

Memorandum

To: Portsmouth Town Council

From: Linda Ujifusa

Date: Aug. 4, 2020

Re: Town Administrator Goals

I am writing this memorandum to briefly outline a few possible priority goals I would like to recommend the Town Council approve for the Town Administrator to be undertaken in Fiscal Year 2020 (July 2020-June 2021).

Background:

Since 2018, the Town Council (TC) has set the Town Administrator's (TA's) priority goals for the upcoming fiscal year in a public meeting. In addition to big picture goals, the TA goals have also included more detailed actions. See 2019-20 goals attached. There are multiple reasons for setting the TA's goals in a public meeting. First, deciding TA priorities in public promotes transparency. Second, the TA should clearly understand what the TC believes are priorities to guide his schedule and efforts properly. Third, TC reviews of the TA should be based on clearly stated and mutually understood goals.

Given the enormous disruptions and stresses caused by COVID-19, the town must act to maintain the health, safety, and general well-being of our community. While the TC has worked diligently with the TA to minimize taxes, a pandemic is not the time to defund our police, fire, DPW, teachers, and other town staff managing this crisis as well as ongoing pre-pandemic work. Nor is it the time to exacerbate existing problems such as deferred maintenance of public infrastructure. Proper planning is necessary to avoid negative consequences that would result from acting on non-specific, unanalyzed and unjustified fiscal proposals.

I look forward to discussing these recommendations at our Aug. 11 Town Council meeting.

Recommended priority TA goals for FY 2020:

- 1) Develop and implement a plan to deal with major distressed town-owned properties (i.e., the former Coggeshall School and Hutchinson School).  
Multiple options have long been considered for what to do with these properties. The deadline to make decisions has been moved up significantly by factors such as mold, fire code violations and COVID-19. It is important to make sure that actions are fiscally prudent and serve the best interests of our residents.
- 2) Create an open space and recreation master plan.  
This item is related to item 1) insofar as it is important to know how the disposition of our two major distressed properties would fit into an overarching open space and recreation vision for the town.
- 3) Continue to improve climate change preparedness and resiliency, especially for our most vulnerable areas (i.e., Island Park, Common Fence Point).

To build on the work undertaken by the Portsmouth Emergency Management Director and staff (e.g., through our \$339,000 “Resilient Rhody” municipal grant), the town must continue to implement action items set forth in Section 11 of the draft Comprehensive Plan (Natural Hazards and Climate Change). Specifically, we should prioritize working with RIDOT to mitigate future impacts and increase resilience to flooding, storm surge and sea level rise along Park Avenue in Island Park and in CFP.

4) Create and implement a green and complete streets ordinance.

Although the major complaints about Portsmouth roads center on roads owned and operated by the State (i.e., East Main and West Main Roads) and the TC and staff have undertaken efforts to increase safety, we must also ensure that all the roads in Portsmouth are planned and managed to encourage and provide for the safe access to destinations in town for everyone – including pedestrians and bicyclists.

5) Develop and implement an improved solid waste management program.

Transfer station sticker prices will continue to climb. The Central Landfill may close as early as 2034. This year, for the third straight time, there will be no recycling profit sharing with municipalities. The contract with our current waste haulers will expire in 2021. The TA, working closely with the Portsmouth Solid Waste and Management Committee, must evaluate and implement a fair, fiscally responsible and sustainable solid waste management program.

6) Improve the Town's management of online services.

As COVID-19 has made extremely clear, the ability to interact with the Town online is imperative and must continue to be improved to allow the town to properly conduct business and serve the public. Everything from being able to make payments online to improved communications about and during events can and must be addressed.