

Operation Audit Recommendations

Department Head Recommendations to the Board of Selectmen

The following is a summary of the recommendations, both operationally and best practice, contained in the Operational Audit conducted by Matrix Consulting Group and the Department Heads' recommendation to the Board of Selectmen

Town Clerk

1. **Recommendation:** Maintain the current staffing level of one full-time and two part-time staff in the Clerk's Office.

Town Clerk Response: After the departure of Marlene Kenney to become the Harvard Town Clerk, the Board of Selectmen agreed with a proposal to maintain current staffing levels but by adjusting hours from two (2) 20-hour-per-week staff to one (1) 25 hour-per-week and one (1) 15 hour-per-week staff. This staffing level is working out appropriately, and allows the Clerk's office to maintain services levels to date. I wish to stress to the Board and the Townspeople that the Clerk's Office strives to maintain a high level of service delivery to the public and administrative support to town functions. The environment is dynamic, and presents challenges to which we will respond. We are continually assessing better and more productive and efficient ways to deliver services.

Town Manager Comment: I concur with the Town Clerk's assessment and input on this recommendation.

Finance

1. **Recommendation:** Maintain the current staffing levels within the Office of the Town Manager.

Town Manager Response: Given the workload in the Office of the Town Manager and the service provided to the Board of Selectmen and residents, the staffing level within the office is adequate and should not be changed. We concur with this recommendation.

2. **Recommendation:** Maintain the current staffing levels within the Office of Accounting.

Town Accountant Response: Regarding their assessment of staffing, I tend to agree with their finding that while weekly staffing hours are currently on the lower end of the spectrum compared with other communities, the workload is generally manageable.

Town Manager Comment: I concur with the Town Accountant's assessment and input on this recommendation.

3. Recommendation: Maintain the current staffing levels within the Office of the Assessor.

Principal Assessor Response: In light of the recent Town Meeting expenditure to hire a consultant to assist with Cyclical Inspections, the current staffing level in the Assessors' Office is adequate at this time.

Town Manager Comment: I concur with the Principal Assessor's assessment and input on this recommendation.

4. Recommendation: Maintain the current staffing levels within the Office of the Tax Collector / Treasurer.

Treasurer/Collector Response: I was somewhat confused by the apparent contradiction of the audit's narrative and subsequent recommendation. Specifically, the audit recommendation referenced the comparison of staffing levels within the surveyed comparative municipalities and concluded that the Groton office was on the very low end of office staffing, specifically having the 'second lowest number of employees-hours dedicated to this role'. The audit further stated that 'given the labor-intensive nature of the payroll entry process, the low staffing levels in Groton's Treasurer/Collector office are even more noteworthy'. We were able to absorb the Fiscal 2017 loss of 12 staff hours in the office or 14% of total staffing.

Town Manager Comment: It appears that the Auditors were confused with the Staffing within the Office of the Treasurer/Tax Collector. Nevertheless, as Director of Finance for the Town, I am comfortable with the current staffing levels within this Office.

5. Recommendation: Increase Cross-Training within the Finance Offices.

Town Accountant Response: Matrix noted possible benefits to be realized from cross-training between Finance divisions. I am confident that all members of the Finance Department would be open to such a plan, as long as it can be accomplished while still respecting the inherent separation of labor from a checks and balances standpoint. (For instance, an employee who signs vendor checks should not also be able to input invoices for payment). From a business continuity perspective, cross-training between divisions is a worthy goal, although labor intensive and of limited utility without frequent "refreshers" and regular exposure to the cross-trained task. That said, an analysis of tasks that would be appropriate for cross-training could be easily accomplished if the Board of Selectmen feels this would be advantageous. This effort would impact scheduling in three departments and should therefore involve all three finance department heads in developing a plan for choosing tasks to cross-train and determining the best way in which to move forward.

Town Manager Comment: I agree with the Town Accountant's Assessment. When we had a larger staff pool within the various offices, we did cross train employees and had one employee float between two of the offices. However, given the workload within the Finance Offices and the reduction in workforce over the last two fiscal years, I would rather concentrate on making sure the work is being completed within each office before we embark on cross-training. I would look to the Board for direction on this best practice recommendation.

6. Recommendation: The relative ease for the public of finding the budget could be made easier, relative to other communities.

Town Accountant Response: Regarding the budget, the Matrix team suggests that the budget may be difficult for the public to find. Of course, the budget is always available from the Accounting Department for anyone who requests it. Additionally, there is a link to the budget on the first page of the Town website, and on the Town Manager's page, as well as the Town Meeting page. The interactive Visual Budget was added in 2016 as a "quick link" and is accessible on every page of the website. This information was specifically designed to present spending and revenue results in a transparent and attractive manner for the public. That said, I might agree that while numerous versions of each fiscal budget are available in many places on-line, it could be challenging for the general public to determine which of these represents the final, year-end version (assuming that is the one they are looking for). I would be very happy to work with the IT Department to provide additional links to the final year-end budget in any place that seems appropriate.

Town Manager Comment: Since many locations on the website contain the budget, I agree with the Town Accountant that it may make sense to limit the location of the budget and have it prominently displayed on the homepage.

7. Recommendation: Accounting should review opportunities to maximize available discounts.

Town Accountant Response: Matrix points out the benefits of maximizing early pay discounts when processing A/P. While Accounting recognizes discounts whenever available, these opportunities are very limited due to the amount of time it takes an invoice to travel through the departmental approval process prior to submission. All invoices are paid with the next scheduled expense warrant once received, but very often, this is too late to take advantage of the offered discount. I have been testing payment of certain invoices through American Express which offers cash back (as a discount against invoices) to the Town based on transaction totals. While some benefits may be realized from this program, I am finding that our vendors generally resist accepting payment via Amex, therefore this program may ultimately be discontinued.

Town Manager Comment: Unless we move to weekly accounts payable warrants (at great expense and need for additional manpower, I do not believe this best practice recommendation can be realized. I appreciate the Town Accountant's willingness to examine ways to improve this practice and will work with her on potential solutions. That said, I believe the Town addresses this recommendation to the best of its ability.

8. Recommendation: There may be opportunities to improve the Payroll System; a primary function of the Accounting Assistant is the manual inputting of payroll information from Town departments, because of the lack of a Town-wide, Munis-type system of payroll input.

Town Accountant Response: The Consultant may be confused about how the Payroll function operates. They noted that a primary duty of the Accounting Assistant is the manual inputting of payroll. This is not true. In reality, timesheets and payroll control worksheets are completed at the department level, and then delivered to the Treasurer's Department where the Payroll Coordinator inputs all information to the payroll system. The Accounting Assistant then does a complete review of all timesheets to payroll reports (prior to submission to Harpers). Finally, the Accountant analyzes the payroll for fraud and sufficient departmental appropriation before preparing the warrant. Matrix is correct in asserting that some efficiencies could be gained from

use of a Munis-type software package that allows departments to input their own information (reducing duplication of effort). A single town-wide software platform could create a number of such efficiencies in Payroll, A/P processing, and month-end reconciliations. This would have a major operational impact on many different departments (hopefully for the better) but would likely require a significant financial investment.

Town Manager Comment: Given the enormous cost of an integrated system and other capital priorities facing the Town of Groton such as the Senior Center and Florence Roche Elementary School, this kind of expenditure would be an extremely low priority in my opinion and should not be pursued.

9. Recommendation: While Munis would be a significant upfront investment, would a central, module-based system provide efficiencies worth the investment for a Town of Groton's size?

Treasurer/Collector Response: A consistent theme throughout the Finance area of the operational audit concerned the area of automated and integrated financial software packages in place. The audit rightly recognized that the Treasurer-Collector office had strong municipal software in place, some of which has eliminated much of the prior spreadsheet-based accounting procedures. The thrust of this recurring area is the issue of fully integrated financial systems in the Town, most specifically referring to the broad-based MUNIS system used by many larger municipalities. This issue has been discussed and debated for a long time, in that an expensive (hundreds of thousands) system such as MUNIS would have to be considered a worthwhile investment for a Town of Groton's size. The Operational Audit did not specifically recommend anything here.....but basically recognized that fully integrated financial systems would be good, but come at a price.

Town Manager Comment: Please see my comment under Recommendation #8.

Country Club

1. Recommendation: Create a "brand" for the Groton Country Club that generates interest, increases participation and promotes its value to the community.

General Manager Response: At the present time, I am working to create a new brand for the Club. It is my intention to have a proposal to the Town Manager and the Board of Selectmen in the next several months,

Town Manager Comment: I support this effort and look forward to the recommendation.

2. Recommendation: The Country Club staff should develop a five to ten-year capital improvement plan for the golf course.

General Manager Response: When I began as General Manager in February, 2015, a five-year capital plan was already in place. I have expanded it to ten years and will update the five-year plan accordingly.

Town Manager Comment: The Charter requires the Town Manager to provide a five-year Capital Plan annually. Within this Overall Capital Plan is the Plan of the Country Club. We adjust the Plan annually to reflect priorities and available funding. While a ten-year plan is a useful tool, I would rather keep the Plan to five years and plan accordingly. I appreciate the General Manager's efforts with this recommendation and will adjust the five-year capital plan as needed.

3. Recommendation: The Town should make a strategic decision regarding the retention of the Groton Country Club as a Town asset.

General Manager Response: The GCC is current working within its first self-sustaining budget (FY2018). Before making a final decision on the Club, we should determine if this model is sustainable. We will continue to work towards full sustainability.

Town Manager Comment: We have been working very hard over the last several years to eliminate the impact of the Country Club on the tax rate. As the General Manager states, this is the first year we have projected no impact on the tax payers. I would like to get a couple of years under our belt of this new model before making a final decision. We need to study the data before making a final decision.

Human Resources

1. Recommendation: Maintain the current staffing level of one full-time, dedicated Director of Human Resources.

Human Resources Director Response: I agree that the current staffing level is adequate for the Town of Groton.

Town Manager Comment: Having a dedicated full-time Director for the Town of Groton meets the needs of the Town of Groton.

2. Recommendation: Perform a review of Town departments' use of annual reviews, seeking opportunities to improve how departments use the data to create individualized employee plans for improvement.

Human Resources Director Response: I would like start by saying that I respectfully disagree with the recommendation from the Matrix Audit Group. The audit states that we need to improve on our annual review process. This is an area I believe we are exceptionally strong. Our employees are reviewed on an annual basis and the forms we use give both the employee and the manager an opportunity to review in the following areas:

- Communication skills
- Knowledge of job duties
- Accuracy and thoroughness of work
- Productivity
- Dependability
- Initiative
- Organizational skills

The management review also covers the following:

- Previous year's goals
- Self-evaluation over the past year
- Budget review
- Goals for the year

In certain circumstances we might have that one employee who will need a little more “guidance” in their job. On occasion we have developed an “Individualized Improvement Plan” to give the employee an opportunity to be successful in their job. Our objective with these evaluations is to have the employee and manager discuss best practices, support dedication, encourage innovation, and to identify areas of improvement. We as an organization take this process very seriously and like to give our employees the opportunity to grow and be successful in their career while they are employed with the Town of Groton. I have also scheduled Evaluation Training for all Department Heads for April 5, 2018. This will review writing and setting goals, evaluating performance, and how to communicate areas of improvement.

Town Manager Comment: I fully support the response of the Human Resources Director. I believe we are very strong in this area and will continue to conduct annual reviews of our employees.

3. Recommendation: There is not a dedicated HR software system in place, making quantifying outcomes and performance measures difficult. The Town should consider purchasing a dedicated HR software system.

Human Resources Director Response: I fully support the HR Software recommendation. I feel that having this would be helpful in many ways such as:

- Historical data
- Reporting
- Benefits Administration
- Payroll/ Time and Attendance
- Leaves of Absences-Tracking

I believe that this is an investment that would not only benefit HR, but Accounting and Treasury.

Town Manager Comment: Similar to my position on an integrated finance software system, I do not consider an HR software system as a high priority for the Town and would not pursue this recommendation at this time.

4. Recommendation: The Town should conduct specific evaluation to review cause and effect factors related to past WC claims, providing an opportunity for improvement in this regard.

Human Resources Director Response: I disagree with recommendations on Workers Compensation. I review every claim and ensure that it is processed in a timely fashion. All incidents are investigated to make sure that they are legitimate and are followed up on.

Town Manager Comment: Since the current HR Director has been with the Town, our Workers Comp claims have been better managed and we have seen a reduction in length of claims. The follow-up with our insurer has been excellent. I do not see a deficiency in this area.

Information Technology

1. Recommendation: Maintain the current staffing level of two full-time employees in the Department of Information Technology.

IT Director Response: I agree with this response. No actions necessary.

Town Manager Comment: While I was not in favor of the reduction in staffing in this Department last year, we have been able to maintain the high level of services previously provided. Should funding become available in the future, I would like to see the staffing restored.

2. Recommendation: Formalize a prioritized list, developed between the Town Manager and the Director of Information Technology, of longer-term projects that can be done through the efforts of the Director.

IT Director Response: We annually design this list during the performance assessment and goal setting process between the IT Director and Town Manager. As it stands right now projects are orientated as goals. It would not hurt to look further out as a general roadmap of where IT should be driving town processes to. The IT Director will work with the Town Manager to help define this roadmap this year.

Town Manager Comment: I believe we do a good job setting priorities and looking to the future. I am very comfortable with the current process and do not believe any changes in this process is necessary.

Land Use

1. Recommendation: The Land Use Department should utilize its web site more extensively to provide handouts and guides that discuss all of the difficult or confusing subjects that face permit applicants in the Town.

Land Use Director Response: The Matrix report identifies certain types of information that should be available on the website. In many cases, this information is already available. Specific to the recommendations:

- Permit application instructions by type of application...: Most application forms already include specific instructions and checklists. The Conservation Commission has a FAQ and a Wetlands Kit for applicants available. The ZBA has an application packet available. The Board of Health has its fees and regulations available. The Planning Board has a permitting guide.
- Permit application forms...: There are nearly 40 application forms contained in the "Forms" folder on the main Land Use page.
- Environmental impact assessment information...: The point of this recommendation is unclear.
- Design guidelines including guidelines for signs: Design guidelines for the Town Center Overlay District are already available. The HDC regulations are available on the website and provide general guidance for projects within HDC jurisdiction. Guidelines for signs will vary by the type of sign application required and are generally codified in the Sign Bylaw, Ch. 196 of the Town Code, which is on the website.
- References to the requirements related to such permits as for accessory buildings, decks...: With the implementation of ViewPoint online building permitting software in May 2017, this type of information is now provided online, as needed.
- Guidelines for the review of applications by outside departments such as Fire: This is now handled primarily online. See above comment.

Town Manager Comment: I fully support the position of the Land Use Director and we will continue to improve the information we provide online.

2. Recommendation: The Land Use Department should expand the use of its ViewPoint software to enable applicants for single trade permits to complete a permit application via the Internet including payment.

Land Use Director Response: Done. Building permits have been online using ViewPoint since May 2017. Electrical permits have been online since October 2017. Many permits have been issued and paid for in the same day. Applicants can pay for the permit online using credit card or e-check, or they can pay with a paper check at the Land Use counter. We are working with the IT Department to make the trench permit available online next. Gas and plumbing permits will also be added in the future. We will also be proposing a new fee structure for electrical permits to make it more compatible with ViewPoint software. Please note that some of the reporting and search functions of the ViewPoint software are surprisingly limited. For example, it is not easy to generate reports by year or by type of building permit, or by completion status. If possible, the software should be improved to allow for better reporting capabilities. This would allow us to better respond to inquiries such as FOIA requests. We will continue to work with the IT Department to address the limitations in the software.

Town Manager Comment: I am very pleased with the work done by our Land Use and IT Departments to get this permitting on line. The response has been very favorable from our residents and contractors. We will continue to work improving this system.

3. Recommendation: The Building Department should increase the number of building permits issued over-the-counter, with a goal of 55% to 60% of all building permits issued.

Land Use Director Response: Why? How? This recommendation is in complete conflict with the online permitting recommendation in Section 4. Also, the list of recommended OTC building permits is not realistic given the existing requirements of Massachusetts General Laws and Town Bylaws.

Town Manager Comment: I agree with the Land Use Director that this recommendation is confusing and in conflict with the previous recommendation. I believe we should continue working on improving on line permitting and deal with residents who come to the Counter in the same professional manner we currently provide.

4. Recommendation: Post common plan check corrections on the Town's website to provide guidance on the construction requirements in the Town of Groton.

Land Use Director Response: The purpose of this recommendation is unclear. It sounds like this would require a lot of work by Land Use Department staff for the benefit of design professionals who get paid to understand the requirements for construction.

Town Manager Comment: I concur with the statement of the Land Use Director.

5. Recommendation: The Land Use Department should hire an additional part time Land Use Administrative Assistant to primarily assist the Land Use Director in the performance of clerical and administrative tasks. The cost of this position is estimated to be \$19,427 annually.

Land Use Director Response: The ZBA (not BZA) administrative position is 15 hours per week, not 18 as stated in the Matrix report. Hiring a part-time assistant will require an increase in the Land Use Department budget. Departmental budget increases have been strongly discouraged in recent years, and the FY19 budget proposal does not include such an increase. It is worth noting that the Planning Board has had a per diem recording secretary preparing draft meeting minutes since September 2017. This has been very helpful to the Land Use Director/Town Planner. The Conservation Commission and Finance Committee have a new per diem minute taker as of January 2018. This assistance is made possible thanks to funding through the Board of Selectmen. In addition, the Land Use Department continues to take advantage of clerical assistance made available through the Senior Work Program.

Town Manager Comment: Additional staff is not needed. We have cross-trained the staff to assist each department as stated in the Land Use Director's Response. I believe we are adequately staffed and do not need any additional staff. As noted in the Land Use Director's Response, we have hired per-diem minute takers to assist the Land Use Director and Conservation Administrator. This has freed up time for both Department Heads allowing them to better manage their departments.

6. Recommendation: The Land Use Department clerical and administrative staff should be comprehensively trained to perform all duties in the Department.

Land Use Director Response: As to the Matrix recommendation “that the clerical and administrative staff in the Groton Land Use Department be more comprehensively trained to cover each other’s primary duties, with the goal of having all staff members comprehensively trained in all duties and responsibilities of the Department”, we feel this is an unrealistic goal. The Land Use Director’s goal is to have all staff members sufficiently trained to provide support to the dedicated staff member, and we will work toward that end. However, the Matrix recommendation is oblivious to the technical expertise required for each dedicated position, and the budgetary implications of such a scenario. Are we going to budget for seven Building Commissioner salaries?

Town Manager Comment: I disagree with this recommendation. When the Land Use Department was created in 2010, the goal was to consolidate the operation, provide better customer service and have all employees support one another, while having dedicated duties to support a particular department. This has been very successful and no changes in the operation are needed.

Police Department

1. Recommendation: At current staffing levels in addition to the availability of per diem officers and sergeants the Groton Police Department provides a high level of coverage to the Town.

Police Chief Response: Our officers are already very proactive on patrol. In addition to their regular patrol function, they are also assigned Directed Patrols which come from input and requests from the citizens of our community to address trouble spots. The sergeant or OIC supervises the officers during the shift. The Matrix report states that there are insufficient numbers of supervisors for around the clock coverage. We agree and additional sergeants would allow for greater accountability.

Town Manager Comment: I agree that our Police Department provides a high level of coverage. What is missing from this statement is the high level of service that accompanies this coverage. The Town has come to expect this level of service and we should continue to fund the Department at a level that allows us to continue this level of service.

2. Recommendation: Maximize the utilization of high levels of proactive time, with first-line supervisors structuring the most effective use of this time to impact community problems. Evaluate the feasibility of implementing an alternative shift for long term employee retention.

Police Chief Response: The Matrix report states that “many departments have implemented different shifts to better attract and retain personnel.” They suggest the option of a 12-hour shift. We disagree on the 12-hour shift. It would automatically build in 8 hours of overtime for each officer per week. It would also eliminate 2/3’s of our work force for filling of unanticipated absences.

Town Manager Comment: I agree with the Police Chief's opinion on this. Under the Fair Labor Standards Act, we are required to pay officers their FLSA overtime rate for any hours in excess of 171 hours in a 28-day period. Unlike Firefighters, who under FLSA have to work in excess of 212 hours in a 28-day period, extended shifts do not make sense in the Police Department. By extending shifts, we would be hit with more overtime and a workforce that is required to work extended shifts. In my opinion, this would not provide a higher level of service and could ultimately increase overtime. I would recommend we leave our shifts as currently constituted.

3. Recommendation: The department and the Town should visit the possibility of providing communications and dispatching services for other local towns.

Police Chief Response: Although we are already considered to be a regional dispatch center, we have negotiated with and were willing to accept other towns such as Shirley and Pepperell. Not coming to Groton was due to decisions made on their part, not ours.

Town Manager Comment: As the Police Chief states, we have actively pursued expanding our dispatch center by inviting other Towns to regionalize with Groton. While we have not been successful to this point, we will continue to pursue other opportunities to regionalize.

4. Recommendation: Maintain the current staffing of one detective with minor crimes followed-up on by field personnel. If the resolution of the current detective's work status is not resolved within the next year, other steps should be considered such as the formal designation of an intermediate term detective until that status is resolved.

Police Chief Response: We disagree that there should only be one detective. The detective position covers a myriad of responsibilities such as investigation, narcotics work, court prosecution, providing discovery, property room management, crime scene technician, processing of evidence, liaison to the MSP lab, scheduling officers for court, and equipment maintenance and purchase. We also currently have designated an intermediate term detective and the SRO handles all juvenile matters. This is obviously too many areas of responsibility for one person and we have shown the need for a minimum of two detectives. The department already has the patrol officers follow-up on all minor offenses and investigations, which is nothing new to us. We use such a practice to keep the officer challenged and engaged. It also helps them to keep their investigative skills sharp.

Town Manager Comment: I support the Police Chief's position on this matter.

5. Recommendation: Hire a second part time (20 hours per week) administrative support staffing to perform crime and service analysis as well as to provide relief for the Executive Assistant.

Police Chief Response: We agree and request such a position be created.

Town Manager Comment: I completely disagree with this recommendation and will not support nor recommend the creation of this additional position. Three years ago, we created a 15-hour part-time position within the Police Department to assist with budgeting, grant oversight and other related items. The workload of the Executive Assistant has been reduced and no additional staffing is needed at this time.

6. Recommendation: Continue the approach of assigning collateral program management responsibilities to patrol sergeants.

Police Chief Response: We agree that this is a healthy approach to develop and cultivate future leaders of the department. We also agree that the return of the detective and the creation of a part-time administrative person will help to alleviate the current pressure on our sergeants.

Town Manager Comment: I support this recommendation without adding additional administrative support.

7. Recommendation: GPD currently utilizes an informal approach to planning and evaluating the proactive time of our officers.

Police Chief Response: Areas of concern and requests for extra patrols that come from our citizens are covered at our roll calls and assigned. The officers' proactive efforts are entered in the daily shift logs. The shifts are monitored and supervised by a Sergeant or by an OIC, who hold the officers accountable for their efforts. I am unsure of what Matrix means by a "tactical action plan" as to proactive patrol efforts but the Matrix report also states that "this goal is impacted by too few sergeants". We have requested additional personnel, specifically supervisory, for the last few years to no avail. Additional supervisors would benefit the department by better being able to hold officers accountable.

Town Manager Comment: I believe the approach taken by the Police Department in this matter greatly improves our delivery of service.

8. Recommendation: The report asks if the department is involved in specialized services such as traffic, SRO, and focused patrols

Police Chief Response: The answer is yes, we are and we have been for years, to the extent humanly possible. We understand that Groton has a large amount of commuter traffic and addresses it as best as we can. We have requested a dedicated traffic officer in the past few budgets so that we can be more proactive in this area but have been unsuccessful. Our SRO/Juvenile Detective is doing yeoman's work in establishing a proactive program that has aided all of the schools in town to establish and update emergency plans. We have fostered a better working relationship with the schools and are proactive in addressing all issues related to the schools. We have shown that our SRO is doing the work of three and have requested an additional SRO over the past few years but have been unable to have help with our SRO program. The department has been conducting proactive, directed patrols based upon the input and requests by our citizens for many, many years.

Town Manager Comment: I agree with the Police Chief's response.

9. Recommendation: Crime Analysis Information/Information Exchange

Police Chief Response: The report states that "there is no formal crime analytical information generated on a regular basis. There is no staff to accomplish this on a dedicated or shared service basis. Are there shared service opportunities? They are correct. We do not have the staff to accomplish this goal. We are short staffed and our detective, who is out injured, has not been able to attend roll calls and disseminate crime information for some time. We normally interact quite well as a department, sharing information. If patrol develops a case they work in conjunction with the detective to solve same, developing our officers in investigative procedures.

Town Manager Comment: I agree with the Police Chief's response.

10. Recommendation: Interjurisdictional Drug and DUI Enforcement. Does the department work with other jurisdictions on narcotics and DUI enforcement?

Police Chief Response: We have in the past had very robust drug investigations and worked very well with other surrounding agencies. Our detective being out injured for an extended period has impacted those efforts. Our existing staffing does not allow us to continue with these drug enforcement efforts. As far as DUI enforcement goes, the department is very proactive in this area. We work locally on this endeavor as we cannot enforce DUI laws in other jurisdictions and regionally as easily as Matrix thinks we can.

Town Manager Comment: While the Police Department has been proactive in working with other jurisdictions, additional manpower is needed to continue in this endeavor. I trust that when opportunities arise, the Police Chief will be proactive in this area.

Public Library

The following memorandum was received from the Library Trustees concerning the Operational Audit:

Thank you for asking for our response to the Operational Assessment (OA) of Town Departments as it relates to the Groton Public Library (GPL). We appreciate the efforts of the Matrix Consulting Group and the priority you have placed on Groton's operational efficiency. We agree with most of the OA findings, particularly its recognition of the high level of service the library provides, especially regarding programming. The OA confirms that GPL has its priorities in alignment with the priorities of our residents: 1) emphasis on programs for children, teens, adults, and seniors; and 2) efficient maintenance of library collections.

We are gratified that the survey results found that GPL enjoys a high level of community support, with 97% of respondents agreeing the Library represents good value for tax dollars expended. We also agree with the OA that it would be a mistake to curtail staffing levels.

The Set of Communities Selected for Bench Marks Includes Some that are Less Suitable

On the attached documents, "Presentation on Community and Library Statistics" and "Additional Library Stats for Operational Assessment," we have assembled additional statistics regarding the GPL, the communities used for comparison, plus four other communities (Duxbury, Lynnfield, Northborough, and Wayland) that we think provide better comparisons for Groton. The OA's comparison towns were selected solely on population size, but we believe additional criteria such as income and level of library service is needed to provide the most meaningful town comparisons, as well as using other important parameters such as number of programs, staffing levels, hours open, and rate of circulation.

The comparison statistics confirm that the GPL is efficiently meeting its community's goals:

- We have increased our service hours, although we are open less than the libraries of some comparable communities.
- Our rate of material circulation is as high as any of the communities on an absolute and per capita basis despite the comparatively relatively modest size of our collection.
- The GPL has responded to residents' repeated requests to increase the number of programs offered. Our rate of participation in programs is considerably higher than any of the comparison communities, particularly among young adults. Our programming benefits greatly from our alternative sources of funds, particularly the GPL Endowment.

Our staffing levels are determined by the combination of our need to staff three floors as well as the level of service, which is commensurate with other high service libraries. On the attached document, "Changes Library Staff v Service Hours FY12 to FY18," note that while our hours open has increased by 20.6% since 2012, our level of staffing has increased by only 3.8%, resulting in a 13.9% decrease in staff hours per hours open.

GPL Accepts the Recommendation to Establish a Target Funding Level for Materials but Notes that the Calculation of Funding per Capita is Incomplete

The recommendation made in the report is as follows:

"The Town and Library Board should work together and establish a target for material support as well as the appropriate sources for funding for the level established." (p. 4)

The level of funding for books and materials calculated (\$6.14/capita) accounts for only our municipal allocation; it does not include the ongoing contributions (\$60,000 in FY18) from the John H. Robbins Library Fund, which increases our books and materials funding to \$11.78 per capita, putting GPL at the higher end of the comparison towns, as is consistent with other high performing libraries.

We are confident in the ability of the Robbins Fund to contribute the current level of funds in the future. The GPL has agreed upon a rate of expenditure from Robbins with the independent Commissioners of Trust Funds that is reliably sustainable. The availability of these alternative funds is discussed every budgetary season.

We whole-heartedly agree that the Town and Library Board should work to determine a sustainable rate of expenditure on materials and the reliable sources of those funds. We believe that our discussions over the last several years have reflected that exact goal. For example, this time last year, we proposed reducing our materials expenditures in favor of expanding Sunday hours as more consistent with resident needs and suggested a means to do so at essentially no cost increase to the Town. This proposal was recommended by both the Board of Selectman and Finance Committee members, and was approved at Town Meeting.

We believe that the State's spending guidelines on books and materials associated with the library certification process should continue to be our basis of spending in this area. We have found that this rate of expenditure provides for a vibrant collection that address the needs of our patrons, as is reflected in GPL's high circulation rate. Meeting our materials expenditure guideline additionally allows GPL to continue receiving state aid of approximately \$19,000/year (FY17: \$18,965). Our

patrons also benefit from easy access to all 35 MVLC library collections. In summary, GPL appreciates the high degree of participation and support that it receives from the Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee members, and the Town of Groton and believe that the recommendation made by the OA for GPL has been addressed. Having said that, we will assess on an ongoing basis both our level of materials expenditure and the sustainability of its funding. We are committed to continued communication with the Town on these issues.

Responses to the List of Potential Improvements (Section 7 of Appendix D)

1. The patron list is not reviewed periodically to cull non-users, people who have left, etc. (p. 173)

GPL does review and cull non-users every year, and has done so for many years. We run a system report to identify all accounts with no activity for 5 or more years. After reviewing the report and verifying its accuracy, we delete those patron accounts. (Anyone coming in without a valid library card is issued a new one.)

2. Are poorly circulated materials weeded out? (p. 173)

GPL is proud of its collection and believes that its quality is reflected in the high rate of material circulation (which is among the highest in the state), despite our collection being smaller relative to some other communities. Our collection is limited by the availability of shelf space but also reflects the nature of the demand for materials. Our collection is carefully curated, resulting in the removal of a number of titles each year based on rate of circulation, condition, relevance, currency, demand, and availability from other libraries.

3. How viable are these sources [of alternative funds] for the long term? What strategies can be developed alone and with the Town to meet the material [i.e., books, etc.] needs of the Library? (p. 173)

GPL works assiduously to understand the needs of its community and adapt its offerings to those needs. This includes careful planning for stable funding with all its stakeholders.

4. Again, as noted above, how stable are those sources in the long term? (p. 174)

Library Trust Funds and the GPL Endowment Trust are both managed by independent boards with the goal of maintaining stable expenditures year over year. Most of the monies are held as non-expendable, and the funding provided to the library is based on the interest and income earned each year from the untouched principal.

5. What is the demand for Sunday hours the rest of the year? (p. 174)

We note that the findings contained in Appendix D relative to hours open are not fully accurate: GPL is open three evenings a week until 9 pm, Fridays 5-6 pm, and Sunday afternoons from September to May. Sunday hours are among our most popular in terms of patron visits per hour. As part of our long-range planning process in 2015, we mailed a library services survey to every household in Groton and received 600 responses. The results were definitive in terms of what hours our residents most want to see added at GPL:

1. The top request for additional hours was for Sundays Sept-Dec (76% of responders),

2. The second top request was for Sundays, May to August (71% of responders).

Our patrons also report that the Sunday hours provide for a more relaxed extended visit for themselves and their families (see "Sunday Patron Comments" doc). Also, Sunday hours give us the opportunity to provide programs at time most convenient to the greatest number of our patrons. Sunday afternoons work for most families and working people, as well as for seniors. (The final document included is a list of Sunday programs for this fiscal year.)

We hope that you find this letter useful and look forward to discussing any questions or comments that you might have. Again, we appreciate the support of your boards and the Groton community for the GPL and we look forward to continuing our productive relationship.

Town Manager Comment: I believe the Library Trustees have done a very good job reviewing and commenting on the Operational Audit. Groton has made a decision to expend tax dollars to provide an outstanding Library. This is evident based on the Audit Review results and the town survey. The Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee need to take this into consideration in reviewing the Audit and its impact on the Operating Budget. I look forward to having these discussions with the Selectmen and Finance Committee as we determine our priorities over the next several years.

Public Works

The following Memorandum was received by the DPW Director in response to the Operational Audit:

The Municipal Audit that was completed last year has given us direction for possible improvements. Some of these recommendations I agree with and have begun to implement, and some I do not believe can be accomplished without additional personnel or funding. I also believe that some of their findings are not reflective of the Department.

1. Recommendation: Preventative Maintenance Program for Buildings

DPW Director Response: With one person mostly dedicated to building maintenance, it is difficult to put out the small fires which occur daily in the buildings. We do have, for our major components, a schedule with companies to service them regularly. This includes HVAC units, Elevators, Generators and air quality units in the Fire Station. Our staff routinely changes the filters and monitors key components and calls for service on items we cannot do. To have a service contract on every single piece of equipment would not be advantageous, in my opinion, when we can do most of the small stuff in-house. I am in the process of evaluating an all-around computer program to assist in this as well.

Town Manager Comment: I believe our Building Maintenance Division has done a great job maintaining our buildings and doing it in a cost-effective manner. When funding becomes available, I would like to add a second maintenance worker to our DPW.

2. Recommendation: Fleet Maintenance

DPW Director Response: The Audit recommends that we include the police in our maintenance program. This is not a bad idea and we will look to see if this is viable. Some things we cannot do without specialized equipment and certifications, and on some, it is hard to beat the price of a \$29.95 oil change done in 20min when I pay our people \$25. Add in the cost of oil, filters and topping off fluids, it cannot be beat. These are some of the things we would have to look at to see if it is worthwhile.

Town Manager Comment: I would encourage the DPW Director to continue to determine whether or not this is viable option. Given the excellent price of outsourcing this service, it makes sense to continue outsourcing until such time as it makes financial sense to bring it in house.

3. Recommendation: Outsource Repairs on Vehicles

DPW Director Response: They agree we do a good job of balancing loads between outside vendors and in-house staff. We know what we can and cannot do and when we can't, I send it out. Sometimes it is because it is specialized and sometime it is because of time.

Town Manager Comment: I support the DPW Director's position on this matter.

4. Recommendation: Charge Other Departments for Work Performed by DPW

DPW Director Response: They agree with our approach; however, the Audit suggests we have a charge back system to other departments. We do have other departments pay their own invoices for parts when it comes to working on their vehicles so it does not come out of our budget and we don't have to worry about transfers and such, however, we do not charge back our labor to them. I do not see this making any sense. Our labor is already paid and to have another town department budget money to pay back already budgeted labor isn't logical. Parts however are, and we already do.

Town Manager Comment: I support the DPW Director's position on this matter.

5. Recommendation: The Public Works Department should commit to the development of an asset inventory as a first step toward a structured asset management program.

DPW Director Response: I think we already take care of this with our capital plan. When it comes to small equipment such as mowers and such, we do that already in our operational budget.

Town Manager Comment: Our DPW does a great job maintaining our assets and our Capital Plan has been very effective for many years. I do not believe we need to change this.

6. Recommendation: Additional Staff Position for Building Maintenance

DPW Director Response: This basically says we are understaffed for our municipal buildings handyman, I agree. I have learned to contract out more items and this shows in some of the larger accomplishments over the last year. It would be cheaper to do lots of items in house, but I can't do it fast enough without more help in this area. The cure for this is more help or increased budget, right now I balance it and prioritize jobs to be effective.

Town Manager Comment: Please see my comment under Recommendation #1.

7. Recommendation: Outsourcing Custodial Services

DPW Director Response: I believe we are where we should be with this. One thing the report does not say are the duties beyond the general cleaning that the custodians do. The price range that they indicate are for just cleaning, not snow removal, painting, trash and recycle runs or other non-cleaning related items.

Town Manager Comment: The DPW Director makes a very good point. The Town's custodians do more than just general cleaning.

8. Recommendation: Establish a Formal Scheduling System within the DPW

DPW Director Response: We have a lot of standard duties that are the same year after year, our core duties, but since we do not have a computer program we are not formal. Every year we have sweeping, paving, culverts, sidewalks, trees, beavers, mowing, catch basins, plowing, etc..... Do we need a formal program for these items? I am investigating programs that may be able to assist us in this but they have to meet some criteria. The most important would be ease of use for the employees. It also has to be fluid enough to change on a moment's notice. Here is one quick common example on how we have to change and adapt that a program will have to follow. One thunderstorm with a microburst or front-line wind gust can give us a solid unanticipated job for 1 week with the full crew. Are there programs out there that will flow with this and adapt to the reactionary part of our job, which I would say is more than 50%? I am looking for it, but until we do we will continue with the now implemented manual work orders which is a step up from where we were.

Town Manager Comment: I support the DPW Director's position on this matter.

9. Recommendation: Utilize a Computerized Maintenance Management System

DPW Director Response: I am looking for one that will suit our needs. Some are yearly fees, some are full purchase but will cost money.

Town Manager Comment: I believe the installation and use of such a system is in the Town's best interest. I encourage the DPW Director to find the best system that suits our needs and, depending on cost, consider adding it by Special Appropriation to the DPW Budget.

10. Recommendation: Utilize and Install a Formal Pavement Management System

DPW Director Response: This is a program that is very labor intensive and requires to be established with a visual assessment which they say we already do. We had a demo of these many years back and the cost was upwards of 10K. In addition, you would need to input data and constantly update them. Cities and towns that use these typically have on staff engineers to complete them. Since I am on the road more than half of the day in various areas of town and see the condition of the roads, I see this as no help. For a town where the director is behind a desk all day and rely on data to make a decision on road conditions, it a great tool, but not needed.

Town Manager Comment: I support the DPW Director's position on this matter. I do not believe it makes financial sense to pursue such a system in the Town of Groton.

11. Recommendation: Clean Catch Basins Every Two (2) Years

DPW Director Response: That would be great in a perfect world. We clean when we have to, but we know our frequent ones that need more attention. It would take a new machine, as ours would not take that amount of work, and an employee most of the year to do the whole town every two years.

Town Manager Comment: Given the priorities within the DPW, I would put this as an extremely low priority. As stated by the DPW Director, the Town Maintains the troubled basins. We do not have the financial wherewithal to adopt this recommendation and I would not pursue it at this time.

12. Recommendation: Fixing and Maintaining Potholes

DPW Director Response: They agree with our approach. We scout during slow days and also are reactionary and document calls and repairs to limit our liability.

Town Manager Comment: I support the DPW Director's position on this matter.

13. Recommendation: Road Repair Protocol

DPW Director Response: They agree with our approach. Major repairs are contracted out as stated. All prep work for major projects are completed by the Town. Most side walk construction and repairs are completed by the Town as well.

Town Manager Comment: I support the DPW Director's position on this matter.

14. Recommendation: Check Sign Reflectivity

DPW Director Response: This work is done at night, and would require overtime, and specialized equipment. The program that I am looking for will be encompassing to do in place sign inventory and replacements as well as stock inventory, but to check reflectivity every two years will have an expense. This is a good idea however.

Town Manager Comment: Similar to my position on previous recommendations, I would rate this as an extremely low priority. While I appreciate the need, it is not an area that I would recommend we the expenditure of Town funds.

15. Recommendation: Manner in which the DPW Paints Crosswalks

DPW Director Response: They agree with our approach.

Town Manager Comment: I support the DPW Director's position on this matter.

16. Recommendation: Annual Street Sweeping of all Town Roads

DPW Director Response: The report suggests we sweep 100% of our roads. We do all roads that have curbs, in neighborhoods, sharp turns and hills on heavily traveled roads, and areas with catch basins. We do not do long stretches of roads that have little or no traffic, houses or excess build up. We have one older sweeper and we do the necessary areas. This takes us about 2 months in the spring. To do what they suggest would probably require a new machine, as the current one would wear out in year or two, at a cost of 190k as well as having that employee sweeping for another 2 months. This also requires an extra employee to follow the sweeper in a dump truck to haul debris. I am comfortable of how we are completing this task now. A city would be more likely to sweep 100%.

Town Manager Comment: I support the DPW Director's position on this matter.

17. Recommendation: Transfer Station Fees

DPW Director Response: They agree with what we do, however they mention not analyzing data over last 10 years. We do track our revenue and have seen a steady increase. We compare sticker sales and other fees periodically to make sure we are not losing revenue. All this info is available.

Town Manager Comment: I support the DPW Director's position on this matter.

18. Recommendation: Utilize Web Site to Provide Recycling Information

DPW Director's Response: We can ask our web developer, oops don't have one. We have lots of handouts, have done new program outreach and are always being proactive in this area. We recently received a grant to resign and educate the public at the transfer station. We could add more to a website with the right expertise.

Town Manager Comment: The website is a great resource to provide information to our residents. We need to address this issue and work with our IT Department to increase information. This happens to be a goal of the Town Manager this year and it will be addressed.

Senior Center

1. Recommendation: Maintain the current staffing level of three (3) full-time employees, including dedicated full-time personnel for Outreach and Activities coordination.

COA Director's Response: Current staffing levels meet the needs of the Seniors at the present time.

Town Manager Comment: I am satisfied that the current staffing levels meet the current needs of the Seniors. As the Senior population increases, a review of staffing will be necessary and addressed as needed.

2. Recommendation: Use Aggressive Promotional Techniques are Utilized for Programs and Services

COA Director's Response: The COA currently collaborates with the Fire and Police departments, accompanying them on visits when appropriate. We also work with the Town Nurse regarding at risk residents. The COA has developed an Outreach Brochure that has been distributed around town and with local places of worship. As a result of our 2015 Needs assessment, as part of our Long-Range Plan, we have implemented a marketing plan which is included with this report.

Town Manager Comment: I support the COA Director's position on this matter.

3. Recommendation: Activities of participants should be tracked so as to gauge programmatic interest as well as overall participation levels.

COA Director's Response: Program design is currently based on the 2015 Needs Assessment results. The COA 5-year Long-Range plan is also based on the assessment. It is anticipated at the conclusion of the 5-year plan (2021) the COA will once again conduct a needs assessment to update the Long-Range plan.

Town Manager Comment: I support the COA Director's position on this matter.

4. Recommendation: Establish foundations to assist in support of specific services or facilities (e.g. "Friends of the....")

COA Director's Response: The Friends of Groton Elders has established a Senior Center Facilities account to support fundraising for a new or renovated senior center. The Friends also has a Life Long Learning account which supports senior center programming. In FY 2017 they provided approximately \$2,000 in programming support.

Town Manager Comment: I support the COA Director's position on this matter.