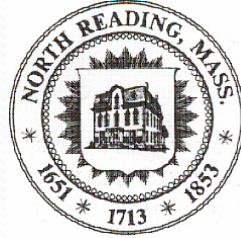


Town of North Reading Strategic Plan 2023 & Beyond

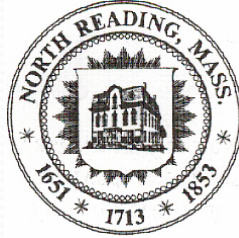


Approved by the Select Board on August 8, 2022

Mission Statement



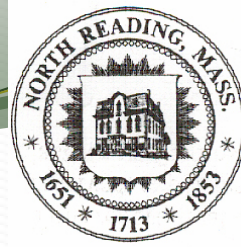
The Select Board, as ethical stewards of the public trust, shall set policy that is consistent with the Town Charter, respectful of the needs of the Community, the laws of the Commonwealth and within the financial means of the Community. It shall seek all opportunities that will advance the overall well-being of the Community and its citizens by providing the best quality of life, education, public safety and public health. It shall provide the necessary leadership through consensus building and communication for the benefit of its constituencies and employees by reminding them of the value they bring to the Community.



Vision Statement

North Reading while maintaining its suburban small town character, will implement a strategic plan that improves the quality of life for all its residents through controlled community development, supportive infrastructure, and the implementation of a budgetary plan with, cost savings, increased efficiencies, and new revenues which support town services on an annual basis.

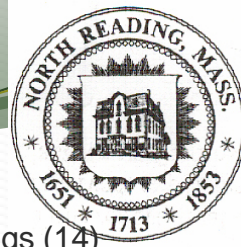
Progress Ongoing



- Identified and funded a Profile for Funding OPEB (14)
- Storm Water
 - Secured Funding for Mapping and Completed Mapping (16)
- Establish stand-alone Human Resources office w/Director (16)
- Completed and Submitted a DEIR and **FEIR** for Water and Wastewater (16-)
- Funded Implementation RMLD Phase-1 Installing LED Street Lights throughout the Town Streets and Town Owned Properties (17)
- **Completed Housing Production Plan (18)**
- Obtained Membership in AARP Age-Friendly Communities Program (18)
- **Established partially self-funded health insurance model since 2018**
- Appropriated funding for electronic records retention (19)
- Funded Rail Trail Feasibility Study (19-22)
- Assisted in Construction of Battery Storage Facility (19)
- Obtained state grant funding for electronic permitting system (19)
- Funded Public Relations / Communications Personnel (19)
- **Implemented virtual/hybrid public meetings (20-)**
- **Implemented expanded voting opportunities for elections and Town Meetings (20-)**
- Funded and **recruiting** Grant Writing Personnel (21)

- **Resumed Facilities Master Planning Committee feasibility study for municipal properties (21)**
- **Achieved developer's agreement to add SHI- affordable and residential preference units – at Pulte and Wheeler development (21)**
- **Approved an investment policy (21)**
- **Approved proclamations:**
 - **Pride month (21)**
 - **Veterans Appreciation month (21)**
- **Reviewed other solid waste programs to determine viability of Town's program (21-22)**
- **Funded and recruiting Public Services Director (22)**
- **Utilized \$2.9 million of JT Berry funds for wastewater design**
- **Submitted wastewater project FEIR to state (22)**
- **Signed feasibility agreement to explore regional civilian dispatch (22)**

Progress Achieved



- Energy Efficiencies Established
 - New/Retro-fitted Lighting
 - Installed Efficient Motors in Various Equipment
- Wastewater Achievements
 - Completed a Study that Proves the Investment in Wastewater in Key Commercial Areas will generate additional Tax Revenues (11)
- New High and Middle School (11-12)
- Renovated Senior Center (Complete -12)
- Obtained Additional Funding for New School Project (13)
- Acquiring Healthcare Consultant Achieves Modest and Controllable Premium Increases (13)
- Delinquent Taxes & Collections
- Revenue Generating Services
 - ALS Services at 90% Staffing Level (13)
- Technology Investments
 - Fully Funded the Completion of MUNIS (13)
 - Acquired a Town-Wide Alert System
 - Code Red
 - Town Hall Security Systems
 - Town Hall Server Upgrades (10)
 - Municipal Data Backup Systems (17)
- Secured Funding for MWRA Project and Submitted Environmental Impact Permits
- Completed a Facilities Study on Town Buildings (14)
 - Fire Station/DPW Facility/Town Hall Facility/Senior Center
 - Identified New Water Resource/Options (11-15)
- Successfully Executed a Succession Plan (14)
- New Revised Collective Bargaining Strategy
 - Successfully Negotiated 7 Labor Agreements that Resulted in Long-Term Savings (15/16)
 - Labor & Mgmt Cooperation On Health Ins.
- Established an Economic Development Committee Jointly with CPC (15)
- Received the Funding on Two (2) Community Compact Projects (17)
 - Regional Transportation
 - Concord Street Sewerage Study
- Acquired Two (2) Parcels on Lowell Road from DCAMM (former JT Berry)
 - Purchase and sales agreement signed with Pulte Homes in March, 2017
- Employee Recognition
 - Annual Lunch (17)
- Committed to Andover as our Water Resource (18)
- Secure Funding and Implementation for Andover Water Resource Project (18-19)
- Become a Purple Heart Community

Objectives

LEADERSHIP/VISION

- Maintain Management/Labor Relations
 - Shared Municipal/School Services
 - Human Resources, Purchasing Agent, Facility Maintenance and Technology
 - Develop Plan to Tie-In Municipal Bldg into School Waste Water Facility (Library, Peabody Court, Public Safety, etc)
 - Evaluate Alternative Delivery of Municipal Services including Shared Services
 - Complete/Evaluate Facilities Master Plan
 - Explore compensation for elected officials
 - Pursue Public Relations / Communications Personnel
 - Determine Vision for Town's Future Identity
 - Evaluate/Implement Community Master Plan (20)
 - Identify locations, cost, RMLD partnership for upgradable electric vehicle charging stations (DPW engineering)
 - Establish an electric vehicle purchasing program
 - Accessory Dwelling Unit bylaw
- Leadership/coordination need
 - Population turning over
 - Volunteer Recruitment Committee
 - Active recruit for Hillview – golf volume / pro marketing, Toscanas, Green Tomato, Strega
 - Affordable housing policy – review as with Carpenter Drive
 - Regular housing report
 - Re-visit use of remaining Berry Property
 - Town Center

Objectives

PUBLIC WORKS

- Permit, Design, and Construct Water System Improvements
- Commercial Wastewater Plan Implementation (11-27)
 - Develop a Finance Plan (21-22)
 - Complete FEIR (22)
 - Explore funding opportunities / secure funding for construction (22)
 - Permitting and Approvals (22-23)
 - Construction Begins (24?)
- Maintain and Increase Sidewalks
- Dispose of 9 Mill Street
- Storm Water
 - Identify Cost & Revenue Sources to Fund this Program
- Improve Town Buildings
- Intersection Safety Enhancements
- Greater Energy Conservation (13 – On going)
- ESCO (21)
- Reduce solid waste, expand recycling and conservation options, and reform fee structure
- Beautification – shrubs/trees

FINANCE

- Revenue Plan that Supports Services Without an Override
 - Funding Capital Plan
 - Economic Development
 - Integrate Wastewater in Key Commercial areas to Increase Values
 - Fund OPEB as per Current Policy
- Develop Capital Plan for Use of Berry Sale Proceeds
- Prepare for Town's Share of Cost of New Vocational School Project
- Refine Collective Bargaining Strategy
- Technology Solutions, Expansion & Implementation
 - Permitting and Record Retention and Access
 - Enhance Security, Implement Best Practices
 - Employee Time/Attendance/Benefit Solutions
- **Develop plan to expend ARPA funds**
- Fill Grant position
- Support staff for Grant Writer
- IT support staffing -- \$60,000
- Document digitization project

Objectives

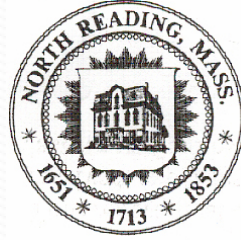
PUBLIC SERVICES

- Public Service Director to advance age-friendly
- Transportation Enhancements (18-21)
- Intergenerational Community Center
- Implement AARP Age-Friendly Communities
- Senior Housing/Assistance Living
 - Need to Identify Town Owned Parcel(s)
- Leverage the Use of Available Town-owned Land including Conservation for Open/Passive Recreation
 - Swan Pond (proposed access study)
- Martin's Pond preservation: dredging
- Affordable Housing (Plan Development Ongoing)
- Explore options for affordable units
- Identify options to gain access to Riverwood Property
- Explore the Viability of Rail Trail
- Explore the Viability of Dog Park
- Explore Options for Early Voting in Town Elections
- Fine-tune expanded voting and public meeting options
- Age-Friendly Task Force – next agenda
- Website digital data
- Update website
- Expanded passive recreation access
- Rail trail
- Smith Property – Apple Tree Lane
- Full assessment of Town-owned land
- Comprehensive review of public services

PUBLIC SAFETY

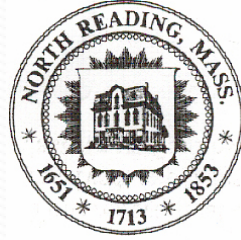
- Expand public safety staffing
- Exploring civilian dispatch

Community Core Values



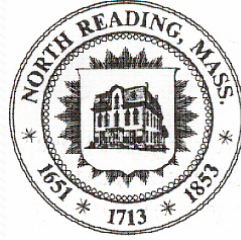
- Quality Public Education
 - Public Safety
 - Promotion of Local Commerce
 - Preservation and Improvement of Environment
 - Reputation of Openness and Trust
 - Open Space and Recreation
- Preservation of Town Character
 - Involvement in Community
 - Diversity of Ideas and Respect for Others
 - Health & Welfare for All
 - Sense of Community Compassion

SWOTT Exercise



- Strengths
- Weaknesses
- Opportunities
- Threats
- Trends

Strengths



- Location (proximity to major highways)
- Excellent School System
- Open Space
- Effective First Responders
- Effective Legislative Delegation
- Productive Town Department Operations
- Productive Operations by Town Employees
- Favorable Bond Rating
- Open Town Meeting (*Trending toward a weakness due to lack of Participation*)
- Community Involvement/Volunteerism/Activism/Generosity
- Continued Stability of Workforce/Ability to Attract Candidates
- Proactive Financial Planning Team
- Active Community Impact Team and Outreach
- Active Economic Development Committee
- Excellent Youth Opportunities
- Long-term stable quality water supply
- Intermunicipal Commitment for Commercial Wastewater Solution

Weaknesses

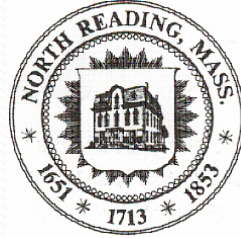
Weaknesses tied to an Objective

- Small Commercial Tax Base
- Lack of Sewers
- Lack of Public Transportation (trending favorably)
- Deteriorating Public Facilities and Infrastructure
- Increased Costs due to Deferred Maintenance
- Unfunded Federal/State mandates
- Structural Revenue Shortage
- High Cost of Employee Benefits
 - Health Insurances Premium, End of Career Benefits, Pension Costs
- Inconsistent aesthetics of commercial real estate on Rte. 28.
- Website Not Updated by Boards & Committees
- Lack of Affordable/Senior/Assisted Housing
- Lack of Sidewalks and Sidewalk Conditions
- Fragmented Social Media Presence

Weaknesses without a dedicated Objective

- ~~Civil Service in Public Safety Promotions~~
- Lack of Contested Races for Public Office
- Low voter turnout, and percent of eligible voting residents to meetings, and town meeting.
- Underutilized Public Access Channel
- Public Perception of Customer Service at Town Hall

Opportunities

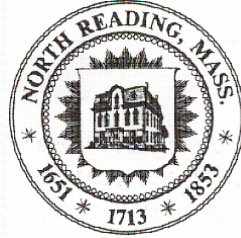


- Wastewater Initiatives
- Berry Center Commercial Development
- Planning for Capital Expenditure of Berry Sale Proceeds
- Increase Commercial Tax Base
- Collective Bargaining Agreements
- Improve Employee Relations
- Improve Communications with Residents and Industry
- Combine Local Public Safety Dispatch
- Consolidations (General Gov. – Schools)
- Tie-in Town Buildings & Peabody Court Wastewater into School Wastewater Plant
- Favorable Legislation
- Employee Incentive Program
- Wastewater Revenues by Commercial Development
- Expand Services and Facilities for Seniors
- Increase Collaboration Between Towns
 - Regionalization
 - Joint Purchasing
- Improve Customer Satisfaction and Public Perception
- Employee Development
- Use of Town-Owned Land
- Develop a new Identity for a NR Downtown
- Seek Opportunities in State Bond Bills
- Expanded Grant Writing
- Evaluate Regional Water Resource Needs

Threats

- Affordable Healthcare Act
- Reduction in State Aid
- Unfavorable Litigation
- Rising Energy Costs
- DEP/EPA Enforcement Orders
- Increased State & Federal Regulations
- Increase in Construction Costs
- Possible New Vocational School Project, Town would Pay a %
- Severe Winters/Storms/Climate Change
- Loss of Cell Tower Revenues
- Inability/Unwillingness to Serve on Boards/Committees
- Increased Drug-related and Domestic Crime
- Labor Costs
- Housing Affordability for Seniors
- Special Education Costs
- Infrastructure Failure (bridges)
- Reduction of Federal Aid
- Changes in Cable Technology over to Fiber Optics – Causes Decrease Rev.
- Opioids Addiction
- Security: facilities / cyber / staff
- Reliance on Social Media as Primary Source of Information

Trends



- Increased Cost of Goods and Services
- Eroding National Public Trust & Lack of Understanding
- Continuing Over-Regulation and Unfunded Mandates
- Uncertain Energy Costs
- Increased Healthcare Premiums
- Decreasing Health Care Carrier Options
- Willingness to Foster Inter-municipal Collaboration
- Trending toward more Positive in Flexibility by State Agencies
- Multiple Initiatives Underway Simultaneously
- Increasing Labor Costs
- Limited Availability of Qualified Personnel for Open Positions
- Reliance on Social Media as Primary Source of Information
- Cost of Operating and Maintaining New High/Middle School