

BARNSTABLE COUNTY STRATEGIC PLAN

2014 – 2018



**Submitted to
Barnstable County Commissioners**

**By
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3.0 Strategic Priorities 2014-2018

During interviews with department managers, commissioners and other stakeholders, each was asked to identify emerging needs or trends relevant to the services they provide and the populations they serve. The following emerging trends were identified in the course of those discussions. These emerging needs and trends, along with the assessment of strengths and challenges above, provide the basis for the strategic priorities of Barnstable County over the coming five years.

3.1 Leadership and Financial Stability

3.1.1 County Governance and Administration. After carefully considering the recommendations of the Special Commission on County Governance, the Board of Regional Commissioners voted a resolution in support of merging the Board of Regional Commissioners and Assembly of Delegates into a new legislative body elected by population-based districts, and appointing a new position of County Executive. The changes would achieve the dual goals of streamlining county government while reinforcing a regional context for policy discussion and decision-making. District-based representation would afford more equal weight to each citizen's vote as compared with the existing proportional votes allotted to the towns based on population. Citizens' votes would have equal weight regardless of the size town they live in.

3.1.2 Policy Planning and Capacity Building. The strategic plan identifies several measures to provide county departments with increased leadership in support of strategic policy priorities, and to encourage greater collaboration among departments working toward strategic priorities. New budgeting, reporting and collaboration tools and methods are proposed.

3.1.3 Financial Stability. Increasing the county stabilization fund, catching up on unfunded liabilities such as Other Public Employee Benefits, and adopting new financial policies and procedures are among the actions recommended to enhance the County's financial position.

3.1.4 Public Outreach and Education. Steps to promote greater communication among county departments and between county departments and towns, citizens and stakeholder groups are called for in the strategic plan.

3.2 Environmental Protection

3.2.1 Wastewater Management. Wastewater planning will continue to be a priority through the development and subsequent implementation of the Section 208 Area Water Quality Management Plan Update. There will be a need for ongoing data collection and technical assistance regarding evaluation of alternative septic and wastewater management technologies; regulatory guidance for towns transitioning from onsite septic systems to sewer, and support for compliance monitoring once sewer systems are installed.

3.2.2 Water Quality. The County will continue to provide support for bacterial monitoring of public swimming areas. In addition, the County's state of the art water quality lab creates an opportunity to

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evaluate other water quality threats such as Contaminants of Emerging Concern (CECs) in the water supply.

3.2.3 Solid Waste Management. The County will continue to explore cost effective solid waste disposal and recycling options that meet economic and environmental goals. In addition, the County will explore strategies for food waste diversion through composting or anaerobic digestion. Valuable household hazardous waste programs will continue.

3.2.4 Community Planning. The County can continue to provide leadership and support to towns in the area of cutting edge design, infrastructure planning and economic development services by building on its existing leadership in geospatial design services. Further planning guidance to towns will be provided through the updating of the Regional Policy Plan.

3.2.5 Coastal Resource Protection. The frequency of severe winter storms and resulting damage to public beaches, infrastructure and private property is of growing concern. Predicted sea level rise would only exacerbate storm surge during such events. Advance planning for coastal resource management is needed to protect coastal resources, public and private property, and public health.

3.3 Increased Energy Self-Sufficiency

3.3.1 Energy Efficiency. The adoption of energy efficiency measures among residential and commercial electric customers has been successful. Energy efficiency programs need to continue evolving in order to capture additional facilities and customers across the region. Opportunities for Smart Grid energy applications should be pursued as technology develops.

3.3.2 Competitive Power Supply. It will be important to continue to work through the Cape Light Compact to identify ways to improve the leverage of regional electric customers in the competitive power supply market. The County should continue to provide administrative support to the Cape Light Compact through a long-term administrative agreement.

3.4 Safe and Healthy Population

3.4.1 Public Health Services. The County will continue to provide technical support for local Boards of Health. In addition, the County will seek to expand public health outreach services, particularly outreach and public health nursing for prevention screening for skin cancer, and prevention of Lyme disease and other tick-borne illnesses. Public education and outreach programs promoting nutrition and wellness also will continue to be priority.

3.4.2 Human Services. The County will continue to serve as an information clearinghouse and facilitator of policy and systems improvements in the areas of public health, behavioral health/suicide prevention, homelessness and aging and disability. In the coming five years a focus will be on exploring programs opportunities in concert with Barnstable County Correctional Facility and the District Court system dealing with mental health and drug addiction; seeking to augment Mass 2-1-1 with a regional clearinghouse/referral system, and monitoring and evaluating state and federal policies and budgets to

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improve planning and better respond to human service needs. Programs for youth and families will continue to be a focus. The County will continue to address the epidemic of child abuse through direct services and programs for victims and their families, as well as education and prevention programs.

3.4.3 Affordable Housing/Low-income Rental Housing. Despite progress in the creation of affordable housing, the region is still more than 5,000 units short of the state-mandated 10% affordability goal. Support for affordable housing, particularly affordable rental housing, will continue to be a priority in the coming five years.

3.5 Economic Opportunity

3.5.1 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). CEDS will continue to serve as the economic development blueprint for the region. In the coming five years, implementation of the CEDS will continue, and the process for updating the CEDS will begin.

3.5.2 Support and Regional Collaboration. The County will continue to support the following economic development initiatives, and promote collaboration among regional economic development stakeholders. Particular focus will be on:

- Strategic priorities of the Cape Cod Economic Development Council,
- Coordination with the Workforce Investment Board and JTEC,
- Market expansion programs and technical assistance offered by the County Extension Service, including Buy Fresh/Buy Local programs, food safety training, agriculture and groundskeeping management expertise, and shellfish management and propagation.

3.6 Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness

3.6.1 Regional 911. Determining the most cost effective solution for regional 911 service is a public safety priority. Evaluating the functions of the County Public Safety Office to determine if modifications are necessary is another priority.

3.6.2 Emergency Preparedness Planning and Training. Disaster preparedness planning and training will continue through the Barnstable County Regional Emergency Planning Committee, in collaboration with regional and local law enforcement and emergency personnel, human services providers and public works departments. The development of a Hazard Vulnerability Assessment is needed to understand and plan for the physical protection of inhabited areas and coastal resources in the event of a catastrophic storm.

3.7 Cost Effective Regional Services

3.7.1 Information Technology and the development of the Regional Umbrella Services System. Expansion of broadband capability and development of Open Cape creates new opportunities for smart technologies for land use planning, energy, environmental protection and government services. E-permitting pilot projects with Chatham, Falmouth and Yarmouth may lead to expanded e-permitting

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capacity that would increase permitting efficiency and save towns money. In addition, there are opportunities to expand the County's IT capabilities and provide a range of services to the towns.

3.7.2 Grant Writing and Administration. The County will continue to track and identify grant opportunities for county departments and towns, and provide technical assistance with grant writing and grant administration. A focus in the coming five years will be to increase grants research in areas of strategic policy priority.

3.7.3 County Dredge. The County will continue to offer cost effective dredge services to towns. Future demand for dredging services will be evaluated to determine if the new dredge vessel budgeted for 2015 is to serve as a secondary or replacement vessel.

3.7.4 Purchasing. The County will continue to provide bulk purchasing services to towns at significantly lower cost, with continued emphasis on environmentally preferred products where feasible.

3.7.5 Public Education and Technical Assistance. The County will continue to provide cost effective technical assistance in the areas of public health administration, food safety training, agriculture and groundskeeping training, and shellfish management and propagation.

3.7.6 AmeriCorps. Americorps is responding to an increasingly broad array of issues and service needs on Cape Cod. In addition to environmental stewardship and public education, Americorps assists with human service needs. This high profile program helps to attract and retain talented young people on Cape Cod.

3.7.7 Registry of Deeds. The Registry will continue to serve its statutory role of maintaining the records of property transfers in Barnstable County, and making records accessible to citizens, attorneys surveyors and others who may require access to them.

3.7.8 Retirement Board. The County Retirement Board will continue to operate as the retirement system for 51 governmental units on the Cape and Islands, including towns, school districts and fire districts. Any changes in the language of the County charter must be consistent with the requirements of MGL Chapter 32.

3.7.9 Mosquito Control. The County is exploring options for placing control of Mosquito Control within the County. This will ensure that mosquito control practices reflect environmental factors relevant to Cape Cod.

5.0 Evaluation

The Barnstable County Strategic Plan is intended to be a living document that provides a blueprint for actions in the next five years. As noted above, the Plan does not replace the depth of detail found in individual departmental action plans, but represents the broader actions of all county departments in the context of shared policy priorities.

The Plan is intended for use by County Commissioners, Department managers and County Administrators in developing fiscal year work plans and budgets

Several recommendations (4.1.3, 4.2) call for planning and budgeting measures focused on strategic policy priorities outlined in the plan. Specifically:

Planning. The Strategic Plan should be referred to in annual progress reports and reviews. Department managers should develop annual implementation plans with goals and objectives for each strategic priority identified in the strategic plan that is related to their mission and scope of work. Implementation activities geared toward shared priorities should be coordinated through County departments.

Budgeting. Annual budget preparation should be organized around strategic priority areas using a program budget format.

Reporting. Each department's progress toward strategic priorities should be reviewed with chief elected officials in January during budget reports/reviews and again at the end of the fiscal year. These reports should be compiled into an annual strategic plan progress report that is available for public review and posted on the County website.

As these measures are implemented, it will be possible to demonstrate contributions individual departments make in promoting policy priorities.