



TOWN OF GROTON

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Audit Review Committee

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Honorable Board of Selectmen
173 Main Street
Groton, MA 01450

The Audit Review Committee is pleased to provide the Board of Selectmen with the completed Municipal Audit conducted by the Matrix Consulting Group. The following is a brief overview of the Report.

Background

The Town of Groton Municipal Audit Review Committee (the Committee) was appointed by the Board of Selectmen in July of 2016 with the charge of overseeing the operational assessment that had been recommended to the Board of Selectmen by the Sustainable Budget Study Committee. The Audit's intent was "to retain a Consultant that can conduct a management and operations study that will identify the strengths and opportunities of the organization; assess the allocation of personnel, monetary and equipment resources; and make recommendations that will improve the organizational effectiveness and efficiency in the delivery of Town services".

The Audit Committee consisted of members of the Board of Selectmen, Fin Com, School Committee, Personnel Board and 2 residents at large.

The Committee issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) looking for consulting firms that have core expertise and experience in the area of municipal operational assessments. Four responses were received and Matrix Consulting Group (Matrix) was chosen unanimously.

Matrix collected information in a variety of ways including staff interviews and anonymous community surveys. Matrix compared Groton with its understanding of 'best management practices' and industry standards, and to a set of comparable towns selected in partnership with the Audit Committee. A community survey assessing community attitudes was added to the scope of work and administered by Matrix. A draft report was prepared and department managers had an opportunity to review and comment before the final report was submitted. It should be noted that neither the Fire Department nor the Regional School District were part of this assessment as each was undergoing its own independent assessment.

Outcome:

Matrix reports no major variance from 'best practice' or operational standards observed at comparable towns. In general, based on this report, our sense is that Town of Groton is generally quite well run from an operational standpoint. The report cites strengths, which should be leveraged, and points out areas for improvement, which should be addressed.

The community survey indicated that the public is generally content with the services provided. Fire, Police, Library and Transfer Station all received high quality ratings. Planning, Building, Permitting and the Country Club received the lowest overall quality ratings, though all received an approval rating of over 50%. The survey also indicated a majority desire to spend more on schools. Interestingly, while the operational assessment report showed opportunities for improvement in the Highway Dept, the survey showed that residents are highly satisfied with its work. Matrix reports these responses as expected for a town of our size and character.

Spending and staffing was generally in line with comparable towns noting the following:

- Matrix noted that the Police Dept. is adequately funded and may have surplus staffing capacity compared to best management practices.
- The community expressed interest in additional funding for schools.
- The library is quite generously funded compared to its peers, and that the town values the library quite highly, and uses its services more than libraries of comparable towns.

Specific opportunities for improvement or attention include:

- While the Country Club has shown significant improvement in recent years, and is nearing a break-even financially, Matrix points out the need for significant investment including a marketing campaign to increase membership, and creation of a 5 to 10-year capital plan. The Community Survey that Matrix conducted indicates low relative perceived value of the Country Club to town residents. As a community we need to decide if the Country Club should continue to be operated and owned by The Town of Groton or if there are other priority expenditures and alternative uses for the club.
- The Department operation and efficiency of Public Works (DPW) would be improved through the implementation of an effective work order system and an inventory control system. Such systems would be beneficial town-wide to understand employee utilization, and tracking and monitoring of assets. Such systems will require software and training investment. Matrix indicates that progress toward this goal can be achieved through spreadsheet based tracking of employee tasks and department assets.
- The balance of recommendations all have merit and should not be discounted simply because they are not called out individually here. Each department assessment should be reviewed and departmental plans and goals established for improvement. See our recommendation for **Tracking and Accountability**. Appendix D contains valuable observations for each department, including strengths and potential improvements.

Tracking and Accountability

The true value of this effort will be if the report becomes a living document and drives action over time. We recommend that the items in Appendix D be addressed with **Departmental Action Plans**. Performance against plans should be integrated into individual performance goals. These **Plans** should be presented to the Board in regular review cycles until all items are addressed or dismissed.

Summary

We expect that there will be those that take issue with some of the report's methods and results, and we accept that there will be differences of opinion. Indeed, some on our committee felt that the report was short on resource utilization recommendations, and did not specify the saving impact of some of its suggestions.

On the whole we believe that the report accomplished its objectives and offers significant value, both for the suggestions that it contains, and for the validation of Groton's standing compared to its benchmark towns and industry best practices. The survey suggested that we are delivering services that are valued by our residents.

Attachments/Appendices:

Committee Charge

RFP

Matrix Proposal/Contract

Matrix Final Report