

Working together is success.

— Henry Ford



Sullivan County Goal Setting Report

April 3, 2017

Primex³
NH Public Risk Management Exchange

Center for
Public Sector
Advancement

Promoting Excellence in the Public Sector

Purpose and Intended Results

The purpose of this goal setting session was to assist the Sullivan County Council and County department heads in establishing short- and long-term goals that will move the County's vision forward. The goals identified will become part of the County Council and management staff's ongoing action plan moving forward.

Participants

County Commissioners

Jeffrey Barrett, Chair

Bennie C. Nelson, Vice Chair

George Hebert, Clerk

County Managers

Jessie Levine

Derek Ferland

The session was facilitated by:

Carl Weber, Director of Member Services, Primex³

Ground Rules

At the outset of the session, participants identified a list of ground rules that set the stage for how to proceed. Participants chose the following ground rules for themselves:

- 2014 Recap
- Lunch
- Don't talk at once
- Be Positive
- Be Specific

Review of Sullivan County's Vision, Mission and Values

Participants reviewed the County's Vision Statement, Mission Statement, and Core Values. These factors make up a lens through which goals and objectives can be evaluated and developed.

Vision for Sullivan County (From existing report)

The Commissioners and County Manager identified their ideal vision for Sullivan County in 3-5 years. The creation of this vision would then become the foundation for accomplishing specific goals towards that aim. The Commissioners and County Manager identified the vision for Sullivan County as follows:

Sullivan County continues to maintain the **core functions** of the County, fill service gaps, and supply services regionally when possible with a strong financial position and **stable tax rates**.

To be **recognized, relevant, and useful**, with a strong role to play in the economic health of the region.

To be a **responsible leader in the region**, and to have a **strong workforce**.

To **influence the region** by leading by example in a cost effective way by:

- ✓ Balancing taxpayer and employee needs; and
- ✓ Making decisions, creating policies, and building programs that have a **demonstrated positive impact** for the communities and citizens in Sullivan County.

Core Functions Defined

- Sheriff's Department
- Registry of Deeds
- Department of Corrections
- Nursing Home
- Natural Resources (Conservation)
- County Attorney
- Cooperative Extension

Vision: (Additions/modifications to existing report)

The overall 'Health' was expanded to include not just economic measures

- Economic
- Emergency preparedness
- Behavioral, Health, Education
 - ⇒ Addiction
 - ⇒ Mental Health
- Natural Resources
- Active Living

SWOT Analysis

Participants were asked to evaluate the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) facing the County. This structured process helps identify the internal attributes of the organization in the context of its external environment, and provides the foundation to help Sullivan County maximize its strengths to pursue opportunities, and minimize threats by addressing – or at least understanding – its weaknesses. The SWOT Analysis then becomes another lens through which participants evaluate and develop goals and objectives.

Strengths Identified:

- High Collaboration
- Supportive and positive leadership
- Accessible land
- Strong fund balance
- Internal strengths-High functioning organization
- Value – services – Per \$
- Campus
- Management (Executive)
- Natural resources
- Collaboration
- Employees
- Elected officials
- Location
- Industry
- Fiscally sound
- Good workforce
- Well respected
- Visible leadership
- Successful programs
- Financial position (for now)
- Department head ability/willingness to work together/innovate
- Teamwork
- Sense of urgency/awareness to be stewards of tax dollars
- Natural/cultural/historic resources

Weaknesses Identified:

- Lack of employee engagement
- Need for sustainable finances
- Aging demographic
- Loss of workforce
- Often the forgotten County facilities = deferred maintenance
- Lack of staff accountant
- Middle management
- Recruitment and retention of medical staff
- Aging facilities
- Outreach
- Geographic location of main campus
- Union negotiations
- Perceived value-cities and towns
- Lack of formal authority and responsibility over towns/cities
 - ⇒ Economic development, etc.
- Perception
- Unsustainable reliance on fund balance to augment operational budget
- Human capital
 - ⇒ Geography
 - ⇒ Wages
- Aging infrastructure
 - ⇒ Newport
 - ⇒ Sanders / Stearns
- Diversify industrial base to sustain reasonable tax base
 - ⇒ Ruger
 - ⇒ What else? (eggs in one basket)
- Being complacent
- Lack of new industry
- Not having a good plan to recover from the changing Medicare program
- Taxpayers don't know what the County does

- Qualified worker shortage
- Dated nursing facility
- Perceived as being out of the way

Opportunities identified:

- Use fund balance strategically
- Building stock-residential, commercial, industrial
- Staff with strong community minded interest
- Open channel to federal delegation
- Small enough to bring state holders together
- Potential for good jobs
- Political momentum/attention generated by local leaders
 - ⇒ Lead paint
- “Buy NH” mindset to support local farmers/businesses
 - ⇒ Growing trend?
 - ⇒ Or just a fad?
- Sullivan County way of life
 - ⇒ Leverage Natural/Cultural/Historical resources to target specific demographics
- Proximity to Upper Valley and Dartmouth
 - ⇒ Bedroom communities
 - ⇒ DHMC-PHN
 - ⇒ Transportation nodes
- Amtrak
- Routes 89/91
- Workforce development
- Regionalization of services
- Collaboration with member communities and organizations
- Grant facilitation
- Youth retention
- Educational partnerships

- Increased recreational opportunities for citizens
- Grant opportunities
- Opportunity to educate people about what we do
- We have and can implement programs to fight the addiction crisis
- We can leverage resources to help communities
- Working to improve relationships with municipalities
- Create good internal working teams to find cost saving ideas

Threats Identified:

- Lack of investment in education
- Addiction
- Property tax growth
- Federal and State decisions that downshift costs
- Underestimating the silver Tsunami
- Change/reversal in the Department of Corrections census trend
- Federal changes, disruptions
- Climate changes
- Healthcare Medicaid Money
- Migration/downsizing of key industry/employees
 - ⇒ Ruger
- Demographic death spiral
- Social dimension
 - ⇒ Family structure
 - ⇒ Addiction
 - ⇒ Social programs
 - ⇒ Reasons for youth to stay in area
- Aging housing inventory
 - ⇒ Impact to market and property values
 - ⇒ Environmental hazards (lead)
 - ⇒ Limits bedroom community potential
 - ⇒ Ceiling on property value and tax return

- Medicare/Medicaid reimbursements
- Health care reform
- Indiscriminate use of fund balance
- Managed care
- Pro-share and bad tax changes, cuts
- Less effective workforce
- Municipalities running into rising costs and not able to recover
- Rising health insurance cost
- Ability to keep up with competing wages to keep and attract new employees
- Healthcare costs
- Eldercare funding
- Sunapee secession
- Loss of workforce
- Large employer closings
- Dramatic change in delegation
- Losing key staff
- Legislation-unknown
- Aging infrastructure

Identification and Prioritization of Goals

Goals were defined as qualitative statements of what the County intends to accomplish over a period of years. These are “big picture” items vital to organizational success.

Participants discussed the various goals each person had identified for the County. (Most participants had already completed a pre-session assignment that asked them to identify three goals they felt were essential to move the County forward, so they had already identified numerous goals.)

As each goal was discussed, each participant decided whether it was similar to, or different from, the previously stated goal. Similar goals were placed in the same “category,” and at the end of the process, the group had created a total of four buckets, each with its own sub-goals. They were as follows, with the theme of:

Focus on **core** functions and internal activities as you attempt larger things.

1. Workforce Stabilization and Enhancement

- Fully staff our organization
- A solution to hiring and keeping a work staff at the nursing home

- Human capital strategy
 - a. Recruit and retain staff
 - b. Education links
 - c. Employment and economic development
- BHAG: Be a leader in workforce development
- Improve both workforce and workforce environment
- Complete union negotiations to everyone's benefit

2. Strategic Fiscal Plan

- Solve annual operational budget vs. fund balance disconnect
- Keeping taxes in check and stable
- Refurbish and modernize nursing facility
- Commitment at all levels to long-term capital and operational financial plan
- Deliver services efficiently to maintain current tax rate

3. Regional Leadership

- Create a team of local business and community leaders to discuss ideas on ways to improve community involvement and improve workforce
- Have a big facilitated work session to get to common goals
- Work with R.P.C. to develop work groups to tackle regional problems

4. Maintain and improve trails and substance abuse programming

Development of Strategic Objectives for Top Goals

Strategic Objectives were defined as short- and long-term quantitative results that directly support the goals. Objectives should be measurable, achievable, and consistent with the goals, and should also align with the Town's overall vision, mission and core values. These objectives create the basis for an ongoing action plan going forward.

Participants were tasked with developing at least two strategic objectives to help the County achieve its goals. The strategic objectives for each goal were as follows:

Goal 1: Workforce Stabilization and Enhancement

- **Strategic Objective 1:** Increase use of Sullivan County nurses while lowering use of agency nurses

- **Strategic Objective 2:** Create partnerships to provide a pool of new employees
- **Strategic Objective 3:** Try to achieve this goal through cost savings to pay for the increased wages over a period of a few years
- **Strategic Objective 4:** Cut turnover rates in half at nursing home by 12/31/17
- **Strategic Objective 5:** Finish implementing wage/compensation study recommendations
 - ➔ No later than 2018
- **Strategic Objective 6:** Identify resources and how to best allocate
- **Strategic Objective 7:** Staff development and mobility
 - ➔ Six months

Goal 2: Strategic Fiscal Plan

- **Strategic Objective 1:** Update Capital Improvement Plan every 6 months
- **Strategic Objective 2:** Keep undesignated fund balance within policy
- **Strategic Objective 3:** Put limits on spending by controlling lost hours work/interior cost
- **Strategic Objective 4:** Achieve sustainable annual budget (i.e. 0 fund balance subsidy)
 - ➔ No later than FY 19
- **Strategic Objective 5:** Prepare outlooks that compare to proposed trend-forecast
- **Strategic Objective 6:** Educate delegation about Capital Improvement Plan and fund balance use
 - ➔ Next 45 days

Goal 3: Regional Leadership

- **Strategic Objective 1:** Identify regional stakeholders and develop list of shared goals and partner network no later than end of FY 2017
 - ✓ Economic development opportunities
 - ✓ Education opportunities
 - ✓ Public health
 - ✓ Transportation
 - ✓ National Resources
- **Strategic Objective 2:** Kick-off event Sullivan County collaborative Jan-Feb 2018
- **Strategic Objective 3:** Improving relationships with town and cities in the County

- **Strategic Objective 4:** Collaborate with our regional partners to develop a comprehensive/strategic vision for Sullivan County, Upper Valley, etc.
 - ✓ We need to agree on the 'Big Idea' in order to work together to achieve our goals
- **Strategic Objective 5:** Increase County's rank among ten counties, in factors like income, college attainment, social determinants

Wrap-Up, Recap and Action Plan

The next step following this session will be for the County Manager, department heads, and County staff to work together to develop specific tactics for accomplishing the identified goals and objectives. Tactics describe specifically HOW the goals and objectives will be met.

Concluding Thoughts

Thank you again for the opportunity to participate in this important process. Primex³ appreciates the opportunity to provide assistance to members with goal setting, and to help governing bodies develop paths to achieve their visions. A forward-looking community that is deliberate, disciplined, and strategic in developing and accomplishing its goals illustrates how "good management is good risk management."

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