

CHuG Issues, Goals and Recommendations

Needs to be substantially reorganized

Governance

1. Issue: Some citizens think that Lincoln's government is a closed group, not welcoming to new people or ideas.
Goal: Facilitate opportunities for volunteers, including important but time-limited contributions to the Town, and cultivate volunteers for assuming public office.
Recommendations:
 - Volunteer committee/coordinator to facilitate and coordinate outreach
 - Create a systematic electronic data base of the skills of town's residents
 - Hold welcoming events for newcomers
 - Provide an information packet on volunteer opportunities when people register to vote and at public meetings
 - Involve town-based networks for reaching out to citizens (I don't know what this means)
 - Target electronic messages for specific audiences (too vague to be helpful)
 - Involve long-time town government participants in encouraging residents to volunteer and to provide mentoring of residents who indicate interest.

2. Issue: Attendance at TM is dropping, and attendees are aging.
Goal: Identify actions that will make Lincoln's TM more attractive to citizens
Recommendations:
 - Institute general outreach as described under 1. above (not clear what this means – consider deleting)
 - Use slides and electronic media to illustrate and enhance presentations of warrant articles (we already do; albeit presentation could often be made more interesting and less long-winded)
 - Develop a time schedule for warrant article presentations; either within the Saturday TM and/or by dividing TM into multiple shorter sessions each with specific content (e.g. budget; schools; planning board; citizen-submitted articles)
 - Improve lighting and sound-amplification in Brooks Auditorium
 - Provide daycare to encourage residents with children to attend
 - Provide live TV coverage of TM
 - Encourage the Moderator to be more forceful in encouraging the time-management of debate.
 - Provide civic lessons for the town's students to engage both them and their parents in town affairs (not clear how this would be done; need to be more specific as to actions)

3. Issue: It is difficult to find people willing to run for, or be appointed to, major boards.
Goal: Cultivate volunteers for assuming public office

Recommendations: Huge overlap with 1. Need to rethink both. (1) has to do more with the perception of the closed nature of TG – the need is for activities aimed at improving communication and increasing “transparency”. (3) should focus on ways to encourage volunteers to come forward.

- One-on-one outreach
- Disseminate information about each board’s activities

4. Issue: There is insufficient communication between government and citizens. (communication about what – process of government, specific current issues; invitations for feedback (electronic or by attending meetings). It seems to me we want feedback in whatever form citizens want to give it.

Goal: Provide enhanced avenues for community outreach (this is really the main thrust of (1).

Recommendations:

- Improve the town’s website
- Provide periodic newsletters and/or e-news about town government activities
- Encourage development of blogs on specific issues facing the town. (i.e be positive rather than passive. Citizens will decide)

5. Issue: Serving on some boards can be very time consuming. Providing better staff support is a distinct other issue)

Goal: Reduce time commitments by increasing the efficiency of committee processes.

Enhance support for residents serving on town boards and committees

Recommendations:

- Change the culture of committee activities by getting insights from organizational experts; encouraging committees to analyze opportunities for achieving better results; carefully assessing opportunities within the open meeting law to encourage preparation of substance outside of meetings while ensuring full recording of background material and open discussion and decisions during meetings. CHuG process is a case in point (and I realize Peter is opposed – though I have trouble understanding why). Tim Higgins offers support for this suggestion – the key is open communication of all that transpires.
- Provide additional staff support to committees within budgetary constraints as needed
- Provide training for board chairs and members (in what?)
- Provide information packets prior to meetings (in sufficient time that members can read them before the meeting)
- Set agenda and adhere to time lines

6. Issue: There is inconsistent, and often insufficient, communication among key boards.
Goal: Facilitate cooperation and communication among town boards and committees
Recommendations:
- Schedule inter-board meetings at least twice yearly (early fall and before TM). These could be chaired either by the Town Moderator or expert group facilitator.
 - Enhance chair-to-chair communication on issues involving more than one board/committee.
 - Schedule joint board meetings for discussion of critical issues or applicant presentations that involve more than one board/committee
7. Issue: Lincoln is not maximizing the use of IT to enhance communication with citizens and within town government.
Goal: Improve the town's IT capabilities and ensure their optimal usage
Recommendations:
- IT planning should be a high priority.
 - Improve the town's website
 - Provide an electronic suggestion box for complaints and to obtain ideas about needs for improvement. Ensure prompt responses to complaints.
 - Create data bases for public information that are accessible to town staff, town government volunteers, and the public through their home computers.
 - Convert all key town records to easily accessible electronic databases (e.g. voter records, assessors data, current town financial and government data, historic records).
8. Issue: The increasing cost of town government. (This is very complex issue that we haven't adequately discussed. This isn't to say we shouldn't express some ideas, however. Increasing revenues is a completely different, though related, issue)
Goal: Reduce expenses (separate goal: increase revenues)
Recommendations:
- Explore opportunities to regionalize services such as DPW, fire, police
 - Expand tax revenue from commercial enterprises (targeted development plus increased tax rate)
 - Increase user fees

Culture and History

This whole section looks like an afterthought. It's more important than this and needs much more emphasis!!

1. Issue: Lack of coordination between the town's cultural and historic organizations
Goal: Improve coordination

Recommendation:

One clear message from the focus group was that there might be advantages to considering whether to combine some historical/cultural groups (e.g. combine Bemis Trustees programs with Friends of Library Program). Also, there is fuzziness about the distinction between the Historic Commission and Historical Society. Other priorities might be to increase collaboration between the schools and the library and DeCordova. Also, we might point to opportunities for greater collaboration between Mass Audubon, CCF, and other local farms.

- Create a coordinator for timing, event space, and fundraising (How would this work? This needs more specifics. Coordinators rarely solve anything unless they are given clear guidance and a lot of support)
2. Issue: Inconsistent and often inadequate interactions among cultural and historic institutions and, of these with the schools

Goal: Develop mechanisms and incentives for cooperation

Recommendation:

- Encourage the schools to make time available for existing opportunities

(What does this mean?)

3. Issue: Need to insure the preservation of key historic assets of the Town
- Goal: Identify key elements of our historical assets, set priorities for protecting them for future generations and establish steps to be taken to protect them in the face of limited resources and competing priorities

Recommendation: Encourage the town's existing historic boards/committees to respond to the stated goal

(We can and must do much better than this! The history and culture of Lincoln are too important to give these issues only a passing glance.)