



SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY

Moakley Center for Public Management



Strategic Planning Results
Town of Pembroke, MA

presented by

Moakley Center for Public Management
Suffolk University

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

BACKGROUND.....	1
DEFINITION OF STRATEGIC PLANNING.....	2
METHODOLOGY.....	2
OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS.....	3
ATTACHMENTS.....	8

Background

Pembroke is an attractive suburban community located in the South Shore area of southeastern Massachusetts. The Town is located 26 miles south of Boston, 16 miles north of Plymouth and 14 miles east of Brockton. The Town's current population is 18,549. Pembroke contains 23.48 square miles (21.85 square miles of land area) and the population density is currently 836 persons per square mile.

The Town has an Open Town Meeting form of government, with a five member Board of Selectmen and Town Administrator. Elected or appointed boards and commissions direct much of the Town's operations.

In order to assess the future needs of the Town, management partnered with the Moakley Center for Public Management, Suffolk University to begin the strategic planning process through a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis with representatives from the community along with the Board of Selectmen and Department Heads.

By way of background, the Center for Public Management traces its roots to 1973, when the New England Regional Commission gave Suffolk University a grant to provide training and education to the public service workforce, to support public service community efforts with technical assistance, to conduct research and evaluation of public service projects, and to provide opportunities for public discourse on a variety of public policy issues. Dr. Richard McDowell [who later became Dean of the SBS] was recruited to spearhead that effort.

The goals of training, evaluation, public discourse and community service are the mission of today's Center for Public Management, now known as the Moakley Center for Public Management.

Definition of Strategic Planning

Local government strategic planning is "the process by which the governing body and top management of a city or county envisions the organization's future and develops the necessary organization, staff, procedures, operations and controls to successfully achieve that future."

Benefits of strategic planning include, improved sense of direction for the organization, better performance, an increased understanding of the organization and its purpose and an earlier awareness of problems, and more effective decisions. The strategic planning model includes five elements: 1) Environmental scanning-identifying important cultural, demographic, economic, and political factors and their implications for the organization, 2) Determining the mission and goals-identifying issues and opportunities for new services or approaches based on the environmental scanning, 3) Analyzing internal and external strengths, weaknesses, and resource limits (i.e. the SWOT analysis) of the organization, 4) Developing action plans and establishing priorities and 5) Developing an implementation strategy and monitoring the implementation.

Methodology

In order to begin the strategic planning process, Suffolk conducted a pre-session survey (Attachment A) followed by a planning session which involved both brainstorming and priority/goal setting. Planning sessions were held at the Pembroke Country Club with the Town's department heads, with members of the Board of Selectmen (4), and board/committee/community representatives (22), to assess the Town's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Each segment involved 15-20 minutes of brainstorming on each of the four areas followed by idea management. More specifically, all ideas were written on flip charts and each participant was asked to place colored dots next to the idea/strategy he/she felt the strongest about.

Observations/Recommendations

Upon review of the pre-session survey results (Attachment B) and the notes from the brainstorming sessions (Attachment C) the following observations/recommendations are noted:

Observations

Pre-session Survey

- Respondents rated their quality of life in Pembroke highly with an average score of 4.10 (n=20/1=poor, 5=excellent).
- Respondents were asked: compared to surrounding communities, the quality of life in Pembroke is much better? The average score was 3.77 (n=20/1=completely disagree, 5=completely agree) indicating a somewhat lower perception of quality of life in Pembroke when comparing it to other communities.
- When asked to describe Pembroke respondents noted numerous positive attributes including: friendly, comfortable, affordable, and a “salt of the earth environment.”

Brainstorming Session

- The **top three strengths** identified by each group was as follows:

Department Heads

1. Each department head “manages” their own department (10)
2. Town employees are dedicated to service (7)
3. Viable senior center (4)

Community Group

1. Excellent school system (10)
 2. Open space, trails, and ponds (10)
 3. Geographic location (5)
- The **top three weaknesses** identified by each group was as follows:

Department Heads

1. Level budget funding (9)
2. Money—Lack of growth (5)
3. Triage town management (3)

Community Group

1. Limited technology Wi-Fi (integration issues) (9)
 2. Communications/information about articles lacking; particularly the discussion on important items (6)
 3. Form of government is a barrier to change (4)
- The **top three threats** identified by each group was as follows:

Department Heads

1. Less tolerance from the community relating to resolution of problems not service (8)
2. Selectmen are reactionary/ provide no direction, need to do more (5)
3. Federal mandates; healthcare costs; Demands on front line staff (tied at 2)

Community Group

1. State funding (7)
 2. Inability to get things done (2)
 3. State and federal regulations (2)
- The following **opportunities** were identified by each group:

Department Heads

- Improve gaps in technology knowledge
- Education of staff technology options
- Share information resources between departments (example mapping info)
- More meetings with department heads
- Technology- post questions/ concerns

Community Group

- Generational differences/ embrace them
- Consistency of communications can improve (have a point person)
- Hire a public relations director
- Balance technology
- Town Facebook page
- Target outreach to young people
- Improve sharing of information across Town Hall
- Start long range planning

Considering the **strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats**, the *department heads* decided upon the following **goals** for the next twelve months:

1. Improve interdepartmental communication via monthly meetings
2. Reduce the duplications of efforts
3. Improve Information Technology (IT) support at Town Hall
4. Develop a 5 year strategic plan- start process; highlight departmental plans

- Considering the **strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats**, the *community group* decided upon the following **goals** for the next twelve months:

1. Explore the town meeting issue on a global level
2. Look into the structure of town government
3. Explore the need for a town charter
4. Develop a long range strategic plan (operations, capital, and technology)
5. Develop a Facebook page to attract participation from younger members of the community

Recommendations

In order to achieve the goals highlighted above, it is recommended that the following actions be considered:

- The town administrator should hold monthly (rather than as needed) meetings with department heads. The goals of the monthly meeting are to give department heads more face to face time, improve collaboration among staff and establish a venue for discussing and developing the Town's five-year strategic plan.
- The town administrator should continue to collaborate with the Information Technology Committee (IT) to improve IT support at town hall.
- In response to the goals identified by community members, additional committees/groups (with new members that don't currently serve) should be established to assess the need for a town charter, engage younger members of the community (e.g. Facebook) and explore concerns around the efficiency of Town Meeting.
- Suffolk University should re-connect with the town administrator in the next six months to assess the progress of the above goals.

Attachment A: Survey



*Please respond by
Feb 17th*

**MOAKLEY CENTER FOR PUBLIC MANAGEMENT
SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY**

Pre-Session Survey

In preparation for the strategic planning session that will take place on Wednesday, February 22nd, please take a few minutes to complete this brief survey. This survey is completely confidential, only a summary of the results will be reported.

Please fax the completed survey to Nicole Rivers at Suffolk University (617 227-4618) by Friday, Feb 17th.

Thank you!

1. How would you rate the quality of life in Pembroke? (1=poor, 5=excellent).

poor					excellent
1	2	3	4	5	

2. Compared to surrounding communities, the quality of life in Pembroke is much better. (1=completely disagree, 5=completely agree).

completely disagree					completely agree
1	2	3	4	5	

3. What are the Town of Pembroke's three biggest strengths?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. What are the Town of Pembroke's three biggest challenges?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

5. What three words would you use to describe the Town of Pembroke?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

6. What is the most important goal you would like the Town to achieve during the next 12 months?

Attachment C: Pre-Session Survey Results

n=13

1. How would you rate the quality of life in Pembroke? (1=poor, 5=excellent)

Mean=4.1 Mode=4

2. Compared to surround communities, the quality of life in Pembroke is much better. (1=completely disagree, 5= completely agree)

Mean= 3.77 Mode= 3

3. What are the Town of Pembroke's three biggest strengths?

- The residents of the Town who care
- Providing services for elders
- The school system
- Overall management and Department Heads
- The way the community comes together
- Still has small town feel, character
- School system
- Community involvement—sports, scouting, etc.
- Property Value
- Town Services
- Schools & School Buildings (condition)
- Rural feel/ Green space
- People
- Location
- Stability
- Location
- Natural beauty
- Balanced Residential & Commercial property
- Sense of Community
- Tubbs Meadow
- Ponds
- Work hard at proactive planning
- having elective Boards
- Maintains good fiscal responsibility
- Location
- Education/schools
- Center of Town
- Affordable hounding
- Good schools
- Open space
- Town services—the ability of residents to access Town Hall
- Location
- Schools
- Geographic location;
- Access to public transportation
- Good and ample water supply
- Rural character
- Location
- School system

4. What are the Town of Pembroke's three biggest challenges?

- The economy and trickle-down economics and how it affects residents;
- The tax rate and keeping residents
- Maintaining services
- Funding of the Capital Plans
- New Town Hall, Police, Fire, Community Center
- DPW Barn and Manpower
- Budget
- Capital spending/buildings-roads etc.
- Controlling growth
- Town Facilities
- Activities/Places for younger population during non-school hours
- Educational Aspirations of many families
- Economy
- Current Financial Resources
- Planning for further ahead than a year
- Budget
- Affordable Housing
- Rebuilding the Community Center
- Expansion of population
- Ponds
- Community Center
- Information sharing between all boards & elected officials
- Keeping pace with surrounding changes
- Providing current/updated services to tax payers
- Stable tax rate
- Traffic/transportation
- Municipal services
- Road/highways
- Sidewalks
- Keeping costs down
- Infrastructure
- Poor communication at municipal level
- Tend to be reactive, not proactive
- No charter
- Controlling growth
- Budget/tax rate
- Traffic

5. What three words would you use to describe the Town of Pembroke?

- Rural friendly atmosphere
- Open space – not crowded in
- Wonderful Fire & Police
- Caring
- Passionate
- Friendly
- Community
- Value
- Ponds
- Improving
- Family
- Pleasant
- Positive
- Beautiful
- Conservative (not just politically)
- Bedroom Community
- Comfortable
- Nice Country Feel
- Diverse
- Middle-class
- Salt of the earth
- Rural
- Quiet
- Working-class
- Smart
- Functional
- Convenient
- Home
- Sweet
- Home
- Safe
- Friendly
- Pretty
- Neighborly
- Convenient
- Affordable

6. What is the most important goal you would like the Town to achieve during the next 12 months?

- Maintaining services- stable tax rate
- The funding of Capital Plans and Infrastructure
- Aligning Town employees contracts with anticipated budget
- Develop a clear vision and mission from which strategic goals can be developed
- Get a grasp on what people (residents) really want for services and plan to provide it
- Deciding what to do with the Community Center
- Find a way to fix the Community Center situation
- That our Selectmen be more open with information & their goals as elected officers & what they think the people want
- Form a charter commission to recommend change in government structure. Like Bridgewater, with exception, town should have a representative form of town meeting. 10 members from precinct totaling 50 and a council of 9 members.
- Begin roadway improvements
- Change to a representative form of town meeting
- Re-establish Community Center task force and establish a charter commission
- Control town budget/tax rate

Attachment C: Session Notes

Segment 1: What are Pembroke's strengths?

Department Heads

- Rural (1)
- Open space (1)
- Excellent school system (2)
- Facilities and performance
- Quality employees (3)
- Safe community (1)
- Strong confidence in public safety level of response (1)
- Reputation for good service (1)
- Cross department cooperation (2)
- Receptive community (1)
- Each department head manages own department (10)
- Cohesiveness among departments (2)
- Local government smaller- better to manage (1)
- Strong response to citizen needs (1)
- Personal response (1)
- Strong leadership (2)
- Volunteerism (2)
- Community as a whole understands issues
- Financial service stability
- Department heads volunteer (1)
- Dedication to community (1)
- Community has an identity
- Pride- blue collar- high level of citizen involvement
- Business leaders invested in community
- Dedicated senior services
- Strong volunteerism from the senior community
- Senior center (4)
- Town Employees dedicated to service (7)
- Community of workforce (1)

Community Group

- Schools (10)
- Geographic Location (5)
- Access to Public Transportation/ Greenbush
- Ample water supply
- Incredible sense of community
- Youth programs
- Open space, trails, and ponds (10)
- Generous local business
- Cable studio
- Affordable housing costs (1)
- Ability to participate in town government (1)
- Citizens are respectful of each other
- Rural character (2)
- Neighbors willing to work together (example food pantry)
- Smart and honest local government leadership (1)
- Relationship between schools and town (1)
- Departments work well together
- Affordable tax rate
- Mixed housing
- Financial stability (3)
- Bond rating
- Arts festival
- Library (3)
- Folks that work in the field also serve on town committees
- Big box stores (+/-)
- Improved recycling activities (1)
- Community spirit (1)
- Council on aging (1)
- Good drinking water (4)
- Safe (2)
- Town website and Pembroke connect

Segment 2: What are Pembroke's weaknesses?

Department Heads

- Can't fiscally grow into what we need
- Money- Lack of growth (5)
- Level budget funding (9)
- Expenses/ demand for service (1)
- Have to limit services
- Triage town management (3)
- Survival=success
- Enforcement resources
- No time for proactive enforcement
- Reactive with money (1)
- Community doesn't understand local government limitations

Community Group

- Need more email blasts
- Frustrations with town meeting/ time constraints for the public to comment (1)
- Lack of adherence to protocol
- Info to town meeting members not timely
- Town meeting (efficient?) (3)
- Lack of depth of citizen involvement
- Not enough town meeting members
- Communications/info about articles lacking; particularly the discussion on important items (6)
- Local connection to state
- Town website (1)
- No town pool
- Technology
- No Facebook page
- Voter apathy (2)
- Public facilities—lack of use
- Health care costs (1)
- Budget constraints
- IT support within Town Hall
- No art center
- Community center
- Reactive town
- Maintenance of town buildings (2)
- Lack of sidewalks (1)
- Increase in crime
- No Town Planner
- No full time Accountant
- Affordable housing
- Infrastructure—roadways or lack thereof (1)
- No long term plan (2)
- Limited economic plan (2)
- Limited commercial tax base
- Need more young people involvement (3)
- Lack of direct access to other parts of the state
- Tax rate/ inconsistency of service
- Lack of long term infrastructure planning (water)
- Need more info through technology
- No mass email
- Cram town meeting
- Lack of quorum (1)
- Proximity to other communities; south shore and Boston
- Timing of town meeting
- Advisory needs a bigger role
- People don't read the newspapers
- "rubber stamp" voting/ decision making
- "homework" not always done (1)
- Town warrant process (1)
- Form of government is a barrier to change (4)
- No town charter (3)
- Budget process—twice a year and therefore department heads are constrained
- Lack of multi-year planning (2)
- Not having budget priorities
- Departments not fully staffed
- Limited technology Wi-Fi (integration issues) (9)

Segment 3: What are the outside threats affecting Pembroke?

Department Heads

- Workload has doubled
- Federal mandates (2)
- Workforce dropped (1)
- Zero support from the state (1)
- Healthcare costs (2)
- Loss of grant money for Library
- Selectmen are reactionary/ no direction, need to do more (5)
- Economy- people struggle (1)
- People not qualifying for services
- Dissatisfaction
- People hurting in the town
- Elders want to stay home
- 40B
- People get involved directly effects them
- Foreclosures
- Pond communities- negative reputations
- Unoccupied- negative impact
- Higher likelihood of an unhappy citizen (1)
- Less tolerance relating to answer not service (8)
- Hostility in town hall
- Demands on front line staff (2)
- You can "walk into local government" ultimate frustration (1)
- "I pay your salaries" sentiment from citizens

Community Group

- Inability to get things done (2)
- State funding (7)
- Unfunded mandates (federal and state)
- State and federal regulations (2)
- Tax base
- Disrupted funding (1)
- Federal deficit
- District 5
- Mass DOT leadership
- Lack of accountability at the state level
- Relationships with town unions (1)
- Census
- Catastrophic weather events (1)

Segment 4: What are some opportunities that lie ahead for Pembroke?

Department Heads

- Willingness to work together/ improve gaps in technology knowledge
- Education of staff technology options
- Shared information resources between departments (example mapping info)
- More meetings with department heads
- Seize opportunities
- Catch up on needs
- Needle disposal
- Technology- post questions/ concerns
- Build better VNA nurse (more hours)
- Revolving account/ vaccine services
- Start long range planning

Community Group

- Generational differences/ embrace them
- Consistency of communications can improve (have a point person)
- PR director
- Balance technology
- Town Facebook page
- Targeted outreach to young people
- Town Hall sharing of info

Segment 5: What are your goals for the Town of Pembroke in the next 12 months?

Department Heads

1. Improve interdepartmental communication; monthly meetings- common ground
2. Reduce the duplications of efforts/ reduce workload
3. Improved IT support- town hall
4. 5 year strategic plan- start process; highlight departmental plans

Community Group

1. Setup 4 new committees/groups with new members that don't currently serve
2. Explore the town meeting issue on a global level
3. Look into the structure of government
4. Explore a town charter
5. Rehab internal communication
6. Develop long range plan including operating plans, capital plans, and technology plan
7. Develop Facebook page