

Town of Auburn, Massachusetts

Julie A. Jacobson
Town Manager



February 21, 2015

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 which provides an update on my fourth year as Auburn's town manager. This report covers the period from January 31, 2014 through January 30, 2015.

This past year was a busy and productive one. Building upon the framework I established in my first three years, which included the omnibus Reorganization Plan and subsequent implementation of the new departments, structure, policies and procedures, 2014 was spent developing new initiatives and programs, continuing to strengthen fiscal management, updating existing and developing new policies, reviewing General By-Laws, and developing long-term plans for facility management. During the year I also continued to focus on maximizing resources and identifying savings.

Among the highlights of the past year is the Bylaw Review process and completion of the Draft Administrative/General By-Laws which will be brought to a Special Town Meeting in March 2015; the development of Facility Improvements Plan for all municipal properties over the next five years; the review and creation of two proposed new financial policies to guide the Town's investment strategies; the execution of two Net Metering Credit Agreements to reduce the town's energy costs through solar credits; completion of the Draft Open Space and Recreation Plan submitted to the State in June; the sale of the long-vacant, former Scavone property to a private business; and the ongoing development and implementation of several green initiatives.

As result of strong financial management and adherence to our financial policies, the Town was able to secure a bond rating of AA+ from Standard & Poor's and AA3 with a Positive Outlook from Moody's, which translates to lower borrowing costs and reduced interest payments on bonds for capital projects. The strong bond ratings also enabled Town administration to refinance the existing high school debt at lower interest rates which reduces our borrowing costs by \$2,984,923 over the ten year life of the loan, which results in savings of approximately \$300,000 annually to the taxpayers.

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 31, 2014 to establish goals for the remaining ten months of the third year of my contract in addition to the core capabilities on the evaluation form that the Board adopted in April of 2013.

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The specific goals that the Board established for Year 4 were:

1. Continue with the By-Law Review process to prepare a document to bring forward to Town Meeting.
2. Develop a proposal for amendments to the existing financial policies, and new policies, to bring forward to the Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen to further enhance the financial stability of the Town.
3. Prepare a prioritized list of major building needs with a plan for a 5 year period, including financing, and report on major projects completed since April 2014.

The categories of the evaluation form are:

- A. Relationship with the Board of Selectmen
- B. Town Administration
- C. Budget and Finance
- D. Community Relations

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. I also keep Board members informed of important meetings or projects that the administration is working on.

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 policies and provide well-informed guidance for the Town. Recognizing that it is 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, I respond to their requests for information and am always willing to meet to discuss issues and concerns. I remain available to discuss issues with the Board at any time.

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

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. I have proactively provided the Board with information and I have been responsive and timely in responding to requests for information from the Board.

This past year, among the areas in which I have conducted research and analysis, collected data, and provided information includes research on local and state requirements for Board of Appeals appointments, property disposition, warrant articles, local and state budget issues, personnel policies, housing and economic development legislation, Chapter 61A process and analysis, 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 myriad requests for information or action from members of the Board who sought my assistance on specific constituent concerns and questions, providing data and information that will assist the Board in responding to citizens and understanding issues.

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

I am very responsive to direction and suggestions by Board members. Whether guided by a formal vote of the Board or an informal suggestion by a Board member, I am very open to new ideas and strategies and always willing to discuss alternative options and methods.

While I strive to effectively oversee and manage the daily operations and administration of town government, I have never hesitated to seek Board input, advice or guidance 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 diligently to provide feedback and implement those suggestions provided by the Board.

When the Board makes a recommendation or requests information from town administration, I coordinate with the appropriate town employees and departments to provide feedback in a timely manner.

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

Since becoming Town Manager, I have worked diligently to keep the legal fees for both Labor Counsel and Town Counsel at a minimum wherever possible, recognizing that when there are serious issues or complicated legal issues that require either Labor Counsel or Town Counsel participation in order to

protect the Town, I will seek their legal guidance, opinion or advice. Since then, we have been effective at reducing the annual legal costs to the Town.

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 resolve grievances without Counsel 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.

During the past year, two major projects required extensive involvement of Town Counsel: the By-Law Review process and the Chapter 61A notification and land acquisition process. In both cases, it was necessary to engage the services of Town Counsel for legal guidance, legal representation, document preparation, and legal review.

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.

During the past three years, town administration has worked very hard to review and propose revisions to the administrative By-Laws (see below for details on this process which is one of three goals established by the Board).

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 agencies 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 when deemed appropriate.

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

Please see the response to Goal #3 below for specific details on the maintenance plan for town facilities.

Prior to 2011, 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 an estimated savings of \$642,952.00 (which includes some other volunteer and in-house labor from other departments but is primarily attributed to DPW). 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.

In overseeing all procurement for the Town under Section 3.06 of the Town Charter, which deems the Town Manager as the Chief Procurement Officer, I seek to procure materials, supplies and equipment through the most cost effective means under state procurement laws. This includes utilizing firms, supplies and products on the State bid list, seeking quotes for purchases under best practices, contacting other communities to suggest joint purchasing, and seeking quotes as prescribed under Massachusetts General Laws.

Since becoming Town Manager, I have continually evaluated 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.

The Facility Management Unit within the Department of Public Works continued to be very busy throughout the year working on various improvement projects in town buildings and properties. Since 2011, the Town has saved approximately \$649,000 by using in-house labor and other volunteer labor. The Unit will continue to undertake 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.

The Fleet Maintenance Unit within DPW, also created in the Fall of 2012, was fully operational in 2013. The Unit handles vehicle repairs and maintenance for most town vehicles including police, fire and public works. This work had previously been outsourced to private vendors. Bringing these repairs and maintenance in-house have resulted in an annual savings of approximately \$65,000 and will continue to result in significant savings.

Town administration continued to develop and implement various 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. The Town finished the scope of work on the original Green Community Grant in December, which included implementation of several energy efficient projects in both municipal and school facilities that were identified through a comprehensive audit. The projects undertaken promote energy efficiencies and conservation, and reduce energy costs. In September, the Town signed a three-year energy contract with Constellation Energy that became effective in December that will generate significant savings for the Town as the rate was established prior to the burgeoning electric rates projected for the first of the year. The Town executed two Net Metering Credit Agreements that, combined, will save the Town approximately \$9 million over a 30 year term. Following approval of a warrant article at the Fall Town Meeting to authorize the Town Manager to enter into a municipal aggregation agreement, Town administration, in conjunction with the Wind Turbine and Alternate Energy Committee, began to undertake the analysis of several municipal aggregation programs. The Committee hopes to have a recommendation in the Spring of 2015 so that residents can begin to realize savings on their escalating electric bills due to the increasing cost of electricity. Through a public-private partnership as outlined in a Memorandum of Agreement with RH White Construction and NStar, gas lines were installed in a section of Central Street which will enable the conversion from oil to gas at Town Hall. The Town will be applying for grants in the Spring of 2015 to fund the conversion to this more economical and efficient system.

I have worked on several regional initiatives to share resources and create efficiencies that result in savings for the Town that would not otherwise have been achieved through its own procurement.

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

During 2014, I oversaw the preparation and presentation of the Town Warrant for the Annual Town Meeting in May, the Fall Town Meeting in October, and the Special Town Meeting in November, held to take up warrant articles regarding the Chapter 61A acquisition of 50 acres of agricultural land.

The preparation of the warrants include internal review by the affected department heads, the CFO/Assistant Town Manager, Town Counsel review, and coordination of the Town Warrant with the Town Clerk, Town Moderator and Town Counsel. Certain warrant articles also required review by our financial advisors at Unibank and bond counsel. The final Town Warrant was then distributed to Town Meeting members. This was accomplished within the time frame established and specified 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. Department heads are also present at each meeting to respond to any specific questions that Town Meeting members may have on warrant articles.

My office is responsible for making all arrangements to hold each Town Meeting including coordinating the availability of the room at the High School and ensuring the availability of the Town Clerk, the Town Moderator, Town Counsel and the School Superintendent in addition to ensuring a quorum of the Board of Selectmen, the Finance Committee and the School Committee.

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

Throughout the course of the year, I continue 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 and participate on their behalf.

As a result of the Chapter 61A process that the Town was involved in late last summer/fall, I met with Senator Moore's legislative and legal staff in Boston to request that the Senator consider filing legislation to amend Massachusetts General Law Chapter 61A, Section 14 to extend the period of time under which municipalities have to waive, assign or exercise their right of first refusal to purchase Chapter 61A land under the state-regulated notification process. I also recommended additional amendments to the Chapter as well to ease the burden on municipalities and enhance the requirements of the Chapter 61a land owner. Senator Moore reviewed the request and subsequently filed legislation proposing these amendments.

I have submitted requests to both Representative Frost and Senator Moore for funding various projects in Auburn under the Environmental Bond Bill, the Transportation Bond Bill, and the State FY'15 Budget. We are very fortunate that our request to fund \$80,000 for the construction of a playground at the Dr. Arthur and Dr. Martha Pappas Recreation Complex was approved by the Legislature in the FY'15v Budget. We are grateful to Senator Moore and Representative Frost for working with us to support this line item and for carrying it through successfully.

Through the maintenance of a strong working relationship with Congressman James McGovern and his staff, I keep apprised of federal legislation and initiatives that may have an effect on the Town of Auburn.

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 in order to hear 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, state legislation, 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.

For the second year, in January, I was elected to the Executive Committee of the MMMA which provides 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.

In December, I was appointed to the Department of Energy Resources statewide Green Communities Division Advisory Committee as one of four municipal district representatives in the Commonwealth. The Advisory Committee consists of 9 members who are appointed by the DOER Commissioner. This statewide advisory panel will provide input and advice to DOER's Green Communities Division regarding current procedures, proposed policy changes, new initiatives, and other issues to advance clean energy and energy savings for Massachusetts' cities and towns.

I continue to serve as the municipal representative to the Central Massachusetts Regional Homeland Security Council which provides the opportunity to discuss emergency management and security issues with representatives from law enforcement agencies, fire officials, and local and state officials and to keep apprised on legislation affecting security and emergency management funding.

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 numerous meetings over a several month period 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 achieve a AA+ rating from Standard & Poor's and AA3 with a Positive Outlook from Moody's in 2014. By proposing financial policies, adopted by the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee in the fall of 2012, and implementing those policies, we have been able to set aside one-tenth of allowable 2 ½ annually for capital in order to reduce our borrowing needs.

Through creative strategies, we have proposed several mechanisms for funding the Facility Improvements Plan over a five year period utilizing an array of financing sources. (See attachment).

Since I began as Town Manager in 2011, I have submitted annual budgets to the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee that are well under the allowable limit under Proposition 2 ½.

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. This process takes several months, beginning in the fall, in order to have the Budget ready to submit to the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee in accordance with Town By-Laws.

Each year, I work with the Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee, School Committee, School Department and CFO to schedule a joint meeting to discuss the upcoming budget in preparation for finalizing a budget to submit. This joint meeting was held in December 2014 in preparation for the FY'16 Budget.

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, the CFO and I evaluate and prioritize the capital and operational needs of each 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. As appropriate, budgets are amended, transfers are requested, and staff is re-allocated to address any deficiencies or gaps to allow for continued operations.

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 thirty-nine (39) grants totaling \$4,138,466.81. Four (4) of those applications were regional totaling \$320,375.00. Of the 39 grant applications, to date twenty-nine (29) grants have been awarded for a total of \$641,608.81. Eight (8) applications are pending and two (2) were denied.

Grants awarded to the Town funded critical fire breathing apparatus, emergency management equipment, CERT equipment, CodeRED funding, public health initiatives, library materials and training,

police equipment and training, DPW equipment, cultural events, playground equipment, senior center programs and transportation.

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 2,365 emails to the Town Manager account, which generally come from residents seeking assistance or identifying an area of concern, sent over 10,100 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 ongoing 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 use their Facebook pages to enhance communications with the public and to provide timely information regarding town issues to the public, while the Police Department has been very active in their use of Twitter to keep residents informed of public safety issues.

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 thirty-eight (38) plans, projects and license renewals 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 have expanded, new businesses opened, and new developments were proposed. (See list below).

Completed:

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Outback Steakhouse:

Bloomin Brands, a national restaurant chain, demolished a vacant, former Abdou's Big Boy restaurant location and constructed a new, 6,000 square foot Outback Steakhouse. The construction utilized the existing parking area with made improvements to the striping to increase the parking capacity by 30% and provide safer traffic patterns. The new Outback facility is adjacent to the recently opened Reliant Medical Group ReadyMed facility. The opening of the new restaurant location in October of 2014 eliminated a long-term blighted property in a highly visible location.

Cumberland Farms:

Cumberland Farms, which operates a combination gas station/convenience store at 502 Washington Street, completed its major reconstruction project in 2014. The project included razing the existing building and gas pumps along with the house on an adjacent lot. The new 4,000 square foot convenience store building was constructed on the newly assembled lots. Additionally, the existing gasoline storage tanks were removed, replaced and relocated to allow for the reconfiguration and addition of the dispensary facilities.

Auburn Mall:

Two tenants, Kay Jewelers and Victoria's Secret, in the Auburn Mall facility completed their expansion and retrofit projects.

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.

Herb Chambers Toyota:

Herb Chambers Toyota completed 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. Demolition is expected to start in March 2015.

Deer Run Estates:

This development consists 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. 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. There is one more house closure remaining. Estimated completion is April 2015.

440 Washington Street:

A new 20,000 square foot industrial building will house multiple tenants. Two of five occupancy permits for the space have been issued. One tenant is Motorsports International, located next door at 444 Washington Street, who will store their excess inventory in a warehouse portion of the building.

Proposed:

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 development and construction of a new facility includes razing the 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 21st century childcare provider. The proposal also includes significant site work including the installation of stormwater collection and infiltration systems, new parking areas, play areas and formalized access and egress to Auburn Street.

Colony Liquors and Wine Shoppe:

Applicant received site plan approval in June 2014 for an addition to the rear of the building on an area that is currently paved and unused at 638 Southbridge Street. The lot would be restriped for parking and would gain 4 parking spaces with this alteration.

BJ Gas Station:

Applicant proposes to install a Member's Gas Station on a currently wooded lot on the corner of Sibley Street and Route 20. This service station will have 8 fuel islands containing 16 pumps serviced by a 400 square foot kiosk in the back of the lot. The construction shall include two egresses (both onto Route 20), paved service area to contain two parking spaces, new site lighting, and a stormwater management system that includes drainage improvements to Sibley Street.

Bells Lawn and Garden Center:

Proposed commercial nursery stand for sale of produce at property located at 282 Southbridge Street. It is currently an undeveloped parcel that is next door to Colonial Glass. Business will include the sale of flowers and other various garden or nursery-related products. The site will contain 8 parking spaces, one of which is handicapped.

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, Jim Langway, purchased the property in 2014 with the intent to relocate his car dealership facility to the site and to build a larger facility than he had on Route 20. Mr. Langway subsequently sold his dealership on Route 20 to focus on his dealership in Vermont. He has announced that the former Lowe's property is now on the market again.

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

Report on the Three Specific Goals for Year 4

I am proud to report on the three 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. Continue with the By-Law Review process to prepare a document to bring forward to Town Meeting. **COMPLETE***

Please find attached a copy of the reports that were submitted to the Board of Selectmen on the By-Law Review process. The By-Law Review Committee has been working with town administration for over three years to review each administrative By-Law and, where appropriate, propose revisions so that the By-Laws will be in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws, state and federal regulations, and the Town of Auburn Charter As Amended in May of 2009.

Over the course of this period of time, the By-Law Review Committee reorganized the existing General and Administrative By-Laws to parallel the Amended Town Charter and the Reorganization Plan adopted in 2011 and revised in 2012 so that By-Laws are organized by department and function. Following that major undertaking, the By-Law Review Committee worked with each department head and division heads to review the By-Laws that relate to their respective department and division. As a result, the Committee has recommended that many of the existing administrative By-Laws should be revised, new By-Laws proposed, and existing By-Laws eliminated to be in compliance with Massachusetts General Laws, Codes and Regulations, as well as to complement the Amended Town Charter and approved Reorganization Plan. Since many of the administrative By-Laws had not been changed in decades, several revisions are proposed.

The proposed Draft By-Laws were thoroughly reviewed by Town Counsel and revised accordingly. The Draft By-Laws were then reviewed by the Town Moderator in conjunction with Town Counsel and individual department and division heads to ensure consistency in language, format and legal terminology. Once those revisions were made, the Draft Administrative By-Laws were sent to the By-Law Review Committee for their review. The Committee voted to approve the Draft By-Laws (version dated December 15, 2014) on January 5, 2015.

On January 6th, the Draft By-Laws were posted to the Town's web site under a new section created specifically for the By-Law review process. An email address was created to allow anyone wishing to provide comments on the Draft By-Laws to do so electronically. The web site explains the process and provides a link to the most recent version of the Draft By-Laws.

The By-Law Review Committee held two public hearings on January 27, 2015 and February 3, 2015 at the Auburn High School Auditorium to solicit input from the public on the Draft dated December 15, 2014. A CodeRED message was sent to Town Meeting Members informing them of the hearing and encouraging them to attend to ask any questions they may have on the Draft By-Laws. The hearings were announced at two Board of Selectmen meetings, posted on the Town's web site, social media sites

on Facebook and Twitter, and posted on ACTV Channel 191. The hearings were also officially posted with the Town Clerk.

Following the public hearings, additional By-Law Review Committee meetings and department head review, the December 15th Draft was revised and a new draft dated February 20, 2015 was created. This version will be sent to the joint meeting of the Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee and By-Law Review Committee on February 26th. A Special Town Meeting will be held on March 24th to review and vote on the proposed General By-Laws. Finally, the approved version of the proposed General By-Laws will be sent to the State Attorney General's Office for review.

This multi-year process to carefully review each and every General and administrative By-Law, while extremely time consuming, has been invaluable. It is critical that the Town's By-Laws are consistent with Massachusetts General Laws, the Town Charter, and all state and federal regulations.

- 2. Develop a proposal for amendments to the existing financial policies, and new policies, to bring forward to the Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen to further enhance the financial stability of the Town. **COMPLETE***

Over the course of several months, the Town Manager, Chief Financial Officer/Assistant Town Manager, Treasurer/Collector, and Assistant Treasurer/Collector, with advisement from our financial advisors at Unibank, reviewed the current financial policies as approved by the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee in November of 2012. After careful consideration of the bond rating agency criteria and practices, we determined that the financial policies that are currently in place should not be modified at this point. While the rating agencies continue to provide higher scores (within the multi-tiered ranking system that comprises the bond rating) to communities with reserve levels in the 17% to 19% range, the Town's current policies set a goal of a combined 13% reserve level, which the Town has achieved. It is the recommendation of town administration, with guidance from our financial advisors, that the policies should not be changed at this time to raise the reserve level goal but to work towards achieving a reserve level of 17% to 19%, which would exceed out financial policy goal, as part of the Town's effort to seek another bond rating upgrade in the future. This strategy will enable the Town to monitor the bond rating agency formulas and adjust where necessary rather than to change a policy now that may not be needed in a couple of years. Town administration does recommend, however, that we strive to increase the level of reserves as part of an overall sound financial plan.

Town administration, working with bond counsel and our investment advisors Bartholemew and Company, Inc., proposed two new investment policies which were provided to the Board of Selectmen. A copy of the report that was provided to the Board is attached herein. Town administration will also provide these two new policies to the Finance Committee for their review and vote. These policies are intended to provide a framework for investing the Town's funds and the OPEB Trust Fund to maximize our returns while providing stability and flexibility where needed with regard to liquidity for funding ongoing operations.

- 3. Prepare a prioritized list of major building needs with a plan for a 5 year period, including financing, and report on major projects completed since April 2014. **COMPLETE***

Attached is the report on the Facility Improvements Plan that was developed in collaboration with each department which provides a multi-year plan for improvements, major maintenance and repairs to all Town of Auburn municipal facilities. Since it is imperative to maintain our town assets, this multi-year

plan was developed to outline a strategy to invest in facility improvements and repairs that will retain municipal buildings in proper condition in order to maximize their useful life expectancy.

The buildings that were evaluated and included in this Facility Improvement Plan are:

- Town Hall
- Merriam Building
- Department of Public Works
- Fire Headquarters (Auburn Street)
- West Street Fire Station
- Police Station
- Auburn Public Library
- Lorraine Gleick Nordgren Senior Center
- Camp Gleason
- Parks
- Cemetery
- 21 Pheasant Court (utilized by AYFS)
- 41 South Street (utilized by the Auburn Historical Museum)

The plan includes:

1. A complete spreadsheet on all major repairs and improvements undertaken on municipal facilities since 2011. This includes whether the work was outsourced or done internally (either through DPW or the Fire Department); the estimated value of the work and the estimated savings if done in-house. (Please note that the goal established by the Board of Selectmen was for the Town Manager to provide a list of major projects completed since April 2014, however the attached list is more extensive and is inclusive of projects completed since April of 2014 which have been delineated with an asterisk in the last column).
2. Planned improvements to municipal facilities that qualify under the Capital Improvement (CIP) Plan (currently with a cost of \$5,000 or above).
3. Projected improvements to municipal facilities that do not qualify for the CIP Plan but which are nonetheless important to undertake.
4. A financial strategy for funding the improvements.

The improvements have been prioritized and tentatively scheduled over the next five years. This is a fluid document that will require ongoing evaluation to determine whether any projects should be expedited based on emerging needs or available funding, or whether any projects should be reprogrammed for a later date based on newly identified and urgent priorities. Thus, this plan will constantly be reviewed and updated similar to the annual CIP review.

Town Administration has worked hard over the past nine months to identify and assess facility needs, determine priorities, and develop potential funding strategies to implement the plan. Department and Division Heads have participated in the facility evaluation, planning, and analysis of their respective buildings and properties. The DPW Director/Town Engineer and the Assistant Town Engineer/Civil Engineer have worked with the Facility Management Unit to estimate the cost of the projects and, in concert with the Chief Financial Officer and the Town Manager, have developed a proposed plan for undertaking and funding the projects over a five year timeline, with some additional projects planned beyond five years.

Funding strategies include a blend of the CIP plan, bonds, the newly established capital fund (created through the financial policies), in-house labor, out-sourced vendors, and volunteer labor. As available, grant funding will be utilized to offset or replace other funding strategies.

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The administration has also worked over the past 4 years to address our facility needs in municipal buildings, recognizing the importance of maintaining these town assets for efficient current use as well as ensuring adequate and effective future use of all of these facilities. Significant improvements to municipal facilities have been undertaken since 2011 and, since the Facility Management Unit at DPW was established in 2012, many of those improvements have been implemented through the Facility Management Unit which has resulted in savings to the Town. Likewise, the Fire Department has performed work on their properties that has resulted in savings to the Town. Further savings have been generated by donated services from organizations and companies such as Home Depot and the Boy Scouts, while the Sherriff's Community Service Division has provided labor to the Town for various projects. Overall, it is estimated that the total savings to the Town since 2011 are \$642,952.00.

Conclusion

I want to extend many thanks to the Board of Selectmen for their guidance and direction throughout the year. The establishment of clear goals enabled the administration to focus its collective resources and efforts towards achieving those goals that the Board deemed to be a priority for Year 4 of my contract. The Board has been thoughtful in its approach to issues that affect the community and has provided solid direction to me when appropriate so that together we can move Auburn forward. The Board has also supported my philosophy of encouraging all town employees to be consistent, diligent, and efficient and to continually strive for excellence in public service.

I also want to recognize the hard work, dedication and efforts of the tremendous management team. The collaborative efforts of the department and division heads who administer the day-to-day operations of their respective departments and divisions enable the Town to accomplish its collective goals, priorities and vision. Our Town employees are to be commended for all they do towards providing services, improving our systems, addressing concerns, and resolving issues on behalf of Auburn's taxpayers, residents and businesses. Town administration strives to provide quality services, programs, events and infrastructure to support a thriving and safe community of which we can all be proud. I remain very proud of the team we have built, the strong relationship we have with the school department, and the partnerships we have nurtured within the community over the past four years. It is this spirit of collaboration and creativity that has and will continue to enable us to achieve success.

I am fortunate to work with a tremendous team at the School Department, particularly the School Superintendent and her Leadership Team, as well as the School Committee all of whom collaborate with Town administration on facility issues, budgets, and numerous town-school initiatives that enhance the quality of life for our residents and our youth.

Our board and commission members deserve recognition for their dedication to the Town and for the many hours each volunteers to the Auburn community. It is also important to recognize and thank our state and federal legislative delegation for their support and leadership throughout the year on legislative matters and policies that impact the Town of Auburn. Finally, I want to acknowledge and thank all Town Meeting members for their crucial role in local government and for the work they did last year to act on the many articles on warrants at the Annual Town Meeting, Fall Town Meeting and Special Town Meeting.

I am as honored today to serve the citizens and community of Auburn as I was when I was first sworn in as Town Manager four years ago. I look forward to continuing in this capacity and working with the Board of Selectmen to implement priorities, policies and goals.

Thank you.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Julie A. Jacobson".

Julie A. Jacobson
Town Manager