

**Structural Change Impact Group
Regionalization, Consolidation & Outsourcing Working Group**

Minutes
May 4, 2021
Meeting conducted via Zoom

**RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA**

DATE: June 24, 2021
TIME: 2:11 PM

Members present: Brian Antonellis, Aaron Pikcilingis, Paul Rickter
Members absent: Mark Paolillo
Other attendees: Norma Massaroti

Meeting was called to order at 8:04am.

Updates on Open ideas

Working group members reported on progress made on items researched since the previous meeting. All items are identified by their ID numbers and are included in the committee idea matrix posted at

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/b64yoe9y05lnwzb/AAB5iDttndB5Pfik6Wzo5Qgva?dl=0>.

- Rickter reported on his conversation with Fire Chief DeStefano on mutual aid (ID 133).
- Pikcilingis reported on merging positions with other municipalities (ID 8). He compiled a list of about 80 non-school positions that are less than full time to see which might be shared with other towns. Some are less practical because they might be needed at the same time in other towns. Norma suggested also looking at full time employees where having a person on staff adds less value than we might get by contracting out the work.
- Pikcilingis reported on regionalizing the library with Arlington and Watertown (ID 12). library director, book processors, and shelving of books would be shared with other towns. Norma suggested looking at other municipalities that have multiple branches. Pikcilingis suggested that we consider other town departments that might be appropriate for sharing or outsourcing.

Discussion on next steps

We reviewed the list of open ideas and agreed that before the next meeting we would each go through the open ideas and score the ones that appear to be promising (financial/operational impact and/or implementation). Try to focus on ten or so ideas that appear to be worth pursuing.

Discussion on reporting on our work

We discussed how to report out the information we've gathered on ideas in a format that will be useful for residents and town leaders in the future who want to learn from our work. For now, we will add detail to the Status Note column and Pikcilingis will research further.

Review new ideas

We reviewed new ideas that have been assigned to our working group.

- Outsource specific Town services (ID 27) - this idea belongs to the working group.
- Put legal services out to bid (ID 134) - Mark is already researching this idea.
- Unify police and fire as public safety force. Move fire dept to volunteer based system (ID 222) - this is partially covered by another idea, but volunteer fire department is a new idea.
- Outsource emergency response services (ID 223) - regionalize emergency belongs to the working group
- Seek purchase opportunities near BHS to use for needed projects (ID 246) - we need to identify next steps on this
- Remove state tax exemption for golf courses (ID 256) - this is a duplicate of ID 294
- Open space and other tax breaks for private entities (ID 294) - this idea covers a wider discussion about other exemptions than ID 256
- Charge congestion pricing for Belmont Center traffic (ID 272) - it would be good to investigate this but this idea would require state approval
- Sell/lease town-owned parking lots in Belmont Center & Waverley Square (ID 273) - this idea is a duplicate of ID 36 (Sell town-owned parcels for residential development or define a public purpose)
- Impose a real-estate transfer tax (ID 275) - good to investigate this idea but requires state approval, duplicate of ID 343 (Home rule petition for real estate transfer tax)
- Put insurance out to bid & purchase insurance with other towns (ID 365) - this idea was split from ID 28 (Put insurance out to bid & have schools pay their share of insurance). We will need to research further to see whether it duplicates any idea we already have.
- Sell town-owned parcels for residential development or define a public purpose (ID 36) - next step will be to compile list of real estate the town owns so we can evaluate higher use of what we own
- Explore alternative financial products and financial advisors (ID 240) - good to investigate but might be covered by an idea that another group has
- Sell the school administration building on Pleasant Street (ID 284) - duplicate of ID 36 (Sell town-owned parcels for residential development or define a public purpose)
- Monetize town owned properties by reverse mortgaging them and investing proceeds (ID 315) - good to investigate this, but not sure if it's legal/prudent, might somewhat duplicate ID 240 (Explore alternative financial products and financial advisors)
- Evaluate cost/benefit of COA transportation (ID 95) - good to investigate
- Train town staff instead of using expensive consultant services (ID 253) - good to investigate
- Explore whether the current form of governance is best suited for Belmont (ID 261) - open to be explored
- Seek office and business development on the Claflin St parking lot (ID 342) - this idea is included with multiple ideas involving town properties
- Home rule petition for real estate transfer tax (ID 343) - pursue this with ID 275 (Impose a real-estate transfer tax)

- Build a shopping mall or a casino somewhere on Belmont Hill (ID 351) - evaluate as part of a strategy of reviewing land holdings and development opportunities
- Lobby with legislature for the PILOT program to be mandatory (ID 352) - evaluate with other ideas involving PILOTs, especially ID 294 (Open space and other tax breaks for private entities)
- Get rid of the recreational department (ID 356) - need to confirm what plans are ongoing for making Recreation Dept an enterprise fund and review need for Recreation Director
- Build a soccer bubble at Grove street playground (ID 358) - evaluate whether a soccer bubble is feasible
- Sell advertising on e-billboards along Route 2 or commuter routes (ID 366) - evaluate whether this is legal/feasible
- Withdraw from NEMLEC (ID 368) - evaluate whether NEMLEC is still beneficial

For next meeting each working group member will review all open and ruled out ideas to identify ~10 ideas that seem most worth pursuing.

Future meeting schedule

Next subcommittee meeting will be Tuesday, May 13, at 8:00am.

Adjourned at 9:58am (Moved: Rickter, Seconded: Pikcingis, Voted 3-0)