

# Town of Auburn, Massachusetts

Julie A. Jacobson  
Town Manager



February 21, 2014

Madame Chair and Members of the Town of Auburn Board of Selectmen:

I am pleased to present this evaluation report to the Board of Selectmen at the close of my third year as Auburn's town manager. This report covers the period from January 31, 2013 through January 30, 2014. During the past year, I continued to focus on identifying reforms and developing strategies to enhance the delivery of services to the public, maximize resources, and strengthen operations at all levels of government. Highlights of accomplishments during the past year include the implementation of health insurance reforms; completion of collective bargaining with all eleven town unions; continued legal savings; community events; negotiation and purchase of the land from the Masonic Lodge for the new Middle School Project; completion of the ascertainment process and subsequent execution of the agreement with Charter Communications; executed agreement with CMDART; executed Net Metering Credit Agreement with Mercury Solar; launching of the Town's first social media initiative; and successful grant applications and awards. Additionally, we undertook the implementation of our Green Communities Energy Saving Programs, completed the Wind Turbine Feasibility Study, revitalized the Independence Day event which attracted 4,000 to 5,000 attendees, and completed the internal review of all Administrative By-Laws.

While I have said this often, it bears repeating: the accomplishments of the administration are the result of the collaboration and hard work of all town employees and especially through the diligence and commitment of my management team. The ability of this team to work together to continuously strive to improve our processes, address concerns, resolve issues, and provide our taxpayers, residents and businesses with services, programs and infrastructure is both impressive and critical to achieving success. As such, I want to recognize and extend my sincere thanks to each of the department heads, division heads and employees across all departments for their dedication to the Town and their creative approach to problem-solving and operations which has enabled us to implement new technologies, new programs, and new processes which enhance our operations and delivery of critical services to the community. I am proud of the team we have built, the relationship we have developed with the school department, and the partnerships we have nurtured within the community over the past three years.

In addition to performing the core functions expected of the town manager and in addition to assuming the duties and responsibilities outlined in Section 3.06 of the Town Charter as Amended in 2009, the Board of Selectmen voted on March 25, 2013 to establish goals for the third year of my contract in addition to the core capabilities on the evaluation form that the Board adopted in April of 2013.

The categories of the evaluation form are:

## A. Relationship with the Board of Selectmen

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- B. Town Administration
- C. Budget and Finance
- D. Community Relations

The specific goals that the Board established for Year 2 were:

1. Develop Open Space and Recreation Plan
2. Develop a Plan for the Analysis, Evaluation and Potential Disposition of Town Properties
3. Evaluate Timeline for All Town Bills and Determine Whether They Can Be Staggered
4. Evaluation of Current Pakachoag Golf Course Operations and Analysis to Determine Feasibility of the Town Operating the Facility at the Expiration of Current Lease

The following report details the accomplishments that I have made towards achieving those goals as outlined in the attached Town Manager Evaluation Form.

**A. Relationship with the Board of Selectmen**

**1. Keeps Board members informed on the issues, needs, and significant issues of the Town departments.**

I have kept the Board of Selectmen informed of major issues throughout the year including emergency situations, legislative updates, new initiatives and significant issues in the administration. This includes regular electronic email communications to inform the Board of various issues or concerns of which they should be aware so that they can respond to constituent inquiries, including but not limited to storm updates, roadway projects, public safety issues, as well as community events, development projects and various issues that residents have brought to my attention. In addition to these communications, I have also provided numerous reports, information and updates to the Board and its sub-committees at Selectmen's meetings and in Executive Sessions throughout the year.

I am always available to meet with Board members and I have reached out to them to discuss policy issues, keep them apprised of critical issues, and answer any questions they may have regarding projects, operations or policies. To protect the rights of employees under the law and to protect the town from liability, I have kept the Board apprised of personnel matters to the extent possible within the law.

I meet regularly with the Chair of the Board of Selectmen to review Board of Selectmen agendas, discuss policy issues, and keep her apprised of situations, issues and needs within Town government, the community and town departments. I communicate with the chair regularly and have always responded to her requests for information, research or follow up action.

Communication with the Town Manager is integral to the ability of the Board to understand the operations and administration of Town government so that they can develop and set policy and provide well-informed guidance for the Town. It is also important for the town manager to provide Board members with essential information that they can use to answer questions from residents on issues of concern.

**2. Offers professional advice on the issues requiring BOS action with appropriate recommendations.**

Whether the Board initiates the request for information or I have provided information to the Board proactively, during the year I conducted extensive research on various issues and provided the results of that research to the Board for their deliberation and/or information. This includes research on gaming legislation, medical marijuana legislation, research on Massachusetts General Laws and other regulations, and information on projects, parcels, applications and policies that I believe the Board

should be aware of or in response to their inquiries. Throughout the year, I followed up on numerous requests for information or action from members of the Board who sought my assistance on constituent concerns and questions.

**3. Open to direction and suggestions by the Board members**

While I strive to effectively oversee and manage the daily operations and administration of town government, I do not hesitate to seek Board input or advice when appropriate or to inform them of critical or time sensitive issues that arise and discuss the handling of those issues. I have been and remain open to direction and guidance by the Board and I work hard to provide feedback and implement where feasible those suggestions provided by the Board.

**4. Provides liaison to Town Counsel and Labor Counsel to protect the town and drive efficient use of legal funding appropriations.**

During the past year, as in prior years, I worked diligently to keep the legal fees for both Labor Counsel and Town Counsel at a minimum wherever possible, recognizing that there are serious issues or complicated legal issues that require either Labor Counsel or Town Counsel participation in order to protect the Town.

During the summer of 2013, I conducted a comprehensive analysis of all legal costs incurred by the town and developed a detailed report for the Board of Selectmen that identified the breakdown of legal costs by category and recommendations for the provision of legal services to the Town. The report provided a comprehensive analysis of the legal expenditures for the period between July 1, 2012 and June 30, 2013 (FY13). The report also provided a 3 year comparison from FY11 through FY13 and a 5 year comparison from FY09 through FY13. The total legal expenditures for FY13 of \$137,898.59 represent a one year decrease of 27.30% in expenditures from FY12 and a three year decrease of 43.65% from FY11. Over the five year period, the FY13 total expenditures represent a 57.28% decrease. An analysis of the legal expenditures for Town (General) Counsel shows expenditures in FY13 of \$82,558.58, a 3.78% decrease over FY12. This represents a three year decrease of 4.09% since FY11 and a five year decrease of 35.50% since FY09. Labor Counsel expenditures were down significantly in FY13, totaling \$54,053.01, a 47.98% decrease over FY12 expenditures of \$103,879.86. The three year decrease is 61.01% over labor counsel expenditures in FY11, and the five year decrease is 47.23%.

As in FY12, a significant amount of expenditures for legal services in FY13, both general and labor, were driven by outside events, lawsuits, litigation, and complaints over which the Town has little or no control. Specifically, Town Counsel expenditures on litigation totaled \$27,342.70 in FY13, or 33% of the total town counsel expenditures. Labor counsel expenditures for FY13 related to grievances, agency matters and suits totaled \$44,324.19 or 82% of the total Labor Counsel expenditures.

I have made every effort to employ the services of both Town Counsel and Labor Counsel only when it is deemed necessary to do so. I have also worked with the unions directly to try to reduce the costs of negotiations through the collective bargaining process and to resolve grievances wherever possible. Likewise, department heads have been diligent about the need to contact Town Counsel or Labor Counsel which is done only after consultation with the Town Manager.

Both Town Counsel and Labor Counsel have and continue to provide excellent legal services to the Town. They are available whenever needed and extremely responsive to the Town's requests for assistance.

## **B. Town Administration**

### **1. Executes efficiently all the provisions of the General Laws, of the Town Charter, votes of Town Meeting and votes of the BOS that are in her purview.**

On a regular basis, I reference and review the Town Charter, Massachusetts General Laws, Town of Auburn By-Laws and Board of Selectmen votes as these laws, regulations, policies and votes pertain to a specific issue, policy, or procedure. In order to keep track of Board of Selectman votes, I created a document to track all votes by date or subject matter that have occurred since I became town manager in order to make it easier to research and find Board votes.

When necessary, I seek Town Counsel advice to provide a legal opinion on matters involving the Town Charter, a Town By-Law or Massachusetts General Law in order to ensure compliance with the laws governing the Town and municipalities in the Commonwealth. I have also reached out to our legislative delegation and state and federal agency personnel to seek their assistance in identifying or implementing various state or federal laws or regulations. When there is a question on the interpretation of various state laws or regulations that can be answered by the Attorney General's Office or the Inspector General's Office, I request opinions from their respective legal staff. I have also encouraged the management team to do so as well when appropriate. While all department heads and employees must seek and receive permission from the Town Manager to contact Labor Counsel or Town Counsel on matters requiring legal counsel, I have supported those requests if deemed appropriate.

During the past two years, town administration has worked very hard to review and propose revisions to the administrative By Laws. Working with each department head and affected employees, in conjunction with Town Counsel, the administration has provided the By Law Review Committee with a comprehensive draft document which the Committee is in the process of reviewing. Once their review is complete and Town Counsel has finalized his proposed revisions, the Committee will hold public meetings to present and discuss the draft Administrative By Laws which ultimately will go to Town Meeting for review and approval.

### **2. Monitors the condition and maintains town facilities as financial conditions allow.**

Many of the Town's buildings and facilities had not been maintained regularly for years which resulted in the need for major repairs or total replacement, such as doors, windows, roofs or flooring. In order to facilitate those repairs and building projects that could be done without having to go out to bid and incur debt service costs, it was necessary to develop the capacity in-house. Thus, as part of the Reorganization Plan, I established a Facility Management Unit within the Department of Public Works to enable the Town to provide for the general maintenance and upkeep of our Town facilities, including the Town Hall, Senior Center, Library, Police Station and Fire Stations. While maintenance of School properties is handled by school department staff, certain building and rehabilitation projects in the schools have been undertaken by Facility Management staff in conjunction with school department staff. Likewise, School staff works on and repairs Town facilities as well. This Town-School partnership has enabled both the Town and the School Department to repair and improve various buildings utilizing Town and School employees rather than having to contract the work to outside vendors.

Since the inception of the Facility Management Unit, the Town has realized a savings of approximately \$150,000. In Fiscal Year 2014 the Facilities Division completed the construction of the Auburn high School Press Box and the DPW Salt Barn, This work minimized the cost of two major capital improvement projects by performing all carpentry work in-house. In addition, the talented Unit completed countless projects in Town-owned facilities which enables the Town to continue its facility maintenance and repair schedule. Over the next several years, the Facilities Division will continue to

complete additional projects currently on the CIP so that the Town does not have to borrow for those projects or bid the project to outside contractors at a much higher cost.

Through the annual CIP process, each department is asked to evaluate their respective facilities and make recommendations on maintenance, repair and upgrades that are needed now or anticipated to be needed in the near future. Those items that can be handled by the Facility Management Division are addressed, or scheduled to be addressed, in order to reduce the need to outsource the work. Those smaller projects that can be funded through capital as opposed to incurring debt and interest payments are handled through the capital account. Larger capital projects are planned as part of the annual CIP process.

It is vital to continue to evaluate the condition of all town properties and to plan for the necessary resources to maintain and repair those facilities as needed.

### **3. Supervises procurement/central purchasing for greatest savings.**

Since becoming Town Manager, I continually evaluate contracted and out-sourced labor, services and goods to determine cost effectiveness and to consider whether alternative mechanisms could be used to accomplish the same or better service at a reduced rate. As a result of this analysis, many services previously outsourced or contracted services have been brought in-house while other services remain contracted as the cost to provide those services in-house would exceed the contracted amount. Those services brought in house include custodial services, facility maintenance, vehicle repair services, and the majority of snow removal operations. Those contracted services for which we have identified alternate mechanisms to generate savings include the purchase of fuel and oil, electric generation, and road salt.

Through an analysis of snow removal operations, DPW has implemented key changes that are more cost effective than previous practices. This includes utilizing DPW personnel from the combined divisions for snow removal operations, which reduced the need to contract with as many private plow operators as in the past. At the Annual Town Meeting in May of 2013, \$20,000 was approved to purchase two Cirus Close Spreader Control Systems, a computer software program that was installed in two to install in some of the DPW trucks called Cirus Controls. The software controls the amount of salt and sand that is distributed from the trucks at specific rates or miles to maximize the efficient use of deicing materials. The program allows for dispersal rates to be adjusted according to speed of vehicle. This is a tremendous improvement over older systems which are dependent on operator's judgment only and can lead to over usage of materials. The Cirus Controls system provides a report for each storm that details accurate records of how much material was placed and provides data necessary for making adjustments. GPS coordinates of each Cirus equipped truck location provides post-storm data collection including application rates, time, and width of treatment area to enable DPW to make adjustments and to calculate materials used in each vehicle during each storm event. Three (3) of DPW's newer vehicles have the Cirus Control System as well, bringing the total equipment with Cirus to five out of eight vehicles. A twenty percent (20%) reduction in treated salt usage is anticipated with this equipment. This year those savings will be approximately \$20,000. The Town of Auburn is one of only a few communities to have implemented this system.

After review and analysis of the costs of outsourcing various fleet maintenance costs, in the winter of 2011, the DPW began to handle minor repairs and oil changes for the police and fire vehicles previously outsourced. Based on preliminary estimates that indicated savings, the Town amended its Reorganization Plan in June 2012 to create a Fleet Maintenance Unit within DPW. Following successful impact bargaining with the union in September of 2012, the fleet maintenance function was fully implemented in the DPW. A vehicle repair database was developed to manage the fleet maintenance

program. Bringing these repairs and maintenance in-house have resulted in an annual savings to date of \$65,000 and will continue to result in significant savings from previously out-sourced services.

During the past year, the Town has launched a number of green initiatives designed to promote energy efficiencies and conservation, reduce energy costs, and support the use of alternative energy both as a municipality and as a community. As part of the Green Community designation, a comprehensive audit was undertaken on several town and school buildings. This audit is being used to identify and measure a number of green initiatives designed to promote energy efficiencies and conservation, reduce energy costs, and support the use of alternative energy both as a municipality and as a community. An analysis of our municipal energy costs and options for potential energy savings led to the execution of a contract with Constellation Energy that will generate savings for the Town. The savings over the last two years as a result of the contract with Constellation total \$12,666. The Town also contracted with Prism to install energy saving fixtures and systems in various town and school buildings. This will result in an annual savings of \$8,000.

Following Town Meeting approval in May of 2013, the Town executed a Net Metering Credit Agreement with Mercury Solar that will save the Town approximately \$3.5 million over the 20 year term. This facility expects to receive SREC approval from the Commonwealth in April and is currently working with the utility company to complete the net metering requirements and expects that process to parallel with SREC approval. Mercury expects the facility to be operational in the Fall, at which time the Town will begin to realize the anticipated savings.

**4. Oversees the preparation and presentation of the Town Warrant.**

During 2013, I oversaw the preparation and presentation of the Town Warrant for both the Annual Town Meeting in May and the Fall Town Meeting in October. This included the internal review, Town Counsel review, and coordination of the Town Warrant with the Town Clerk, Town Moderator and Town Counsel. The final Town Warrant was then distributed to Town Meeting members. This was accomplished within the time frame established under the Town's By-Laws. A presentation by the Town Manager and Assistant Town Manager/CFO is given at each Town Meeting to provide an update on the projects, plans and initiatives that town administration has undertaken and a comprehensive financial overview that enables Town Meeting members to make informed decisions on warrant articles.

**5. Maintains strong working relationships with Auburn's Legislative representatives at the state and federal level.**

Throughout the course of the year, I continued to communicate with Auburn's state and federal legislative delegation to keep them apprised of key initiatives and projects in Auburn. This communication includes contacting either the federal or state legislators' offices when the Town submits a grant in order to keep them apprised of the grant application and to request their support for the grant at the state or federal level. Copies of *The Auburn Account*, the town's quarterly newsletter, are distributed to our state and federal legislative delegation each quarter to keep them apprised of the activities in Town. I also inform the members of the legislative delegation of significant events in Town and invite them or their designee to attend on their behalf.

Last summer, I submitted testimony to the Massachusetts Gaming Commission on the gaming regulations and spoke with Gaming Commission officials about my concerns with the regulations and limited timing for municipal input from potential Surrounding Communities. I also conducted research on legislation that could impact the Town including Mass Gaming Regulations, Medical Marijuana Regulations, House 1859 Zoning Reform, Energy Bills, Veterans Bills and Housing Bills.

Both myself and other members of the town administration attend the Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA) annual Spring Legislative Breakfast meeting and the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) annual Legislative Breakfast meetings held by the in order to listen to the updates on critical legislative issues that our state and federal legislative delegation in the Central Massachusetts region provide and to have the opportunity to ask questions or provide feedback to the delegation. These meetings provide a tremendous opportunity for local officials to network with legislators from the Central Massachusetts region to discuss legislative priorities, municipal challenges, and budgetary issues.

As a member of the MMA and the Massachusetts Municipal Managers Association (MMMA), I attend regular meetings throughout the year in order to stay apprised of pertinent legislative initiatives and to work with the MMA to lobby for or against legislation that impacts the Town of Auburn. I am also on the MMA's Policy Committee on Municipal and Regional Administration which meets monthly to address issues of critical importance to cities and towns including regionalization issues, local planning and zoning issues, and local and state policies. Additionally, I am a member of the MMMA's Form of Government Committee which addresses issues and concerns related to various forms of government in Massachusetts. In January, I was elected to the Executive Committee of the MMMA which will provide a unique opportunity to participate in planning and policy direction for the MMMA which provides technical, educational and professional support for town administrators and an opportunity to meet with legislators from across the state regarding legislation that affects municipalities.

### **C. Budget and Finance**

#### **1. Prepares and presents the Annual Budget and capital outlay program.**

In accordance with the Town Charter and applicable by-laws, I work with the Chief Financial Officer to prepare and present the annual budget to the Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee, and Town Meeting. I also work with the CFO to update and amend as necessary the Five Year Capital Improvement Program. This involves meetings with each department head to review current CIP items, future projected needs, and developing strategies to fund those priority items.

The fiscal condition of the Town remains stable due to conservative budgeting and the implementation of continued reforms which result in savings and efficiencies. The Town's strong reserves, coupled with continued investment of \$500,000 annually into the OPEB Fund and continued growth of the Stabilization Fund, as well as the implementation of solid financial policies, enabled the Town to maintain its AA<sup>+</sup> Bond Rating in 2013. By proposing financial policies, adopted by the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee in the fall of 2012, and implementing those policies this current fiscal year, we have been able to set aside one tenth of allowable 2 ½ annually for capital in order to reduce our borrowing needs.

#### **2. Works closely with department heads to prepare annual budgets.**

In order to prepare the annual budget and the Five Year CIP, I work with the CFO and individual department heads to identify departmental priorities, evaluate those priorities within the context of overall Town goals and priorities, and develop the final departmental budget that is submitted to the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee, and ultimately submitted to Town Meeting. When appropriate, meetings are also held with the relevant board, commission or committee to discuss and determine their budgets. Budgets are prepared to reflect departmental needs, Town goals and priorities, balanced with fiscal responsibility.

**3. Works with department heads throughout the year to evaluate and prioritize departmental needs and financial requests.**

In addition to working with department heads during the annual budget preparation process, through ongoing dialogue with each department head throughout the year we evaluate and prioritize the capital and operational needs of the department. Recognizing the need to be flexible and adapt to changing situations, collectively working with department heads we identify their needs, evaluate the options for addressing those needs, and determine the best mechanism to proceed. As variables arise, such as broken equipment, staff injuries or illnesses, new regulations or requirements, or unpredicted weather-related problems, each department head keeps me apprised as to the issues and proposed remediation to address those needs.

**4. Aggressively pursues available state and federal grant monies in support of the capital and operational needs of the town.**

During the past year, town administration applied for 26 grants in addition to participating as an applicant on three regional grants. Of the 26 grants, 18 grants were awarded and 8 are pending. Grants awarded to the Town of Auburn in the past year totaled \$ 106,463.50. These grants included a debris removal trailer (shared with three towns), compost bins, a light tower, reforestation trees, CERT equipment, emergency management equipment, CodeRED funding, public health initiatives, Civil War monument restoration, and senior center programs and transportation.

Additionally, the two regional grants in which Auburn is a participant were awarded to the regional collaborative for a total of \$268,675.00. The regional grants included an \$80,000 regional CIC grant that was awarded for a thirty-town collaborative for Phase III Stormwater Management and an \$188,675 regional CIC grant awarded last month to fund a bucket truck to be shared with 6 communities.

All department and division heads are encouraged to continually seek alternate funding sources to augment their programs and services, a goal which is incorporated into each evaluation form. We will continue to seek and secure grant and foundation funds to support the priority needs and goals of the Town.

**D. Community Relations**

**1. Interacts positively with the public, responding to questions and requests in a timely, constructive manner.**

Throughout the year, I meet or speak with scores of residents, property owners and business owners to listen to and address matters that they are concerned about and to address any problems or issues they may have. I make every effort to respond to phone calls, emails, visits and letters in a timely fashion and to resolve issues whenever possible. Over the past year, I received and responded to 2,205 emails to the Town Manager account, sent over 10,000 emails, answered myriad phone calls and met with residents, businesses, developers and visitors. I will continue to be accessible to the residents and businesses in the community and will strive to be responsive to inquiries in a timely manner.

In order to enhance transparency in government, communication with the public is critical. I continue to utilize various forms of communication and technology to outreach to the public, keep residents and business informed, and provide the public with easy access to important information regarding town government. In July of 2013, we developed and launched the Town's first social media sites – Facebook and Twitter. We created these pages to communicate information, updates, news and events to residents, businesses, visitors and the general public. Through the use of social media, we have increased our outreach and communication efforts to a broader section of the population. The Town of Auburn's official Facebook and Twitter pages is used to provide updates and information regarding

Town-sponsored events, activities and initiatives, and to feature economic and community development initiatives such as events, activities, new business openings, expansions and projects. The Fire Department and the Emergency Management Department also launched their Facebook pages to enhance communications with the public and to provide timely information regarding town issues to the public.

Electronic distribution of ***The Auburn Account*** continued, a quarterly municipal newsletter created during my first year as town manager to keep residents, businesses and property owners informed about town projects, programs and services. The newsletter is also available in hard copy at Town offices and is sent to over 3,400 parents and families of school children through the School Department. ***The Auburn Account*** is also posted on the Auburn Chamber of Commerce's web site.

CodeRED, a web-based emergency communication system implemented in December 2011, was used throughout the year to keep residents and businesses informed of critical emergency related information. The CodeRED community messaging function, which is optional, was used to communicate information on community events to those who signed up to receive this optional service

We also continue to develop and air Public Service Announcements on Auburn Community Television to keep the public informed of critical issues such as public health and public safety. Auburn Community Television continued to televise as many board and commission meetings as possible to inform the public and provide access to meetings for those who cannot attend in person.

The town administration continued to provide reports and updates to the Board of Selectmen at their meetings to inform the public of pertinent issues and activities that the administration is undertaking.

## **2. Works with local business owners and appropriate town departments to promote industrial and commercial growth.**

Business development, which includes business retention, expansion and the attraction of new businesses, continued throughout the year. Town administration worked to facilitate the opening of several new businesses in the past year and the expansion of numerous existing facilities in Auburn. These efforts have helped to facilitate the redevelopment of vacant and underutilized properties and provide support to those businesses that are expanding their operations in Auburn.

During the past year, town administration continued to work with the Economic Development Committee, the Business Roundtable, and regulatory boards and commissions to facilitate development in Auburn. Throughout the past year, I continued to meet with the Business Roundtable participants who consist of business and commercial/industrial property owners, presidents and general managers in order to solicit valuable input and feedback on the strengths and challenges of doing business in Auburn, identify issues that impact business, and identify programs and/or services that would assist or enhance their operations. We have utilized the input of the Business Roundtable to formulate strategies to meet the needs of the business community and to stimulate economic development. The Business Roundtable has fostered communication and dialogue between the Town and the business community.

I continued to partner with the Auburn Chamber of Commerce and its leaders to collectively work towards the Town's priorities and to strengthen the business environment in Town. I have spoken at several Chamber meetings to provide information on plans and initiatives in Auburn. Building relationships and communicating with businesses in Town is a key component of creating economic development capacity.

The Department of Development and Inspectional Services (DIS), within which the development and permitting functions, building permits, inspections, planning and regulatory services and staffing of the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, and Conservation Commission were consolidated, provides a single point of contact for businesses seeking to establish or expand their facilities. The Development Coordinating Group (DCG), which consists of department heads from DIS, Police, Fire, and DPW, met monthly during the year to review forty plans and projects submitted by entrepreneurs, developers and businesses. The DCG provided valuable feedback and guidance on the development process to several project proponents.

The results of the economic development efforts have begun to materialize in the growth of the commercial/industrial base. During the past year, several companies expanded, new businesses opened, and new developments were proposed. (See list below).

**Completed:**

**Reliant Medical Group ReadyMed:**

With operations at 35 Millbury Street and 42 Southbridge Street in Auburn, Reliant Health Care has expanded their presence in Auburn with the addition of a 5,000 square foot urgent care facility. This 24-hour operation provides care for those patients with injuries that do not need the full service of the emergency room or those who cannot get access to their primary care provider yet require immediate care. Containing 5 exam rooms, x-ray facilities and a procedure room, the ReadyMed facility is located in the former Staples building that has long been vacant.

**Herb Chambers Hyundai:**

Herb Chambers Hyundai is expanding the existing building to include a drive-in vehicle drop off. The expansion of the building was completed in conjunction with reclaiming a significant portion of the parking lot around the building and near Southbridge Street. The building's signage is also being upgraded.

**Former Ethan Allen Building:**

The Ethan Allen Furniture Store has been closed for several years. The current owner has performed some minor alterations to the site including demolition of the two houses that shared the site as well as the removal of a small portion of the building at the northwest corner and the placement of new parking areas. The site now hosts a 5,000 square foot fitness center and is awaiting final agreements to fill the additional 10,000 square feet. This provides highly visible redevelopment and may add some benefit to the proposed use of the former Lowe's site across the street.

**Camden Drive Sub-Division:**

This sub-division consists of 17 lots with single family homes ranging from \$370,000 to \$702,000 in assessed valuation. Sixteen homes are completed with a single lot remaining for development. Lot sizes range from 30,000 square feet to 1.2 acres with homes providing 2,100 square feet to 4,200 square feet of living area. In October of 2013 the Town accepted Camden Drive as a public road and will provide maintenance and upkeep going forward.

**Hertz Rental Car:**

The Hertz Corporation has relocated their operation from within a local auto body repair facility to a stand-alone location at 823 Washington Street. This building has operated as a variety of businesses through the years ranging from a welding shop to an auto repair facility. The Hertz Corporation has done some minor cosmetic and interior renovations to fit the building to their needs.

**Dunkin' Donuts @ 386 Southbridge Street:**

The Dunkin' Donuts at 386 Southbridge Street recently rehabbed their building with new interior finishes and the addition of a second drive-thru window for the pick-up of large orders to avoid back-ups off of the property. In addition to the building modifications the owners of this franchise have also worked collaboratively with the Town and MADOT to reconfigure the property's curb cut on Route 12 by reducing the width and designating it exit only.

**Thrifty Car Sales:**

Thrifty Car Sales has located a new second line car dealership at 444 Washington Street. Working with an existing motorsports sales facility that was not fully utilizing their location, Thrifty added a demising wall inside the building to create office space and has a license for the storage and sale of up to 80 used vehicles.

**Fuller Pre-Owned Autos:**

Expanding their footprint in Auburn, Fuller Automotive has opened a pre-owned vehicle sales location adjacent to their automotive body and repair facilities. This location occupies the front portion of an existing building which has been the location of Truck Tire Service Center, which as a corporation is moving away from retail sales. This location allows for a seamless expansion on the part of Fuller Automotive and allows the current occupant to remain in the Town of Auburn.

**275 Washington Street:**

The building at 275 Washington Street was previously occupied by the Alpine Industrial Corporation and has been vacant since mid-2012. In 2013 the R.H. Harris Corporation signed a lease and performed some interior renovations to divide the building into 2 tenant spaces. Additionally, the property owner got approval from the Planning Board to perform site alterations including changing the stormwater management system for the property from an above ground detention pond to an underground chamber system to facilitate better circulation and increase the available parking on site. In the second half of 2013, the building was purchased by Glaz Reality who also received permission to alter the site by removing some superfluous parking area in the front of the building and installing additional landscaping. Glaz also secured a tenant for the remaining portion of the building.

**Underway:****Diamond Auto Group:**

New construction is underway at Diamond Auto Group, a Chevrolet, GMC, Buick and Cadillac dealership located at 768 Washington Street. Diamond is building a 16,650 square foot facility with 4,000 square feet of office space and 12,650 square feet of repair bays to expand its service center. There will be 374 new parking spaces for inventory storage, customer and employee parking. Diamond Auto Group estimates that an additional 25 to 30 jobs will be created as a result of the expansion project. This project is the second of three phases in a redevelopment of the existing dealership.

**Outback Steakhouse:**

Bloomin Brands, a national restaurant chain, has had plans approved for the demolition of a former restaurant location and the construction of a new 6,000 square foot Outback Steakhouse. The construction will use the existing parking area with improvements to the striping to increase the parking capacity by 30% and provide safer traffic patterns. This development is adjacent to the recently opened Reliant Medical Group ReadyMed facility and will remove a long-term blighted property that the Town and its residents have actively pursued redeveloping.

**Cumberland Farms:**

Cumberland Farms currently operates a combination gas station/convenience store at 502 Washington Street. The project includes razing the existing building and gas pumps along with the house on an adjacent lot. A new 4,000 square foot convenience store building is being constructed on the newly assembled lots. Additionally, the existing gasoline storage tanks are being removed, replaced and relocated to allow for the reconfiguration and addition of the dispensary facilities. The business temporarily closed a couple of weeks ago and will remain so for approximately 3 months, with completion set for the summer of 2014.

**Herb Chambers Toyota:**

Herb Chambers Toyota is adding a small employee parking area on Appleton Road and has received approval for a 2-phased project at the corner of Route 20 and Prospect St. The initial phase will consist of major site work including retaining walls, drainage work and landscaping resulting in a vehicle storage lot that will host 480 first line inventory vehicles. Phase 2 will include the addition of a service facility for the adjacent Toyota dealership.

**R.H. White Construction:**

Auburn is home to the headquarters of R.H. White Construction, one of the largest contractors specializing in construction for utilities in New England. With a highly skilled, trained workforce of over 500 employees, 300 employees are located in the company's Auburn headquarters. The company purchased the abutting property, previously owned by the Knights of Columbus. This purchase will enable the company to hold its training programs onsite while providing additional space to accommodate its growing operations. R.H. White has received approval for the demolition of the existing building and is proposing to build a new two-story office and training facility to meet the needs of their growing company. The project is expected to start in the Spring of 2014.

**Deer Run Estates:**

This development will consist of a new 800-foot road servicing 9 single-family houses on a 38-acre parcel. The lots contained in this subdivision have a minimum lot size of 60,000 square feet with a minimum frontage of 180 feet.

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The homes in this development will range from 2,300 to 3,500 square feet. As part of the design, the developer has placed a conservation restriction on approximately 20 acres for the purpose of preservation of habitat for flora and fauna of special concern.

**440 Washington Street:**

A new 20,000 square foot industrial building is under construction that will house 2 tenants. The first will be Motorsports International, located next door at 444 Washington Street, who will store their excess inventory in a warehouse portion of the building. The other tenant is yet to be determined.

**Proposed:**

**Former Proposed Lowe's Site:**

The 17 acre site located at the intersection of Southbridge Street (Route 12) and the Massachusetts Turnpike is permitted for a retail development which was originally planned as a Lowe's Home Improvement. A local car dealer has signed a Purchase and Sales Agreement with Lowe's and is anticipated to close on the property in 60 days. Detailed site plans will be forthcoming.

**Pakachoag Acres Day Care:**

Pakachoag Acres is an existing childcare facility that is located in a space they have outgrown in a location that has limited accessibility for parents. The proposal is to raze a building that had previously been used as a gas station and then as a restaurant. The demolished building will be replaced with a new building designed specifically to meet the needs of a 21<sup>st</sup> century childcare provider. The proposal also includes significant sitework including the installation of stormwater collection and infiltration systems, new parking areas, play areas and formalized access and egress to Auburn Street. The designs are expected to be approved by the Planning Board in March of 2014.

The administration will continue to work with developers and business owners to facilitate their permitting, financing or expansion projects.

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### **Report on the Four Specific Goals for Year 3**

I am proud to report on the four goals established by the Board of Selectmen upon which my efforts and those of my administration were focused throughout the year to augment the daily ongoing operations and administration of town government. Each of those goals has been met. Those goals are:

**1. Develop Open Space and Recreation Plan – COMPLETE**

The administration completed the draft Open Space and Recreation Plan, which looks at the Town's demographics, the context of Auburn within the region and the existing open space and recreational infrastructure. This information was gathered and analyzed by the Planning Division and submitted to the Open Space Committee for review. The various elements were reviewed with the Committee and changes made accordingly. As the plan took shape, the Committee held a public SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) exercise to determine the potential future needs and possible goals for Auburn in the open space and recreation realm. Using the results of this exercise, the goals were drafted and an action plan was developed. This document will now be reviewed and finalized by the Open Space Committee and presented to the public for comment. Any required changes will be made and the Plan will then be submitted to the Commonwealth for review and approval.

**2. Develop a Plan for the Analysis, Evaluation and Potential Disposition of Town Properties - COMPLETE**

During the past year, I developed a Real Property Disposition Strategy and initiated implementation of the Strategy. The Strategy includes both short and long-term recommendations for the evaluation and disposition of town-owned real property. See Attachment #1 for the report on the Real Property Disposition Strategy that was presented to the Board of Selectmen on February 6, 2014.

**3. Evaluate Timeline for All Town Bills and Determine Whether They Can Be Staggered – COMPLETE**

All Town bill schedules were reviewed and researched to determine whether there is flexibility in scheduling due dates. See Attachment #2 for the report on Bill Payment Schedules presented to the Board of Selectmen on February 6, 2014.

**4. Evaluation of Current Pakachoag Golf Course Operations and Analysis to Determine Feasibility of the Town Operating the Facility at the Expiration of Current Lease – COMPLETE**

Town administration undertook a comprehensive evaluation and analysis of the Pakachoag Golf Course operations, researched national trends in the municipal golf industry, and visited and analyzed several municipal golf courses in Central Massachusetts to understand the various operational, maintenance and administrative models. See Attachment #3 for the report on the Pakachoag Golf Course Analysis and Recommendation presented to the Board of Selectmen on February 6, 2014.

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**Conclusion**

The third year of my term as town manager was marked by successfully negotiated health care reforms and the completion of the collective bargaining process with all municipal unions, continued legal savings, grantsmanship, business development activities, community events, and the development of strategies and programs to generate tax revenues and preserve town –owned assets. Over the past year, we increased our Stabilization Fund, increased Free Cash, increased our reserves, and increased our Excess Levy capacity while maintaining a quality level of services for the residents, businesses and property owners of Auburn.

I want to extend my gratitude and thanks to the Board of Selectmen for their leadership and guidance throughout the year. I also want to recognize and thank the town employees, division heads and department heads for their hard work and commitment to serving the citizens of Auburn, as well as the board and commission members for their support and dedication to the Town. It is also important to acknowledge and thank our state and federal legislative delegation and Town Meeting members for their support and leadership. Last, but not least, my thanks to the School Department and School Committee, especially the School Superintendent, for working with Town administration on multiple fronts, including the budget, the new Middle School project, and many town-school partnerships that enhance the quality of life for our residents.

It is an honor to serve the community of Auburn as Town Manager. I look forward to continuing in this capacity over the next several years, working with the Board of Selectmen to implement policy, and maintaining effective operations.