of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer, and that this currently open position be filled as soon as possible in the new year. We also recommend the job description for this position be reviewed and clarified, and that a vision and clear goals be thoughtfully defined, along with measurements for success in the role. The ability to speak Spanish and/or Portuguese would be desirable. Areas of improvement for the city with an action plan should be detailed and described. An important focus for this position should be developing a City Language Access Plan, or

similar tool, to improve multilingual communication across all divisions and departments in the city. This position should work closely with the Citizen Participation Officer, all division heads, and others on the mayor's office team.

- The committee discussed the Citizen Participation Officer, and its importance and function in lowering barriers to engagement, especially with our bilingual populations, which comprise at least 40% of our residents. We discussed the importance of the CPO being able to speak Spanish and/or Portuguese, and we are aware Mayor Sisitsky and his team are working very hard on outreach to find the right fit for this role. The ability to speak with all of our residents in a manner that immediately establishes a level of comfort and trust cannot be overemphasized. Success in the role would be difficult, though not impossible, to achieve otherwise. The candidate would need the skills to communicate how the everyday issues that matter to residents can be influenced by engagement with, and having a voice in, local government. We stress the city's need to significantly improve the outreach and communication with our Brazilian and Latino residents, and that achieving these are critical to the success and future of the city.
- We support and encourage the mayor's desire to include a Constituent Services function in the mayor's office. This position would assist residents with resolving problems, finding information and assistance, and in general support a customer service-oriented culture in the city. This may mean a constituent services function could be incorporated into a current position or positions, filled by finding efficiencies within and outside the mayor's office, or employing another creative solution. This would be preferable to requesting creation of a new position. It was difficult for the committee to make specific recommendations without intimate knowledge of the workload and functions of all the current roles, but Mayor Sisitsky and his team should continue to research this idea and explore possibilities. As a public-facing and focused position, bi-lingualism would be a desirable skill in this job.
- We recommend the review and possible revision of the Public Information Officer job description, consider whether "webmaster" should be part of it this role, and determine how much support it should have from IT and other departments. The PIO should be focused on effective, timely and informative communications on behalf of the city, and the work should always be aligned with the administration's commitment to transparency, openness and inclusion. The PIO should strive to maintain cooperative relationships with all media outlets and utilize social media in an effective and appropriate fashion, but should also strive to reach all residents using additional, creative methods and approaches. Appropriate translations of all communications are critical.

Overall focus and commitment to diversity and inclusivity

- The committee recommends our new mayor conduct the hiring and filling of positions in such a manner that talented, diverse, and multilingual people are sought, hired and retained. The manner and method may vary, from personal outreach to a wide search

collecting many applicants, but processes and hires should be handled with full transparency, and the goal of having an inclusive, representative and skilled staff always a priority.

- The committee recommends that whenever possible, the city should seek candidates for public-facing positions that speak Spanish or Portuguese, to better serve the large and growing number of our residents that communicate more easily in these languages, and create a welcoming, supportive government and city that harnesses and thrives on the talent and skills of a diverse staff.

Efficiencies and Synergies

As we are still in the midst of a pandemic that has affected every aspect of life, including our economy and financial future, as well as it being good government practice in general, we encourage the administration to identify and act upon opportunities for eliminating redundancies, improving efficiencies and creating synergies in divisions, departments and all areas across the city. The administration will need time to review and understand the current workings of the city, but the committee has the following suggestions at this time.

- The reorganization of the Planning and Community Development Department should be of the utmost importance and is critical to reenergizing our economic development strategy, goals and actions. This is a reorganization required by the charter and that should have been developed and put in place during the prior administration, but was delayed and then poorly outlined. We understand Mayor Sisitsky is already working on these changes rather than waiting for the lengthy process of recruiting, hiring and orienting a new director. Any final reorganizing to complete the plan should be a priority for the new Director, and implementing the changes and hiring necessary staff is critical. It should be a priority for the new Director.
- The committee recommends exploration of establishing an in-house counsel operation for day-to-day legal needs, along with the customary outside law firm, chosen by the mayor, to handle more complicated issues and litigation. This shift should be at minimum cost-neutral, as the retainer with outside counsel should be renegotiated, and in the long run, could result in savings and efficiencies, as well as easier access to legal consultation when needed.
- We support and strongly recommend that Mayor Sisitsky, in collaboration with the City Council, School Committee, and Superintendent, move forward with exploration of a merger and restructuring of the City's Facilities, Capital Projects, and Sustainability departments, and the School Building and Grounds Department, as outlined in the mayor's platform. The potential to increase efficiencies and create reoccurring cost savings should be researched and given serious consideration. Areas of synergies and redundancies should be identified, including in regard to functions, personnel and equipment.

- The administration should review best practices from other cities and towns and discover any tools or technology that would be useful to improve the speed, ease and efficiency of the records access officer functions. The fulfilling of public records requests compliant with FOIA requirements should be a transparent and timely process. The city could reach out to our new CFO who was the Town Administrator in Wayland, but also should compare our processes with those of similarly sized cities and towns, and determine if there are best practices utilized by others that the city should adopt.
- We recommend the mayor clarify and assert the responsibilities and authority of the Traffic Commission, so that recommendations and orders are prioritized and executed by the DPW or appropriate departments. Traffic is a topic that has urgency and importance to many residents, and creation of the Commission was included in the charter to address the safety, efficiency and flow of traffic on our streets and in our neighborhoods. It is widely believed that the authority and “teeth” of the commission remained unclear, vague and unsupported during its first four years, and this must change if the widespread traffic problems in the city are ever to be addressed effectively and timely.

Customer Service Commitment and Overall Culture

- The committee strongly recommends that the new mayor emphasize responsive, helpful and cooperative customer service to residents from all staff, and collaboration and professionalism within and between city departments and divisions. When considering candidates, their ability to perform in accordance with these priorities should be considered. The mayor should re-implement a customer service policy, with consideration of making it a possible ordinance. The administration should build a culture of service to the public and strong working relationships between divisions, departments and staff.
- The committee strongly recommends that the mayor and his staff review, modify, administer and oversee the Policy on Customer Service, originally issued by the Town of Framingham Board of Selectmen in May 2000 (attached). This policy was previously in place, though has seemingly dropped off the radar in recent years. A copy is attached to this report. We believe that the spirit of this policy is critical to the administration's commitment to transparency and service to the residents of Framingham, and needs to become an entrenched part of every-day culture across all City divisions, departments and staff. Though the policy needs a few appropriate updates, it should continue to require the residents of Framingham be afforded timely, accurate and thoughtful responses to their inquiries and concerns at all times, and from all staff. Methods of measuring customer experience and satisfaction should be implemented and consistently utilized. The ability of candidates to satisfy City customer service expectations should be considered when hiring, and performance in this area should be included in evaluations and assessments of employees. Consideration of requiring new hires to provide signed

acknowledgment of reviewing the policy, ranking in this area in annual performance reviews or other methods to cement customer service in the city culture is encouraged.

- The committee recommends that the administration assemble an IT task force or Technology Committee to review the current website and other platforms used by the city in order to generate recommendations and improvements. The city is in need of a more intuitive, practical, useful and accessible web experience for its users. This is the most important hub of information for our residents, but could use enhancement in both design, content and accessibility. The task force should include a wide array of stakeholders including residents, businesses, local organizations, and technology staff. In addition, the city should review the current patchwork of technology functions, administrators, access and disparate approaches and find more effective, efficient and consistent methods of creating content, updating web pages and accomplishing other tasks now performed by many staff members across the city.
- We encourage the exploration of retaining greeters inside the city hall doors, as has been discussed many times in the past but never executed. Greeters would ideally be volunteers of varying ages and backgrounds, would assist visitors with questions and direct them to appropriate offices and personnel. This would align well with a renewed commitment to customer service, alleviate some of the interruptions other offices and staff experience when assisting visitors, and help provide a welcoming atmosphere in the our city hall.



**Town of Framingham
Board of Selectmen**

Policy on Customer Service

Issue date: May 1, 2000

Type of policy: New (X) Amendment ()

Effective date: May 1, 2000

Level: Department () Division () Town Wide (X)

Policy Statement

The Town of Framingham is committed to operating in an efficient customer service orientated manner throughout its entire operation. Excellent customer service results in an organization meeting the needs of its customers in a consistent and professional manner.

References

None.

Special Terms

None.

Policy Description

I. Employee Responsibility

All employees of the Town of Framingham are to be made aware of the importance of customer service within the Town's operation. Employees should be clearly aware that customer service abilities in all levels of their work will greatly impact employment evaluations and promotional

opportunities. The Town of Framingham will recognize employees for excellence in customer service through the Employee Recognition Program.

A. Supervisors and Management Personnel

Leadership by example is a key component to excellence in customer service. Town management must continually promote in their actions, words, and writing the paramount importance of customer service standards. Performance evaluations of management personnel will be substantially impacted by the ability of a manager to provide high levels of customer service and the ability to train and supervise employees to do the same.

II. Standards of Performance

The Town recognizes that for a successful interaction with a customer not only must the end result be satisfactory, the entire experience must be reflective of a quality organization. There are many aspects of our operations that must clearly be based in the ideal of excellent customer service.

A. Processes

There are many processes within Town government that require formal procedures be followed. Departments must strive to make these processes as simple as possible to access and complete. Simplification of forms, easy to understand directions and short time lines are key examples of efforts that should be put forth to assure customer service orientated processes are in place.

B. Marketing and Communication

The Town provides information and services to residents on an ongoing basis. Communication with the public be it oral or written, must be clear, concise, consistent and easy to access. Departments should strive to utilize all communication possibilities as efficiently as possible to assure that the residents remain informed and aware on a regular basis.

C. Printed Material

All printed material issued by the Town of Framingham should be professional in appearance.

D. Phone and Written Inquiries

All inquiries by either phone or writing will be responded to by the proper person in an expedient manner.

Phone calls placed to a specific person are to be taken whenever possible. Initial phone messages must be returned within a 24-hour period. Employees at all levels must adhere to this timeline. If an employee is not available, the caller should be given that information and informed when the person will be available. Alternative help should of course be offered in the interim.

All written inquiries, be they complaints, compliments or suggestions should be acknowledged in an appropriate manner. The initial response should be within no more than three days of receipt of a letter.

The value of automated phone answering systems should not be discounted solely in the pursuit of excellence in customer service. Any department that has such a device must assure that it can be easily bypassed to achieve direct contact with the office.

E. Information and Referral

Many times residents will inquire at Town Hall for issues that are not within our domain. Every effort should be made to refer them to the governmental agency or community service agency that is best able to handle their concern. All referrals should include a phone number or location of the suggested agency if at all possible.

Internal referrals should be handled in a similar manner. If a person on the phone is being referred to a different department the caller should be given the direct dial number for future reference and then automatically transferred through the Centrex system. Customers should not be made to call back at that time.

If a referral is made to another Town department, there must be certainty that the referral is correct. If there is some doubt as to the proper referral, the referring department should ascertain the appropriate contact before connecting or directing the customer. If this information is not obtainable the customer should be directed to a supervisor in the initiating department.

III. Internal Service Departments

Several Town departments are in the existence to serve other Town departments directly and not the general public. The Town's customer service standards are fully applicable to our internal service departments. The ability of the Town to meet its own needs in a professional, efficient and customer service orientated manner is a key ingredient to offering such a service to the public.

IV. Measurement

The Town of Framingham is committed to continual improvement of its operations based on the philosophy of excellence in customer service. Proper measurement of customer service initiatives is vital to this goal.

A. Complaints

Each department must have a complaint log. Whether a complaint is formal or informal, written or verbal it must be entered into the complaint log. The substance of the log is up to individual departments, but must include at minimum the name of the complainant if available, the time and date of the complaint, the nature of the complaint, the employee handling the situation and the disposition of the situation.

B. Monitors

From time to time the Town will utilize monitors for the express purpose of evaluating customer service responses from various Town agencies. The monitors will file a complete report of their experience, describing any perceived strengths and weakness in detail, with the Town Manager and the involved agencies. The purpose of this program is to be instructive in nature and not punitive.

C. Customer Service Evaluation Card

Every department will have available at each customer service point a return mailer card, which allows input on our performance. These cards should be prominently displayed with easy customer access.

Recreation and Cultural Affairs Transition Team Subcommittee

Introductory Comments:

Framingham proudly markets itself as a wonderful place to “live, work, learn, play and enjoy”. We certainly agree that the City of Framingham has many rich and diverse recreational and cultural amenities, programs and facilities providing residents with a wide range of opportunities to enrich and entertain themselves and their families. Appendix C and the spreadsheet that accompanies this report demonstrates the rich breadth and diversity of these many offerings.

Framingham is well served by its many recreational arts and cultural facilities, programs, and people. The size and diversity of our population provides the unique opportunity for very rich and comprehensive offerings which make Framingham an exciting place in which to live, to work, to learn, to play and to enjoy.

While much exists, a lot more can be done to broaden and improve facilities and support people of all ages and cultures all over our city.

Two primary needs are:

- 1) A real recognition by city leadership that these arts and recreational activities are a vital part of a strong city and need active, amplified voices to make sure their needs are being met by city resources.

- 2) Improved coordination among the various arts and recreational players themselves to provide a collective voice to the city.

The Recreation and Cultural Affairs Transition Team Subcommittee acknowledges the breadth of rich programming afforded to city residents and encourages the mayor and his administration to expand upon these by promoting all we have to offer to a wider swath of folks across the community, informing residents of these offerings and making them more accessible and available to all city residents.

Our report is a composite of the feedback from our seven subcommittee members and that provided via the Google Docs survey which the overall Transition Team administered.

Our report is organized as follows:

Identification of Issues, Opportunities, and Ideas

Accessibility, Collaboration and Coordination

Infrastructure

Programming

Recommendations to the Mayor for 2022 (short-term)

Recommendations to the Mayor for 2023 and Beyond (long-term)

Highlighting Successful Recreational and Cultural Programming

Critical Stakeholder Feedback to our Report

Additional Comments from Individual Subcommittee Members

Closing Comments

Appendix A - Framingham START Program Model

Appendix B – Invictus Forever Program

Appendix C – Recreational and Cultural Organizations Spreadsheet

Identification of Issues, Opportunities, and Ideas:

In this section we identify the most important issues, opportunities, and ideas relative to recreational and cultural affairs programming currently available in the City of Framingham and potential new facilities and additional programming in the future. The items in this section are not in a priority order.

(A.) Accessibility, Collaboration, and Coordination:

1. Lack of a central repository detailing all the recreational and cultural programs and amenities available to city residents. A central, web accessible repository of recreational and cultural facilities, programs and amenities needs to be developed and maintained allowing residents one stop shopping for learning of all that is available to them and their families.
2. Lack of outreach to our diverse populations can be improved through multi-lingual communication to all city residents of the rich and diverse recreational and cultural opportunities available to all city residents. The central repository should contain multi-lingual presentation of the information regarding facilities, programs, and amenities.
3. Accessibility to many of the city's recreational and cultural facilities and programs due to geographical and economic limitations faced by many of our city residents is an issue of concern. Recognizing that many of these are run by private enterprises, the city should encourage in the planning for new facilities and programs or amenities and venues for those that consideration of the availability of public transportation and walk routes be given that would make them more accessible to those without their own personal transportation.
4. A survey of city residents should be undertaken to determine the accessibility of recreational and cultural offerings across various demographics; age, race, ethnic, linguistic, geographic, and socio-economic groupings. Create an instrument that would better gauge current participation levels in our city's recreational and cultural programming across a variety of demographics. Utilize the survey to determine ways in which accessibility to our recreational and cultural offerings to a diverse population can be extended and expanded.

5. The city organizational chart lists “Parks, Recreation and Culture” as one of the city’s many divisions. Yet there is no line item under this division for cultural affairs. To elevate cultural affairs within the Parks and Recreation Division, a Cultural Affairs Liaison entry should be added to the organizational chart and a Cultural Affairs Liaison position created and filled. This individual would be the city’s liaison to the many cultural entities and organizations in Framingham and coordinate the promotion of the many activities of these organizations through the Parks and Recreation Department in collaboration with the Cultural Council.
6. Reconstitute the former Framingham START partnership team, broadening the scope to include not only cultural organizations but also recreational and sports programs and organizations. Seek grant funding for an economic impact study on these cultural and recreational activities in Framingham and projected return on investments made in these organizations and facilities. Refer to Appendix A for more details.
7. Suburban Athletic Facility. This large indoor facility on Roxanna Street in south Framingham has indoor and adjacent soccer fields, a swimming pool and more. It’s run by the SMOC program and provides a home for many youth focused services from pre-school thru high school. While it's run by a private nonprofit it’s programs could be better coordinated with other city run and private programs.
8. Greater recreational and cultural program coordination at a city level should include the following organizations and entities: YMCA, Scouts, Boys and Girls Club, SMOC, Invictus Forever, religious organization run programs, public access TV including AFTV, FEC and the GOVT Channel and the Framingham libraries.
9. A way should be found to reduce the method and cost of renting gym time at Framingham Public School facilities for various youth sports organizations. The factors which determine cost (ex. required custodial support, etc.) need to be reassessed based on the type of use.
10. Engaging with youth on the south side of Framingham is challenging. Explore ways to increase programming accessibility for southside youth to city wide recreational programs.
11. Allow for the rental of the Framingham Public School gyms over school breaks.
12. There are several opportunities for enhanced collaboration in the City of Framingham with the YMCA and other organizations that could help

provide increased programs and services that our kids and families count on. Areas of focus in the MetroWest YMCA's Strategic plan are the following:

- a. Providing swim Lessons to children in South Framingham and other underserved areas of the city.
 - b. Growing our collaborative efforts to address food insecurity.
 - c. Universal Pre-K Early Learning and Care.
 - d. Work Force Development
 - e. Senior Isolation
 - f. Summer programming for Middle School
13. Actively engage the business community in coordinating recreational and cultural offerings in the city in a way that is mutually beneficial to promote better participation in the programming and greater patronage at local establishments; restaurants, brew houses, etc. A sponsorship program might be explored.
 14. Greater accessibility opportunities for our disabled residents to participate in the myriad of recreational and cultural programs afforded to all of our citizens must be elevated to a high priority.

(B.) Infrastructure:

1. The School Department has identified the need for a new elementary school located south of Route 135. When considering a parcel for purchase to accommodate the new school consideration should be given to recreational amenities which the parcel could accommodate; playgrounds and ball and soccer fields, etc.
2. Work on the Mary Dennison Park needs to be prioritized and completed soon thus opening a valuable recreational facility for southside residents. Some funding was obtained and now is the time to get this done. This should be a major priority now. Utilize the Mary Dennison park as a satellite location for little league baseball, youth softball, soccer, football and lacrosse games/practices. A small "skate spot" might be added along with other amenities.
3. Deterioration of various major city facilities which limit or preclude their usage for recreational or cultural events; Nevin's Hall, Atheneum Hall, etc. The city needs to update and prioritize its long-term capital plan and assess

whether some of these facilities can be adequately and feasibly repaired to bring them back on-line as recreational or cultural venues or whether they have served their useful life in this capacity. Protect, preserve, and celebrate our historic heritage. Invest in preservation and adaptive reuse of historic City properties.

4. The Cochituate Rail Trail is a gem of an asset to the community. Parking for residents travelling from across Framingham to this asset is extremely limited. To enhance accessibility to the rail trail expanded parking options are needed and they need to be publicized. The city should work with the private sector entities adjacent to the rail trail, the former State Lumber yard, 1 School Street, TJX, Home Depot, etc., to open more available parking to city residents wishing to use the trail.
5. Cochituate Rail Trail amenities and programming. The Natick portion of the trail contains many privately paid for amenities such as mile markers and historical placards outlining the long history of rail service along the Cochituate Rail Trail. Framingham needs to encourage and organize similar privately funded amenities along our portion of the trail. Sponsorship should be sought. It would be nice to have activities planned along the rail trail (ex. Natick's fire pits along the CRT on New Year's Eve) encouraging exercise, outdoor activities for all ages, scavenger hunts, lunch and learn, nature workshops ... plus activities having to do with the waterways (Farm Pond, Sudbury River, Lake Cochituate) that bring people closer to nature, which will encourage them to be better stewards as well. They could incorporate history, the arts, etc. These events could be free, run by volunteers. Also, companies could be invited to sponsor sections of the CRT or areas along the waterways to keep them clean of trash.
6. Creating a levee connector between the Cochituate Rail Trail (CRT) and the Carol Getchell Trail. Now that the CRT has officially connected downtown Natick and downtown Saxonville, it is important to find a way to connect the CRT with the Carol Getchell trail via a levee connection trail.
7. Work on adding the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail to the list of community assets has gone slowly over the past many years. The opening of this rail trail would afford residents in another area of the city the opportunity to partake in all the rail trail system has to offer. Develop a plan for acquiring the necessary land from CSX and work on obtaining state grants for acquisition and development of the Bruce Freeman rail trail.

8. Expansion of bicycle and pedestrian lanes where appropriate has been a slow process. As we work to encourage more and more travel by means other than motor vehicles, we need to expand the number of thoroughfares with bicycle and pedestrian lanes. Framingham is extremely proactive on roadway repair. When major thoroughfares are being maintained a checklist item for the DPW in its planning process should be to do a feasibility study on whether the stretch of road under repair is a good candidate for a bicycle or pedestrian lane. Union Avenue is again in planning.
9. Bowditch Field Athletic and Cultural complex is our flagstone facility. Built in the 1930's as a public works project it was upgraded and re-dedicated in recent years. The facility houses a large multi-purpose football stadium which includes about 5000 permanent bleachers on both sides of the field. The football field is home to the Framingham State University Rams football team and the Framingham High School Flyers football team. The complex also includes a separate Carey baseball field, home to the Framingham High School and Post 74 Legion baseball teams, four tennis courts, two basketball courts, a track and field practice area, and the headquarters of the City Parks Department. Occasional public events such as a food truck festival, movie nights, occasional soccer games and more are held there. Nonetheless, the facility remains unused for much of the year. The cost of use, issues with a grass field and lack of easy television broadcasting service limit use. The baseball complex could benefit from additional seating, better team support and practice aids.
10. Bowditch Complex infrastructure upgrades.
 - a. Bowditch football/soccer field is underutilized due to restrictions set for its use. It's unfortunate that this field is used only a dozen times a year and is not open to the public. Fewer restrictions and reduced fees would allow for greater public use.
 - b. The goal should be to make this a turf field.
 - c. The baseball field could use numerous upgrades including:
 - i. Real dugouts (cinder block, not chain link fence)
 - ii. Batting cage
 - iii. Bullpens
 - iv. Better storage for L screens, dry line chalkers, rakes, quick dry, etc.
 - v. Building for announcers and scoreboard operators.

- d. Add pickleball courts or additional lines/nets on the tennis courts.
 - e. Turf baseball and football fields would be maintenance free and accessible allowing for more physical activity.
11. Loring Arena. Built in the 1960's and renovated in 2020, the city web site notes that Loring Arena provides safe, stable, and reliable skating services to area residents with regularly scheduled public skating and public stick time that is open to all. In addition, the arena supports multiple local user groups including Framingham Youth Hockey, Framingham High School boys and girls hockey, Framingham Middle School boys and girls hockey, Framingham Parks and Recreation programs, Holliston High School Hockey, Framingham State College Hockey, Ashland High School Hockey, and multiple user groups. Loring has also been a venue for MIAA Hockey Tournaments. Ice time is scheduled to maximally achieve the mission statement and provide a balance among the many skating interests. Recent renovations added needed locker rooms, a warm area, an upgraded entrance and much more. However, the facility remains one whose use is seasonal. Exploration should be done to see what could be done to allow its use for non-ice-based events in other times of the year.
 12. Dudley Road Complex. The city has developed several public facilities along Dudley Road to the west of Farm Pond. These include the Cushing Park walking trails and park, the historic Cushing chapel, several little league baseball and open fields used by football and soccer plus the new Skate Park. A dog park is in the design and planning phases. These spaces are well maintained and widely used. Farm Pond however could offer new water related programs (boating, swan boats or other creative ideas) after a study of prior restrictions, insurance considerations and more. The skate park could be considered for expansion as well as its use has shown it to be a well-used amenity. Create an outdoors ice skating rink, maybe at Farm Pond or Framingham Green for people of all ages.
 13. Cushing Park. Large field areas could be dual purposed to accommodate real grass playing fields for soccer. That would provide much needed soccer venues for kids and not interfere with the current use of the park by residents. Open more public bathrooms or porta-potties at Cushing Park and all other city parks.
 14. Farm Pond. Connecting Cushing Park to Farm Pond via a pedestrian bridge (like the one over Route 30 on the CRT) and developing Farm Pond into an attractive (multi-seasonal) recreational area - the use of which could

encourage many people to frequent businesses (restaurants, etc.) in downtown Framingham.

15. Nevins Hall is one of the larger halls between Boston and Worcester seating almost 3000. It is centrally located in downtown Framingham. However, as a performance venue it suffers from acoustical problems, lack of dressing room space previously removed for lower-level offices and other theatrical accoutrements. Presently the city is not staffed to manage, book, promote or oversee performances. A third-party contractor could be retained to drive such an effort as the city is unlikely to have such expertise. It's time to address that by professional promoters/contractors who might define an arts purpose and an architect to repurpose it. It has rarely been used for its intended purpose in recent years resulting in a huge loss to the local arts community on many levels. It could be a major arts jewel for the city. It might also be transformed into a city community center with flexible rooms designed to support local needs for various services and clubs be they choral space, card playing clubs, youth gatherings, community policing activities, computer, and other job-related training and far more, all designed to support the community. At some point the city will have to decide if Nevins can play a role in Framingham's cultural scene or if the space can be better used for much needed office space in City Hall perhaps avoiding greater expenses elsewhere.
16. Framingham History Center. The not-for-profit FHC oversees and preserves three historic buildings in Framingham Center that it leases from the town. The historic Village Hall was recently upgraded by the city making its large hall more accessible and utilized. The Old Academy and Edgell Library both have deferred maintenance needs that will need additional city funding over the next 5-10 years. While not a part of the FHC, the historic Atheneum in Saxonville continues to seek city and private funding for its restoration. These all need to be a part of the city's capital budget planning.
17. Infrastructure upgrades at Framingham High School. Upgrades to the back gym at FHS.
 - a. Side hoops are unusable.
 - b. Scoreboard is broken.
 - c. Batting cage net interferes with the back half court.
 - d. Poor lighting.

18. Infrastructure upgrades at Walsh Middle School. Upgrades to the Walsh gyms.
 - a. Scoreboard broken in large gym.
 - b. Bleachers in large gym need work to fix or replace.
 - c. Small gym floor is narrow and has dead spots.
19. Infrastructure upgrades at Hemenway Elementary School. Hemenway School gym. Rims need work; one main rim is bent; side rims are not at uniform or proper height; only 3 side rims.
20. Infrastructure upgrades at the McCarthy Elementary School. McCarthy School gym. McCarthy floor needs a 3-point arc.
21. Enhancements to the softball complex at Walsh/Dunning to include a permanent storage facility, a concession stand and announcers/scorers booth. The ability to host tournaments at this facility would generate revenue for the program as well local business. Additional recommendations include:
 - a. Upgrade the fields and add scoreboards.
 - b. Repurpose the old tennis courts.
 - c. Create small fields between tennis courts and parking lot for younger developmental program (K thru 2).
 - d. Lights for the fields.
22. Investigate the acquisition of land for the construction of an athletic fieldhouse with indoor basketball courts and track. This would provide additional practice court time and provide the ability to host tournaments. Tournaments would make the travel program more affordable, as well as support local business. Indoor winter track events could be accommodated.
23. Develop a long-range capital plan for moving to turf fields at all city fields starting with Bowditch Field. This would allow for the opening of the new turf fields earlier each spring.
24. Commission an assessment of the city's parks and playgrounds, develop plans to update existing playground infrastructure and consider installing splash pads across the city's playgrounds for families during the summer. Incorporate into the plans expanded adaptive recreational equipment at all city playgrounds for our disabled youth.
25. After the Catholic diocese closed the former Marion High School, they conducted a search for a buyer. To their credit they sold the facility to the not-for-profit Invictus Forever (see appendix B) which serves disabled youth

and adults. The former 4-level, 98,000 square foot high school is in the process of some infrastructure renovations. It has a wide variety of spaces including a cafeteria, 850 seat auditorium with stage, and gymnasium. It clearly could meet a wide range of cultural/recreational activities. They have informally indicated a desire to have the large facility be leased to other organizations within the limits of availability.

26. Much is done to support younger healthy and active youth and adults. Think about recreation resources that can help the full range of older people to remain healthy and active. Include recreation equipment for adults in City parks. Provide well-spaced benches for those who can't walk long distances. Provide welcoming seating areas with benches and landscaping in underutilized sections of parks across the city to encourage social interaction. Integrate an amphitheater with strong cultural and community programming in one or two of the well-used parks in the vicinity of the downtown, such as Farm Pond.

(C.) Programming:

1. Inadequate usage of city facilities allowed for city residents. Restrictions on the usage of Bowditch Field due to the grass field and limited ice time for public skating at Loring Arena are two that come to mind. The construction of a turf field at the Bowditch complex would allow for expanded usage of this facility for a variety of recreational uses; youth football and soccer games, adult soccer tournaments, concerts, fairs, etc.
2. Residents are extremely frustrated by beach closings in early to mid-August each year. Sufficient funding should be provided to the Parks and Recreation budget for hiring staff to keep the 3 major city beaches open from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day.
3. College and university facilities and programs. Framingham is blessed with being the home of a state university and community college. FSU has a full sports program that uses Bowditch field and Loring arena. Its own facilities are used for some local programs such as Keefe Tech and Framingham Youth football. The college's 500 seat McCarthy performance hall, Alumni hall and more offer many cultural programs. Most are free or low cost. These are not well promoted beyond the University, however. Parking is

difficult but could be better coordinated. The university's partnership/ takeover of the Danforth Art Museum saved our local arts museum and school. Its programs need more local support. Coordination by university leaders with broad based cultural and recreational committees would be a way to bridge these gaps and integrate FSU facilities and programs into the community.

4. Private Arts programs. The Amazing Things Arts Center and the Performing Arts Center. The Amazing Things Arts Center, now renamed ATAC, is a relatively small (190 seats max) not for profit arts facility, in a city leased, former firehouse in south Framingham on Hollis Street and is the city's leading public performance facility. A second floor is used for a city LGBTQ program. The Performing Arts Center a small not for profit that offers music lessons to the public. It lost its home in the Danforth condemnation and is temporarily located in the Episcopal Church. Both organizations finances are fragile and could benefit by inclusion in a broader based city arts program effort that increased awareness. The PAC needs a permanent home.
5. Framingham's public schools including Keefe Tech and the McAullife Charter School all offer recreational and cultural programs to students and residents. They maintain a wide variety of gyms, theaters, and other common spaces. While the facilities are actively used by the schools, they could be made available to the public at more favorable pricing than is currently the case. Again, coordination with arts/culture and recreational communities would benefit all.
6. Explore opportunities to greatly expand adaptive recreational programming for our disabled youth and adult population. Framingham has a long way to go to extend to our disabled population the rich recreational and cultural opportunities that are afforded to our non-disabled population.
7. Expand community gardening.
8. Increase as much as possible everyone's access to trails, open spaces, water bodies (e.g., reservoirs) for recreation; include budgeting for marking and mapping, trail maintenance, etc. as many trails seems to be lacking in attention. Put all trail management under the Parks and Recreation Department.
9. Preserve more open space, especially in the Environmental Justice areas of the city.

Recommendations to the Mayor for 2022 (short term):

In this section we identify the top priority short term recommendations for the mayor and his administrative team to consider in 2022. The items in this section are not in a priority order.

1. Conduct a professionally developed, multi-lingual (English, Spanish, Portuguese, Mandarin) current state and future needs assessment survey directed to key leaders and stakeholders who currently provide recreational and cultural facilities, programs, and amenities to the residents of the City of Framingham. The survey would solicit leader and stakeholder comments regarding their current programming and ideas for new and innovative programming in the future.
2. Conduct a professionally developed, multi-lingual (English, Spanish, Portuguese, Mandarin) survey directed to city residents to gauge their use of the various recreational and cultural facilities, programs, and amenities available to the residents of the City of Framingham and their suggestions for new programs and amenities. The survey would seek to gauge resident usage across various demographics; age, racial, ethnic, language, gender, geography and socio-economic measures.
3. Design, develop and implement a central, web accessible repository of recreational and cultural facilities, programs and amenities allowing residents one stop shopping for learning about all that is available to them and their families. Links from this web-page should take users to the web-sites of the organizations sponsoring the many programs and amenities available in Framingham.
4. Continue negotiations with CSX on the acquisition of the land for the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. Apply for various state and private grants to fund the acquisition of the land and the design and development of the rail trail.
5. Organize forums where the leaders from the various city organizations, public and private, who deliver recreational and cultural programs and amenities can gather to coordinate their activities and to collaborate and share best practices and ideas for future innovative programs and amenities.
6. Update the city's long-term capital plan to include timelines for the various facility replacements or upgrades.

7. Design and appoint a new city Recreational and Cultural Affairs board that will be responsible for overseeing joint recreational and cultural affairs programming and amenities in the city. The board will oversee two-way communication between city government and the private and public organizations who provide programs and amenities in both areas.
8. Create two broad based coordinating councils for arts & arts culture and recreational/sports to better coordinate programs, marketing, publicity, and resource use among the many efforts. Each should have an executive committee who reports to the Mayor and City Council on a regular basis to present major needs and opportunities to increase public awareness.
9. Require the DPW to include a feasibility study for bicycle and pedestrian lanes in all major road reconstruction projects starting in 2022.
10. The current Parks and Recreation department could be restructured to give greater emphasis and assistance to cultural and arts activities. To achieve this, update the city's organizational chart to add a Cultural Affairs Liaison line under the "Parks, Recreation and Culture" Division. Create and fund a Cultural Affairs Liaison position in the FY23 budget (effective 7/1/2022) reporting to the senior leadership of the Parks and Recreation Department.
11. Create, fund, and follow thru on a professional study of the Nevins Hall facility and its future use.
12. Complete the upgrades to Mary Dennison Park in a stated period but no more than two years.
13. Review access to programs by often underserved southside residents and develop resources to meet their needs.
14. The beginning of a new term is a great time to get fresh eyes on programs and services so having the mayor and his team conducting visits would be valuable. Leaders of organizations providing vital programs and services could coordinate site visits that are both informative and time efficient.
15. Reduce the bureaucracy on Recreational and Cultural projects and work toward making them more reachable to all our citizens with some enhanced marketing from the city and its boards that oversee such programming.
16. Greater attention and focus on the needs of our disabled citizens through more adaptive and inclusive recreational and cultural infrastructure and programming.

17. Develop a plan for preserving more open space in the Environmental Justice areas of the city.

Recommendations to the Mayor for 2023 and Beyond (long term):

In this section we identify long-term recommendations for the mayor and his administrative team. The items in this section are not in a priority order.

1. Plan for and construct a turf field at Bowditch Field.
2. Roll out of the city's long-term (5 to 10 year) capital plan from a prioritized list of projects mindful that these will compete with other city needs.
3. Provide an annual budget for the new city Recreational and Cultural Affairs board and continue to fund the Cultural Affairs Liaison position within the Parks and Recreation Department.
4. Deferred maintenance of capital projects is an obvious concern for all municipalities and non-profits like the YMCA. Bringing in a third part to develop a 20-year capital investment strategy for parks and all recreational facilities would be a good start.
5. Establishment of a Framingham Cultural and Recreational Office (or Kiosk), sponsored by the local business community. Explore a Welcome Center concept.
6. Enter the design and development phases of the Bruce Freeman rail trail.

Highlighting Successful Recreational and Cultural Programming:

In this section we highlight those recreational and cultural programs and services that are highly successful and would like to call to the mayor's attention.

1. Summer Track Program. The summer track program is offered for kids and adults at Bowditch Field in collaboration between the Parks and Recreation staff and the volunteers from the Greater Framingham Running Club.

Hundreds of city kids and dozens of adults participate in this weekly program from mid-June until mid-August each year.

2. Cochituate Rail Trail. A true gem of a recreational asset whether it be for walkers, runners or bikers. Hundreds of folks utilize the trail from Framingham to Natick and back each day.
3. Aqueduct trails. Thanks to the leadership and vision of the late State Representative Chris Walsh and former Selectman Laurie Lee, the MWRA aqueducts across the city have been opened for passive recreation.
4. Dudley Road Complex. Cushing Park, Farm Pond, the skate park, Cushing Chapel, the ball fields, Loring Arena, the soon to come dog park are all within ½ mile of each other and providing countless recreational amenities to the citizens of Framingham.
5. Team Framingham. The Team Framingham program was established in the fall of 2013 to change the way in which the 22 entries to run the Boston Marathon provided to the City of Framingham by the Boston Athletic Association (BAA) were allocated and administered. The Team Framingham Steering Committee administers the allocation program via an annual lottery each fall open to all city residents and employees of the city government. Since the April 2014 Boston Marathon, 154 of 155 Team Framingham runners have successfully completed the Boston Marathon and have raised more than \$638,000 for dozens of Framingham based charities.
6. Bowditch Field Complex.
7. Framingham History Center.
8. MetroWest Regional YMCA – Framingham. As part of the Y’s commitment to strengthening the foundations of our Framingham community, the facility at 280 Old Connecticut Path was expanded by 7,800-square feet and existing spaces were renovated during 2019 and fully reopened in early 2020 just before the COVID 19 crisis began. This included painting, tiling, upgrading flooring and lighting in many of our program areas. Upgrading many of the building’s mechanical systems were also be addressed as well as many brand new and exciting spaces. This project was an \$8 Million investment for the kids and families of Framingham and the surrounding towns. The Renovation and Expansion project highlights included:
 - a. Completely renovating the Aquatic Center including the pool environmental controls. This pool has been an invaluable resource to

the community for over 50 years where countless children have learned to swim.

- b. A brand new gymnasium was constructed including long awaited air-conditioning.
 - c. A new group exercise center for functional training was created. (Think Turf Floor and Cool New Equipment was created and is very popular with teens and young adults)
 - d. A new group exercise studio was relocated from the ground level in a more convenient upstairs location.
 - e. A beautiful space was repurposed for dance and a variety of other healthy living programs.
 - f. A new community conference was added for training, lectures, meeting, and special activities.
 - g. A café was added off of the lobby area with new areas for members to relax between activities.
 - h. Improving the front walkway for easier access for wheel chairs was created and a new drop off area at the entrance was created for more convenient building access.
 - i. Expansion and the complete renovation of the Early Learning Center created 20 additional slots to the center bringing our capacity up to 100 children.
 - j. A state-of-the-art commercial grade production kitchen was created which proved to be invaluable during the past 2 years. (The Y has prepared over 250,000 meals free of charge in this kitchen to Framingham families.
 - k. A new space focused on youth development was be created in the building's lower level for an after-school program during the week and other youth and family enrichment programs during mornings and weekends. It was invaluable for remote learning when the schools were shut down. It is currently being used to pilot a universal Pre-K program in partnership with the Framingham Public Schools.
9. Summer park concerts, high school theatre, student after school activities, senior activities, wooden soldiers placed around the city.

Critical Stakeholder Feedback to our Report:

In this section we identify key leaders and stakeholders whose feedback regarding the current and future state of recreational and cultural affairs programming should be sought out and incorporated with those of our transition subcommittee members and the transition team survey.

1. Chair of the Parks and Recreation Commission Kathy Hauck and the members of her board.
2. Leaders in the Brazilian and Spanish speaking communities. The Brazilian Community Center. The Framingham Adult ESL program most likely has key contacts in both the Portuguese and Spanish speaking communities in Framingham and could be reached out to identify these leaders.
3. Leaders of state and private organizations who provide recreational and cultural programming; Framingham State, SMOC, Metrowest YMCA, etc.
4. Downtown Framingham Inc.
5. Framingham State University leadership (4 names suggested by Dale Hamel, FSU Executive Vice President).
6. Callahan Senior Center and the Council on Aging.
7. Framingham Public Library system.
8. Garden in the Woods/New England Wildflower Society.
9. Friends of Saxonville.
10. SMOC.
11. Invictus Forever program at the former Marian High School facility.
12. Engagement with Brazilian and black leaders in our community who can help us to deliver a more inclusive message to the mayor.
13. The Framingham Disability Commission for their valuable input on adaptive and inclusive recreational and cultural infrastructure and programming for the many disabled youth and adults in Framingham.
14. Leaders of the Danforth Art Museum, Amazing Things Arts Center and the Framingham History Center.
15. Framingham High School Drama Department.

Additional Comments from Individual Subcommittee Members:

In this section members of our subcommittee individually provide any additional feedback for inclusion in our final report.

Rabbi Sam Blumberg, Temple Beth Am:

“It has been an honor to serve on this transition subcommittee to ensure a smooth beginning to Charlie’s tenure as mayor of this great city. I am proud to be part of a community with such robust offerings for recreation and cultural programming. By examining and assessing current offerings and infrastructure, the Mayor and his team have an opportunity to ensure that we meet the needs of all of Framingham’s residents, from young to old and from all walks of life.”

Mike Bower, Founder of Team Framingham and Member of the Team Framingham Steering Committee:

“Our subcommittee is comprised of members with a wide variety of experience and commitment in the recreational and/or cultural affairs programming offered in Framingham. Our detailed report reflects that experience. The hope that we all have is that these recommendations will help to significantly enhance the breadth and accessibility of the recreational and cultural programming offerings in our city. We look forward to an opportunity to review our findings and recommendations with the mayor and his team either in-person or via a Zoom call. This would provide us the opportunity to answer any questions the mayor or his team may have regarding our report.”

David Hornfischer, Retired VP of Administration and Finance, Berklee College of Music:

“Kudos to Charlie’s smart transition committee idea. The well-structured format drew further coordinated, comprehensive, collaborative thinking on our task to give focus to culture and recreation.

Challenged to offer a creative visionary and personal piece, I'm excited to suggest the following stream of consciousness.

While watching both today's terrific inauguration ceremony and the annual New Year's Day PBS Vienna symphonic program, Elsa and I were struck with the idea of why Framingham can't do its own Nevins Hall event, but yes soon I'm 78! Maybe it wouldn't be on New Year's Eve, but on a day significant to Framingham. Yes, we have a Flag Day parade (that needs help too). Yes, we have 34 soldiers and newly added snowmen but why not a city gala?

One idea might start with having Milford's Claflin hill orchestra (or other till Framingham creates a better one) with Berklee dancers, playing Strauss waltzes and other fun music while 500 or more danced, drank, met, and listened ... perhaps in gowns, or costume including decorated covid masks. Those will never disappear! Ugh.

It's a vision but maybe too good not to get a group of about 10 fun people to brainstorm?

Perhaps also...the annual Bruce Freeman trail run; a Bowditch football classic; a WooSox game in Framingham (if we got more bleachers at Carey Field), a Brazilian soccer team game, a skate park statewide challenge, a lecture series featuring nonpartisan speakers, and far more.

Let's get creative and think big about fun and local pride! Oh yeah, fireworks too on Flag Day?"

Closing Comments:

The Recreational and Cultural Affairs Transition Team Subcommittee acknowledges that Framingham is blessed with a diverse population and a rich and wide variety of recreational and cultural opportunities available to all city residents.

Framingham is truly a wonderful place to "live, work, learn, play and enjoy".

We submit to the mayor and his administrative team our thoughts and ideas on issues, opportunities, and ideas for expanding the already long list of recreational and cultural programs and amenities in the city and our suggestions on how to broadly publicize and make more accessible these opportunities to each and every resident of the City of Framingham.

We look forward to the opportunity to present our findings to our new mayor and his team and to assist in any way to help bring these ideas and recommendations to fruition.

Respectfully Submitted,

Recreational and Cultural Affairs Transition Team Subcommittee

Mike Bower, Co-Chair

Donna Wresinski, Co-Chair

Rabbi Sam Blumberg

David Hornfischer

Rick MacPherson

Mauricio Perea

Mike Spring

Appendix A

Framingham START Program Model – Presented by David Hornfischer:

Looking back, a coordinating effort among the local arts organizations, in conjunction with the Mass Cultural Council between 2004-2010 called FRAMINGHAM START addressed many of the issues relating to the arts. While we know of no such effort regarding recreational and sports activities there is little doubt of a need for such nor any reason not to believe the results would be of equal significance.

The START Partnership was a collaboration of more than a dozen arts, history, natural history, and cultural organizations in Framingham. Founded in 2004, the Partnership worked in part to promote Framingham's place as a vital cultural destination.

An economic impact study, commissioned by the START Partnership detailed the important economic impact the arts and cultural organizations have on the community and demonstrates the value of investing in the "creative industries."

The study, conducted by **Carlisle & Company** and funded by the Sudbury Foundation, noted several distinguishing features of creative industries:

- They are strongly rooted in their communities and generate local jobs.
- They induce additional spending beyond the visitors' purchase of tickets.
- They attract other businesses, such as restaurants and shops, to the area.

The analysis used well-respected models from Americans for the Arts and New England Foundation for the Arts. It calculated the total economic impact of just six leading Framingham cultural organizations.

- Amazing Things Arts Center
- Danforth Museum of Art

- Framingham History Center
- Framingham Public Library
- Garden in the Woods/New England Wildflower Society
- Performing Arts Center of MetroWest

These organizations had then a combined current operating budget of \$6.3 million, yet they provided nearly double the economic value to the community or \$11.4 million annually as their spending and that of their visitors rippled through the economy.

Over 10 years, these six organizations would have a combined economic impact of \$126.8 million, conservatively assuming level staffing and operating budgets.

These arts and cultural organizations then were seeking capital investments of \$20 million over the next 10 years to improve facilities and to better serve the community. The analysis indicates that an investment like that would:

- Increase the 6 organizations' economic impact by \$36 million
- Increase the number of jobs generated by their activity by 27%
- Offer a healthy 56% return on investment.

The economic impact study forcefully concluded that "in every measure the proposed investment by and in these six yields impressive gains."

One can only imagine the results if the study were to be done now, include the many other arts and cultural organizations, Framingham State University and especially city efforts.

A similar effort for recreational and Sports activities in Framingham would certainly equal and likely surpass the other. Both are needed.

Appendix B

Invictus Program – Presented by David Hornfischer:



Invictus Forever is a nonprofit organization that seeks to meet the vocational, recreational, social, educational, and therapeutic needs of children and adults with disabilities. Invictus Forever’s meaningful activities and inclusive social initiatives cater to individuals with mild to severe disabilities (e.g., autism, developmental disabilities, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy) By promoting a tolerant and respectful atmosphere that recognizes and nurtures each individual’s unique talents, we are able to create a safe, warm, and welcoming environment where individuals of all strengths and abilities can excel.

Appendix C

Recreational and Cultural Organizations:

The Recreation and Cultural Affairs Subcommittee brainstormed over several weeks to put together a comprehensive listing of 78 Framingham based organizations that provide recreational and/or cultural programming. Where possible we provided contact names and contact emails/phone numbers for the organizations.

We have categorized the organizations as follows:

Recreational	-	42
Cultural	-	22
Both	-	14

We realize there are probably dozens of other organizations that we missed and who shall come to light during the community outreach process which we have recommended take place as a follow-up to our report.

We view this list as a primary and central repository to be utilized when conducting surveys and needs assessments of key local stakeholders who provide recreational and cultural affairs programming.

The spreadsheet has been sent accompanying this report and is named:

City and Private Organizations - Recreation and Cultural V1.0

	Committee / Board / Organization	Contacts / Comments	Email for Contact
Cultural	A Common Thread Theater Company	Jaimee Banks, President	info@acommonthreadtheatre.org
Both	Access Framingham TV	Audrey Hall, Board President	██████████ ██████████████████
Cultural	Amazing Things Arts Center	Lynne Damianos, Chair	info@atac160.org
Cultural	Athenaeum Community Hall	Jim Paolino, Facilities Director and David Longden, President Friends of Saxonville	friends@friendsofsaxonville.org
Recreational	Boys and Girls Club	Laura Terzigni	laura.terzigni@bgcmetrowest.org
Both	BRACE- Brazilian American Center	Liliane Costa, Administrator	brazilian.american.center@gmail.com
Recreational	Brazilian Adult Soccer / Juventus pro soccer academy Metrowest	B. Murphy	bmurphy@juventusboston.com
Recreational	Brazilian Elite Soccer Academy (BESA)	Bresley Pascual, President	██████████████████
Recreational	Callahan State Park	State of Massachusetts DCR	
Both	Christa McAliffe Branch Library	Jillian Holmberg	jholmberg@minlib.net
Cultural	Christa McAliffe Center For Integrated Science Learning	Irene Porro	iporro@framingham.edu
Recreational	Christa McAuliffe Charter School Sports Teams	Frank Tipton, Director	ftipton@mcauliffecharter.org
Both	Coburnville Tripoli Neighborhood Association	John Stefanini	██████████████████
Recreational	Cochituate Rail Trail	Rail to Trails Conservancy or	██████████████████

		Mary Kate Feeney	
Both	Community Preservation Act Committee	Environmental Transition Subcommittee member Judy Grove is on the CPA Committee and can be a contact	████████████████████
Both	Concerts on the Common	Parks and Recreation Commissioners	████████████████████ ████████████████████
Recreational	Conservation lands	Sudbury Valley Trustees, Lisa Vernegaard, Executive Director	lvernegaard@svtweb.org
Recreational	Council on Aging	Clyde Dottin and Jen Rich are on the COA and can be contacts. Clyde is the Chair.	jrich@2lifecommunities.org clyde.dottin@keoliscs.com
Cultural	Cultural Council	Subcommittee member Marricio Perea is a Chair of this board. FSU Portuguese and Spanish professor Everton de Castro	████████████████████ evargasdacosta@framingham.edu
Cultural	Cushing Chapel Advisory Commission	Listed as "inactive" on city website	
Cultural	Danforth Art Museum	Jessica Roscio, Director and Curator	danforthartmuseum@framingham.edu
Both	Downtown Framingham Inc	Anthony Lucivero, Executive Director	anthony@downtownframinghaminc.org
Cultural	Drama Clubs at the various	Subcommittee member Donna	dwresinski@framingham.k12.ma.us

	Framingham Schools	Wresinski can be a contact	
Recreational	Eastern Massachusetts Senior Softball	Walker Royce, President	████████████████████
Both	Framingham Centre Common Cultural Distric	Stacey David	████████████████████
Recreational	Framingham Dog Park	Shannon Stevens, Parks & Rec Board member	████████████████████
Recreational	Framingham Girls Fastpitch Softball	Greg Palmer	greg@palmermail.org
Recreational	Framingham High School Athletic Department	Paul Spear, Athletic Director	pspear@framingham.k12.ma.us
Recreational	Framingham High School Gridiron Club	Liz Coleman, President	fhsgridironclub@gmail.com
Cultural	Framingham History Center	Annie Murphy Rebecca Reiner	director@framinghamhistory.org rebecca@framinghamhistory.org
Cultural	Framingham Interfaith Clergy Association	Rev. Dr. Debbie Clark, Convenor	framinghaminterfaith@gmail.com
Recreational	Framingham Police Athletic League Basketball & Boxing	Parks and Recreation Department and Parks and Recreation Commissioners	████████████████████ ████████████████████
Both	Framingham Public Library	Jennifer Rosenberg	jrosenberg@minlib.net
Both	Framingham Public Schools Buildings and Grounds	Matt Torti, FPS Director of Buildings and Grounds	mtorti@framingham.k12.ma.us
Cultural	Framingham Semi-Pro Football / Mass Warriors Semi pro football	Steve Maycock President	Masswarriors21@gmail.com
Recreational	Framingham State - Athletic Facilities	Tom Kelley, Athletic Director	tkelley@framingham.edu

Recreational	Framingham State - Football @ Bowditch	Tom Kelley, Athletic Director	tkelley@framingham.edu
Recreational	Framingham State - Hockey @ Loring	Tom Kelley, Athletic Director	tkelley@framingham.edu
Cultural	Framingham State - McCarthy Arts Center		
Recreational	Framingham State - Sports and Culture	Dale Hamel, L. Holloway, E. Zimmerman, E. Gustafson	ezimmerman@framingham.edu lholloway@framingham.edu dhamel@framingham.edu egustafson@framingham.edu
Cultural	Framingham State Arts Council		
Recreational	Framingham Youth Baseball	Adam Levonsohn, President	info@framinghambaseball.org Adam L. [REDACTED]
Recreational	Framingham Youth Basketball	Mike Spring, President	[REDACTED]
Recreational	Framingham Youth Football / Framingham youth football and cheerleading	Alex Perez	president@fyfc.us
Recreational	Framingham Youth Hockey	Carl Smith	[REDACTED]
Recreational	Framingham Youth Lacrosse	Dan Mulvey	[REDACTED]
Recreational	Framingham Youth Soccer / Framingham United soccer club	Candace Donoghue	president@fusc.org
Recreational	Framingham Youth Sports Leagues (other)	Janet Leumbruno can most likely provide contacts for the various leagues	[REDACTED]
Both	Friends of Saxonville	David Longden, President	friends@friendsofsaxonville.org
Recreational	Friends of the Callahan Senior Center	Mary Megill	[REDACTED]

Recreational	Friends of the Framingham Library	Marsha Farmelant, President	[REDACTED]
Recreational	Garden in the Woods	Ralph Brown Chair	hello@NativePlantTrust.org
Recreational	Greater Framingham Running Club	Susin Carlson, President	[REDACTED] gfrc-officers@googlegroups.com
Cultural	Heritage chorale	Laura Helliwell, President	President@heritagechorale.org
Cultural	Heritage Chorale, Inc.	Ann Harris	publicrelations@heritagechorale.org
Cultural	Historic District Commission	Stephen Greeley, Chair	HistoricPreservation@framinghamma.gov
Cultural	Historical Commission	Paul Silva, Chair and Fred Wallace, Vice Chair	[REDACTED]
Recreational	Hoops and Homework	Herb Chasan, Founder	[REDACTED]
Recreational	Invictus Forever	Caroline Langer	info@invictusforever.org
Recreational	Keefe Tech Swimming Pool	Jim Snyder, Parks and Recreation Director or Parks & Recreation Commissioners	[REDACTED] [REDACTED]
Recreational	Learn to skate program (run at Loring; not sure if it's part of youth hockey) Possible Parks & Rec Dept.	Parks and Recreation Commissioners	[REDACTED] [REDACTED]
Recreational	Library Trustees	Ruth Winett, Chair	[REDACTED]
Recreational	Loring Arena Advisory Committee	Joseph Tersoni, Chair	
Cultural	Metrowest Music Groups		
Recreational	Metrowest YMCA	Subcommittee member Rick MacPherson is	rmacpherson@metrowestymca.org

		the CEO of Metrowest YMCA	
Recreational	MWRA Aqueduct Trails Program	MWRA	
Both	Nevins Hall & Memorial Building	Jim Paolino, Facilities Director	
Recreational	Parks and Recreation Commission	Kathy Hauck, Chair Bob Berman, Member	██████████ ██████████████████
Cultural	Performing Arts Center of Metrowest	John Ebel, Chair	pac@pacmetrowest.org
Recreational	Pinefield Garden Club	Karen Nolte	██████████████████
Cultural	Saxonville Studios	Rosalie Ripaldi Shane, Owner/Manager	saxonvillestudios@gmail.com
Recreational	School Playgrounds Construction Team	Ricky Finlay is a contact	██████████████████ ██████████████████
Both	South Middlesex Opportunity Council, In. (SMOC)	Ester Powel	epowel@smoc.org
Cultural	Starfun Theater Camp	Margie and Eric Pell	info@starfuntheatercamp.com
Recreational	Team Framingham Steering Committee	Subcommittee member Mike Bower is a member of this committee	██ TeamFraminghamMarathon@gmail.com
Recreational	Temple Beth Am Youth Basketball	Rich Stekloff, President	██████████████████
Cultural	Voices of MetroWest (VOMW)	Charlene Frary	██
Both	Youth Council	Isabella Petroni is on the Youth Council and can be a contact	ipetroni@framinghamma.gov

Framingham Transition Team

Senior Affairs Subcommittee

January 2022

According to the 2019 American Community [Survey](#), more than 20% of Framingham citizens are over 55 and all communities in the Commonwealth are getting older. The needs and interests of adults over 55 vary – what a 65-year-old is seeking and what a 90-year-old needs are very different. Similarly, the disparities in income, education and access to health care challenge us to conduct a thorough assessment of all needs.

Each of the subcommittees that Mayor Sisitsky created are lenses through which we should examine all of Framingham’s policies and procedures. Older Adults is a lens that cannot be ignored. Framingham is one of only 200 cities and towns in Massachusetts designated as an Age and Dementia Friendly City – to live up to that commitment, we will have to work together to make our community better and more livable for older adults, and, therefore, for people of all ages. According to Age and Dementia Friendly Massachusetts, being part of an Age and Dementia Friendly community means ensuring older adults and their families can access key services, quality health care, affordable housing options, and reliable transportation, and have open spaces in which to gather. For the older adult population, that also means being able to live as independently as possible, including having the opportunity to work and volunteer in their community.

The Seniors Subcommittee would like to provide suggestions in the following top areas of need: COVID, Communications, Services, Tax Relief and Related Job Opportunities, and Housing.

COVID

- Mask mandate – Maintain the mandate in all public spaces.
- Access to rapid tests – This is a very important issue to older adults. Regardless of their financial status, seniors are worried about being with grandchildren who are not vaccinated. They don’t want to infect children who are too young to be vaccinated, and they don’t want to be infected by children who are too young to be vaccinated and may be carrying COVID. Advocate for additional testing supplies that are simple to acquire as well as provide guidance on how to obtain reimbursement through health insurance (Mass Health, Medicare, Secondary Providers, USPS)
- Simplify COVID information and announcements – Speak in a single voice, using simple and concise language, to promote consistent messaging and minimize misunderstandings. Make the City a prime resource for seniors to obtain accurate and current information about the state of the pandemic and about available COVID-related services. Consider a multi-language dial-in information line, increase the use of reverse 911, and provide printed literature as well as online message options.

Communication - Internal

- The Director of Elder Affairs is responsible to have a broad perspective on all of the City's 55+ residents and all related services, not a focus on one facility (Callahan Center) or a limited subset of services. Protocol should be structured so that the Director of Elder Affairs has a direct line of communication into the Mayor's administration, not through another department head. The Director of Elder Affairs should have quantifiable goals directly tied into citywide initiatives for the 55+ population
- Create a destination portal on the city website specifically geared to information for the 55+ community. This central location should house all municipal announcements for seniors and the Callahan Center's web page should be tied to the portal, with multiple language translations available.

Communication- External

- Streamline information for seniors. Make it simple, straightforward, and easy to understand. Use as many communication channels as possible to reach both older adults and their families.
- Have a broad array of easy-to-read, multi-lingual printed information on housing, transportation, health resources, City resources, and recreation resources available at Callahan and at the libraries. Information should be easily accessible for those without access to the Internet or those who have limited ability to use such resources with confidence. Without a non-electronic way to obtain information, many older adults may have trouble gaining access to COVID tests, services, or both general and program-specific information.
- Create and publicize a new, information telephone line with content available in multiple languages.
- Create "commercials" and public service announcements for broadcast on Framingham Access and/or the government channel.
- Increase use of the reverse 911 system to ensure that announcements and information pertinent to seniors is widely distributed.
- Produce simple posters, in large print and multiple languages, when a topic is important, i.e., COVID. Arrange to have them posted in places seniors go, like religious institutions, corner grocery stores, and doctors' offices, as well as municipal buildings and public libraries.

Services

- Conduct a needs assessment, in multiple languages, from individual older adults, caregivers, community partners, to include, but not be limited to the topics of Transportation, Health and Wellness, Transportation, Housing, and Food Insecurity
 - Collaborate with Age-Well Framingham, use the knowledge they have built over the past three years

- Identify walking routes and sidewalks that are well traveled by people with disabilities and older adults. Work with the Commission on Disability to ensure that they meet ADA standards, that crosswalks at such routes provide enough time for safe crossing, and that crosswalk signals utilize sound technology.
- Investigate the feasibility of an accessible pocket park with [senior playground equipment](#).
- Create a plan with the Framingham Department of Elder Affairs to repurpose 200 Chromebooks obtained through a grant to reduce seniors' isolation, as the need is less than anticipated. Identify where there are other gaps in computer access (students, municipal and school administration) and make use of the computers before they are outdated.

Tax Relief and Related Job Opportunities

- Reinvigorate the senior tax work-off program and improve municipal customer service to increase awareness and use of the program. Make the program manager responsible for increasing participation with job-specific goals and objectives.
- Promote the program on every tax bill that is issued, on the City website, on all of the City's social media pages, Framingham Access TV and on the government channel. Short videos can be posted on the web as well as being used in broadcast media.
- Create new jobs that act as vehicles for older adults to participate in the tax work-off program:
 - Create virtual jobs for outbound telephone customer service. Seniors often like to connect with people on the phone to provide information and updates. The City has a need for this across all departments.
 - Create in-person jobs such as for the library bookmobile or for greeting people when they enter the Memorial Building.
 - Create a call-back system, employing seniors to call people back who leave voicemail messages for City employees. They can find out more about their inquiries and try to channel them to the right people.
 - Create virtual receptionist jobs, using technology to route calls to seniors working from home who can answer calls and take messages, allowing inbound callers to speak to a person rather than a voicemail box.
 - Update the Senior Property Tax Work- Off Brochure
- Advertise the tax deferral program that allows seniors with annual household incomes of \$60,000 or less to defer up to 100% of their property taxes at 1% interest. At present, only 5 people in Framingham take advantage of this program.
- Address a glitch in the tax deferral process wherein banks won't typically subordinate their mortgage lien to a city tax lien, so they block seniors with mortgages from taking advantage of property tax deferral. Work with local banks to help identify a solution.

Housing

- Create a project to analyze and study ways to identify and increase the availability of more reasonably priced housing for middle-class seniors.

- Work with the City Council, Planning Board and other agencies to further investigate the concept of permitting Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) to be built within the City.
- Collaborate with local housing organizations to investigate and identify a broader range of housing options in our community, allowing residents the opportunity to choose either to age in place or to age within the community.

Respectfully Submitted by the Seniors Subcommittee
Jennifer Rich and Clyde Dottin, Co-Chairs
Pat Dunne and Abrielle Salloway, Subcommittee members

Additional Documentation

Example of simple easy to read poster - simple language makes translation easier.

Public Distribution Days for Rapid COVID 19 Test Kits for 55+



CITY OF FRAMINGHAM

HOW TO REGISTER



ONLINE

Visit the front page of the City's Website OR Covid Page on 12/23 at 1pm for registration link

No Access to Internet. Contact us **BY PHONE**
Call the Callahan Senior Center at **508-532-5980**

TEST KIT DISTRIBUTION DAYS

Thursday, December 30 & Saturday, January 8, 2022

- **A maximum of 2 Test Kits will be available per family**
 - (2 tests per kit = 4 tests total)
- **Priority given to Framingham Residents who are 55+ and who attest to financial hardship.**
- **Only ONE submission per household - multiple submissions will be deleted.**
- **Participants will be sent an email with additional information and pick-up instructions.**

Submission of form does not guarantee a test kit!



CITY OF FRAMINGHAM EXEMPTIONS as of fiscal year 2019

For details on the following exemptions call the Assessor's Office, 508-532-5415.

Clause 17D - \$175.00 -

Surviving spouses; minors of deceased parents; and persons who were 70 by July 1st of current fiscal year.

Clause 18 – Variable Amount -

Applicants must be aged, infirm AND have a financial hardship.

Clauses 22 – Variable Amounts -

Veterans Exemption based on circumstances, call for details.

Clause 37A - \$500.00 -

Blind person's exemption.

Clause 41C - \$1,000.00 -

Persons 65 years or older by July 1st of current fiscal year, living in Massachusetts for at least 10 years.

Clause 41A – tax deferral –

Defer up to 100% of property taxes until the property is sold.

Clause 42 – 100% of tax -

Surviving spouse, until remarried, of officer or firefighter killed in the line of duty.

Veterans Work-Off Program –

Up to \$725** tax credit for hours worked in a designated municipal department.

Senior Circuit Breaker Tax Credit

The Senior Circuit Breaker Tax Credit is available to homeowners or renters age 65 or older by the end of the tax year, who meet the income and property value guidelines. The maximum credit for tax year 2017 is \$1,080.

The income limits for owners or renters are:

\$57,000 - single person

\$72,000 - head of household

\$86,000 - married couple filing a joint return.

Since this is a refundable tax credit, you don't have to owe taxes to receive it, but you need to file a state income tax return. Bring your water and sewer bills along with your property tax bills to your tax preparer. You can also apply for the credit retroactively up to three years.

For Homeowners:

If the combination of the property taxes plus 50% of your water and sewer bills for the year exceeds 10% of your income you could be eligible for the credit, up to the maximum allowed. The property's assessed value cannot exceed \$747,000 as of 1/1/2018.

For Renters:

If 25% of the rent you paid in the calendar year exceeds 10% of your income you may be eligible for the credit, up to the maximum allowed (**NOT** if you receive a rent subsidy).

For full details, exclusions, and forms for this credit on MA State Income Tax, call 1-800-392-6089 or visit www.Mass.gov/DOR.



Senior Property Tax Work-Off Program

Callahan Center
535 Union Avenue
Framingham, MA 01702

508-532-5980

www.framinghamma.gov/360/council-on-aging

revised May 2018



GOALS

- Provide property tax credit for eligible seniors in exchange for their service hours.
- Enhance municipal services by utilizing the skills and abilities of seniors.
- Increase senior involvement in local government.

DETAILS OF TAX CREDIT/ REIMBURSEMENT *

For fiscal 2019 the tax credit is \$1,000*. This will appear as a credit on the property tax bill after the required hours are completed. The credit will be prorated for fewer hours worked.

ELIGIBILITY *

Minimum 62 years of age

Framingham resident and homeowner for 5 years.

Maximum allowable income is \$50,000 for single person or \$60,000 for married couple.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Please call the Callahan Center **between July 1 and August 25** to receive an application and appointment for the Senior Property Tax Work-Off Program.

508-532-5980

***Please note: details regarding amount of credit, eligibility, number of hours required and number of positions available may change annually. You will be advised of any changes during your scheduled appointment.**

The credit received through the Senior Property Tax Work-Off Program may affect your eligibility for the Senior Circuit Breaker Tax Credit. See reverse side for details of that credit.



Dedicated to Excellence in Public Service

POSITIONS

The potential number of participants will be determined by the level of city appropriation each year. Positions will be offered in those city departments that show interest in having assistance. The type of assistance requested will be determined by departmental needs. Applicants may have the option to defer a placement, pending the possibility of other opportunities. However, there is no guarantee that additional positions will become available.

Applicants will be chosen on the basis of skills, availability and physical ability, as necessary. First-time applicants will have priority consideration each year. All applicants are required to abide by all City of Framingham policies. The Property Tax Coordinator will provide an information packet to each applicant upon determination of their eligibility for the program.

ACCEPTANCE

Approval of applicants will be a mutual agreement between the requesting department head and the applicant, based on their qualifications and suitability for the position. If an applicant is not qualified or unable to meet expectations after two placements we reserve the option to withdraw the person from the program.

****Applicants who receive the Veterans Work-Off abatement are not eligible for the Senior Property Tax Work-Off.**

(See other side for additional sources of assistance with property taxes.)