Transition Report
City of Taunton

Prepared for Mayor Thomas C. Hoye

Table of Contents

I.	Downtown Revitalization	3
II.	Economic Development	9
III.	Education	21
IV.	Public Safety	28
V.	Health and Human Services	70
VI.	Permitting Reform	86
VII.	Social Media and Technology	91

Downtown Revitalization Task Force
Transitional Plan

- Chairman –
Joe Norte

- Members –
Jose Bejarano
Teri Bernert
John Damaso
Dave DeSantis
Joseph Olaniyan
Sandy Thomas
Colleen Wellman

During the opening months of 2012, the Downtown Revitalization Task Force interviewed and surveyed Downtown Business Owners in order to provide the newly elected Hoye Administration with a guide and vision to create an economically and vibrant Downtown Taunton. Although there is no magic bullet, we believe that the ideas set forth in this document are feasible.

In order to accomplish these tasks, there must to be a team approach between the city, businesses, and downtown organizations working toward the common good. We will never return Taunton to the way it was, nor do we want to. We believe that with cooperation, we can make downtown a vibrant and exciting community. In the sections below you will discover the findings and recommendations for issues facing Downtown Taunton.

Findings & Action Plan:

1. Lack of Interest or Development in Downtown

Currently, there is a high vacancy rate of approximately 30% which includes storefronts and office space. In addition to the high vacancy rate, there is a number of absentee property owners that are unwilling or not interested in investing in their properties.

<u>Action Plan:</u>

First Year:

- Create a District Increment Financing (DIF) Plan Authority: M.G.L., chapter 400. District Improvement Financing (DIF) is an economic development tool that promotes redevelopment by the use of tax increments. A DIF would channel tax dollars into a targeted redevelopment district, which could mirror the BID District.
    - i. The first step to create a DIF is to designate and certify a district with the state and create a development program. The development program would include any zoning changes, development opportunities, planned infrastructure and a financial plan. DIF provides financial benefits to developers by providing infrastructure and surrounding amenities to support their projects. The early public funding takes the initial burden off the developer and minimizes risk. SRPEDD and the BID could assist in the creation of the DIF.
    - ii. The Development Program Plan would also serve as a blueprint for downtown revitalization. By offering a property tax break for BID Members, this would encourage participation in the BID and demonstrate to BID Members who are already paying additional fees dedicated to Downtown that the city is equally committed. Reducing property taxes of those property owners who are committed to downtown and investing in downtown, would give incentive for new developer investment. The increased membership in the BID would provide additional funding to further improve downtown. The benefit to the City of Taunton would be increased property values due to the enhancement and revitalization of

downtown and the city would receive higher revenues due to increase property values.

- Improve and expand upon the existing façade program for downtown, with assistance given to property owners and renters who would like to improve their storefronts.
- Develop and execute a Downtown Marketing campaign with a "Buy Downtown" theme.
- Waive permitting fees for new incoming business to establish in downtown.
- Relax current parking requirements from 2 cars per unit, to 1 car per unit, to develop more mixed use property in the downtown area.

2. Infrastructure:

Sidewalks are unsafe, unattractive, and neither handicap accessible nor handicap compliant.

<u>Action Plan:</u>

First Year:

- Complete Phase 1 of the "Downtown Improvement Project". Apply to Mass Works or other funding sources for complete street-scape improvement.
- Beautify and improve the Taunton Green Triangle at the intersection of School, Main, Weir Street and Taunton Green.

Long Term:

- Complete Phases 2-4 of the "Downtown Improvement Project".

3. Parking:

In recent years, there has been an effort to increase off-street parking in the Downtown area.

<u>Action Plan:</u>

First Year:

- Increase signage to indicate where parking is available.
- Develop a system that funds downtown parking improvements through the reinvestment of fees from meters and tickets.

Two – Five Years:

- Improve/upgrade existing parking lots by providing better lighting which enhances safety, and establish an independent parking commission that would collect the monies from the meters and use these funds to improve the parking issues. *Note: A published five year parking improvement plan should be provided by the Parking Commission.*
- Assist any interested developer with coordinating parking for their proposed development.

4. Public Safety:
There is a perception that Downtown Taunton is unsafe. We must provide a comfortable and safe area to promote downtown.

<u>Action Plan:</u>
First Year:
- Increase police presence
- Hire parking and meter attendants to collect meter monies and write tickets. In addition to increased police presence, these uniformed parking attendants will provide a sense of security to people visiting the downtown area.
- Create slightly raised sidewalks that would require vehicles to slow down and allow for pedestrian traffic to cross safely.

5. Central Conference/Cultural Center:
Currently there is no venue that seats over 80 people Downtown. Business, community, and social events must be held at a larger venue outside of Downtown, giving no added economic activity to the Downtown.

<u>Action Plan:</u>
Two – Three Years:
- Use tax incentives to assist the BID and developers to create a conference and events center in downtown.

6. Cleanliness:
Downtown streets and sidewalks should be cleaned and maintained on a regular basis.

<u>Action Plan:</u>
First Year:
- Have a street sweeper come through the center of Taunton twice per week.
- Have an adequate amount of sidewalk trash barrels and empty barrels once per week.
- Fund additional positions at the DPW to assist the BID with cleaning downtown sidewalks and the overall city at least twice per week.
- Work with the Sherriff's Office and/or the Department of Corrections to create a program in Taunton where inmates work to sweep the sidewalks, collect debris, and keep the area maintained

7. Vacant and/or Deteriorated Buildings:
Downtown has a number of vacant and unattended buildings which are in much disrepair, including the Starr Theater and City Hall.

<u>Action Plan:</u>
First Year:

- City of Taunton needs to have a definite plan in place with regard to City Hall to reopen City Hall as soon as possible.
- The City must continue action with the Star Theater. The City should take it by eminent domain, declare it unsafe, and pursue for city or developer control.

8. Attract a Higher Education Presence
We should develop a plan to attract a higher education facility in downtown. This would provide foot traffic to the area.

<u>Action Plan:</u>
Long Term:

- Reach out to the higher education community and accommodate their space and parking needs in a development scenario.
- Identify buildings or locations that may be of interest. Develop a plan that would accommodate the City, property owner and the higher education.

9. Marketing:
It appears that is there is no coordinated marketing plan on behalf of the City of Taunton to direct and attract businesses to the downtown area.

<u>Action Plan:</u>
First Year:

- Other cities, such as New Bedford, have a Marketing Program and/or Director committed to attract business to locate in the downtown area. The City of Taunton should do the same. Much effort is directed towards the industrial park and very little to downtown. The City should be actively contacting small businesses, especially those which have left the mall, and try to re-locate such businesses downtown.

10. General:
With the possibility of a casino locating in the city, negotiate and earmark funds for downtown revitalization. The City should consider establishing a Wampanoag Museum that would attract visitors.

We need to make Downtown the Social, Cultural, and Economic Center of the city. The downtown area, especially around the Green, along with its architecture is a special natural resource that is not realizing full potential. We need to cultivate and strengthen the

partnership between the City and the Downtown Organizations. The BID could assist the City with implementations of these ideas. The Downtown Taunton Foundation and The Heart of Taunton should promote special events such as international festivals, and other events similar to the "Lights On" to attract people downtown.

Economic Development Task Force
Transitional Plan

- Chairman –
Michael Mattos

- Members –
Venita Amidon
Joseph Baptiste
Louis Ricciardi
Elisa Scully
PJ Sullivan
Terry Quinn

Current State

Historically, Taunton's relatively low utility rates and exceptional highway access have been the driving economic development attraction for many warehouse and distribution companies located in our industrial parks. Meanwhile, smaller, service-oriented retail businesses in our downtown and neighborhoods have struggled.

In general, Taunton's citywide economic development activities have tended to be more reactive and random in nature, rather than proactive and planned with a systematic approach towards achieving identified goals. While this has lead to some positive outcomes, such as cleaning up some of the city's contaminated properties, know as Brownfields, the final results of these projects have yet to be realized.

The City of Taunton enjoys a strong network of organizations that provide business assistance, including the Office of Economic and Community Development (OECD), Office of the City Planner, Taunton Development Corporation, Taunton Area Chamber of Commerce, SEED Corporation, Taunton Career Center, Heart of Taunton, Business Improvement District, The Neighborhood Corporation, Downtown Taunton Foundation and many other committees that include area business professionals. However, due to the number of organizations there is some misunderstanding, confusion and lack of coordination that has resulted.

Desired State

In order for the City of Taunton to build upon its successful economic development track record and remain competitive with other communities within Massachusetts to attract and retain businesses, there needs to be a strategic, coordinated and well-balanced approach to market and promote the entire city; frequent and consistent communication among city departments and business organizations; a business friendly atmosphere and reputation for providing clear and measurable incentives to businesses that create jobs and new tax revenue; and strong leadership from the Mayor's Office.

It is critical that economic development not be reactionary, a process whereby attention is mobilized only when a particular opportunity arises. Rather, it must be a well-defined, cohesive, and ongoing program of activities aimed at both growing existing businesses and attracting new businesses to the community. As part of that effort, the City should consider the following

Action Plan

Immediate (0-1 year)

1. **Continue to promote and build upon Taunton's existing advantages.**

Many area businesses that have decided to make Taunton their headquarters have done so because of Taunton's geographical and infrastructure advantages. Specifically, the areas that we have identified as positives for Taunton from larger area employers include:

- Central location within Southeastern Massachusetts with direct access to I-495 and rt. 24 connecting to both Boston and Providence
- Plenty of buildable land
- Low utility rates
- Availability of rail
- Labor force

These factors will continue to drive businesses to Taunton, and should be promoted, preserved and enhanced to the greatest extent possible.

2. **Create a Mayor's Economic Advisory Board**.

A consistent theme identified by the economic development taskforce was the need for the Mayor to provide direction and play a leadership role in the economic and business development efforts of the City. While the combined efforts of residents, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and local and regional government will be required in order for economic development strategies to succeed, the Mayor's office is particularly well-positioned to take a leadership role in developing and communicating an economic development vision for the city. The Mayor's office has the political authority to lead diverse community stakeholders in working cooperatively toward the benefit of all. As the Chief Elected Officer (CEO) of Taunton, the Mayor could make a lasting, positive impression with businesses interesting in locating and expanding in the city by connecting and meeting with private Chief Executive Officers to let them know that Taunton is a sophisticated, first-class city that wants to work with businesses to be successful and create jobs and economic growth.

By organizing a board of economic advisors that consists of key business leaders and relevant department heads within the City, the Mayor would be able to discuss and seek input on significant economic development projects and initiatives within the City. With the Mayor as Chairman, there would be regular communication and follow-up on issues that would allow the City's economic development efforts to remain focused and produce results.

3. Develop consistent communication between City departments.

Information and communication to businesses from multiple city departments needs to be consistent to avoid confusion and allow businesses to make sound investment decisions. The Mayor should help facilitate frequent dialog and input from all departments that play a key role in assisting businesses and developers that are seeking to start-up, expand or build in Taunton. These departments may include, but are not limited to, the Office of Economic and Community Development, City Planner's Office, Building Department, and Department of Public Works. The best way to get multiple departments and personalities "on the same page" is to meet and discuss issues and the process that may be necessary for projects in the city to move forward and be successful. The economic development taskforce suggests hosting meetings at least once a month with heads of departments to report progress on projects and other topics to avoid a duplication of efforts by various departments trying to accomplish the same things. Simple and consistent communication will increase efficiency of staff time and resources. This structure would help advance economic development projects strategically and systematically.

4. Leverage existing small business loan programs.

Some cities, such as Fall River, offer a small business loan program directly through their economic development office through lines of credit provided by local Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and lines of credit from local banks. Other communities, such as Brockton, created a small business loan program with funds from a now eliminated grant source, once provided by the U.S Economic Development Administration (EDA). The City of Attleboro offers a commercial loan program that provides assistance to businesses through a program that combines a 50% CDBG grant and a 50% private loan. That model serves to provide an incentive, while ensuring that funds are coming back into the system.

However, considering the presently limited financial resources of Taunton, it would be more beneficial at this time for the city to build a stronger working relationship with the SEED Corporation located on Rt. 44 in Taunton. SEED has readily available micro and small business loans available in amounts ranging from $1,000 to $5.5 million to assist business with everything from working capital, equipment, real estate and leasehold improvements. While the city's Economic Development Director has been an active member of SEED's Board of Directors for many years, perhaps the city, through OECD, could play a more direct role in collaborating with SEED to assist small businesses.

OECD could provide direct follow-up with both SEED staff and businesses to track their progress and assist with other issues beyond financing, including local and state permitting, and workforce training opportunities to help achieve success.

5. Follow up on business leads

A process needs to be established for systematically following up on business leads. Business leads between SEED and other agencies need to be documented and continuously

advanced. The creation of a single point of contact for economic development related issues within the city would ensure that the information is centralized and consistent across city government. A centralized system should be created and developed that documents all potential economic opportunities and tracks progress. If a lead is deemed to be no longer viable, then it can be removed from consideration. Business leads that are deemed viable should be subject to continuous follow-up until they are no longer viable. The Mayor should be kept apprised of all new business leads, and decisions should be made periodically as to whether his involvement could be useful.

6. Showcase successful companies on the City's website.

Taunton is fortunate to have many successful businesses located in our city that are some of the area's largest employers such as Kopin, Agar Supply, Steward Healthcare, Pepsi Bottling Group, Tribe Hummus, Jordan's Furniture, etc. As a way to improve relations with local employers, as well as sell the benefits of locating and expanding a business in Taunton, OECD, in coordination with the Mayor's office, could do a monthly profile of a successful Taunton business and post it on the City's website as a link.

7. Host city-wide Economic Development Listening Tour during first year.

There should be an ongoing effort to market the community as "business friendly." It would be useful to have a press event at least every other week during which time the Mayor touts a new or expanding business/or a new business initiative – and uses the occasion to promotes the business friendly environment of the City. The City must continuously reinforce the message that the Taunton is a great place to do business and that its leaders are committed to promoting business interests.

During the Mayor's first year in office, he and his key department heads could host three annual business forums, one in each industrial park and one in downtown as a way to outreach directly to both large and small businesses and have an opportunity to listen to businesses issues, concerns, ideas and needs. Receiving direct feedback from businesses on an ongoing basis would allow the Mayor and his staff to make any necessary adjustments to improve business-related services.

Potential businesses or business investors are more likely to invest in the City if they believe it "is on the move" and they can be associated with an effort that they perceive to be an emerging success.

8. Develop and maintain an available space inventory.

Compile an inventory of available commercial and industrial space throughout the City, not just the industrial parks, and pair that with a responsive site selection program that can easily assist businesses wishing to locate or expand in identifying properties that will meet their needs.

Short-term (1-2 years)

1. **Conduct business retention surveys.**

Each existing City business should be surveyed on an annual basis to identify any issues or needs a business may have, including spacing, financing, and permitting. The business retention surveys will not only allow the City to identify areas where intervention may be appropriate, they can also be useful in shaping the focus of City's economic development program and give practitioners and City leaders a better understanding how the business community views the City's business climate.

2. **Create a brand for the City of Taunton.**

As part of a proactive economic development strategy, our city government must effectively market Taunton to potential new businesses. By creating and communicating a clear, consistent, and compelling "brand" for Taunton, we can attract new investment that takes advantage of community assets, addresses community needs, and preserves and strengthens our city's culture and character.

Past efforts to create a "brand" for Taunton have focused primarily on our city's industrial past (i.e. emphasizing our identity as "The Silver City.") While honoring our community's history is important, a more effective marketing message for Taunton's future must be forward-looking. While the specifics of the message should be derived from an inclusive, public process involving stakeholder input, Taunton's economic development "brand" should:

- Emphasize our unique assets: convenient highway access, competitive utility rates, existing dense neighborhood infrastructure, etc.

- Focus on our specific needs: to fill vacancies in our industrial parks and downtown; to bring back reliable industrial jobs; to offer more highly-skilled jobs to retain educated young people; etc.

- Incorporate our hopes for the future: the creation of a new life sciences center; the return of a vibrant, bustling downtown; the creation of pleasant, walkable neighborhoods; the preservation of green space; etc.

While it is certainly important to provide information online via the City website, developing an impressive collateral package that contains information on demographics, assets, and incentives (beyond a package that is geared exclusively to the industrial parks) is also very important for face-to-face meetings or situations involving direct mailings. The package should profile the City's assets and offer a compelling rationale as to why Taunton is a great place to do business.

In addition, the City should partner with other organizations and businesses already engaged in marketing Taunton (Taunton Area Chamber of Commerce, commercial realtors, etc.) By encouraging the use of city-developed graphics, photos, and "tag lines" by all agencies, our community can create a consistent message.
One method that the City of Brockton has employed successfully to fund marketing efforts is to utilize revenue from the local hotel/motel tax and contract out marketing responsibilities to the Chamber of Commerce. Another possible option is to develop a quarterly newsletter that could be sent to the Chamber of Commerce membership and other economic development stakeholders apprising those groups of economic development activities that are planned or are underway.

3. Work with Taunton businesses and colleges to identify and focus on education, job training needs and career opportunities.

The City should focus more keenly on workforce training. Economic development needs to better understand those jobs that are going unfilled in the community because of a lack of skills in the existing workforce and develop training options that will educate people, particularly those in the community who may be unemployed, in those areas. The Economic Development Taskforce interviewed local employers that noted some employment obstacles for consideration, including that the distance from major research universities make it difficult to support a tech/biotech cluster and that it is difficult to attract highly-educated workforce, who prefer to live north of Boston where school systems are perceived as being better.

Also, although the availability of unskilled labor is plentiful, it has been difficult for some companies to hire applicants due to factors such as employment drug testing results. Further, it was noted that not many local Taunton residents are employed in management and other professional positions within larger businesses. Many of the people that are employed in these positions reside outside of the City of Taunton in neighboring communities and are not interested in relocating to Taunton because of a perception of higher crime and mediocre schools.

This issue should be addressed on two fronts. First, through marketing efforts aimed to change the current perceptions of the city's educational system by highlighting the progress and accomplishments of the public and private schools in our city, and secondly by working with Taunton businesses and local/regional colleges to identify job training needs and career opportunities. By focusing on educating Taunton's workforce, we can improve the quality of employment opportunities for local residents. The City should continue to strengthen its relationship with BCC and the training that is available through that institution. Presently, BCC is working with a number of industrial park tenants (companies) in securing funding and the training that will allow companies to enhance the skills of their workforce in a variety of important areas. BCC both assists companies in applying for the training grants as well providing the training itself. The City should build on that existing relationship and expand that effort to include other businesses throughout the City.

The City should work to build an even stronger relationship with Bridgewater State University. The cities of Fall River and New Bedford have partnered effectively with UMass Dartmouth in forming and promoting the South Coast Partnership. That partnership has been very effective in establishing the *SouthCoast* brand. A university's participation in local economic development initiatives can add a significant degree of credibility and resources to the process.

4. Develop a business and permitting guide.

There is a need to make the "process" as simple as possible for businesses interested in locating or expanding in the City of Taunton. The City Planner's office should work with the Office of Economic and Community Development to develop a professional, simple, clear permitting guide that assists businesses in understanding the step-by-step process to acquire various business permits and licenses from multiple city departments and boards.

The need to simplify and streamline the process for business cannot be overstated; it is by far a top concern for many businesses, particularly small businesses that do not have a lot of time because they need to tend to their businesses. Putting much of the process online and/or having a special "permitting day" each week when City staff are available to review and sign off on forms would be extremely helpful.

Furthermore, the site plan review process for certain permits could be more streamlined by allowing all projects regardless of size to be heard and approved by the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals. Currently, any project over 100,000 square feet requires a public hearing with the City Council, after getting favorable recommendations from the Planning and/or Zoning Board of Appeals. Both the ZBA and Planning Board are represented by officials elected by Taunton residents, therefore having the City Council vote on projects that have already been reviewed by one or two elected permitting bodies is an unnecessary step that can add time and money to a business expansion project.

5. Evaluate and restructure the city's tax increment financing (TIF) guidelines for businesses.

The city's tax incentive program for businesses, better known as TIF, tax increment financing is part of the state's Economic Development Incentive Program (EDIP). The program offers two primary tax incentives for businesses the create at least one permanent full-time position and increase the assessed value of their property through private investment. The state offers a 5% investment tax credit for tangible investments in construction and equipment, and the local community provides a negotiated tax abatement between 0%-100% on the value of the new "incremental" value through a TIF agreement whereby the new taxes that would result from a businesses' proposed expansion is "phased-in" over a period of time.

While the program has been modified by the Patrick Administration to focus on companies that generate substantial sales outside of Massachusetts, certified expansion projects in economic target areas (including Taunton) still allow for negotiation between the business

and the city of a local TIF, which can be perceived as a subjective process and open for criticism by local residents and elected officials.

In an effort to make the local TIF process more objective and predictable for both expanding businesses and the City, the current TIF process should be restructured to develop clear guidelines that establish exemption percentages for businesses/projects that meet approved local criteria for prioritization such as location/neighborhood, re-use of existing buildings, number of new jobs proposed, value of investment and projected new tax growth. These established guidelines should be available on the city's website and provided to qualified businesses prior to their application to the state's EDIP.

6. Develop feasibility plans for successful Brownfield clean-up sites.

The Office of Economic and Community Development has a successful track record of obtaining Brownfield assessment and remediation funds from the U.S. Department of Environmental Protection (EPA). Many of these funds have been used to date to clean contaminated properties owned by the city, as well as other private entities including the former F.B. Rogers site on West Water Street, the former New Jersey Rubber on Arlington Street, the former Abral Metals on Park Street and the former NuBrite Chemical in the Weir Village.

Significant public investment has occurred on these sites, which has brought them into environmental compliance with state and federal regulators DEP and EPA. Some of these sites presently have a redevelopment plan, such as NuBrite Chemical where a local non-profit, The Neighborhood Corporation, is working diligently on obtaining financing to move forward with a reuse plan to develop mixed-income housing. However, there is presently no reuse plan for the city-owned sites New Jersey Rubber or FB Rogers.

Thought should be given to what the City would like to see happen with those sites and a coordinated effort should be made that would "set the stage" for it to occur. For example, if the ultimate goal is to have the New Jersey Rubber site redevelopment into a mixed-used, transit-oriented development project, efforts could be made to generate a feasibility plan that incorporates a schematic site plan of what the City wants, and then solicit interest from private developers to gauge market interest in the site. The City could also identify ways that they could assist in the development of the site such as expediting permitting, waiving fees providing a special tax assessment etc.

7. Develop a strategic economic development plan.

The most consistent comment received by the economic development taskforce was that the city needs a coordinated plan that identifies goals and priorities with a systematic approach to accomplish specific tasks with assigned accountability to achieve progress in accomplishing goals.

The strategic plan should identify priority development areas such as the industrial parks, downtown, route 44 west, route 140 south from Hart's four-corners heading south, as well

as priority projects/sites within these areas. Once a consensus has been established around economic development priorities, a detailed task-oriented approach can be proposed to initiate projects and achieve desired results. There needs to be coordination in business development efforts of various entities. There are many entities working separately including the City, Chamber of Commerce, BID, TDC etc. that need to coordinate their efforts around a central vision for the benefit of Taunton.

Through that process, the City can better understand its competitive advantages and build on those advantages. The City should not be pursing industries that are unrealistic given Taunton's specific characteristics and attributes as a community. Conversely, the City should devise a targeting marketing plan/strategies aimed at sectors of the economy that are compatible with the strengths and assets of our particular community. The issue of understanding the City's competitive advantages is paramount in exploiting those advantages and pursuing opportunities and initiatives that are realistic and attainable.

One frustration expressed was that the City does not "tell businesses/developers what it wants (its vision, its goals)", therefore, businesses and developers are left to guess and end up proposing projects that are either rejected or not well-received. The City needs to control its own destiny by developing a cohesive plan that provides direction and incentives for wanted types of business growth and development in priority areas.

8. Consider funding a grant writer within the Mayor's office.

Having a part-time position within the Mayor's office dedicated to working with all departments on behalf of the Mayor to coordinate the assembling, packing and submission of competitive grant applications to state and federal funding sources would be extremely beneficial for all departments including economic development. There are a number of competitive grants and other financing sources available to cities and towns offered by the U.S. Economic Development Administration as well as the state's Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development designed to assist communities in their efforts to attract and retain businesses through planning and infrastructure improvements. Having a grant writer focused on the production of grants would allow city departments such as OECD more time to focus on identifying new funding opportunities and would improve the quality of the content of each submission.

Long-term (2-4 years)

1. Partner with a non-profit to develop a small business incubator facility.

The city should partner with a local non-profit organization to develop a small business incubator for micro to small businesses that need office space for their business to grow, but do not have the expertise or time to focus on lease-hold improvements or purchase real estate. Many small business loans offered thorough SEED Corporation could be used for leasehold improvements. If small businesses are looking for cheap available space to start or expand, they could work with the city and its non-profit partner to use their small-

business loan funds towards leasehold improvements. If the building were built out over time, and central conference rooms and copy rooms were shared, that would help to reduce the overall operating costs for small businesses.

2. Review economic development organizational structure.

The City may not be ready for a total restructuring of its economic development infrastructure. However, in the long-term it may be worth at least considering an independent, non-profit entity to handle economic development. While OECD is charged with the responsibility of initiating and managing economic development activities on behalf of the City of Taunton, there are a number of other entities and committees that have been formed over the years that also focus on economic development activities, which has created unnecessary duplication and confusion for both businesses and local officials. Attached is an organizational chart that illustrates the current structure of departments and organizations involved in economic development activities within the City of Taunton.

The creation of OECD in 2005 was a result of merging the offices of economic and community development. The intended goal was to increase efficiencies and provide municipal department cost savings. Most of OECD's funds come from HUD-funded entitlement grants such as CDBG and HOME for affordable housing and community development activities. There are no specific program funds for economic development activities. As a result, the majority of OECD staff is focused exclusively on community and housing development activities, and not on economic development. Only the Economic Development Director's primary job responsibilities are designed to focus solely on business attraction and retention for the city. A common theme identified by the current structure is the lack of accountability for tasks. Given that there is an Executive Director (department head) and an Economic Development Director, the ultimate job tasks and responsibility/accountability for tasks has become a "gray-area" that needs to be better defined.

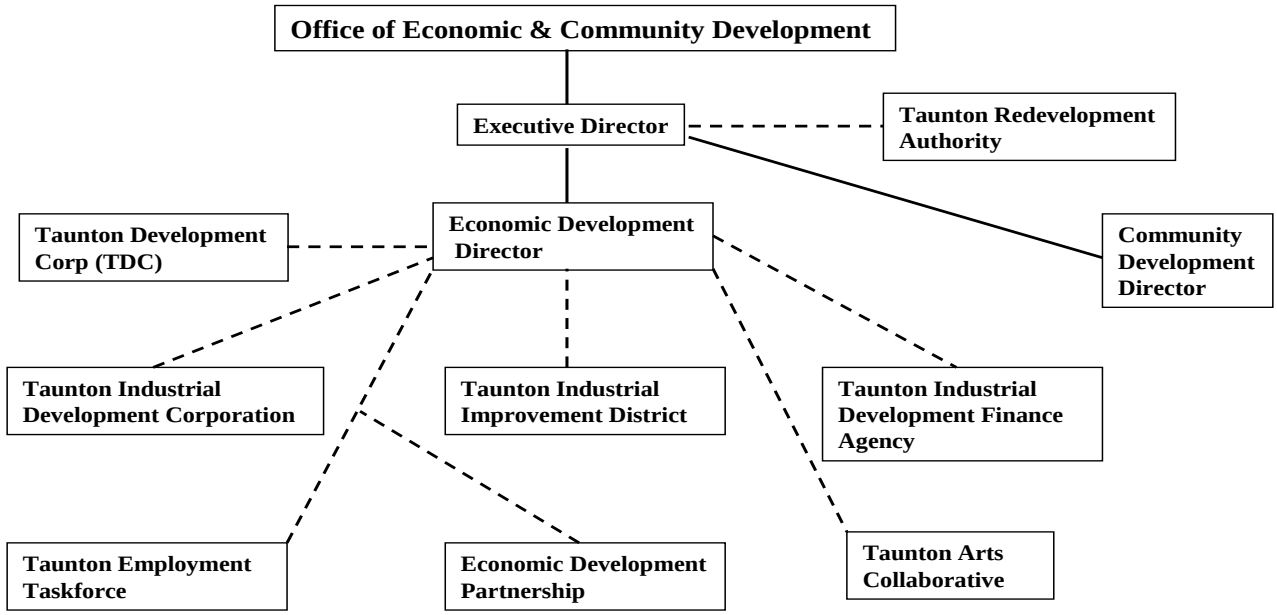
Another model that the city may consider in the future, which has been used somewhat successfully in nearby cities such as Brockton, Fall River and New Bedford, is the creation of a private non-profit economic development organization, where the board members of the organization are made up of the Mayor, key city department heads, and business leaders from the community's top employers. The non-profit organization would manage economic development on behalf of the City and develop a work plan based upon the city's economic development goals. Staff members would report to the Board Members and be held accountable, as part of monthly meetings, for moving projects forward. That model tends to keep economic development projects out of the local political process and allows decisions to be made quickly and responsively.

A non-profit entity would also allow for greater flexibility for partnering with businesses and other organizations to obtain private and public financing sources and to take on challenging projects directly.

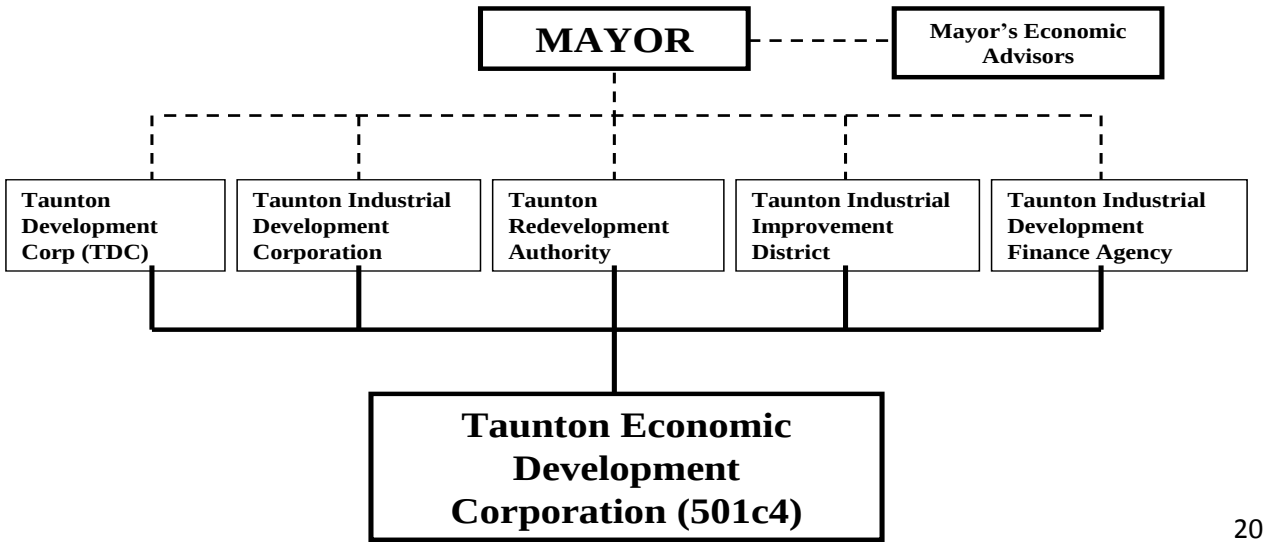
3. Consider revising the commercial/residential tax split.

Although not a politically popular topic, the City's current tax split, with the maximum percentage shifted towards the commercial side, sends an "unfriendly" message to businesses. Taunton has one of the highest commercial tax rates in the region at $27.62/$1,000 (2.21 times the residential rate). A more balanced split should be considered as a way to increase new business growth for the City.

City of Taunton - Economic Development Existing Structure



City of Taunton - Economic Development Proposed Long-Term Structure



Education Task Force
Transitional Plan

- Chairman –
William Tranter

- Members –
Tamika Correia
Lincoln DeMoura
Greg Gay
Bob Murray
Thomas Quigley
Christopher Scully

As a committee we believe, that we are starting from a strong position: motivated and talented students, outstanding teachers, committed parents, skilled administrators and dedicated education partners. We are fortunate to live in a City that values education and gives young people opportunities to excel.

And yet our education system is based on a model of learning from the previous century. To change that, we need students at the center of their own education. We need to make a better link between what students learn at school, and what they experience and learn in their everyday lives. We need to create new learning environments for students that allow them to discover, embrace and fulfill their passions. We need to set the stage for parents, teachers, administrators and other partners to prepare our children for success not only in today's world, but in a world that few of us can yet imagine.

Before us lies a tremendous opportunity. We know more now than we have ever known about how children learn. It is time to use that knowledge to change what we do so students can realize their full potential. As parents, grandparents and concerned citizens of Taunton, we want an education system that gives all children the best opportunities to be successful in whatever career they pursue. We are sure every Tauntonian feels the same way. By working together, we can take what we know is a good education system and make it great!

Respectfully
The Education Transition Committee

THE CHALLENGE

Most people agree that the Taunton Public School System is a good one. Teachers are skilled, facilities are more than adequate and students succeed. Yet an education system designed in the very different circumstances of an earlier century can not possibly meet the challenges students face both now and in the future. In the social, economic and technological environment of the past, change was much more gradual than it is today. Many of the jobs and opportunities we are preparing our students for may not exist in the next decade. So while we enjoy a strong and stable system, we need a more nimble and flexible one that can adapt more quickly to better meet the needs of 21st century learners.

All citizens have a stake in preparing our young people for success in a changing world. Our challenge is clear. The world has changed, and it will continue to change, so the way we educate students needs to continually adapt.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Children are natural born learners, and teachers are passionate about teaching. We have a unique opportunity to forge that common ground toward a more innovative system that meets the needs of Taunton's families today and in the future, to keep our young people achieving and thriving in a dynamic, rapidly evolving world.

We can build on the many strengths of our existing education system while modernizing systems to adapt and respond to students' needs. We can involve all Tauntonians directly in discussions and decisions about education.

We can make education more flexible so students and families benefit from the exciting knowledge economy we are part of. To do that, students must be at the center of a more personalized approach to learning. They will still learn basic core skills, but they will also have more freedom to pursue their individual interests and passions within a particular topic. Teachers are fundamental to student success. Teachers must be supported to work with students in a variety of roles: guide, mentor, coach, an serve as content experts. Our schools must be more adaptable in responding to student needs.

We can make better use of technology in education so our young people will be equipped to use it effectively and ethically.

We can provide a more responsive and effective system of interventions for students who are struggling.

BUILDING ON OUR STRENGTHS

This committee's transitional plan for education will build on the strengths of our existing system while moving to adaptable education for the world of today and tomorrow.

For all students, reading, writing and math skills will still be emphasized and students will be required to meet the common core of learning outcomes. We will build upon the foundations of MCAS.

To better prepare students for the future, there will be more emphasis on key competencies like self reliance, critical thinking, inquiry, creativity, problem solving, innovation, teamwork and collaboration, cross-cultural understanding and technological literacy. We can also connect students more directly with the outside world with increased focus on learning these skills across content areas.

Students' progress should be monitored through rigorous assessments. Effective classroom assessment practices are key to student success and will be even more vital in a more personalized learning environment. Educators should have more ability to decide how and when each student is assessed. New tools should be developed to provide greater access, richer information, and more consistency across the system on student progress. Regular reporting to parents both formally and informally should remain a priority.

A great teacher has always been the key to creating outstanding educational experiences. To help students succeed in a rapidly changing world, teachers will be empowered to shift from the primary source of content to focus on helping students learn how to learn. This Plan should make it easier for teachers to use their professional knowledge to guide students toward the skills necessary for success in the 21st century. The curriculum should be built around fewer but higher level outcomes.

Students, parents and teachers all need the teaching profession to be administered in a way that ensures high standards and puts the public interest first. Schools should gain more flexibility to design programs that really work for all students. There should be more flexibility about how students are organized for learning. More learning should take place outside of the school setting.

This plan is based on a simple principle: every learner will realize their full potential and contribute to the well-being of our city.

To move our education system from good to great, the Plan has six key elements:

1. Personalized learning for every student
2. Quality teaching and learning
3. Flexibility and choice
4. High standards
5. Learning empowered by technology
6. Facilities and equipment maintenance

Personalized Learning for Every Student

Students and parents will play an active role in designing their own education, and there will be increasing accountable for their own learning success. It is about putting students at the center of education. That means giving teachers and schools the flexibility to make

sure each student is well served by their educational program. Each student is unique and our education system will support each student's interests and ways of learning.

Action Steps

- Work with our education partners to identify the attributes of an educated citizen and how that will be articulated throughout the education program culminating in graduation.
- Guarantee a curriculum that will reflect the common core competencies, skills, and knowledge that students need to succeed in the 21st century.
- Create a curriculum with fewer but higher level outcomes that allow deeper learning and understanding.
- Increased flexibility to make sure that student's interests are realized, as well as their different and individual ways of learning.

Quality Teaching and Learning

Our transition plan acknowledges the complexity of the teacher's role. Teachers will receive support as they continue to adjust their roles to match what students need, moment by moment, to design personalized education that opens the door to educational success for Taunton's young people.

Action Steps

- Work with our education partners to make sure that Professional Development Days are used to enhance educators' knowledge base and professional expertise. It is important that teachers are able to refresh and develop new practices throughout their careers by participating in professional development opportunities.
- Ensure educational opportunities that give teachers the knowledge and skills they require to support student learning.
- Provide mentoring to support teachers' professional learning both in the formative years and throughout their careers. Teachers should have increased access to learning opportunities by working with teacher mentors and each other.
- Work collaboratively with educators, to increase transparency and accountability and to ensure that the interests of children are protected.

Flexibility and Choice

We recognize that as the world becomes a more complex place, education needs to become more flexible and more tailored to the needs of the individual student; one-size-fits-all schooling is a thing of the past. Taunton schools should offer students multiple options and choices at every level of their education in order to best engage and serve each student.

Action Steps:

- Create an alternative school at the secondary level for students who, due to academic challenges, would be best suited for such a program.
- Increase the number of high school students pursuing dual enrollment classes, with a college-level partner in the city of Taunton.
- Refine and grow our inclusion program at all levels, so that students who need modified instruction can receive it in a regular educational setting.
- Re-institute adult enrichment programs in order to educate our entire community.

- Provide appropriate numbers of guidance counselors, adjustment counselors, and special education team leaders to ensure that the students have the supports needed to be positive members of the community.
- Expand the Virtual Instruction Program to ensure that any student will be able to continue his or her education without interruption.
- Provide multiple pathways that combine education with work-force development opportunities.
- Engage school administration leaders, teachers and employers together to compare and contrast educational curriculum that is reliant on current and future workforce needs.
- Collaborate with partners in the community to secure employment experiences for Higher Education preparation or post-secondary employment.

High Standards

What students know and what they are expected to learn with respect to knowledge and competencies will be reflected in a strong core curriculum. Student performance with respect to MA curriculum standards will be key to moving forward.

Action Steps

- Ensure our standards stay relevant so that every graduate has every advantage to succeed in life.
- Build on core curriculum skills that all students are well versed in the competencies they need to succeed.
- Sustain and maintain assessment activities that support ongoing student learning system wide.
- Make available to teachers' effective intervention strategies so they can quickly identify students who are not meeting educational goals.
- Strive to ensure that every student has the foundations of reading and writing and be able to perform at grade level by the end of grade 2.

Learning Empowered by Technology

Our transitional plan will encourage smart use of technology in schools, better preparing students to thrive in an increasingly digital world. Students will have more opportunity to develop the competencies needed to use current and emerging technologies effectively both in school and life. Educators will be given the supports needed to use technology to empower the learning process.

Action Steps

- Ensure that learners, educators and families will have improved access to digital tools and resources that support face-to-face and online learning.
- Improve student information and reporting systems that help teachers plan a more personalized learning experience with students.

Facilities and Equipment Maintenance

Schools are centralized locations where learning is encouraged and both subjects and values are taught. Educating the next generation is a critical need for our community. It is

imperative the school environment be conducive for learning. A school facility where teachers and students struggle with issues such as noise, poor indoor air quality, poor lighting, computers that do not work, and even physical security concerns is unlikely to be conducive for learning. Inadequate investment in school facility maintenance, and the fact that in the city, school building maintenance is controlled by the building department has led to a scenario in which too many schools have not been adequately maintained. It is important to invest in school facilities to avoid the need for future major repairs.

Action Steps

- Develop a new school building maintenance model so that the school department has control over all aspects of school maintenance.
- Conduct a study of custodian (staff responsible for daily facility upkeep and cleaning) and maintenance (staff members who perform skilled jobs such as electrical, HVAC, plumbing repair and computer maintenance) worker needs and budget accordingly.
- Budget 4% of the total school budget for school building maintenance.
- Conduct a study of technological maintenance needs and budget accordingly.

TAKING THE NEXT STEPS

Under Mayor Hoye's transition plan for education, the Taunton Public School System will be an education system that is more flexible, dynamic and adaptable to better prepare students for a bright future. We are not alone in recognizing the need for change. School systems around the world are re-examining how their education systems are designed and they are making them more responsive to the kind of learning children need now, and what they will need in the future.

The way to get from good to great is through personalized learning, supporting teachers, creating more flexibility and choice for families, maintaining high standards and embracing technology. It is an opportunity for every child, every student, and every learner to do their very best in education. We invite all Tauntonians to get involved in this exciting transformation.

Public Safety Task Force
Transitional Report

- Chairman -
John Cicco

- Members -
Joe Rose, TFD Chief, retired
Tom Downey, TFD Chief, retired
Ron Nastri, TFD Chief, retired
James Tynan, TFD, retired
Seth Amidon, Taunton Businessman
Stephen Tapis, MA Executive Office of Public Safety and Security,
Office of Grants and Research - Homeland Security Division
John Munise, TPD Active Duty
Dan McCabe, TPD Lieutenant Active Duty
Michael Silvia, TPD Captain Active Duty
Brian Carr, RPD LIEUTENANT Active Duty

BLIGHTED PROPERTIES

BLIGHTED PROPERTIES **CURRENT STATE**

The City of Taunton has an overwhelming number of blighted properties within the city limits (over 200) affecting both the downtown area as well as the neighborhoods. Vacant properties contribute to a negative image of the City and cause an increase in detrimental health, safety and crime issues. Blighted properties present a significant obstacle to economic growth, they broadcast a lack of respect and responsibility by property owners and the inability of our local government to manage the problem to resolution.

Complaints about blight permeate public hearings and the local newspaper opinion pages. Both citizens and business owners have called for City Hall to craft a focused strategy for forcing action on abandoned and neglected properties. Citizens who have worked tirelessly and at great expense to maintain their own homes and businesses are angered to see their values diminished by derelict properties nearby.

However, the City lacks an efficient and comprehensive plan for dealing with its numerous abandoned properties. These properties basically fall into three categories: imminent hazards needing to be demolished, properties that need to be stabilized but are suitable for future rehab, and properties suitable for rehab that need no immediate stabilization other than effective board-up.

BLIGHTED PROPERTIES **DESIRED STATE**

The City must adopt a comprehensive strategy to address abandoned properties. The Task Force identified three principal strategies for dealing with blight**:** code enforcement, negotiation and litigation.

IMMEDIATE ACTION PLAN

Code enforcement has the capability to process large numbers of deteriorated buildings, which makes it the primary tool for addressing blight problems. Combining code enforcement with negotiation allows for the good faith efforts of the properties owners to move forward to compliance in a structured and monitored goal oriented step process.

Code Enforcement

Much of the blight associated with abandoned properties can be better addressed with a more streamlined and responsive Code Enforcement program. Stronger code enforcement in the city could simultaneously address several issues that are negatively impacting the city.

1. First, more rigorous code enforcement would put pressure on absentee property owners to rectify the situation. This, in turn, would improve the quality of life in neighborhoods and along the city's commercial corridors by reducing the number of quality-of-life related nuisance violations. Violations such as illegal disposal of

trash, failure to maintain a property, and non-certified occupation of a property all detract from the quality of life for other residents, businesses, and customers. Furthermore, providing a coordinated, code enforcement-based approach to dealing with issues such as illicit activity in abandoned properties would improve public safety and would increase operational funding for the city through the collection of fines.

2. The Task Force recommends the administration puts in place a system for documenting the outcomes of code enforcement hearings, to include the number of properties voluntarily brought into compliance without the imposition of fines; number of properties brought into compliance after a finding of violation; number of properties brought into compliance after imposition of daily fines, amount of fines paid, and the time required to achieve those results; number of properties on which fines went unpaid and liens were recorded; number of properties moved to code lien auctions; number of properties sold and revenues generated through code lien auctions.

3. Task Force members feel strongly that the system by which code enforcement is administered should be open to public scrutiny at every stage of the proceedings (both online and in person) so that the public can monitor and evaluate the progress of code enforcement at every step of the proceedings.

4. The Task Force also feels that code enforcement need not be an exclusively punitive process which is why we recommend including negotiation as an element in the process. Code enforcement combined with negotiation can be used to provide property owners with an incentive to fix up their properties; assistive programs that set up step goals or a system of payments should be considered to help property owners achieve the City's desired objective. Other forms of assistive programs might include those which property owners can be referred for counseling, financial assistance, charitable and volunteer support—in short, any programs that might enable them to rehabilitate their properties and remain in ownership of them. We also suggest that support personnel for these programs be present before, during, and after code enforcement hearings, so they can respond immediately to the needs of property owners involved in such proceedings.

In stating the need for a compassionate component to the code enforcement process, Task Force members do not mean to suggest that the enforcement process should be less vigorous or diminished in any way.

Litigation
Litigation to rectify blight in the city will be used as a last resort when all other options fail.

City-Wide Spring Cleanup
Many of Taunton's neighborhoods and parks have significant amounts of accumulated trash and debris. One of the Mayor's articulated priorities has been "cleaning up the city." Clean streets, parks and neighborhoods can significantly enhance the quality of life for

residents. These conditions are also proven to reduce the incidence of crime and enhance property values. In support of the initiative to curb blight, the Task Force recommends that the Mayor immediately coordinate a *City-Wide Spring Cleanup***.**

- This city-wide initiative would be a coordinated effort among the city's churches, non-profits, community groups, corporate stakeholders and the Department of Public Works. Grant funding from the state, county and other sources may be available for this effort.
- Critical to successful implementation is to appoint a specific project manager who will; work to recruit a sufficient number of organizations to cover the entire city, and research and apply for any grants which may help defray the costs associated with the effort.
- To generate publicity and awareness for this community clean-up, a kick-off event should be held and public officials and the media should be in attendance.

Additional Blight Strategies for long-term Consideration

Role of Neighborhood Associations:
In addition to the three strategies (code enforcement, negotiation and litigation) discussed above, this Task Force also identified an important role for neighborhood associations in the fight against blight. Task Force members believe that an engaged community of residents can contribute to the City's recovery and renewal, and we believe that City government must recognize and support a partnership with neighborhood associations in the coordinated assault on blight. Volunteer programs can contribute to mapping blight, identifying code violations, and setting priorities in deployment of the City's anti-blight resources. The City must facilitate public oversight and the accountability of public officials by creating online systems that enable area residents to track the progress of City agencies and personnel in the blight remediation process. Neighborhood associations and City officials not only can—they must—work together in removing blight from the City's neighborhoods.

Land Bank:
Cities such as Flint, Indianapolis, Louisville, and Atlanta have established land banks that specialize in the acquisition of abandoned property, followed by rehabilitation or demolition and ultimately by disposition of the property to a third party. A land bank offers opportunities to plan for and implement alternate uses of property that might otherwise lie fallow. These alternate uses might include recreational green space for neighborhoods without convenient access to public parks and playgrounds; water retention areas that can assist in storm water runoff and drainage; community gardens or urban farms that can supply fresh food to the needy; and other neighborhood amenities to attract new residents. A land bank can also hold properties in perpetuity where there is no sensible strategy for putting that property back into commerce. Oddly sized or oddly located properties such as those in proximity to public rights of way are two examples.

Recycling Properties into Other Productive Uses:
Task Force members heard from numerous speakers who were concerned about homelessness which is a large and growing problem for Taunton. Some suggested that the City's vacant and abandoned properties might be recycled into affordable housing. Others voiced similar concerns and hopes relative to the disabled population.

Other organizations suggested the City use of these properties as creative artist's spaces. This last strategic suggestion might prove to be a viable overall strategy in response to these various concerns; programs to eradicate blight could yield up properties appropriate for housing the homeless, the disabled, or artists' studios. Blight remediation can make the properties available for adaptive reuse; programs for the homeless, the disabled, and the creative arts might then make use of the properties for their purposes, but they would need to be assisted by funding.

In the current budgetary crisis facing the city, ancillary funding for programs like this are scarce. However, the Task Force felt it was important to include these additional strategies to keep our minds open to the wide range of positive changes which are possible even when faced with troubling challenges.

TAUNTON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

TAUNTON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY **CURRENT STATE**

The Taunton Emergency Management Agency (TEMA) is the city agency responsible for coordinating federal, state, local, volunteer, and private resources during emergencies and disasters in the City of Taunton. TEMA has an FY 2012 budget of $144,945.58.

TEMA develops plans for effective response to all hazards, disasters or threats; trains emergency personnel and volunteers to protect the public; provides information to city residents; and assists individuals, families, and businesses to mitigate against, prepare for, and respond to and recover from emergencies, both natural and manmade.

TEMA has 2 full time employees (the Director and Asst Director) who recruit, supervise and train a force of over 100 volunteers and coordinates the partnership with the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) and the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC). TEMA management also coordinates all reimbursement for emergency management costs to the city.

TEMA was an early adopter of social media and uses Facebook and Twitter as part of their coordinated media effort to reach communities and citizens affected in times of emergencies.

Taunton is a designated reception center for citizens displaced by an emergency that involves the Pilgrim Nuclear power Plant. $108,000 of TEMA's operating budget is provided by the Pilgrim Nuclear Power Plant and it must meet stringent guidelines and pass graded exercises in order to continue to qualify for that funding.

Currently TEMA's capabilities are reduced due to poor communications infrastructure and a lack of a permanent operations center, both caused by the fire at City Hall and the organizations subsequent relocation to a trailer located at 90 Ingell Street in Taunton. Current communication capabilities are poor at best and TEMA can only guarantee local contact at this time. A site visit to the TEMA trailer currently used as headquarters revealed temporary, unsecure communication lines not suitable for long-term use or reliable under the environmental and load capacity stresses that would be placed on them in times of emergency.

TAUNTON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY **DESIRED STATE**

Continue to build on capabilities to reach and communicate residents looking for direction and support during disasters.

Support current efforts to build a comprehensive database which identifies residents with special needs, makes note of their exact location, contains emergency contact information and recognizes any transportation and sheltering needs germane to their condition.

Renew efforts to close the gap between local and regional sheltering capabilities.

In order to qualify for Homeland Security grant money, recipient communities, as a whole, must participate and partner with a broad scope of organizations which include but are not limited to:

- The Red Cross
- Board of Health
- MEMA
- The National Weather Service
- South Eastern Emergency Management Agency

IMMEDIATE ACTION PLAN

Shelter Cots:
Sheltering capability is the biggest immediate challenge TEMA faces at this time. Currently TEMA only has 45 cots which it can provide to residents displaced by any given emergency event. A minimum of 200 cots is needed to bring TEMA up to a level of preparedness that is considered adequate given the geographic scope and population size it stands ready to serve. The Task Force recommends the City work closely with TEMA management to allocate matching funds of $20,000 to qualify for the Emergency Planning Grant which will provide funds for over 100 brand new cots.

TEMA Operational Center:
The Task Force feels it is in the best interest of Taunton's residents and the City's capabilities to adequately respond to emergency public safety events to relocated TEMA to a permanent operations center as soon as possible. The ideal location for logistical, managerial, and interoperability reasons would be one that is in close physical proximity to Taunton's other first response systems (TFD & TPD). It should include:

1. A dedicated room that is large, open and wide enough to serve as an operational center to coordinate emergency management efforts in times of crisis. This room should be able to hold a minimum of three (3) eight foot long tables and have electrical outlets, internet connections and phone jacks to serve multiple computer monitors, and a communication bank of 35 phones.
2. Permanent, modern, serviceable communication lines and systems backed up by a dedicated emergency generator.
3. A secure storage lot large enough to stage and service the TEMA equipment and vehicles.

Departmental Bi-Annual Meetings:
To ensure operational readiness of our first responders and emergency service response units, and to increase eligibility for Homeland Security grants, recipient communities must demonstrate a consistent ability to successfully coordinate operations between departments. The ability to model plans of action, and display habitual meetings where priorities are designated and current challenges are communicated is essential to successful operations and obtaining this vital funding. The Task Force recommends bi-annual meetings of department heads (and / or their designees) from;

1. Taunton Emergency Management Agency
2. Taunton Police Department
3. Taunton Fire Department
4. Taunton School Department
5. Taunton Highway Department
6. Morton Hospital

The purpose of these meetings would be to update department contact information, build interdepartmental relationships that would facilitate a greater understanding of the mission and capabilities of each department -individually and collectively- under different emergency scenarios.

These meetings should be chaired by TEMA and once a coordinated outline is built, TEMA should expanded these meetings to a regional basis to position Taunton as forward thinking readiness leader and position the City for those Homeland Security grants that are allocated for regional projects.

Mutual Aid:
The Task Force recommends that the City adopts all three of the Intrastate Massachusetts Mutual Aid Agreements.

1. **Statewide Mutual Aid Agreement**: Massachusetts has adopted an opt-in format for its statewide mutual aid law. Once a community has opted in they can send and/or request assets from any other community with the Commonwealth that has also opted into the agreement. This agreement answers question surrounding liability, workers compensation, payment for use of resources etc. This agreement can be activated for any public safety incident/event. The agreement is Massachusetts General Law Chapter 40 Section 4J.

2. **Public Works Mutual Aid Agreement**: This agreement is very similar to the Statewide Mutual Aid Agreement; however, it does differ in three areas. The first is that it can be used for everyday use. The second is that there is an advisory board to answer questions. The third is that it can be used out of state as long as the communities are contiguous to a Massachusetts community that has opted in. The agreement is Massachusetts General Law Chapter 40, Section 4K.

3. **Fire Mobilization Plan:** The Statewide Fire Mobilization Plan offers pre-determined inventories and run cards to assist in the event a community has exhausted their assets. This plan is governed by a committee that is selected by the Director of MEMA. This law is Massachusetts General Law Chapter 48 Section 59A.

TAUNTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

The mission of the Taunton Police Department (TPD) is to protect and preserve life, to protect property, to understand and serve the needs of the City's neighborhoods and to improve the general quality of life for residents of and visitors to the City of Taunton. The Department strives to build its capacities to maintain order, recognize and abate problems, and to apprehend criminals in a manner consistent with the law and reflective of shared community values.

The Taunton Police Dept consists of three separate administrative divisions, each commanded by a Captain.

1. The Field Services Division, the department's largest Division, is the backbone of the department and is responsible for responding to calls for service, dispatch operations and general law enforcement. The Field Services Division consists of Patrol, K-9, Traffic, Dispatch and Detail Hiring. It is commanded by Captain Michael Silvia.
2. The Investigative Services Division is responsible for investigation and follow up on serious crimes. It consists of the Detective Unit, Vice Unit, Street Crimes Unit, Licensing, Sex Offender Registration and officers assigned to various federal task forces. It is commanded by Detective Captain John Reardon.

3. The Administrative Division is responsible for internal operations of the police department. It includes the Community Policing Unit, School Resource Officer,

Domestic Violence, Meters, Training, Court Prosecution, firearms licensing and clerical staff. It is commanded by Captain David Warish.

The FY 2012 operating budget is $8,887,982.40, which is $1,443,476.17 less than the FY 2011 budget.

UTILIZATION OF MANPOWER **CURRENT STATE**

Taunton currently fields 104 sworn officers which is the fewest the City has fielded in the past 30 years. The average age of an officer on our force is 49 years, and by 2013 only 4 officers will be under the age of 40.

Under the current contractual manning obligations, we require 65 Patrol Officers to fill the 8 City Sectors, however, we currently only have 48 Patrol Officers to assign. As we stand today, Taunton is under staffed by 17 officers each day and uses overtime just to meet contractual obligations. The average time of service for a Taunton police officer is 19 years. Due to past force reduction and hiring freezes we now have large experience gaps that may pose significant challenges as the 11 officers with over 25 years of service retire.

Clearly, the greatest challenge facing TPD is the need to overcome the understaffing of the force.

ACTION PLAN

Grants:

Develop and pursue a more aggressive strategy to secure more grant funding opportunities from both public and private sources. Maximizing the use of these funding sources for hiring new officers will enhance the City's public safety while offsetting pressures on the immediate annual budget. Any additional funds should be targeted towards increasing the number of authorized officers. As previously suggested, sworn officer strength is very low for the type of policing service Taunton residents have come to expect.

Streamlining:

Direct the city council in conjunction with TPD to conduct a comprehensive work study that will evaluate the pros and cons, and examine, the feasibility and impact of:

1. reconfiguring the eight (8) police districts across the City
2. establishing a permanent foot patrol unit in the downtown area
3. reorganizing the community policing program to maximize effectiveness
4. evaluating the level of resources needed to continue the Police Department's mission in further reducing crime should the Casino be approved
5. disbanding or reorganizing the vice units to serve in revolving 3-5 year assignments
6. how can we leverage regional, state and federal resources for a force multiplication effect
7. Contract bookings to the Sheriff's Dept.

Vehicles:
The Task Force recommends that the city work in concert with the TPD to produce a timely, and ongoing vehicle replacement plan so a detailed understanding of the condition of the vehicle fleet is known and the ability to replace aging and unserviceable vehicles can be conducted in a timely and orderly manner on a regularly scheduled and budgeted basis.

Staffing:

1. Explore ways to make positive advancements to resolve the department's hiring needs. It's clear that the city needs to add more officers to the force and prepare for the multiple retirements in the immediate future. With our current force we are limited in our capabilities and are staffed to react to calls but unable to proactively fight crime within the city. It seems that the City has reached a tipping point where based on the amount of overtime it pays to meet minimum staffing requirements, it would actually realize a cost savings to hire additional officers. The Task Force recommends hiring new officers, as soon as it is fiscally possible, to bring the City's staffing levels up to contractual compliance

2. The Task Force also recommends creating a reserve officer list which the city could pull from as staffing requirements spike during high call volume periods or special events. This would also give the City and the TPD management the ability to evaluate a candidate's performance before committing to a permanent spot on the force. Reserve officers typically would not receive the same benefits package as full time officers so the city would recognize a cost savings at that level as well.

3. There is significant potential for turnover within the ranks of the TPD over the next five years. TPD should provide opportunities for mentoring existing employees in preparation to assume progressive responsibility within the Division before the impending retirement of it's most knowledgeable officers.

NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVES **CURRENT STATE**

Mission: To form a coalition of community members to develop a plan of action to provide citizens of Taunton with crime and violence education and prevention programming.

Committee Goals:

Criminal Justice Committee: The goal of this committee is to cooperate as a coordinated law enforcement committee in which major felonies as well as misdemeanor quality of life crimes are targeted for aggressive prosecution and individuals responsible for the majority of criminal activity are vigorously pursued through the criminal justice system.

Treatment and Prevention Committee: The goal of this committee is to address prevention activities of high-risk adults and youth in the community and to advocate and develop programs that address the needs of the substance abusing population.

Education Committee: The goal of this committee is to develop and identify areas of school law and other issues that relate to the safety of students and school personnel.

Neighborhoods Committee: The goal of this committee is to work with target neighborhoods in identifying their needs and to facilitate community problem solving in order to enhance the quality of life in those neighborhoods.

ACTION PLAN

Administrative Realignment:
The Task Force recommends moving Jennifer Bastille from the Department of Human Services over to TPD. This realignment makes operational and administrative sense as she:

- Runs Crime Watch
- Works closely with TPD to coordinate county services
- Tracks graffiti
- Works in conjunction with Taunton Juvenile Court.

This move will give her unlimited access to the QED system reporting database, streamline capabilities and free up police officers from the duty of reviewing film and cameras related to crime recorded on the city cameras. 90% of her current workload requires clearance through the Chief of Police and TPD pays for her attendance to various conferences and funds her relevant training.

Social Media:
In an effort to promote transparency and open government, the TPD recently began engaging with the public by utilizing social media.

- TPD has redesigned its website, instituted a new complaint procedure and posted the blotter online. The Task Force recognizes this progress and recommends that they continue to build on this foundation adding content, public safety forms and links to state and regional data and statistics.
- Use of Twitter (67 followers) and Facebook (14,000 likes) by the TPD is an admirable effort and each has the potential to significantly expanded immediate public access to information. However the Task Force finds sporadic updates and limited content especially on Twitter and recommends that TPD assign content management duties to an individual or risk losing their budding following on Twitter and diminish the effectiveness of this valuable outreach and communications tool. Student interns from our three local high schools or Criminal Justice college students may be interested in this as a volunteer or credit earning opportunity.

DRUG / GANG ISSUES **CURRENT STATE**

Taunton has several gangs actively operating in the city; they include but are by no means limited to:

1. Latin Kings
2. Gangster Disciples
3. Latin Disciples
4. Outlaws / Righteous Few

The gang problem is a societal reality which is not unique to Taunton. As our population expands, the economy fluctuates and the demographics change we have seen an exponential growth and social acceptance of gangs and gang related music, fashion and culture.

The problem of gangs and drugs are intertwined in the city, they are one and the same. Most crime in the City relate back to drugs, including the recent uptick in metal theft, bank robberies et al. Policing is reactive by nature and realistically the City can mitigate illegal drug use and sales but can never irradiate it.

The City intends to set a tenor whereby those who participate in the illegal use and sale of drugs know there is a greater chance of getting caught if they ply their trade in the City.

Early education is an important key to prevention in the case of both gangs and drugs. With that in mind, the Task Force notes that due to a loss of funding there are no **D.A.R.E**. or **G.R.E.A.T** programs, running in the Taunton school system.

> **D.A.R.E**. is a police officer-led series of classroom lessons that teaches children from kindergarten through 12th grade how to resist peer pressure and live productive drug and violence-free lives
>
> Gang Resistance Education And Training (**G.R.E.A.T.)** is a gang and violence prevention program built around school-based, law enforcement officer-instructed classroom curricula. The program is intended as an immunization against delinquency, youth violence, and gang membership for children in the years immediately before the prime ages for introduction into gangs and delinquent behavior.

ACTION PLAN

Consider reestablishing DARE:
The Task Force recommends a thorough review of any available funding at the State and Federal level and the establishment of a local fundraising committee in an effort to reestablish and support these two valuable drug and gang violence prevention programs.

Regionalization:
Continue to work closely with the Massachusetts State Police Gang Unit. The gang and drug challenges Taunton faces are regional. Technology and transportation allow for gang member to move quickly around the state and eastern seaboard, communicate on the fly and deliver drugs dynamically, which creates unique surveillance and apprehension challenges for law enforcement. The Massachusetts State Police Gang Unit is better equipped and has superior resources to track, monitor and apprehend these criminals.

Shared Resources:
Taunton also has a Violent Fugitive Apprehension (VFA) team member stationed here every day. This is an important relationship and a helpful strategic partnership that should be continued.

TAUNTON POLICE STATION **CURRENT STATE**

Taunton Police Station:
In 1978 the National Guard Armory at 18 Pleasant Street became the temporary home for the Taunton Police Department for over thirty years. In 2002 the building was condemned and the Central Station was moved to 23 Summer Street for what was intended to be an 18 month temporary assignment until a permanent station could be built. The TPD remains Head Quartered at 18 Pleasant Street to this day. TPD also runs three (3) substations attached to fire stations in Whittenton, Weir and East Taunton. All three sub stations are located in buildings that were built in the late 1800's. The last time the city of Taunton built a Police Station was 1912.

The current Central Station is not suited for permanent or long term use. The current size is probably adequate but will not be suitable for future needs. The physical structure itself is beginning to fail as it was designed as a temporary placeholder. The back of the building is thought to be structurally unstable and the HVAC is failing.

Current cell space is inadequate and sub-standard and will not sustain current growth models let alone models that include the proposed resort casino. Office space is lacking and that which is available is shred and cramped. Due to the limited size of this temporary building TPD is unable to house all operations onsite and is also using part of the former City Hall Annex, this creates physical and logistical inefficiencies.

The current location does not allow for efficient and secure storage of TPD equipment. TPD has two offsite storage locations located in Weir and Whittenton. It is nor uncommon for the TPD to travel from Central Station to the Weir to pick up a trailer and then travel across town again to Whittenton to procure the equipment they need to put on the trailer because there is no room to store it all in the same place. This creates operational challenges, logistical, staffing and functional inefficiencies.

TAUNTON POLICE STATION **DESIRED STATE**

Taunton is at a crossroads. With the TPD with no permanent station, TEMA operating out of a surplus trailer and TFD Headquartered in the oldest Firehouse in the United Sates, the City should take advantage of this challenge to plan for Public Safety Departmental space requirements that will last for the next 30 to 50 years.

The City needs a comprehensive approach to a centralized Public Safety complex that stream lines service, eases accessibility by the public, promotes intra-departmental shared resources and provides for force multipliers across all agencies simply by means of their proximity to one another.

ACTION PLAN

The Task Force recommends that the city conduct a cost / benefits analysis of a centralized Public Safety Complex which would contain TPD, TFD, and TEMA. After extensive interviews with public safety officials, the Task Force finds that all Department Heads are amenable to this concept if it is properly located and fiscally possible. The consolidation of these individual offices, which all need replacing, will create cost efficiencies and streamline intradepartmental coordination during times of emergency, when smooth, effective operational capabilities are need most.

Constructing a central Public Safety Complex on the borders of 2 districts would also allow the TFD to run 2 engines out of it and allow the city to see cost savings by consolidating the force and closing two stations while increasing operational effectiveness.

Potential sites could include:

1. The land at Harts Four Corners, which could then service both East Taunton and the Weir. Both Engine 9 and Engine 3 could run out of a station built there, and the City could eliminate the 2 stations that are posing our biggest problems right now.

2. The empty Haskon building on Weir Street could possibly replace the service rendered by both Central and the Weir Stations, with Engine 3 and Engine 1 running out of it. Recent rehabilitation investments into Central Station may make this option less likely..

3. The land around the old E Pole School on County St and Williams St could also serve as a possible joint Public Safety Complex. The TFD currently uses that land to run training evolutions.

Regardless of how it's done, sooner or later the City must face the reality that its fire stations are extremely old; the temporary police station, and it's patchwork of support complexes located throughout the city, is on the verge of becoming unserviceable; and TEMA cannot effectively operate out of a surplus trailer forever.

The city has reached a point where there must be a concerted joint effort put into formulating a forward looking plan that prepares us for future growth and provides for a sustainable the level of service that the City deserves now and for the next half century.

TAUNTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

The mission of the Taunton Fire Department (TFD) is to provide quality comprehensive fire protection for the homeowners, businesses and government property throughout the community. The FY 2012 operating budget is $8,503,156.82 which is a $1,074,899.46 reduction from the FY2011 budget.

FIRE STATIONS **CURRENT STATE**

Currently, the department operates five stations:

1. Central Fire Station
2. Weir Fire Station
3. East Taunton Fire Station
4. Bay Street
5. Oakland Stations

All stations except Bay St and Oakland are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. As such, most have the problems germane to 100+ year old buildings.

- Central Station was built in 1869.
- The Weir Station and Bay Street were constructed in 1888.
- East Taunton was sometimes in the 1890s.
- Oak Street station was built in 1915.
- Only Oakland is current.

At this time, TFD, per order of Building Superintendent Wayne Walkden, cannot put water on the main floors of the East Taunton and Weir Street stations. That means no washing of the apparatus inside the building. This is not a problem 8 months of the year when the trucks can easily be washed on the tarmacs. Once the weather turns cold TFD is unable to wash their apparatus. Winter is also the season when there is sand and salt on the roads, and the trucks are in most need of washing. This also calls into question the safety of the floors themselves; if TFD cannot put water on the floors, how much longer can they reasonably continue to drive multi-ton vehicles on them.

Heating these century old stations is also a problem in the winter. The Task Force toured Central Station and it appears to have the original windows in it. These windows are 150 years old, some are cracked, none are insulated and most do not do much more than keep out rain water. During snowstorms, ice and snow is often found on the inside sash of many windows in the building. The Task Force noted that many window frames appear rotted. These conditions all lead to increased heating costs.

FIRE STATIONS **DESIRED STATE**

The city deserves a modern, well equipped fire department that stands ready to fulfill its mission. The department and its equipment should be based in serviceable stations which are structurally sound and provide the means to safely store and properly maintain the vehicles and equipment as well as provide an expected level of safety and a reasonable level of comfort to the firefighters.

ACTION PLAN

The Task Force refers back to the above recommendation for a centralized Public Safety Complex which would replace two of the aging unserviceable buildings.

Further the taskforce recommends that the Taunton Building Superintendent inspect the remaining stations and list by order of urgency the repairs needed to guarantee the safety of the personnel and equipment.

FIRE APARATUS **CURRENT STATE**

The condition of all of the City's apparatus is deteriorating quickly. The National Fire Protection Association recommends 15 years as the life span for an engine. Taunton's current fleet of engines, (which are the vehicles that do the majority of the work), contain trucks that are 5, 16, 18, 20, 25, and 26 years old.

The heavy rescue truck that carries the Jaws of Life is 20 years old

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) recommends a 20 year life span for a ladder truck and Taunton's current ladders are 11, 14, and 17 years old. When TFD creates a permanently manned ladder company they will have to choose between these 3 vehicles.

Several of the TFD trucks suffer from various degrees of corrosion on the body. This does not keep them from functioning effectively, however the common perception is that if a vehicle looks bad on the outside it is junk, and not worthy of attention.

The majority of or trucks were purchased in the mid to late 90's. We have only bought 1 truck in the last 12 years

FIRE APARATUS **CURRENT STATE**

TFD should field a fleet of serviceable and presentable fire apparatus. Older vehicles should be well maintained and in service as long as safety and readiness are not impaired. The city recognizes the extreme conditions these vehicles operate under and has a well

thought plan in place to ensure the vehicle fleet remains updated and stocked with serviceable apparatus.

ACTION PLAN

The Task Force recommends:

- The TFD dismantle and salvage the 24 year old engine that has seen heavy use and wear.
- If or when the TFD decommissions the 20 year old heavy rescue truck that carries the Jaws of Life they will disperse the equipment it carries to our other vehicles.
- The TFD institute a vehicle purchasing rotation so the City will not face the current problem again in the future. The plan should look to purchase an engine in staggered intervals of approximately every four years so the serviceable use period will not end collectively for the entire fleet. This would allow the TFD to replenish the oldest trucks, while still maintaining a stable fleet.
- The TFD fix where ever possible some of the aforementioned corrosion issues on the vehicles. Although it may not affect serviceability it will bring pride back into our fleet.

UTILIZATION OF MANPOWER CURRENT STATE

TFD currently fields 112 out of a contractual 127 firefighters on the fire department payroll. Due to retirements, injury, and military service the actual deployable number is 107, or 20 firefighters short.

TFD is an aging department that needs to consider replenishing it's ranks with younger firefighters, as a good mix of experienced veterans and young firefighters eager to learn is the optimal departmental mix.

A lack of manpower has, in the past, forced TFD to close stations in the summer months when vacation use is high in order to ensure the City has enough overtime funds to adequately man our apparatus during our heavy fire season. Closed stations can lead to increased response times at calls throughout the city - not just the district without coverage. When this happens TFD can no longer meet their goal of being on scene within 4 minutes of notification of an incident. This is an NFPA standard that all fire departments strive to meet.

UTILIZATION OF MANPOWER DESIRED STATE

Over the years the City of Taunton has continued to grow. Unfortunately the fire department has not grown in step with the area and the hazards it needs to cover. In order

to better serve the community The TFD must change the way they do things in order to become more efficient and effective.

ACTION PLAN

Fire fighter Staffing Levels:
The Task Force recommends the city do all it can to bring the TFD back up to full operating strength. With the potential of a resort casino being built within the city borders we will want to have a full and operationally proficient fire department. .

Administration:
The work load is high among the TFD staff positions. The city continues to get larger but the Fire Prevention office does not. Their workload and responsibility grows but remains a three man division. Office work throughout the other divisions is also extensive. Help is needed to make day to day administrative work more effective and efficient. The Task Force recommends creating a Staff Deputy Chief to help oversee the actions of Fire Prevention, the Training Office, the Maintenance Office, and the E911 Communications Office.

Force Realignment:
During interviews with Chief Timothy Bradshaw, he identified manpower utilization changes that would stream line his workforce. The Task Force supports these efficiency moves in his Department and recommends he work closely with the union to implement the following changes in the coming years.

The Chief hopes to change his full manning from its current structure, to a model with 5 engines manned by 5 officers and 11 privates year round and 1 ladder truck manned by an officer and 3 firefighters for a total of 6 officers and 14 privates or 20 employees.

Chief Bradshaw believes TFD will operate more efficiently with this structure. This change would require staff levels be brought up to the 127 firefighters stated in the agreement between the firefighters union and the city in order for this process to be feasible.

The Chief would also like to move personnel to the outside stations to create 4 man engine companies whenever possible. No longer should extra men just be kept downtown at the Central Station. The 4 man engine is the standard for NFPA 1710 compliance. This is a standard we should try to meet as the city grows.

Current contract manning levels will not allow us to run all of our engine companies as NFPA compliant 4 man units all the time, but as the city and its industries expand, it should be a goal that city leaders strives to meet. This is how fire apparatus is manned in Brockton, New Bedford, and Fall River.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE SYSTEM

This final section will study the facts related to bringing Emergency Medical Care System in house to the Taunton Fire Department. The Task Force has been asked to present the facts and not to make any recommendations. We broke our research into five basic parts:

1. What are the benefits of a fire department run ambulance service?
2. What is the cost to run an ambulance service within the Taunton Fire Department?
3. Will the profit margins and collection fees collected from a fire-based EMS transport service be sufficient to support its operation?
4. How many personnel would be needed to effectively operate a fire-based EMS transport service?
5. What ambulance service will be used to back up the Taunton Fire Department if the department chooses to transport patients?

The Task Force does believe that bringing EMS in house would be profitable for the City. An extensive and wide reaching research into the costs and profit for several towns and cities currently running the system is included.

The current contract with AMR is good for 3 years so we do have time to solidify our foundation and make an informed decision.

EMS CURRENT STATE

In the City of Taunton, calls for emergency medical services are received through the E-911system (at fire headquarters). These calls are then transferred to the private ambulance provider American Medical Response (AMR). AMR then processes these calls and dispatches an ambulance (Medic 1 or Medic 2) to the address.

Simultaneously, the Taunton Fire Department dispatches the closest engine company to provide BLS (basic life support) for the incident. The fire apparatus in Taunton are currently equipped to provide BLS with firefighters trained as the First Responder and EMT's (Emergency Medical Technician). In the last three years the Taunton Fire Department has experienced a growth from 47% to over 63% in EMS service calls.

The Taunton Fire Department is usually the first on the scene providing prehospital emergency care, but has not been reimbursed due to the fact that the fire department does not transport patients.

In the past, the Taunton Fire Department was basically a fire and rescue department because fires were a common occurrence. Today, priorities have changed. Fires are down to a minimum and EMS calls account for 70% of the department's responses.

What are the benefits of a fire department run ambulance service?

The following is a comparison of Fire-Based versus Private service control comparison.

Fire-Based	Private
Optimum response times	Unacceptable response times
Average fee structure	Top of scale fee structure
Cannot strike	Potential for employee strike
Traditional and dependable	Dependency on service contracts
Citizen control	Stockholder control
Stable employees; low turnover	Higher turnover rates
Public service orientation	Profit orientation

(International Association of Firefighters, Charting the Future of Fire-based EMS 1997).

What is the cost to run an ambulance service within the Taunton Fire Department?

The plan that is chosen to operate the ambulance transport service will dictate the cost of the service.

PLAN A:
Plan A of the first year basically is a starting point for the department to enter the EMS field. The plan establishes a hierarchy under which positions are established. Plan A trains dispatchers to the EMD level, applies for the necessary license for EMS transport and, purchases the necessary equipment for an EMS transport service. Under Plan A of the first year a position of lieutenant paramedic must be established to oversee operations and set protocol and procedures. Plan A also includes the purchase of a new ALS transport fire engine for assisting AMR when they are unable to support a second ambulance. Contracting out billing services to a third party for EMS transports is also part of Plan A.

Transporting of patients to the hospital can only be accomplished with a vehicle built for that purpose. Emergency One vehicles have that ability. The rear of the cab contains everything a traditional ambulance would, including a built in oxygen system. This fire engine has a rear engine and double doors on each side, which allows for a large stretcher that can be placed in different directions. It has a hydraulic device to lift stretchers.

Plan A would have to apply to a fire station already being staffed, Bay St. Fire Station for example. The reason is that the City of Taunton is not ready to hire additional personnel at this time to staff an ambulance. The existing fire truck in that station would have to be replaced with an ALS transport fire engine. Any plan that is proposed will not be financially feasible unless all funds are deposited into a revolving account to be used by the Taunton Fire Department. The provisions of Chapter 44 Section 53E, of the Massachusetts General Laws allows this to happen.

PLAN B:
Plan B has all of the ingredients of Plan A, but advances to the ALS level immediately. An ALS license is obtained, a lieutenant paramedic is hired as a EMS director, dispatchers are trained to the EMD level, an EMS transport fire engine is purchased, a secretary is hired, firefighters are trained to the paramedic level. This plan will allow the department to have the ability to transport at the ALS level instead of at the BLS level.

Expenses for first year Plan A
Medical licenses for Engine four _____ $750.00
Supplies for Engine four_____ $10,000.00
Lease purchase Engine four for seven years _____ $85,832.25
Secretary for record keeping _____ $30,000.00
Lieutenant paramedic in charge of operations and procedures_____ $61,295.72
EMD training for fire department dispatchers _____$20,000.00
Total expenses under plan A _____ $207,877.97

Expenses for first year Plan B
Supplies for ALS transport fire engine_____$20,000.00
Lease purchase of a transport fire engine _____ $85,832.25
Secretary _____ $30,000.00
Lieutenant paramedic in charge of operations and protocol_____$61,295.72
A twelve lead defibrillator _____$12,000.00
Training for employees for the paramedic level _____$36,000.00
Overtime to cover firefighters attending paramedic school _____ $20,000.00
Total expenses for Plan B _____ $265,127.97

Second Year Expenses under Plan A
Under the second year of Plan A, six EMT's will be hired, along with six paramedics. A lease purchase of an ALS transport fire engine and a lease purchase of an ambulance will be required under the second year of plan A. A secretary for record keeping and lieutenant paramedic responsible for protocol will also be hired. This plan will allow the department to staff an ALS ambulance and a BLS fire apparatus. The purpose of this is to have a fire-based ALS ambulance for calls that AMR cannot respond to in an appropriate manner with the remaining calls assisted by a fire-base BLS transport fire apparatus.

Hire six EMT's to cover 1st ambulance
Firefighter's 1st year basic wage _____ $36,164.31
Five years longevity _____ $905.14
Station Apparatus Maintenance _____ $1,028.57
Uniform Allowance _____$1,234.28
Holiday Pay for eleven holidays _____$2,262.86
School Credits _____ $1,000.00
EMT Incentive _____ $822.82
Defibrillator Pay _____ $411.43
Health Insurance seventy-five percent _____ $1,260.00

Pension deposited into retirement board from the city side _____$6,951.00
Total cost for one EMT per year _____ $52,040.18
Six EMT's multiplied by $52,040.18 is equivalent to _____ $312,241.08

Hire six paramedics for the first ambulance
Firefighter 1st basic pay _____ $36,164.31
Five years longevity _____ $905.14
Station Apparatus Maintenance _____$1,028.57
Uniform Allowance _____$1,234.28
Holiday Pay for eleven holidays _____$2,262.86
School credits _____ $1,000.00
Paramedic Incentive _____ $2,468.57
Defibrillator Incentive _____ $411.43
Health Insurance seventy-five percent _____ $1,260.00
Pension deposited into the retirement board from the city side _____ $ 9,651.00
Cost of one Paramedic _____ $56,386.16
Cost of six Paramedics _____ $338,316.96
Secretary _____ $30,000.00
Pension deposited into the retirement board from the city side _____ $ 9,651.00
Lieutenant paramedic in charge of operations and protocol_____ $61,295.72
Physicals for recruits _____ $6,000.00
Psychological screening tests _____ $12,000.00
A twelve lead Defibrillator _____ $12,000.00
Training fire dispatchers to the EMD level _____ $20,000.00
Lease purchase of an ambulance _____ $35,978.00
Lease purchase of an ALS transport fire engine _____ $85,832.25
Cleaning supplies _____ $250.00
Computers _____ $3,500.00
Maintenance _____ $2,000.00
Upgrade for mechanic _____ $5,000.00
Licenses _____ ___ $850.00
Postage _____ $200.00
Medical supplies _____ $20,000.00
Vehicle inspections _____ $60.00
Renovations to existing fire station _____ $5,000.00
Radio equipment _____ $2,000.00
Fuel for vehicles _____$3,000.00
Total expenses under second year proposal _____ $965,174.21

Expenses for second year Plan B

Under the second year of Plan B the department will take over the EMS transport service. The lease purchase of two ambulances and an ALS transport fire apparatus will be incorporated into this plan. The department will be capable of handling all of the city's EMS needs. The addition of a second ambulance to this plan would add an additional six EMT's and six paramedics to the total expenditure of Plan A of the second year.

Six EMT's multiplied by $52,040.18 is equivalent to _____ $312,241.08
Cost of hiring six paramedics _____ $338,316.96
Total cost for six paramedics and six EMT's _____ $650,558.04
Lease purchase of a second ambulance _____$35,978.00
Lease purchase of the first ambulance _____ $35,978.00
Lease purchase of ALS transport fire truck _____ $85,832.25
Medical supplies for second ambulance _____ $20,000.00
Computers _____ $3,500.00
Maintenance _____ $2,000.00
Physicals for recruits _____ $6,000.00
Psychological screening tests _____ $12,000.00
A twelve lead Defibrillator _____ $12,000.00
Vehicle inspections _____ $60.00
Pension deposited into the retirement board from the city side _____ $ 9,651.00
A twelve lead Defibrillator _____ $12,000.00
Cleaning supplies _____ $250.00
Maintenance _____$2,000.00
Radio equipment _____ $2,000.00
Fuel for vehicles _____$3,000.00
Licenses _____ $850.00
Postage _____$200.00
Total expenses to add another ambulance and still have Engine four as a backup to the second ambulance. $1,517,437.20

Will the profit margins and collection fees collected from a fire-based EMS transport service be sufficient to support its operation?

AMR holds the current agreement to provide ambulance service for the City of Taunton. Estimated revenues for AMR were calculated from Taunton Fire Department response cards. Then the revenues were matched with what communities in the area are charging for their EMS transport service. AMR did forward to the City of Taunton their EMS runs for 2002. Any other year calculations have to be estimated, because AMR refused to relinquish any more information pertaining to transporting of patients after their 2002 report.

Table 2
Estimation of AMR's EMS transports between 2001 and 2003.

Fiscal year	2001	2002	2003
EMS Responses	5245	5828	6119
Total Transports	4107	4563	4791
BLS Transports	2012	2236	2460
ALS Transports	1466	1629	1710
ALS 11 Transports	628	698	733

Estimation of AMR's revenue for EMS transports between 2001 and 2003.

BLS Transports	**2012**	**2236**	**2460**
Total Revenue BLS	$818,844.00	$910,015.00	$1,001,220.00
ALS Transports	**1466**	**1629**	**1710**
Total Revenue ALS	$698,351.00	$776,107.00	$814,644.00
ALS II Transports	**628**	**698**	**733**
Total Revenue ALA II	$410,250.00	$455,960.00	$478,815.00
Total Revenue	*$1,927,445.00*	*$2,049,395.00*	*$2,294,679.00*

The Author has used the 2002 fiscal years figures, because these figures are the exact numbers from AMR. All other years are estimated.
$2,049,395.00 multiplied by an 80% collection rate equals $1,639,516.00.
$1,639,516.00 minus $81,975.80 for collection service equals to $1,557,540.20.
$1,557,540.20 is the estimated revenue collected by AMR in 2002.

How many personnel would be needed to effectively operate a fire-based EMS transport service?

The list of personnel needed to effectively operate a fire-based EMS transport service is listed below.

- A lieutenant paramedic to oversee operations and set protocol and procedures.
- Twelve paramedics (six assigned to each ambulance).
- Twelve EMT's (six assigned to each ambulance).
- A secretary to follow up on medical payments and keep records.
- A medical director.
- A third party billing company.

The personnel listed above will support two ALS ambulances. The third back up ambulance will be a fire-base transport apparatus, which will be upgraded to the ALS level. Existing personnel on the fire apparatus will be used in this situation.

The reason six paramedics and six EMT's are figured for each ambulance is that the standard for determining staffing configuration is to use the factor of 1.5 for each position,

which will account for vacation time, sick time, personnel time, line-of-duty injuries and so forth.

What ambulance service will be used to assist the Taunton Fire Department if the department chooses to transport patients?

The Taunton Fire department will work with other fire departments and outside private ambulance companies in obtaining mutual aid for the transportation of sick and injured citizens. The fire departments in Bristol Country are currently working under a mutual aid agreement for structure fires, and the same type of agreement has been made for ambulances. Norton Fire Department will continue to be the tactical command point for request for both firefighting equipment and ambulance assistance. Listed below is the protocol, which has been established for mutual aid for ambulances.

Bristol Country has been designated as District Three. Within District Three, fire department and ambulance providers deliberated and agreed on a mutual aid agreement for support to the cities and towns in the county. The Strike Team Commanders under each Ambulance Strike Team are the fire chiefs from that city or town whom will be responding, for example, under Strike Team 3A the Seekonk Fire Chief will be the Strike Team Commander and will act as the incident commander. The Assistant Strike Team Commander will be the Norton Fire Chief. Depending on the severity of the incident will determine how many strike teams are called.

Bristol Country District 3
Ambulance Strike Teams
Ambulance Strike Team 3A

Strike Team Commander:	Seekonk Fire Chief
Assistant Strike Team Commander:	Norton Fire Chief
Ambulances:	Seekonk Fire Department
	Rehoboth Fire Department
	Attleboro Fire Department
	N. Attleboro Fire Department
	Plainville Fire Department
Alternates:	American Medical Response
	Mercy Ambulance Service

Ambulance Strike Team 3B

Strike Team Commander:	Raynham Fire Chief
Assistant Strike Team Commander:	Berkley Fire Chief
Ambulances:	Raynham Fire Department
	Norton Fire Department
	Berkley Fire Department
	Freetown Fire Department
	Dighton Fire Department
Alternates:	Response Ambulance Service
	Mercy Ambulance Service

Ambulance Strike Team 3C

Strike Team Commander:	Rehoboth Fire Chief
Assistant Strike Team Commander:	AMR Field Supervisor
Ambulances:	American Medical Response
	American Medical Response
	Mercy Ambulance Service
	Mercy Ambulance Service
	Response Ambulance Service
Alternates:	Response Ambulance Service
	Alert Ambulance Service

Ambulance Strike Team 3D

Strike Commander:	Freetown Fire Chief
Assistant Strike Team Commander:	Response Field Supervisor
Ambulances:	Response Ambulance Service
	Response Ambulance Service
	Alert Ambulance Service
	Alert Ambulance Service
	American Medical Response
Alternates:	Mercy Ambulance Service
	American Medical Service

DISCUSSION

The following figures were taken from records received from the Raynham Fire Department. These figures represent all expenses incurred with the ambulance transport service. The author will closely look at real cost of providing ambulance service and investigate if all of the below are captured in their annual budget statements.

Table 4
Raynham Fire Department 07/01/03 to 06/30/04

Month	Charges	Payments	Adjustments	Cases
July	$42,490.51	$45,130.50	($11,860.91)	77
August	$71,679.00	$19,203.69	($19,088.40)	130
September	$55,709.00	$45,038.73	($13,646.57)	97
October	$50,691.00	$47,809.83	($18,872.26)	97
November	$42,110.52	$30,435.00	($7,048.77)	78
December	$57,105.74	$46,934.25	($20,147.84)	105
January	$50,933.00	$35,613.00	($14,654.96)	101
February	$41,774.07	$32,496.72	($10,710.40)	82
March	$37,557.00	$38,568.89	($15,111.07)	73
April	$59,362.00	$43,180.82	($14,483.02)	114
May	$47,424.00	$30,669.27	($11,594.50)	90
June	$56,801.00	$34,918.32	($24,130.93)	112
Total	*$613,636.84*	*$449,999.72*	*($181,349.63)*	*1,156*

Total Charges were $613,636.84

Total Adjustments were ($181,349.63)
Payments Received $449,999.72
This is a 74% collection rate.

Table 5

Ambulance Account Expenses from July 2003 through June 2004

Article Transfers	$	150,000.00
Cleaning	$	420.37
Computer Billing	$	1,195.90
Computer Maintenance	$	2,539.00
Computer other	$	5,956.50
EMT Incentives	$	110,477.00
EMT Medical Bills	$	395.00
EMT Reimbursements	$	1,830.00
EMT Schooling	$	3,078.20

Equipment (Ambulance)	$	11,009.93
Licenses	$	1,700.00
Medical Supplies (Oxygen)	$	828.71
Medical Supplies (Ambulance)	$	20,417.90
Misc. Account	$	445.07
Office Equipment	$	3,343.39
Postage	$	1,235.75
Office Supplies	$	2,747.46
Telephone, Cells, Fax Machine	$	12,346.44
Overpayments	$	1,833.46
Payroll (Office)	$	48,821.71
Reimbursements	$	4,030.71
Repairs to Medical Equipment	$	977.33
Repairs to Radios	$	3,162.66
Repairs to Rescue 1	$	1,332.99
Repairs to Rescue 2	$	4,151.80
Repairs (other)	$	62.12
Uncategorized Expenses	$	605.60
Total Expenses - Personal	$	(394,945.25)

Holiday pay is not included in the Ambulance Account Expenses. Each person assigned to the ambulance receives 11 holidays a year. This figure is equivalent to one-fourth of his/hers weekly pay. On the average each individual receives $231.56 for each holiday, therefore 11 holidays is calculated out to $2,547.16 a year per individual. Each ambulance has two firefighters assigned to it. When calculating assignments you must use three personnel for every two. This takes into account sick time, vacation, personal time and line-of-duty injuries. The total for holiday pay calculates to $7,641.48 per vehicle.

Fuel has been omitted from the equation; this is estimated to be around $6,000.00 a year. The big-ticket item left out of the Ambulance Account Expense Report is the basis salary for the EMT's and Paramedic who operate the ambulance. The minimum base salary for a firefighter operating the ambulance in Raynham is $42,618.03 plus sick leave incentive, longevity, cleaning, and apparatus maintenance and firefighter incentive. With all of these

incentives the base pay is boosted up to $45,695.53. This amount multiplied by three employees equals to $137,086.59 per year to staff an ambulance. The town's commitment to share the cost of health care insurance is overlooked. Each member of the Raynham Fire Department has to pay one-fourth of the total premium for health care. This is equivalent to $35.00 per person. The Town's portion is $105.00 per week for each individual employed. This figure multiplied by three equals to $315.00 a week per ambulance that the town has to kick in for insurance. The cost of insurance to the Town is $16,380.00 a year per ambulance.

Table 6

Total expenses to operate EMS service for the Town of Raynham

Ambulance Account Expense Sheet	$394,945.24
Holiday Pay per ambulance	$7,641.48
Fuel for ambulances	$6,000.00
Payroll for 3 firefighters	$137,086.59
Cost of ambulance over 5 years	$30,000.00
Total cost to run one ambulance	$575,673.31
Minus 150,000.00 taken out for OT	($150,000.00)
Total cost for 1 ambulance	$425,673.31
Net Income	$449,999.72
Profit margin for the year 2004	$24,326.41

The above figures do not take into consideration,

- The second ambulance out of the same station, which responds to 50% of the calls due to simultaneous calls.
- The actual cost of the second ambulance over a five-year period.
- The overtime cost to back fill the second ambulance.
- The manpower to staff the second ambulance.

The following figures were taken from records received from the Somerset Fire Department. These figures represent all expenses incurred with the ambulance transport service. The author will closely look at real cost of providing ambulance service and investigate if all of the below are captured in their annual budget statements.

Table 7

Somerset Fire Department transports from 07/01/03 to 06/30/04.

BLS Transports	523
ALS I Transports	636
JALSII Transports	69
Total Transports	1226

Table 8

Payment	ALS	BLS	Amount Collected
Medicare	$147,097.64	$69,724.98	$216,822.62
Blue Cross	$53,652.56	$21,529.27	$75,181.83
Self Pay	$8,860.06	$14,387.00	$23,247.06
Other Ins.	$49,455.68	$40,716.82	$90,172.50
Total Collected	$259,065.94	$146,358.07	$405,424.01

Table 9

Payment	ALS	BLS
Medicare	56.78%	47.64%
Blue Cross	20.71%	14.71%
Self Pay	3.42%	9.83%
Other Ins.	19.09%	27.82%
Total	100%	100%

Table 10

Ambulance Account Expenses July 1, 2003 through June 30, 2004.

Diabetic Supplies	$647.61
Suction Supplies	$297.53

Endotracheal Supplies	$633.05
Broselow Bag Supplies	$796.95
Medical Gloves	$588.15
Blood Pressure Supplies	$486.21
Stretcher Supplies	$216.50
Collars	$56.56
Immobilization Supplies	$837.84
Ferno Stair Chair	$726.95
Oxygen Related Supplies	$2,443.21
Computer Repairs	$945.00
SARF Form Computer System	$2,500.00
MC Products (Lights for vehicles)	$26.00
Miscellaneous Medical Supplies	$313.84
Staples	$1,639.94
Badgeamerica (Department Id)	$113.00
GFREMSCC, Inc. Communication equip.	$850.00
Licenses / Certifications	$1,300.00
MHQ Municipal Vehicles 2003 vehicle	$14,032.00
Mail Cost Reimbursement	$238.49
Earthlink – On Line	$22.95
Atlantic Environmental & Marine	$22.95
Cape Electronic (Radio Repairs)	$268.00
Ambulance Billing Overpayments	$1,904.00
COMSTAR (Ambulance Billing Fee)	$16,430.78
Gray's Office (Photocopier Lease)	$300.00
Southcoast Hospital Groups	$3,073.33
FETN (School Bus Rescue Program)	$350.00
Defibrillator Supplies and Equipment	$7,852.17
Overtime	$35,124.11
Ambulance pays for five Paramedics	$222,103.54
Total Payroll and Expenses	$317,839.46
Revenues Received	$405,424.01
Returned to General Budget	$87,584.55

Although the Somerset Fire Department returned $87,584.55 back into the general fund, there were many variables not included in the calculations. There is no line item for fuel or repairs to any vehicles in the Somerset Fire Department fleet. Funds are deducted from the DPW account. Anytime a fire apparatus or ambulance is in need of repair, the fire department calls up the DPW and they send a mechanic from their pool to repair said vehicle. The Somerset Fire Department supplies both the fire department and the police department with all the necessary medical supplies. This includes twelve police cruisers.

The Somerset Fire Department funds five paramedic positions out of the ambulance account. The total amount deducted is $222,103.54. There are still three positions, which must come from the fire department budget account. The fire department uses its firefighters in a dual purpose. If a reported structure fire occurs the ambulance crew is

transferred to the fire apparatus to tackle that task. When the fire apparatus returns to quarters the crew will shift to the ambulance again.

The following figures were taken from records received from the Fairhaven Fire Department. These figures represent all expenses incurred with the ambulance transport service. The author will closely look at real cost of providing ambulance service and investigate if all of the below are captured in their annual budget statements.

No one fire department operates the same. Every department has a different approach on how an ambulance service should operate. In Fairhaven the fire department starts out with a beginning balance from the prior year, and works from there. The following chart will show what the beginning balance is as of July 2003. It will show BLS and ALS commitments, payments, and ending balance.

Table 11
Fairhaven Fire Department
Ambulance Billing Account Reconciliation Report

Month	BLS	ALS	Comstar	Clients	Net
July	$10,555.57	$23,076.99	$50,838.62	$1,046.25	$21,141.65
August	$8.786.92	$23,076.99	$20,095.97	$1,652.73	$59,870.80
September	$61,812.06	$15,616.54	$58,676.71	$1,329.84	$52,025.26
October	$21,275.11	$65,306.87	$37,969.86	$390.92	$38,360.83
November	$12,066.90	$53,910.54	$40,263.20	$1,666.78	$41,929.98
December	$16,160.27	$41,416.39	$38,135.65	$696.88	$38,217.86
January	$20,239.38	$62,071.37	$32,970.55	$939.44	$34,033.99
February	$22,707.14	$60,480.02	$37,905.36	$1,260.34	$39,165.70
March	$16,153.27	$61,686.40	$51,215.92	$2,153.49	$53,867.29
April	$18,820.02	$35,744.41	$48,214.68	$6,036.52	$53,867.29
May	$16,046.35	$57,332.86	$35,728.60	$282.87	$36,011.47
June	$27,445.06	$65,053.36	$46,788.88	$1,954.73	$48,193.77
Total	$25,206,805	$577,651.64	$140,497.75	$358,305.73	$516,188.01

Table 12
Expense report for the ambulance transport service in Fairhaven

Expense item	Cost
Regular EMS overtime	$68,687.56
Continuing Education	$43,725.62
EMS stipend	$51,500.00
Training	$7,500.00
Ambulance supplies	$25,000.00
Professional fees, dues, licenses	$1,500.00
Lieutenants' salary	$61,780.98
Telephone	$410.00
Clothing allowance	$325.00
Four paramedics	$178,088.00
Office supplies	$1,000.00
Repairs to ambulance	$1,500.00
Fuel for ambulances	$3,000.00
Medical supplies for ambulances	$25,491.00
Licenses	$950.00
Court fees	$1,200.00
Vehicle inspections	$90.00
EMS Director	$3,000.00
Computers	$1,500.00
Three cell phones	$80.00
Secretary	$5,000.00
Total expenses	*$479,828.16*

The Town of Fairhaven uses Costar for their ambulance billing and collection. The collection rate is around 90%. The fire chief of Fairhaven encumbers the other 10% in small claims court making the collection rate nearly 100%. The ambulance account is a revolving account, which can only be used for fire department purposes. Funding can only be taken out of this account with approval of the fire chief and a town vote.

In the beginning of the fiscal year the town of Fairhaven showed $337,014.49 in the ambulance revolving account. The account has nearly $460.000.00 in revenue at the end of this year. $30,000.00 is set aside each year for the purpose of buying ambulances therefore there is no lease purchase. The ambulance is used for five years then placed in reserve.

The total transports as of the month of November 2004 was1679 that is a 51.53% increase in EMS transports from the same time a year ago. Fairhaven runs a five-member shift. When a medical call comes in, two members from the shift, staff the ambulance leaving the fire apparatus with three personnel. If another medical call comes in, two of the remaining members on duty operate their back-up ambulance and a call back of personnel starts. The Town of Fairhaven receives a dual role from its fire department personnel.

The ambulance account also pays for a ten-year note on a structure in which the ambulance is housed. This note is $65,000.00 a year. Starting next year the ambulance account will also be paying for an EMS captain in charge of operations. This will be a new position.

The following figures were taken from records received from the Natick Fire Department. These figures represent all expenses incurred with the ambulance transport service. The author will closely look at real cost of providing ambulance service and investigate if all of the below are captured in their annual budget statements.

Table 13

Total transports for the Town of Natick from July 1, 2003 through June 30, 2004.

BLS transports	1,309
ALA transports	818
ALS ll transports	16
Total transports	2,143

Table 14

Salaries for firefighter, EMT, EMT-I, and Paramedic

Base Firefighter's pay	No incentive	$46,000.00
3.5% for EMT	$1,610.00	$47,610.00
9% for EMT-l	$4,140.00	$50,140.00
12% for Paramedic	$5,520.00	$51,520.00

Natick Fire Department operates two ALS transport units. One is staffed with two paramedics and the second unit is staffed with an EMT-l and an EMT. When calculating

funding for each ambulance, the usual procedure is to multiply each position by a factor of 1.5, which accounts for vacation, sick time, personal time and overtime.

Two paramedics staff the first ALS ambulance. Two paramedics for four shifts are equivalent to eight. Eight paramedics multiplied by 1.5 are equivalent to twelve. Twelve multiplied by $51,520.00 (rate of pay) is equivalent to $618,240.00.

The second ALS ambulance is staffed with one EMT-l and one EMT. One EMT-l for each group is equal to four EMT-l's. Four EMT-l's multiplied by 1.5 is equivalent to six. Six EMT-l's multiplied by $50,140.00 (rate of pay) is equivalent to $300,840.00.

The second ALS ambulance is staffed with one EMT. One EMT for each group is equal to four EMT's. Four EMT's multiplied by 1.5 is equivalent to six. Six EMT's multiplied by $47,610.00 (rate of pay) is equivalent to $285,660.00. The members assigned to the delivery of EMS service have a dual role. The ambulance will respond to all structure fires and will assist the ladder companies. This upgrades the ladder companies from two personnel to four, but if the ambulance is needed elsewhere they will be dispatched to the call.

Total payroll for two ALS transport ambulances was $1,204,740.00. This did not include $20,000.00 a year to stock the ambulances, licenses ($1,300.00), fuel, insurance, repairs, or for any office equipment. The purchase price of $125,000.00 for the latest ambulance was also eliminated. The Natick Fire Department did turn in $780,255.97 to the general fund for 2003. An outside collection agency was used, and their fee was four%. The collection ratio was 93%.

There is not a separate budget for the EMS transport service in the Town of Natick. All budgetary items are accounted for in the fire department budget. Fuel and maintenance are budgeted out of the DPW budget. The $1,204,740.00 for salaries to support the EMS delivery system is under wages for fire department personnel. All overtime costs to cover open positions are not broken down. The overtime funding comes from the fire department budget. Therefore, it is difficult to separate any funding for the delivery of EMS transport service in the Town of Natick.

Since the implementation of the Enhanced-911 emergency call retrieving system, the Taunton Fire Department has had complete control of dispatching fire, police, and the ambulance. The department has taken an active role in responding to medical calls and treating patients. The fire department has in a sense subsidized AMR, which currently holds an open-end contract for emergency medical service for the City of Taunton. The contract between the city and AMR states that there will be no charge to the city or to Morton Hospital by AMR for the provision of emergency ambulance service. AMR will accept as payment in full the amounts it collects through direct billing of third party payers and or individuals for service rendered in accordance with all applicable federal, state, and local guidelines.

In return the fire department has been thanked by AMR by refusing to refill the department's oxygen tanks used to treat the patients AMR transports, which they used to refill at no charge. Members of the Taunton Fire Department who are injured at a fire no longer receive free transportation to the emergency room. The department gets billed to the maximum under the current regulations.

At one time AMR supplied the fire department with automatic defibrillators for each fire apparatus, a practice, which no longer exists. The fire department received donations from the community to cover the costs of the new defibrillators. AMR, in the past, supplied EMT courses for our members, now the fire department has to contract out its own training from resources from the fire departments depleted budget for refresher courses for its EMT's at a cost of $4,000.00 a year. The department has even loaned radios to the dedicated ambulance in Taunton, just to have communications with them.

The net effect of the current situation is that the Taunton Fire Department receives the Enhanced-911 call, responds to the incident and stabilizes the situation, AMR arrives and transports the patient to the hospital and collects all of the billing fees associated with that call. The department receives no reimbursement from AMR and is prevented from billing for the incident because it does not provide transport services.

Estimated revenues for AMR were calculated from the fire department response cards. Then the revenues were matched with what communities in the area are charging for their EMS transport service.

Table 15
Estimation of AMR's EMS transports between 2001 and 2003.

Fiscal year	**2001**	**2002**	**2003**
EMS Responses	5245	5828	6119
Total Transports	4107	4563	4791
BLS Transports	2012	2236	2460
ALS 1 Transports	1466	1629	1710
ALS 11 Transports	628	698	733

Table 16
Estimation of AMR's Revenue for EMS transports between 2001 and 2003.

BLS Transports	**2012**	**2236**	**2460**
Total Revenue BLS	$818,844.00	$910,015.00	$1,001,220.00
Total Revenue ALS 1	$698,351.00	$776,107.00	$814,644.00

Total Revenue ALA II	$410,250.00	$455,960.00	$478,815.00
Total Revenue	$1,927,445.00	$2,049,395.00	$2,294,679.00

The Author has used the 2002 fiscal years figures, because these figures are the exact numbers from AMR. All other years are estimated.

$2,049,395.00 multiplied by an 80% collection rate equals $1,639,516.00.
$1,639,516.00 minus $81,975.80 for collection service equals to $1,557,540.20.
$1,557,540.20 is the estimated revenue collected by AMR in 2002.

First year plan A
Apply for and obtain a BLS license to operate a BLS transport service for the City of Taunton. Establish a position of lieutenant paramedic to oversee operations and set protocol and procedures. Train and qualify Taunton Fire Department dispatchers to the Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) level. Purchase a new ALS transport fire engine as a back up to AMR for BLS transports to the hospital. Set up contract with third party billing for EMS transports. AMR has one ambulance dedicated exclusively for service within the City of Taunton operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week staffed with personnel trained to at least EMT-I level. AMRs contract reads that, one ambulance will be staffed by paramedics and equipped to ALS requirement. This one unit will serve the city, hospital and surrounding towns as needed. Said unit when not in use will be based in Taunton. Total transports by AMR in 2002 were 4563. This does not include dry runs, false alarms, or patient refusals. One ambulance covers fifty square miles and has 56,000 residents to service not counting the transient population.

Transporting of patients to the hospital can only be done with a vehicle built for that purpose. The author proposes to purchase an ALS transport fire engine, which will have that ability. The rear of the cab contains everything a traditional ambulance would, including a built in oxygen system. The fire engine will have a rear engine and double doors on the sides, allowing for a larger stretcher that can be placed in different directions. It would have a hydraulic device to lift stretchers.

The author's proposal would have to apply to a fire station already being staffed, Bay St. Fire station for example. The reason is that the City of Taunton is not ready to hire additional personnel at this time to staff an ambulance. The existing fire truck in that station would have to be replaced with an ALS transport fire engine.

The next item to address is the EMT's assigned to the new ALS transport engine. There must be a signed agreement between the firefighters union and the City of Taunton that all members assigned to this ALS fire engine must meet the basic qualification of an EMT and must maintain their certification. The current positions on Engine four are bid positions, and there must be sufficient personnel to staff this vehicle.

- AMR responded to 4563 medical incidents in 2002.
- 49% of all medical calls are of the BLS.
- 20% of all medical calls require a second ambulance.

- 49% of 4563 medical transports equals to 2236.
- 20% of 2236 transports equals out to 447 medical transports.
- 9% of the total transports are associated with motor vehicle accidents (MVA).
- 9% of 447 transports at the BLS level are equivalent to 40.
  This leaves 407 transports for the Taunton Fire Department for BLS. 407 medical transports multiplied by $300.00, which is the new BLS transport rate equals to $122,100.00. 40 transports of MVA at $450.00 equals to $18,000.00.
  Total revenue estimated for BLS transport from Engine-4 would be $140,100.00.
- Mileage can be charged to a patient for EMS transportation. Total of 447 EMS transports multiplied by $70.00 equals to $31,290.00.
- $140,100.00 plus $31,290.00 equals to $171,290.00 for total revenue.
- $171,290.00 multiplied by an 80% collection rate equals to $137,032.00.
- $137,032.00 multiplied by a 5% collection fee, from an outside agency equals to $6,851.60.
- Total revenue under proposed Plan A equals to $130,180.40.

Any plan that is proposed will not be financially feasible unless all funds are deposited into a revolving account to be used by the Taunton Fire Department. The provisions of Chapter 44 Section 53E, of the Massachusetts General Laws allows this to happen. Section 53E states that a city or town which accepts the provisions of this section may specify when making an appropriation for the annual ordinary operation costs of any agency, board, department or office of said city or town that such costs may be offset, in part or in the aggregate, by the estimated receipts from the fees charged to users of the services provided by such agency, board, department or office. Receipts so allocated shall be deposited in a special account by the city or town treasurer or otherwise specifically identified and may be expended for the purpose allocated without further appropriation. Any balance in such accounts at the end of the fiscal year shall be deposited into the general treasury of the city of town.

Expenses for Plan A

Medical licenses for Engine-4 _____ $750.00
Supplies for Engine-4_____ $10,000.00
Lease purchase Engine-4 for seven years _____ $85,832.25
Secretary for record keeping _____ $30,000.00
Lieutenant paramedic in charge of operations and procedures_____ $61,295.72
EMD training for fire department dispatchers _____ $20,000.00
Total expenses under plan A _____ $207,877.97

First Year Plan B

Apply for and obtain an ALS license to operate an ALS transport service for the City of Taunton. Establish a position of Lieutenant Paramedic to over- see operations and set protocol and procedures. Train and qualify Taunton Fire Department dispatchers to the EMD level. Purchase a new ALS transport fire engine to back up AMR for ALS and BLS transports to the hospital. AMR has one ambulance dedicated exclusively for service within the City of Taunton operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week staffed with personnel

trained to at least EMT-I level. AMRs contract reads that, one ambulance will be staffed by paramedics and equipped to ALS requirement. This one unit will serve the city, hospital and surrounding towns as needed. Said unit when not in use will be based in Taunton. Total transports by AMR in 2002 were 4563. This does not include dry runs, false alarms, or patient refusals. One ambulance covers fifty square miles and has 56,000 residents to service not counting the transient population.

Transporting of patients to the hospital can only be done with a vehicle built for that purpose. The author proposes to purchase an ALS transport fire engine, which will have that ability. The rear of the cab contains everything a traditional ambulance would, including a built in oxygen system. The fire engine will have a rear engine and double doors on the sides, allowing for a larger stretcher that can be placed in different directions. It would have a hydraulic device to lift stretchers.

AMR responded to 4563 medical incidents in 2002.

- 20% of all medical calls required a second ambulance based on 2002.
- 20% of 4563 EMS transports is equivalent to 912.
- 9% of total EMS transports is related to MVA.
- 9% of 912 are equivalent to 82 MVA.
- 49% of all medical calls are BLS.
- 49% of 830 equals to 407.
- 407 transports billed at the BLS rate of $300.00 equals $122,100.00.
- 423 transports billed at the ALS rate of $500.00 equals $211,500.00.
- 82 transports billed at the MVA rate of $450.00 equals to $36,900.00.
- Mileage can be charged for EMS transportation. The high average charge is $14.00 per mile. Each EMS transport in Taunton averages five miles. Five times $14.00 is equivalent to $70.00.
- $70.00 multiplied by 912 is equivalent to $63,840.00. Using 80% of $63,840.00 for a collection ratio is equivalent to $51,072.00. Using that figure minus 5% for a collection fee is equivalent to $48,518.40.
- Total revenue generated from Engine-4 at an EMT-I level is $370,500.00.
- At an 80% collection rate this equals $296,400.00.
- A 5% collection fee from an outside agency is $14,820.00.
- Total revenue from an ALS-I transport fire engine is $281,580.00.
- $281,580.00 plus $48,518.40 for mileage equals $330,098.40.

First Year Expenses for Plan B

Supplies for EMS-I transport fire engine_____ $20,000.00
Lease purchase of a transport fire engine _____ $85,832.25
Sectary _____ $30,000.00
Lieutenant paramedic in charge of operations and protocol_____ $61,295.72
A twelve lead defibrillator _____ $12,000.00
Training for employees for the paramedic level _____ $36,000.00
Overtime to cover firefighters attending paramedic school _____ $20,000.00
Total expenses for Plan B _____$265,127.97

Second Year Proposed Plan A

Submit an application for an ALS license to operate an ambulance in the City of Taunton. Enter into an agreement between the City of Taunton and the Taunton Firefighters union for transportation of all medical calls. Lease purchase an ambulance for transporting of EMS patients to the hospital. Establish an EMS medical director's position for ALS. Hire six EMT's and six paramedics. Engine four would still be used as a backup to the ALS ambulance for the City of Taunton.

Hire six EMT's to cover 1st ambulance

Firefighter's 1st year basic wage _____ $36,164.31
Five years longevity _____ $905.14
Station Apparatus Maintenance _____ $1,028.57
Uniform Allowance _____ $1,234.28
Holiday Pay for eleven holidays _____ $2,262.86
School Credits _____ $1,000.00
EMT Incentive _____ $822.82
Defibrillator Pay _____ $411.43
Health Insurance seventy-five %_____ $1,260.00
Pension deposited into retirement board from the city side _____ $6,951.00
Total cost for one EMT per year _____ $52,040.18
Six EMT's multiplied by $52,040.18 is equivalent to _____ $312,241.08

Hire six paramedics for the first ambulance

Firefighter 1st basic pay _____ $36,164.31
Five years longevity _____ $905.14
Station Apparatus Maintenance _____ $1,028.57
Uniform Allowance _____ $1,234.28
Holiday Pay for eleven holidays _____ $2,262.86
School credits _____ $1,000.00
Paramedic Incentive _____ $2,468.57
Defibrillator Incentive _____ $411.43
Health Insurance 75%_____ $1,260.00
Pension deposited into the retirement board from the city side ___ $ 9,651.00
Cost of one Paramedic _____ $56,386.16
Cost of six Paramedics _____ $338,316.96
Secretary _____ $30,000.00
Pension deposited into the retirement board from the city side ___ $ 9,651.00
Lieutenant paramedic in charge of operations and protocol_____ $61,295.72
Physicals for recruits _____ $6,000.00
Psychological screening tests _____ $12,000.00
A twelve lead Defibrillator _____ $12,000.00
Training fire dispatchers to the EMD level _____ $20,000.00
Lease purchase of an ambulance _____ $35,978.00
Lease purchase of an ALS transport fire engine _____ $85,832.25
Cleaning supplies _____ $250.00
Computers _____ $3,500.00
Maintenance _____ $2,000.00
Upgrade for mechanic _____ $5,000.00

Licenses _____ $850.00
Postage _____ $200.00
Medical supplies _____ $20,000.00
Vehicle inspections _____ $60.00
Renovations to existing fire station _____ $5,000.00
Radio equipment _____ $2,000.00
Fuel for vehicles _____ $3,000.00
Total expenses under second year proposal _____ $965,174.21

Projected revenues collected under the Second year plan.
Based on 2002 transports by AMR to local hospitals, 80% are Medicare payments and 20% are private billing.

- 2236 BLS transports multiplied by $300.00 multiplied by 80% equals $536,640.00.
- 1629 ALS transports multiplied by $355.00 multiplied by 80% equals $462,636.00.
- 698 ALII transports multiplied by $500.00 multiplied by 80% equals $279,200.00
- Mileage for BLS - $14.00 multiplied by average five miles per transport is equivalent to $70.00 for each transport. $70.00 multiplied by 2236 transports is equivalent to $156,520.00 multiplied 80% equals $125,216.00
- Mileage for ALS - $14.00 multiplied by average five miles per transport is equivalent to $70.00 for each transport. $70.00 multiplied by 1629 transports is equivalent to $114,030.00 multiplied by 80% equals $91,224.00.
- Mileage for ALSII - $14.00 multiplied by average five miles per transport is equivalent to $70.00 for each transport. $70.00 multiplied by 498 transports is equivalent to $34,860.00 multiplied by 80% equals $27,888.00.

  Private billing accounts for the remaining 20% of the EMS transports.
- 2236 BLS transports (MVA) multiplied by $450.00 is equivalent to $1,006,200.00 multiplied by 20% is equivalent to $201,240.00.
- 1629 ALS transports (MVA) multiplied by $505.00 is equivalent to $822,645.00 multiplied by 20% is equivalent to $164,529.00.
- 698 ALSII transports (MVA) multiplied by $650.00 is equivalent to $453,700.00 multiplied by 20% is equivalent to $90,740.00.
- Private billing mileage - $14.00 multiplied by an average of five miles per transport is equivalent to $70.00. 2236 BLS transports multiplied by $70.00 is equivalent to $156,520.00 multiplied by 20% equals $31,304.00.
- Private billing mileage - $14.00 multiplied by an average of five miles per transport is equivalent to $70.00. 1629 ALA transports multiplied by $70.00 is equivalent to $114,030.00 multiplied by 20% equals $22,806.00.
- Private billing mileage - $14.00 multiplied by and average of five miles per transport is equivalent to $70.00. 698 multiplied by 20% equals $6,972.00.

Table 17
Total estimated revenues collected for EMS transport.

Total revenues under Medicare	Total revenues for Private Billing
BLS transports $536,640.00	BLS transports $201,240.00
ALS transports $462,636.00	ALS transports $164,529.00
ALSII transports $279,200.00	ALAII transports $90,740.00
Mileage for BLS $125,216.00	Mileage for BLS transports $31,304.00
Mileage for ALS $91,244.00	Mileage for ALS transports $22,804.00
Mileage for ALSII $27,888.00	Mileage for ALSII transports $6,972.00
Total of Medicare $1,522,824.00	Total for Private Billing $517,589.00

Total revenue from both columns are $2,040,415.00 multiplied by 80% collection ratio is equivalent to $1,632,332.00 minus 5% for collection fee from an outside agency reduces this number to $1,550,715.40.

Second year proposal Plan B
The addition of a second ambulance to this plan would add an additional six EMT's and six paramedics to the total expenditure of plan A.
Six EMT's multiplied by $52,040.18 is equivalent to _____ $312,241.08
Cost of hiring six Paramedics _____ $338,316.96
Total cost for six Paramedics and six EMT's _____ $650,558.04
Lease purchase of a second ambulance _____$35,978.00
Lease purchase of the first ambulance _____$35,978.00
Lease purchase of ALS transport fire truck _____ $85,832.25
Medical supplies for second ambulance _____ $20,000.00
Computers _____ $3,500.00
Maintenance _____ $2,000.00
Physicals for recruits _____ $6,000.00
Psychological screening tests _____$12,000.00
A twelve lead Defibrillator _____ $12,000.00
Vehicle inspections _____ $60.00
Pension deposited into the retirement board from the city side __$ 9,651.00
A twelve lead Defibrillator _____ $12,000.00
Cleaning supplies _____ $250.00
Maintenance _____$2,000.00
Radio equipment _____ $2,000.00
Fuel for vehicles _____$3,000.00
Licenses _____ $850.00
Postage _____$200.00

Total expenses to add another ambulance and still have Engine four as a backup to the second ambulance. $1,517,437.20

Health and Human Services Task Force
Transitional Report

Human Service Committee:

Estele C. Borges, Chair, Exercise Physiologist, PTA, Morton Hospital A Steward Family Hospital Taunton, MA is a resident of the City of Taunton. Her vision of the live experience comes from her work at Morton Hospital and in the community for over 25 years. Ms Borges has also worked for Life Care at Home and United Rehabilitation. She holds her Bachelors from Lasell College. Ms Borges has also been a Realtor for almost 10 years and currently is working at Realty Executives Metro South in Taunton. She is a member of several professional organizations including, American College of Sports Medicine, American Physical Therapy Association and The National Realtors Association. Estele serves on several Boards including the Zoning Board of Appeals for The City of Taunton and volunteers for community events often.

Michael J. Fox, Special Education Teacher, Taunton High School, Taunton, Mass is a resident of the City of Taunton. Fox holds a Bachelor of Science Degree from the University of Tampa. He also has a Master of Science from Springfield College. "Coach" Fox is probably best known as the former Senior Program Director at the Taunton YMCA. Fox retired from the Y after 20 years of proudly serving the Taunton community. He is currently employed in the Taunton school system working with students in the Alert & Alter Educational Programs. He also coaches the THS Junior Varsity Field Hockey team and assists with the Softball program.
Fox has a long history of volunteerism within the community. He has coached Pop Warner Football for a number of years, and is also a former Board Member & Past-President of the Taunton Kiwanis Club. He has done work with the Special Olympics, Bay State Games, and served on numerous political campaigns, scholarship committees and fundraising endeavors. He currently serves as the Tri-Chair of the Mayor's Youth Commission.

Sheryl Marshall, B.A. M.S, Program Director of MHA/ACCESS-RI Pawtucket, Rhode Island, Ms. Marshall is a resident of the City of Taunton and graduated from Coyle & Cassidy High school in 1996. She holds a Master's Degree in Science from Springfield College and a Bachelor's Degree in Liberal Arts from Merrimack College. Ms. Marshall has been employed at MHA/ACCESS-RI for 6 years serving as the Program Director for 4. MHA/ACCESS-RI serves the chronically homeless in the State of Rhode Island by providing outreach, intensive case management and psychiatric services. Ms. Marshall is also a proud member of the Rhode Island Coalition for the Homeless Board where she takes part in several committees to help end homelessness in the State of R. I. Before employment at MHA/ACCESS-RI, Ms. Marshall was employed at the Old Colony Y Group Home in Fall River, M.A. where she was a supervisor for 2 years.

Annemarie Matulis, recently retired from the private sector and currently serves as the Program Coordinator for three Greater Taunton Task Forces – Suicide Prevention, Violence Prevention and Substance Abuse Prevention. A resident of the City of Taunton, she has twenty-six years as a career portfolio specialist balancing careers in the public and private sectors. She served as the coordinator for multi-level health and wellness coalition that covered 12 communities and more than 250,000 residents, has been a small business owner, substance abuse counselor and job-readiness trainer Ms. Matulis is nationally recognized for coordinating volunteer-based, grassroots events. She has documented grant writing expertise, is an expert in computer literacy, word processing, spreadsheet, database and desktop publishing. Ms Matulis was a vocational trainer and job readiness expert for Massachusetts School of Information Technology, Taunton MA, and is Master Certified in the Microsoft Business Suite and recognized vocational Certified Instructor by Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. She graduated from Jeremiah E. Burke High School, Boston MA. Ms Matulis is State Certified QPR Suicide Prevention Train the Trainer. In 2011 Ms Matulis was awarded, Taunton Person of the Year, Americas Promise Safe Haven designation for the Silver City Teen Center and WBRU/First Citizens Federal Credit Union's Model Citizen of the Year. In 2012, Ms. Matulis was awarded a state-wide Leadership Award for Suicide Prevention. Ms Matulis can be described as a leader, visionary, inspiration, mobilizer, motivator, organizer, advocate and a positive power of example.

Agencies Reviewed by Human Service Team

- City of Taunton Health and Human Services
- The United Way
- Catholic Social Services
- Community Counseling of Bristol County
- Silver City Teen Center
- Taunton Clergy
- Samaritan House
- Association for Human Services
- Taunton Career Center
- Taunton Area School to Works
- BETA
- GATCH
- Bristol Workforce Investment Board
- New Hope, Inc.
- Taunton Employment Task Forces Club
- Boys and Girls Club
- Old Colony YMCA

1. **Homelessness**
2. **Job Opportunities**
3. **Youth Enrichment**
4. **Elderly**
5. **Drug Addiction**

Communication

At the present time all communication efforts need to be enhanced, especially external communications with all Social Service Agencies within the City of Taunton, including communication between city employees, the Mayor and Municipal Council.

Recommendations:
Short Term

- Initiate monthly staff meetings to include all program administrators who manage programs at the Senior Center. City and community information discussed should be shared by department heads and their staff. Meeting summaries should be circulated to all staff via email. This should be shared with the Mayor, his staff, and City Council members.
- The Department of Human Services should send a weekly update to all staff via email. This update should be short and include: Human Service highlights, Mayoral and Council highlights and upcoming events. This should be shared with Mayor, his staff, and Council Members to better inform staff and the community of current events held at the Council on Aging.
- Work with the Assistant to the Mayor and Social Media Transition Team to enhance the current City of Taunton website's Human Service Page. Use the City of Taunton's website to share info internally and externally. Website address should be on all printed material in the Department of Human Services.
- Hold monthly meetings with all Health and Social Service organizations across the City of Taunton. Make sure that appropriate information gleaned from these meetings is shared with all staff in the Department of Human Services, the Mayor, his staff, and Council Members.
- Initiate an employee of the month program. Recognize the employee of the month at Council meetings.
- Create a Community Resource Guide made available to the Citizens of Taunton through the Mayor's Office and The Department of Human Services.

Homelessness

Current State:

The City of Taunton has several agencies that provide services to the homeless in the area. The services range from sober living, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, food stamp application help, clothing, alcohol and drug counseling, mental health services, resume building and job searching. Homeless individuals need all of these services to help them identify and treat barriers preventing them from obtaining and retaining affordable permanent housing.

At present, agencies such as Community Counseling of Bristol County, Catholic Social Services, Citizens for Citizens, Department of Transitional Assistance, St Vincent de Paul

Distribution Center, Pennies for Heaven, and the Taunton Career Center offer services to help the homeless. There is also a wide variety of committees that come together to discuss the issues of the homeless and brainstorm to come up with solutions to these current problems that are being faced in this area. For example, The Greater Attleboro/Taunton Coalition on Homelessness (GATCH) meets monthly to identify and work on problems the homeless face in the 14 surrounding cities and towns. Members of GATCH include city and town government officials, mental health organizations, law enforcement, and domestic violence agencies, adult and family shelters, Public Housing Authorities and food providers. The GATCH committee has the ability to apply for Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development and obtain funding through the United Way to help with housing, case management, and emergency sober living shelter in this area.

The only emergency shelter in Taunton is The Samaritan House located at 59 Ingell Street *Taunton*, *MA* 02780, (508) 824 6497. The Samaritan House provides 20 beds per night with 24 hour staffing and is operated by Catholic Social Services. In order to stay at The Samaritan House, an individual needs to be sober and committed to his or her recovery. If individuals present as inebriated, he or she is advised to go to the local emergency room (Morton Hospital 88 Washington Street Taunton, MA 02780 Phone Number: (508) 828-7000). After an individuals' blood alcohol content is 0.0, he or she is released regardless of what time of day or night it is. If it is in the middle of the night the individual is often forced to find a place to stay in the woods until the sunrises. The Samaritan House provides support with budgets, obtaining job training skills, and access to mental health treatment. Catholic Social Services also provides transitional and permanent housing for individuals who continue treatment with them. They are committed to helping individuals connect to community resources, employment opportunities and permanent, affordable housing.

Recommendations:

Short Term:

- By the fall of 2012, A "Damp Shelter" should be opened in Taunton, M.A. A Damp Shelter will allow people who are actively using and/or drinking to receive an emergency shelter bed. This model is part of what is known as "Harm Reduction". Individuals are not allowed to bring alcohol and/or drugs into the shelter. If an individual is so inebriated that he or she seems to be a danger to him/herself, or others, 911 will be called.
- The Faith Based Community in the Taunton area should be contacted to discuss the possibilities of running one or more Damp Shelters. Many churches have space that can be utilized at night to hold emergency shelters.
- Approach agencies such as Community Counseling of Bristol County, Catholic Social Services, Citizens for Citizens, Department of Transitional Assistance or the GATCH committee to determine if they might be willing to open and operate Damp Shelter (s) in Taunton.
- Consider purchasing or renting a building to have one central location where homeless individuals can go to receive information about benefits, food stamps, food

pantries, recovery, shelters, permanent and transitional housing, employment, clothing and mental health services. This location should be a place where all individuals in need of services can go and stay during the day to rest, especially during the cold, winter months. This building should have showers for individuals who do not have access to them.

- Approach all the service providers about having an individual go to this central location to meet with individuals who are in need of their services.
- Approach an agency to take the lead on researching and applying for Federal, State, and local grants to support a central location/day center for this population.
- Meet with Morton Hospital, A Steward Family Hospital about the possibility of creating a Crisis Stabilization CSU's providing short term crisis stabilization for persons with severe psychiatric and/or substance abuse issues. CSU's are a cost effective therapeutic alternative to hospitalization for individuals experiencing these issues.
- Approach service providers that could work collaboratively with Morton Hospital to provide services such as psychiatric evaluations, case management, medication management, individual counseling, skills groups, and family support sessions.
- Approach an agency to take the lead on researching and applying for Federal, State and local grants to fund the Crisis Stabilization Unit.

Long Term:

- By October of 2012 the City should operate at least one Damp Shelter in Taunton for individuals who are homeless and still having substance abuse issues.
- By January 2013 Steering Committees for both the Day Center and the Crisis Stabilization Unit should be developed and active. Grant writing, fundraising, and contacting local businesses should already be in progress.
- Agencies such as the Providence Center's Crisis Stabilization Unit should be toured by committee members to get a sense of what is being done, if it is cost effective and how it is more valuable to someone than hospitalization.
- Agencies need to come together to decide what types of services should be present at the Day Center and which days certain resources should be there. The Day Center should imitate the Homeless Project Connects that is done around the Country annually. The Day Center will be a permanent "Homeless Project Connect" for individuals to receive services, receive food, bathe and meet with professionals to get the information and services they are in need of.
- Open a Day Center by September 2013 to help all individuals who are in need of services and have no place to go during the day.
- Open a Crisis Stabilization Unit by March 2014 for individuals with mental health and/or substance abuse issues.

Job Opportunities

Current State:

- **Child Care challenges**
    1. Individuals who possess a DTA childcare voucher (because they receive cash benefits) can usually find a provider. However, low income wage earners must rely on the state EEC subsidy system where there have been no funds available for the past several years for subsidies.
    2. Coordinating a half-day, head start center children's schedule with a parent's work or school schedule can be very complicated. This creates challenges for some parents to get home in time to get their children off the bus, and often prevents parents from enrolling in classes.
- **Transportation**
  Transportation is very limited. Parents without cars or other resources can be hindered from pursuing a job or higher education. If a public bus route is not an option it can be difficult for parents to bring their children to a childcare provider, travel to class or work and provide transportation for their children to return home. Public transportation might not be an option based on the location of one's residence, and/or ones financial stability.
- **Financial**
  DTA only pays for a maximum 2-year program. A 2 year program does not usually lift a family out of poverty because the jobs they are qualified for are at or barely over minimum wage. Some parents would be interested in pursuing a higher degree, but do not have the financial means to do so independently. Without the knowledge of loan/grant support they might not be aware that other financial assistance could be available to them.
- **Readiness/Learning Disabilities/Mental Health & Interpersonal skills Issues**
  Disabilities can interfere with parents' abilities to be successful in either academic programs or in jobs. While Mass Rehab Commission may be a resource for some, parents are often unwilling (or do not recognize the need/that they could benefit) to access this resource. There is also a large turnover rate for employees who are struggling parents or care takers. Also, individuals can sometimes complete a GED program, but lack the academic skills to be successful in higher education without a lot of additional mentoring/tutoring assistance. Employers repeatedly note the lack of basic "soft skills" for both teens and adults. Few, if any, resources are currently available within the city to help guide those in need through this kind of training.
- **Language Barriers**
  While Taunton has a wealth of cultural diversity, this presents job readiness issues related to adults and youth alike. The city of Taunton needs to find ways to access Spanish and Portuguese translators to be available to assist with the job readiness preparation.
- **Job Readiness**
  The City of Taunton has options to generate job readiness opportunities through the Corporation for National & Community Service (CNCS). The City should prepare the CNCS proposal to prepare for 2013 application due out December 2012. CNCS is

responsible on the federal level for AmeriCorps, VISTA, Senior Corps, Learn & Serve and other funding options. The Massachusetts State Office for CNCS often requests state level programs that are a part of these primary programs. The state recently issued a Request for Concept Letters related to VISTA funding for 2012. The Concept Letter was due January 6, 2012. If accepted, a request for a full proposal would be requested. Accepted programs would begin in June 2012. Most CNCS programs have a renewable life of 3-5 years. Specific categories for this VISTA proposal include anti-poverty focus, education, at-risk youth, economic opportunity (connecting families & individual to emergency housing, financial literacy, empowering low-income individuals to exit poverty levels, etc.), support for low-income veterans and their families, health issues, and environmental stewardship, to name a few. VISTA does have a modest cost-sharing piece.

<u>Recommendations:</u>

Short Term:

- The City of Taunton, through the Mayor's Office, should do the footwork in 2012 to be prepared to apply for any and all CNCS available options for programs (VISTA, AmeriCorps, Learn & Serve, Senior Corps & any other state related programs) to begin in 2013. CNCS allows multiple programs to operate within eligible communities. Most afford a modest annual stipend to the low-income members "hired" to participate. Some of these programs also offer a tuition support or cash payout to each hire upon successful completion.
- To achieve this preparedness, the city would need to appoint a volunteer Project Director and an all volunteer Advisory Council. 51% of the Advisory Council must come from the low-income community. The Council must submit written comments concerning the need for each application. These comments are a required attachment with each application.
- The City of Taunton should apply for 3 VISTA members. The city would cost share for one at $18,000 - $20,000 (or, could seek another non-profit to help share those costs). VISTA would cover the expenses of the remaining two. This allows the city to create 3 jobs.
- The VISTA's, under the direction of the Project Director (salary included in VISTA funding request), will outreach/liaison with 3 specific populations in need of job readiness support – (1) low-income veterans & their families; (2) identified homeless; and (3) at-risk youth, ages 18-24. If those were the targeted groups, the suggestion is to recruit 2 members of each category (not hired VISTA's) to participate on the Advisory Council. The program support offered would cover a wide spectrum of services including computer training, job readiness and training, social skills, basic educational skills, financial responsibility, etc. as well as connect those in need to existing services to help move them out of poverty. VISTA typically renews project funding for 3-5 years.
- The city should, through the Mayor's office and Volunteer Grant Writing Team, aggressively prepare for all CNCS options, as many as 30-40 people could be "hired" for these programs that could easily impact hundreds within the city. It will take cooperation and collaboration.

- Create a Volunteer Grant Writing Team to successfully secure grant funding to build up and empower an organization, agency or community to identify the needs in advance and immediately seek out existing resources, evaluate the old RFRs, do the research to gather the required data, information, potential partners/collaborators, etc., so that when the new RFRs are released, those pieces are already in place. In other words, write a "mock" grant that can be flexible and accommodate identified needs. If this footwork is done over a period of months, the city is in an excellent position to apply for financial support to grow the community in all areas – safety, health, wellness, economic development, environmental issues, anti-poverty and homelessness, etc. to begin in 2013.
- Create a Community Based Volunteer Force including Literacy and Job Readiness, and computer programs.

Long Term:

- Bring together City Government, businesses, colleges, literacy providers, etc. to create a master plan to improve job readiness.
- Complete and submit a Massachusetts Commonwealth Corps Home Site Application through the Massachusetts Service Alliance. This will allow the city four (4) stipend volunteers to begin the CNCS "process. This application will specifically address Teen Violence and related Risky Behaviors that can be barriers to job readiness. The application was submitted on March 21, 2012. Notification of approval/disapproval will be received by late April.
- Create a Volunteer Grant Writing Team to evaluate financial and service options for the City of Taunton in collaboration with other community partners.
- Collaborate with the city's Veterans Agent and other veterans' organizations, local business organizations, the Workforce Investment Board, and local colleges to support returning veterans who need to return to the workforce and/or college.
- Assure that all businesses, small and large, are well-informed about tax incentives related to hiring specific populations such as returning veterans and long term unemployed city residents and the Massachusetts Workforce Training Fund (WTF). The best approach to assure this is to collaborate with the Workforce Investment Board.
- Research and investigate federal and state funded "green" projects that will increase employment and improve the sustainability of the city
- Research and list job training and apprenticeship opportunities available to Taunton's Youth such as those included in the TASC program, the Dress to Impress Apprenticeship at the Silver City Teen Center and the potential for the Summer Youth Job Corps. These programs incorporate the much needed "soft skills" so many employers state are lacking in youth and adults.

Youth Enrichment

Current State:
The City of Taunton's children and youth are the future of the Silver City. The City of Taunton offers limited resources for Youth Enrichment for children who are not athletic, are low income and are between the ages of 13-19. Local businesses have asked to become involved in The City of Taunton's youth programs. Upon speaking to several local businesses it was clear that they are very much interested in providing scholarships and volunteer in youth enrichment programs. Local businesses have offered their frustration with lack of communication between the Taunton Public Schools and their business. Business owners sometimes call for a full year before a program is implemented or before they hear back from anyone.

It is our belief that the following recommendations be ones that are ongoing throughout the term of the Mayor and established as a permanent act of the Office of the Mayor in order to assure sound and quality youth programs for the children and youth of the City of Taunton. Taunton does have a wealth of resources to support adolescents ages 6-12, such as the Boys & Girls Club, Girls, Inc. and the Old Colony YMCA. However, there is a disconnect between these groups and those serving youth 13-19 such as the Silver City Teen Center and many faith-based after school programs. An additional disconnect is related to culture and language. The Latino/Latina population remains isolated from most youth-serving agencies and organizations. This barrier needs to be torn down.

Recommendations:
Short Term:

- Re-evaluate and utilize the Mayoral Youth Commission to better support the vision of the Mayor for Youth Enrichment. And further, to assure that the MYC cooperate, collaborate, liaison and communicate with other youth-serving organizations to assure a balanced representation of the City's youth "voice" in all matters. It is essential that the Mayor seek advice and input from the youth in our city.
- Request that all schools, public and private liaison with the city's three primary public health task forces – Violence Prevention, Suicide Prevention and Substance Abuse Prevention to assure that the collective goal of safety, health and wellness continue to grow and develop.
- Conduct a comprehensive review of current funding to help re-focus and integrate planning and funding activities.
- Use local businesses as a way to engage in programs that are comprehensive and extensive and collaboration between local businesses in The City of Taunton for Youth enrichment.
- Local businesses should offer scholarship programs for a limited number of youths who demonstrate desire and qualify for such scholarships.
- Require the Taunton School Department to respond in a timely manner to all requests for hosting a volunteer event at one of the schools or for placement of a flyer sent home from schools with community event.

- Require that the Taunton School Department will publicly post all forms required and contact information on The City of Taunton's Website for all necessary steps to take for implementing a Volunteer Program at the school.
- The School Department should respond to all inquiries of youth events to be held at the school within 30 days of request.

Long Term:

- The City of Taunton, through the Mayor's office, should work towards having a Youth Center to meet the needs of all children.
- The City of Taunton should have a Youth Community Resource Board at every school so that the students know what youth programs are available to them. Wherever possible, similar resource boards should be made available to the faith-based community and direct service providers.
- The City of Taunton, through the Mayor's office, should work with its collaborative partner, the Silver City Teen Center, a National Make a Difference Day award winning anti-gang and youth violence prevention project and an America's Promise designated "safe haven" to develop curriculum-based programming to address public health, educational and job readiness skills to help fill the needs of youth of all ages in Taunton at no cost to families. The eventual goal is to have these services and projects available seven days a week.
- The City of Taunton should assign its Volunteer Grant Writing Team the task of seeking federal, state and private grants to help underwrite the cost of these services.
- The City of Taunton should seek collaborative and cooperative financial and social/human capital support from businesses, large and small, as well as all stakeholders within Taunton to build Taunton into one of America's "best" locations in which youth can grow and thrive.
- The City of Taunton should have a Youth Community Resource Board at every school so that the students know what youth programs are available to them. Wherever possible, similar resource boards should be made available to the faith-based community and direct service providers.
- The City of Taunton should utilize Community Access & Media (TCAM) to help better inform the community about all youth-focused resources.

Elderly Services

<u>Current State:</u>

The City of Taunton's current Transportation Service includes GATRA which stops services after 5PM making it extremely difficult for Elders to get around in the late afternoon hours. The current Dial A Ride System doesn't best serve the Citizens of Taunton. Many Elders are hard of hearing and have great difficulty communicating their needs to staff. Therefore, elders often avoid using the trusting service and not seeking sometimes the medical care they need to avoid having calls disconnected. The Elders often will miss their rides because DIAL A RIDE will leave if they are not at the vehicle quick enough.

The City of Taunton currently does not offer a Supportive Non-Medical Adult Day Program. Elders who do not participate in activities at the Council on Aging have no place to go that is Non-Medical.

The City of Taunton does not currently offer a Senior Companionship Program. The purpose of the program is to engage persons in volunteer service to meet critical community needs, and to provide a high quality experience that will enrich the lives of volunteers and those they serve. These volunteers would visit, listen, read, shop and check on frail and vulnerable elderly residents of The City of Taunton.

Recommendations:

Short Term:

- Collaborate with Morton Hospital, A Steward Family Hospital and The Taunton Fire Department to help every senior feel safe in his or her home. The City, Police, and Fire Department should help seniors take advantage of existing programs (with free smoke detectors).
- The City needs to expand its efforts to communicate with seniors, using proven methods as well as new technology. This should be collaborated with the Social Media Task Force.
- Provide a senior guide of important information to every senior making them available at the Morton Hospital, A Steward Family Hospital, local grocery stores, senior centers, social service centers and gyms.
- The City should consider the seniors in almost every decision. The Mayor and his staff should consider services to seniors on a much larger scale than any particular agency in the City government.
- Consideration should be placed on the effect on senior quality of life in all decisions taken by the City, including transportation, pedestrian safety, employment, downtown revitalization and other areas.
- Through the Mayor's office conduct a comprehensive assessment of the Current Transportation Service to ensure that the agency is performing most efficiently.
- Recommend that the Transportation Agency offer two days during the week that the buses run later in the day.
- Senior Volunteer Transportation Service offering senior discounts to participants for Real Estate Taxes and fuel assistance.
- Through the Mayor's office and Dial A Ride implement a better means of communication for the Elders who depend on Dial A Ride. Consider having the drivers carry cell phones and call Elders to inform them that they are in route to their home. Many transportation vans are not visible to Elders and during periods of inclement weather or just inability to stand at a van stop for long periods of time they often miss their rides.
- Consider placing a bench at Housing for the Elderly Dial A Ride Stops.
- Immediately implement a Senior Companionship program honoring volunteers after 100 hours of Volunteer Services at The City Council Meetings. Seniors will provide support services such as listening, talking and reading to others.

Long Term:

- Through the City of Taunton's Department of Human Services Council on Aging develop and implement a Supportive Day Health Program.
- Explore a property owned by the City of Taunton. Collaborate with Bristol Plymouth Regional Technical High School for their expertise in the rehab of this facility.
- Collaborate with Bristol Plymouth Regional Technical High School to utilize students in the Community Health Program for internships in Adult Day Program.
- Collaborate with Taunton High School to design the facility for the Supportive Day Program.
- Utilize Volunteers from the Community to work at the Adult Day Program. (Senior Rewards Program).
- Seniors will be transported to the facility by families or Dial A Ride.
- Meals will be provided by Meals on Wheels if Elder is already receiving this service through Bristol Elder Services or Elder will bring their own.

Substance Abuse: Alcohol, Drugs & Tobacco

Current State:

In 1991, the Greater Attleboro/Taunton Health & Education Response (GATHER) was formed in response to a growing need to coordinate and facilitate health and human services information and resources within 12 communities. This coalition became a member of the Greater Taunton Health & Human Services Coalition (GTHHSC) and the Substance Abuse Committee became a subcommittee. Addressing youth substance abuse prevention was a priority from the beginning however, no data was available. In addition, although the SA Committee members were aware of local needs, this structure was under the blanket of the MDPH and as compliance requirements from DPH changed, the attention to substance abuse was watered down. Until 2010, the Substance Abuse Committee worked under the general mission statement and vision of the larger coalition with no specific strategic plan, healthcare data or school survey data to guide a logic model for alcohol, tobacco and drug use and abuse in Taunton. The Substance Abuse Committee has also been an active subcommittee of the Safe Neighborhood Initiative (SNI) for 20 years. The purpose of SNI is to form a coalition of community members to develop a plan of action to provide citizens of Taunton with crime and violence education and prevention programming. The TSAPTF is a part of the SNI Treatment and Prevention Committee: The goal of this committee is to address prevention activities of high-risk adults and youth in the community and to advocate and develop programs that address the needs of the substance abusing population. Other SNI committees include Criminal Justice, Education (3 high schools) and Neighborhood Watch. The SNI Coordinator is a member of the TSAPTF.

Although a great deal of good prevention work was achieved over the years including the period from 2004-2008 under federal SAMHSA Drug Free Communities funding, much more needed to be done. From September 2008 to the present, the task force began a

rigorous self-evaluation, strategic planning and aggressive capacity building. In January 2009, the members voted to change its name to "Substance Abuse Prevention Task Force." The response was immediate. The community felt a sense of "action" which helped with capacity building. The task force collaborates with the Suicide Prevention and Violence Prevention Task Forces to place a comprehensive triage focus on decreasing underage drinking, drug and tobacco use as well as youth violence and the all too often related risky behaviors of youth suicide, self-injury and violence. In January 2010, the TSAPTF unanimously adopted its own mission statement: *The Substance Abuse Prevention Task Force is a coalition made up of organizations, businesses, students, parents, and citizens in the community working to reduce the abuse of alcohol, tobacco, drugs and other substances among youth within our communities through educational programs and prevention strategies.* In February 2010, the task force took a major step to strengthen itself by developing a more solid organizational structure including a steering committee and subcommittees to address sustainability, events and data.

Taunton has a wealth of youth-serving agencies and organizations as well as those who serve youth and adults. However, few currently have education and prevention programming to address substance abuse. Direct service providers such as Community Counseling of Bristol County, Community Care Services, High Point and Volunteers of America do offer insurance-based treatment. Economically, this is not an option for the vast majority of Taunton's families. National and state data tracking entities repeatedly stress that very few of those in need for treatment actually receive it. At issue is a serious disconnect between these providers has festered for at least two decades. To best serve the city as a whole and guide the community onto a non-stop road to safety, health and wellness, the Mayor's Office will need to take the lead to bring all parties to the same table to formulate a strategic plan, logic model and action plan to address these recognized gaps in these public health issues. These documents already exist through the recent work of the Substance Abuse Prevention Task Force's future planning. The most important gap is education and prevention training to address all ages within the community to help decrease the number of people in need of treatment.

Additional resources already in place are Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) Chapters at Taunton High School and Bristol-Plymouth Technical High School, the 84.org, youth dedicated to a smoke-free environment, at Bristol-Plymouth and the Silver City Teen Center, and THS has a Gay Straight Alliance (extreme at-risk youth) and the Bristol County GSA is hosted by the Silver City Teen Center. In addition, the city of Taunton has a Mayor's Youth Commission.

<u>Recommendations:</u>

Short Term:

- Recommend that the Mayor's Office extend a "call to action" to all agencies, organizations and other stakeholders that experience even minimal impact as the result of substance abuse to come together with the Substance Abuse Prevention Task Force and its cohort partners Suicide Prevention and Violence Prevention to develop a visionary, realistic and reasonable plan of action to make Taunton a powerful example of education and prevention for safety, health and wellness. This

action was taken on February 5th. The next step is to coordinate additional meetings at least quarterly to execute the Action Plan under the direction of the task forces. More information was collected at the SART XVII on March 29th. Next Step: The Mayor's office should host a follow up meeting open to the entire community in late June to address the issues of underage drinking parties, the Social Host law, teen dating violence, bullying/cyber bullying and suicide prevention during the upcoming school vacation period. Further, that a 3rd "call to action" gathering be held in November or December 2012 to evaluate progress and to set dates for similar meetings for 2013.

- Recommend that the *Municipal Council's Youth & Rec* Committee cooperate, collaborate and partner with existing city task forces (Violence Prevention, Suicide Prevention & Substance Abuse Preventions) to better serve Taunton's youth with regard to substance abuse and the collateral risky behaviors related to self-injury, suicide and violence. This action has already begun with a joint meeting on March 5th. Additional meetings will be scheduled throughout 2012 and an evaluation will be reviewed in December 2012 to determine which actions were most effective and what needs improvement.
- Assure that a comprehensive Health & Human Services Resource Directory be readily available to the entire community in hard copy and electronically.
- Through the Mayor's Office, encourage the community as a whole to attend and participate in a year-round calendar of events that specifically target the major public health issues of teen dating, bullying/cyber bullying, domestic violence, suicide prevention and substance abuse prevention.
- The City of Taunton applies for the "America's Best 100 Cities for Youth" status. This application is already in progress and will be submitted on May 17, 2012.

Long Term:

- To allow for easier access and broader participation city-wide that the three primary public health and safety task forces (Violence Prevention, Suicide Prevention & Substance Abuse Prevention) hold their monthly meetings and subcommittee meetings at city hall beginning in September 2012.
- If the June 9th Casino Referendum passes and the required state approvals are achieved, the Mayor's Office should request a 5-year mitigation plan with the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe to coordinate a city-wide campaign of safety, health and wellness specific to substance abuse prevention and the collateral risky behaviors of suicide and violence prevention. This awareness raising should include youth in grades 3 through 12 and their families. Members of the existing public health task forces (Violence Prevention, Suicide Prevention and Substance Abuse Prevention) would be asked to coordinate these trainings utilizing all possible professional resources available within the city as well as national resources. It is important that these trainings be achieved at no cost to youth or their families.
- The Mayor's Office should recommend and encourage organizations, agencies, businesses, schools and the faith-based community to avail themselves of existing resources (Task Forces) to begin immediate education and prevention informational presentations to reduce the use and abuse of substances.

- The Mayor's Office should task the Volunteer Grant Writing Team to seek federal, state and private funding options to help underwrite costs.
- The City of Taunton should recognize and take steps to improve communication with minority and English Second Language populations to address violence prevention, suicide prevention and substance abuse education and prevention. This will require having literature and Web based information translated into Spanish and Portuguese as well as any additional languages requested from the community.

Permitting Reform Task Force
Transitional Report

- Chairman –
David W. Fenton

- Members -
Dan DaRosa
Peter Haggerty
John Hoey
Ron Leito
Bill Manganiello
Bruce Thomas

Current State: Overview

The permit reform committee was asked to explore how the City of Taunton processes permit applications and compare the process to other communities. We looked into how to best either refine or use another community or communities to model a best case scenario. The challenges that the City of Taunton now has is how burdensome this process is on the applicant. The applicant is required to go to numerous locations of city offices, spread out over the community, and obtain many signoffs for their application. This is a requirement for any project regardless of size.

The one issue that was brought to the committee's attention was the requirements of signoffs where there is a review of property owned by the applicant and a review of any fees or taxes owed by the applicant. This requires the applicant to receive approximately six sign offs from different departments prior to receiving a building permit. After receiving the building permit, they may have to again go to numerous locations to receive the number of signatures required on the permit. After a review of the different departments that issue permits it appears that there could be a monetary threshold where this requirement would take effect.

For a business owner this is an added cost to their business. Instead of having to go to City offices for a permit, they must receive signoffs for the property address then go back and receive the permit. For a resident this is an issue where some would not apply for a permit, this would result in the City not receiving the permit fees.

Other items reviewed by the committee were:

- Specific permit packages, would allow an applicant to download, from the City website, applications for specific tasks. An example would be a separate packet for deck replacement / installation, window/door replacement, or roof replacement.
- Online permitting option, which would require updated computer technology.
- Online permit payment option or account setup for issuing of permits.
- One stop shopping, which would require issuing departments to be located under one roof or brought together for a time period either for one day or numerous days during the week.
- A definitive timeline for applications submitted and reviewed. Set a period of the number of days for the application process to be completed. This will allow the City departments a time frame which they can do their review of the project, and allow a property owner, or developer a definitive end date on their review. This would also require the permit submitted to be complete and without errors.
- Development permits, which could be issued for a development rather than each parcel within the development.
- New software that would allow each department to track and follow the permit as it goes through the process.

PERMIT REFORM: BUILDING PERMITS PROCESS
CURRENT STATE

In order for an applicant to obtain a building permit, from a door/window installation or replacement to a large commercial or industrial development, a sign off from these departments is required:

- Water / Sewer
- Police
- Fire
- TMLP
- Tax

These signatures are required prior to beginning the process of obtaining a building permit. After receiving these signatures from department heads application is then submitted to building department. The permits will then go through the process of review by departments and receive appropriate signoffs.

There are a number of permit applications on the City of Taunton Website along with the necessary forms to be filled out. There is also contact information for the building department and online inspection form for electronic notification for an inspection.

DESIRED STATE – SHORT TERM

In order for a more logical process it would appear that for the larger project this would remain as part of the process. For projects that are small in nature with regards to permit fee and scope of the project, it would be practical to relax the requirement of these signatures before receiving a permit. This requirement may deter property owners from obtaining the necessary permits thus the City not receiving the fees and projects going on without inspections. The number of delinquencies has been found to be minimal on these types of projects.

In order to best utilize the workers within City government it would be best to have all applications for permits listed on the City website and packaged together in a format where if a certain project is to be done the package could be downloaded. With this package there could also be an instruction sheet to include the steps needed to be taken and the order that is most appropriate. An example is if a new deck is to be constructed that package would include all paperwork including workers comp requirement and the steps necessary for obtaining that permit. This could hold true for all the common projects that come through the building department.

A list of a few that could be included:

- Permit and Zoning Forms
- Building Permit
- Building Permit Short

- Electrical Permit
- Mechanical Permit
- Permit Pack - Addition - 1 & 2 Family
- Permit Pack - Basement
- Permit Pack - Commercial
- Permit Pack - Deck - 1 & 2 Family
- Permit Pack - Demo
- Permit Pack - New Home
- Permit Pack - Pool- 1 & 2 Family
- Permit Pack - Roof - 1 & 2 Family
- Permit Pack - Shed
- Permit Pack - Siding - 1 & 2 Family
- Permit Pack - Signs
- Permit Pack - Tent
- Permit Pack - Windows & Doors - 1 & 2 Family
- Plumbing Permit
- Zoning Certificate
- Zoning Certificate Home Business
- Zoning Variance Requirements
- Zoning Variance Application

The collection of permit fees by frequent users of the building department could be addressed by either account or acceptance of credit card payment. This would be helpful to get to the goal of online permitting, which could entail online payment options. This is now available through the online payment of taxes. This could be looked at whether the building department could become a part of that payment option now.

A inquire was made to the committee concerning the issuance of a development permit for subdivisions. It was noted that the permit could be for a larger project split into separate projects. This would alleviate the need for a number of separate redundant permits. There could be one Master permit issued for the project with a number of individual permits for each sub project. This most likely would only be used for a sub division where a number of homes would be built over a specific period and the Master permit would end after a time period in no action is taken on the sub projects.

One stop shopping or expedited permitting could be looked at as a way alleviating the need for multiple location stops for reviews of plans by an applicant.

The issue of one stop shopping is magnified since the loss of City Hall. Would it be practical for all departments that need to review projects, which are large in scope, set a number of dates for a specific time period to be available at one location? With resources strained it may only be possible for one or two days a month for a set number of hours in any given day in that month. It is something that could be looked into.

An expedited permitting process would most likely be used by a developer looking for approval on a major or large in scope project within the City. The concept would require the proponent developer to bring with him people that are involved in the project (architects, engineers, contractor, etc.) to a meeting reserved with the city's department heads (building, planning, fire and any other department required to review the particular project). This meeting will allow all to work together until plans are accepted by the departments and either is ready to go before elected boards for approval or permits are ready to be issued. This process gives the developer a better chance of having projects approved in the shortest amount of time that otherwise could be drawn out.

Plans from the developer would need to be submitted a time frame prior to an appointment with the review team. The City review team should examine the plans prior to the meeting for any clear mistakes or oversights. This would give the developer /proponent time to make modifications. In order for this process to work properly the developer must have their complete team on hand and ready to make on-the-spot decisions, modifications, etc., as required.

DESIRED STATE – LONG TERM

The long term goal of permitting reform will entail a number of changes which how the City receives and issues permits. The number one goal of the City should be to adopting an E permitting solution to the way permits are issued. There are number financial constraints that have to be realized for this to take place. There is also an incentive for this to take place. It has been noted in publications of how E- permitting has and does create jobs within the community. E permitting would allow applicants to submit plans, applications, and other material needed by the department heads, in electronic form. Software is available that would allow the applicant to see the status of their application and allow department heads to review, make comments, and submit questions to applicant via electronic communications. With this type of system in place, after permits are issued and project is under construction, inspections could be done electronically using hand held devices. Again this is a long term goal allowing the departments to be more productive while dealing with the constraints of a budget that is retracting rather than expanding within the departments.

Social Media & Technology Task Force
Transitional Plan

- Chair –
Alyssa Gracia

- Members –
Rachael Cooperstein
Christopher Ferreira
Alison Robles
Timothy Whalen

Current State

The City of Taunton's Automation (IT) Department supports the needs of the City's IT hardware, software, and network infrastructure covering 30 departments and 16 buildings. This does not include the Taunton Police Department, Taunton School Department, Taunton Fire Department or Taunton School Department. The City of Taunton Automation Department currently consists of an interim department head and one part time technician.

At this time there is no advisory board or committee in an acting role to offer recommendations to the City pertaining to the use of technology. In the 1990's an Automation Advisory Board worked to make recommendations and fill job positions within the Automation Department. During the mid-late 2000's an Information Technology Advisory Board (ITAB) was established to make recommendations and develop planning proposals for the Mayor. The ITAB held bi-weekly meetings for several years until a fire forced workers out of City Hall in January of 2011. The ITAB had been progressively working on plans for Taunton's future with technology and a City-wide network. The City of Taunton consulted with UNICOM to develop a Network Proposal for the City of Taunton. ITAB's plans and UNICOM's proposal revolved around the City offices located on 23 Summer Street, and were subsequently put on hold after the fire took place and City offices were temporarily relocated to 141 Oak Street.

In recent years the City has made the majority of its IT upgrades in response or reaction to decisions made amongst other departments or uncontrollable events. Taunton's overall use of technology has been in response but not in sync with the growing use of technology globally. As electronic communication evolves our City's use of electronic communication must evolve as well. Innovation has been stagnant and little progress can or will be made until it is acknowledged it is needed. The City needs to make an investment and commitment to technology.

The City of Taunton is faced with a number of obstacles which have and will continue to impede upon this process. Economic recession, federal budget cuts, and diminishing local aid have affected most cities and towns across the nation. The City of Taunton is also faced with aging infrastructure, historic buildings with outdated equipment, and an inoperative City Hall due to an arsonist. The City of Taunton has a fruitful relationship with the Taunton Municipal Lighting Plant (TMLP) which continues to be an overall asset to the community and a partner with the City and technology. The City of Taunton stores its back-up server at TMLP property, uses the TMLP as an email host and sells the City fiber optic bandwidth.

Desired State

In order for the City of Taunton to deliver government services more efficiently, faster and at a lower cost it will need to look to technology. The City must make a real investment in making the critical upgrades to our network, equipment and practices. Once upgrades and a set of standards have been adopted, the City of Taunton will be able to leverage technology to increase citizen awareness, involvement and engagement. The City will at that point be able to inadvertently save time, money and resources.

It is critical that the upgrades to our City-wide network take place in the near future, so that when City Hall is relocated back to 23 Summer Street the network is sustainable for the future. The sooner this work is completed the sooner the City of Taunton will be able to look towards creative and innovative solutions that will not be impaired by the City's current technological status.

Website & Social Media

The City of Taunton's website should serve as a primary resource of information for citizens through different interactive features. It should also provide a range of services such as permits, applications and license renewals, e-payments, and social media.

At this time the City of Taunton's website serves as a secondary resource for the public. When the website was established the City's Director of Automation took on the role of *Webmaster*. That role has, for one reason or another, disappeared. It has become practice that each department head is responsible for the content its department displays on the website. This system could be viable if there was general oversight. Without oversight there is no push, motivation or direction to keep each department managing its content.

What seems obvious to those who work in government is not always obvious to those who don't. The City of Taunton's website is easy to navigate once one knows the role of each department and where they should physically go for different services. However, many people turn to the website to find resources they physically don't know where to go for. To find most documents on the City's website, such as a tax abatement form, one would need to know a tax abatement form comes from the Assessor's Office.

Social media is a free resource which allows for an interactive online conversation. Today, social media exists everywhere. This resource should be adopted by several City departments and used for municipal purposes. At this time the Taunton Police Department has a facebook page (22 followers), Taunton Emergency Management Agency has a facebook Page and a Twitter account, Taunton Firefighters have a facebook Page (212 followers), and the City of Taunton has a facebook Page (33 followers). It is our impression the City of Taunton facebook Page is currently managed by the Mayor's Office.

Recommendations:

- **Work with our current web hosting company, Virtual Town Hall, to conduct a City of Taunton website redesign.**
    - Make each Department, Board and Commission's webpage easier to navigate.
    - Upload new pictures, remove old videos and change the existing layout to improve the visual appeal.
    - Minimize page lengths. Page lengths that are equivalent to several pages in Microsoft Word are difficult to navigate through. Link material to numerous pages that are specific to limited topics.

    - Utilize drop down menus for options on the Home Page rather than redirecting to category index pages.
    - Consider more detailed search buttons. This should be in addition to, not in place of, the existing general search button.
- **Get serious about content management. Content management should happen on a regular, not periodic, basis.**
    - Clean out old material. Encourage department heads to make a habit of removing old material almost as often as they add new things.
    - New material should be introduced to the website as often as possible. Whenever things change, events take place, ribbon cuttings are called for or public meetings are scheduled they should be added to the website. This encourages transparency, and adds a visual interest to all the things happening in the City. People want to live, work and visit a City that has things going on. In today's world, the first place people go when they hear about something is the internet.
    - Reorganize the "Where Do I Go For" page. Consider putting topics, instead of departments, in alphabetical order. Add a search button to this page to allow page visitors to search for specific topics.
    - Reorganize the "Forms and Documents" page. Check with each department to make sure the forms listed are currently used and accepted. Consider updating to Adobe Acrobat X Pro to give the department the capability to upload PDF forms that can be filled in electronically by the user. This upgrade would streamline the current system making it more efficient for business owners, residents, and City departments.
- **Add video streaming of City Council meetings, other Board and Commission meetings, and City events to the City of Taunton website.**
    - Request a quote from Virtual Town Hall on a cost analysis of this feature. Consider the difference in cost between live streaming and video archiving.
    - Compare quote with other companies which offer this service including the TMLP.
    - If the cost of live video streaming is too large at this time, consider working with the local media station to add City Council meetings to YouTube, a free video sharing website.
- **Social media is a free resource that is currently underutilized by the City. Tap into social networks to improve communications from the inside to the outside.**
    - Implement City of Taunton social media sites in phases to learn what works, what doesn't, and how to use social media most effectively in Taunton.
        - Coverage by Taunton Daily Gazette could help to promote social media involvement to general public.
    - We recommend starting with Facebook, then Twitter, and considering YouTube. We believe Facebook will generate the largest audience, but Twitter is a better outlet to spread City communications. By starting with Facebook the City will have the opportunity to learn what works and what doesn't, while spreading awareness that the City does utilize social media.

The facebook page could then be used to launch a City of Taunton Twitter page, and help boost more of an initial interest.
        - Websites like Google and Facebook Analytics may be used to review the reach and development of any social media efforts.
    - Encourage City departments to start a Facebook and Twitter page with final approval given by the Mayor.
        - Department heads and employees who work with social media should add social media icons to their email signature, which should be linked to their department's social media page, to spread awareness.
    - Share pictures, press releases, events and general information on a regular basis through social media. Much of this information can be linked to the City of Taunton website.
    - Pursue innovative and technology grant opportunities. Grant funds could be used for interactive phone and web applications. Such applications include; citizen crime watch technology, pothole, graffiti and crime reporting, and traffic applications.

The City's Department of Automation

The City of Taunton's Automation Department currently consists of one full time interim department head, and one part time technician. The Automation Department is located at Temporary City Hall. The Taunton School Department, Taunton Police Department and Taunton Fire Department each have its own IT department, headquarters, network, hardware, software, servers and equipment.

The City of Taunton does not have a City-wide network, and its internal network has proved to be insufficient for several departments. Most departments have limited ability to share and view public and protected files. Most City employees have an email address. Email addresses are provided by the Taunton Municipal Lighting Plant (TMLP). Email addresses are written to reflect each employee's job description.

Recommendations:

- **Regroup the City's Automation Department. As changes in technology take place across the City consult with the Automation Department and determine how to best adapt to new surroundings.**
    - Change the name of the department from the *Automation Department* to the *Information Technology (IT) Department.*
    - One full time position and one part time position is far from adequate for the City's current conditions, and certainly will not suffice with the upgrades which are being recommended. Additional full time staff members should be hired as soon as possible. Possible positions, which have also been recommended in UNICOM's study, should include:
        - Director of Technology
        - Systems Administrator

        - Desktop Support Specialist
    - The City should also look to hire part time technicians, and/or look to offer internship opportunities.
    - The City needs a *Webmaster* if it ever expects its website to reach full potential. This should be considered as a paid position within the IT Department. We would recommend the *Webmaster* reports to the Director of Technology, manages the City's website and social media, provides electronic communications from the Mayor's Office to the community and actively seeks and applies for grant opportunities which could benefit the IT Department at large. If creating the position of *Webmaster* is not manageable in today's budget, the role of *Webmaster* should be given to an already existing City employee, preferably from the IT Department or the Mayor's Office, who can work with each City department, its employees and the City's webhosting company and its staff. This role, if not a permanent position, should in the least be defined and offer an annual stipend.
    - Consider relocating the City's IT departments to one central location. Putting the personnel from each department in one location would allow for a collaboration of training and resources. This should include the City's IT personnel, Taunton Fire Department's IT personnel, Taunton Police Department's IT personnel, and possibly incorporating the Taunton Municipal Lighting Plant (TMLP). We would recommend keeping the Taunton School Department's IT personnel within the School Department.
    - Every City employee should have an email address. City employees should be encouraged to check their emails on a regular basis. Communications should be provided electronically as often as possible.
        - All City employees email addresses should be the first initial of their first name, followed by their last name, and ending in @tmlp.net (the City's email provider). A number system should be established for City employees who have the same last name and first initial. For example, Joe Smith should be reflected as jsmith@tmlp.net. In the event that there is also a Jane Smith working for the City, Jane's email address should read j1smith@tmlp.net. In the event that a Julie Smith is then hired, her email address would ready j2smith@tmlp.net.
        - The City should consider working with TMLP use an email domain service. If possible, the City should continue to use TMLP as an email host, but should consider changing emails to end in @taunton.gov.

Information Technology Board (ITAB) & City Hall Network Design

The City established the Information Technology Advisory Board (ITAB) in the mid 2000's to serve as an advisory board and make recommendations to the Mayor. The ITAB consisted of the Taunton Schools IT Director, City of Taunton IT Administrator, Taunton Police IT Administrator, a City Councilor, the Mayor or his/her Representative, the TMLP Special Services Manager and Internet Services Administrator.

The ITAB recommended (pre-fire at City Hall) that a study be conducted to produce a plan for the City's network design. The City hired a consultant, UNICOM, to conduct the study. UNICOM completed and published a City Hall Network Design and Proposal. This proposal was presented to Mayor Charles Crowley shortly before an arsonist lit fire to City Hall. The proposal was put on hold until further notice since most of its plans were based on government offices located at 23 Summer Street. The ITAB has been stagnant since the City's move of temporary government office. It is our understanding the ITAB would like to reconvene and once again act as a board which could present plans and recommendations to the Mayor.

To our knowledge, there is currently no acting advisory board to the Automation Department, nor is there a defined set of department standards or goals.

- **Reinstate the ITAB to make recommendations to the Mayor, City Council and IT Department, and be a part of the planning process for future plans regarding City Hall Technology.**
    - Such plans include, but are not limited to:
        - Building network infrastructure, design and equipment specifications
        - Providing IP telephony services
        - The location of the City's servers on a regular basis and in emergency circumstances
        - Recommending potential contractors and consultants to represent City Hall interests
        - A revised technology plan for City Hall, its wiring, configuration, setup and equipment
        - Fiber-optic network, bandwidth, and City-Wide Metropolitan Area Network (MAN)
        - IP Telephony services and IP video delivery services
        - Building security for City Hall and external City departments
    - The ITAB should provide advice and direction to the Director of Technology, the Mayor and the Municipal Council on matters related to IT policies and operational standards and alternatives. In selecting members of the ITAB, we would recommend starting with its most recent members and, if needed, expanding to additional information and technology professionals within the community.
    - The ITAB should work with the City and UNICOM to develop an updated City Hall Network Design and Proposal. It is our consensus that some of the information in the original study would be relevant today with upgrades to modern equipment. The cost of equipment, training and integration would need to be adjusted to reflect real market value.
    - The ITAB should develop a set of technology standards to be practiced by the IT Department. Technology standards are critical for the City to achieve high productivity in the use of technology and for the IT Department to provide a high level of customer service with a practical level of technical support staff. Standards should be restructured annually to adjust for new technologies,

needs and strategies. Deviation from standards may be approved by the IT Department to meet a specific requirement or when a department's need clearly demonstrates that conformance to technology standards will negatively impact their goals. Standards should be developed in the areas of security, server hardware, operating system software, database software, office productivity software, and network hardware.

Streamline Permitting

Currently, all permits, licenses, applications and inspections are done in person. Some forms are available to residents and contractors online, but they must be printed out and physically brought to the appropriate department to obtain a permit.

To obtain most permits and applications a tax status form is required. A tax status form checks the applicants outstanding taxes owed to various department including the Tax Collector, the Water Department, the Fire Department, the Police Department and the DPW. Today's system required the applicant to bring the form to each department mentioned above to check for outstanding taxes before the City will sign off on an application and issue a permit.

There appears to be significant lag time involved with obtaining approval for permits and licenses. In addition to time wasted, some residents and contractors feel it is too burdensome to force them to visit a number of departments, which are located in different buildings in different parts of the City, before they are able to obtain approval to take out a permit. The City's network does not allow for different departments to view taxes owed in other departments.

Inspections are filled out with a pen and paper on site and that information is later added to the appropriate department's electronic database.

Recommendations:

- **Implement an online tax status form.**
    - Tax status forms should be available to be filled out electronically. A fillable Adobe PDF form would allow the applicant to fill out the form and submit their application from the convenience of their home or business. The form could be sent electronically to each department needed to check for outstanding taxes, or it could be sent to one department with the oversight to see the taxes the applicant owes in all City departments.
    - Update the City's internal network so that each department can determine if the applicant owes taxes in any City department. This would save the applicant time and travel, and provide a better system for those who chose not to apply electronically.
- **Make a capital investment in e-permitting, training and equipment.**

- Put together a committee to oversee the selecting a vendor that can meet the City's needs in electronic permitting. A user-based fee system should be considered as it would save the community significant funds.
- In choosing a vendor and making an investment in e-permitting look to consolidate software currently used amongst departments as a cost saving measure.
- Update the City's GIS viewer and make an investment in updating the aerial maps on the GIS viewer.

Electronic Communications and the Future

There appears to be little use of electronic communication used amongst City Departments at this time.

It is our opinion that not all City employees are trained adequately in technology to perform their job in the most efficient way possible.

Technology can be a good return on investments. The City will need to introduce innovative ideas that could leverage technology to increase citizen involvement, awareness and engagement. The City will need to find ways for our citizens to find out what's going on across town, to get to the information they need quickly and on any device, and to deliver that information in the way that they can best use it.

Recommendations:

- **Implement an emergency email alert and notification system.**
  - Messages should be controlled by the Mayor's office. An electronic sign-up form should be available on the City's website.
- **Find ways to improve collaborative consumption.**
  - Collaborative consumption means sharing through technology. It is a movement that was born from the internet that allows individuals to reuse, recycle and redistribute. The City of Taunton should look to technology and the electronic communication to improve upon collaborative consumption.
  - City employees should be encouraged to teach, train and learn from one another. Build employee based electronic forums where City employees have the opportunity to share information and education on how to improve their job duties through the use of technology.
- **Look to sustainable technology.**
  - The City has to begin to transition into building the future. It needs to stop using technology as an alternate source and learn to use it as a primary factor.