

# Natick 360

Honoring Our Past. Planning Our Future.



## Board and Committee Members' Input Issues and Responses by Focus Areas

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### Introduction

Two joint meetings of Natick 360 sponsoring boards and committees<sup>1</sup> February 12 and 13, 2007—and similar meetings of the Town's senior staff (February 13) and the public (February 15)—generated eight focus areas and a list of issues associated with each focus area. These issues identify gaps between where Natick is today, and Natick's vision for the future. The focus areas and issues are listed below.

From March 16 to March 29, board and committee members had an opportunity to provide preliminary input on solutions to fill these gaps through a web-based survey. Input was received from 17 of the potential 40 respondents (42.5% response rate). The survey period was extended to April 6 for senior Town staff members, and a total five of them responded.<sup>2</sup> Both Board and Committee and senior staff comments are reported in this document

This raw input is shown below<sup>3</sup> under each focus area and list of issues. It addresses two questions for each focus area:

- What actions do you suggest the town consider to address these issues?
- What other issues can you identify? What actions would you suggest?

Each paragraph represents a comment by a different respondent.

During the same period, members of the public had an opportunity to provide input to the same questions. The public input is summarized in a different document.

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<sup>1</sup> Sponsoring boards and committees are: Board of Selectmen, Conservation Commission, Finance Committee, Planning Board and School Committee.

<sup>2</sup> Some respondents did not address all survey items. Additionally, six board and committee members, and three senior staff, logged onto the survey system, but did not respond to any survey items.

<sup>3</sup> Responses are reported verbatim, though typographical errors have been corrected.

## Improving Public Education

- Level of financial investment in education
- Competition with other town needs
- Community support for educational investment Insufficient, inappropriate and aging facilities
- Recruitment, training, evaluation, retention of teachers
- Unfunded mandates
- Lack of consensus on measures of quality
- Focus on continuing education
- Parental involvement
- Unequal response to student needs (arts, recreation, special needs, college prep, vocational training, etc.)
- Insufficient use of non-school resources (mentoring, tutoring, etc.)
- Other

### *What actions do you suggest the town consider to address these issues?*

- 1) Better communication and cooperation between school and general government administrations in order that issues are addressed on a town-wide basis instead of using an us-versus-them mentality.
- 2) Improving standards and performance, particularly at the middle school level will lead to substantially improved performance at the high school level.

Level of financial investment in education Increase communication from school department and SC to citizenry. Improve website Send regular newsletters to parents Secure arrangement to participate in town-wide communication Increase communication from town as a whole to citizenry. Town newsletter - including info about schools Ensure that enabling excellent education is high on agenda of the next Town Administrator. Present school budget in the most useful, communicative form possible. Competition with other town needs It is unfortunate that this is thought of as a school issue only. Parking, open space, and town center are also in competition with other town needs – if you choose to look at them in that way. So my suggestion would be to fight the perception that this is a school issue by increased communication as above. Insufficient, inappropriate and aging facilities The town needs to get a grip on its capital program and pursue proper funding. Lack of maintenance and replacement is unacceptable unless it is a response to an explicit demand of the voters (defeat of override). I'm afraid I think of this as a matter of attitude adjustment more than anything else. Recruitment, training, evaluation, retention of teachers Maintain compensation Minimize risk of layoff. Examine professional development methods, increase investment as needed. Work toward greater latitude to respond to poor teacher performance. Unfunded mandates Educate citizenry about what these are -- without penalizing students who need services. Pressure, to the extent possible, state and federal officials to provide more funding. Coordinate between Board of Selectmen and SC for a united front. Continue work in TEC (regional education collaborative) legislative work on these issues.

I think there is a potential to overlap education with civic engagement - include civic/local government topic in school programs. The focus would be to explain/teach government infrastructure and the importance of citizen participation. Maybe even get a class in front of the BOS on an issue with recommendations to show how government works to solve problems and make the community a better place to work. There is the youth advisory committee and participation on the committee is noble but what about the 1000 plus kids at Natick High. What about the kids in K-12. Teach kids early and often about the importance of government, voting and getting and stay involved and maybe just maybe voter turnout in local elections would increase.

a. Search committee for new Superintendent needs to be aware & educated about these issues b. School committee should as part of it's mandate, do regular 'marketing' programs to inform the public about these pressing issues - much like the marketing piece sent with recent tax bills c. BOS, Town Admin., Finance Committee, School Committee, Planning Board & DPW should have twice yearly combined meetings to discuss these issues, to put in place strategic plans for interagency resolutions, to identify tactical next steps, and to keep lines of communication open for the inevitable fiscal realities

Greater funding for education ( as well as public safety) Getting Natick High School fixed. The high school is probably the biggest single risk to the value of every property owner's home. Providing differentiated instruction so that every student gets what they need; not just teaching to the average or to pass the entire class in MCAS Public safety in public schools. Police officers need to be more involved . The incident at Lincoln Sudbury was an alarm to take note of.

Maintain a steady but maintainable increase in funding each year. Unfortunately we will have to also solve rising health care costs by review of the percentage that teachers pay and by also exploring some lower cost plans. Do not skimp on building maintenance. These funds should not be tapped for operational needs. Review teacher step increases esp. with the idea of retaining younger teachers. Unfunded mandates. Band together with other towns to apply pressure to the state to increase funding and to also review the number and extent of the mandates. At the same time pressure the state for more level year to year Chap 70 funding. Measurements. MCAS should be just one measure. Faculty and administration can measure within the framework of their curriculum. They can also identify other applicable standards.

Larger participation and commitment to regional planning activities

We need a commitment from all aspects of town government toward fully funding the schools. We will need an operational override in the next year. We should put efforts into increasing state aid and reducing unfunded state mandates. Planning for a new high school should begin now, as a public process, with an eye toward getting on the school building assistance list and doing a debt override in the next 3 years. One funding area to explore is participating in the state's health care plan and joining the state's retirement fund, rather than having separate plans.

More transparency in the town and school budget on what it costs to deliver the school services - including benefits to staff and the off budget costs the school dept manages. Clarity on final budgets and what is included in budgets that are managed year to year vs. what was approved as a budget number by the school committee - for example if the schools add a position at the start of the school year and that position was not in the budget when the SC voted the budget that needs to be clear at the start of the budget cycle. Community support for educational investment means taking care of our buildings we have improved more consistently and looking for more commercial support for the schools. would like to see all town boards jointly communicate to our state rep and senators the negative impact on our town and school budget the unfunded mandates. Don't agree that we have lack of consensus of measures of quality, but we don't communicate well about what they are and how people can learn more about them. the schools have 2 constituencies; their students and staff and the taxpayers. They know how to communicate to the school audience but they don't utilize resources or create resources to communicate to the public and the SC meetings are not a good venue for this to happen.

When discussion heats up over new high school (disclosure: my youngest is graduating this spring) the debate can not be driven just by those with younger children. It is perceived by many (in my experience) that that group is more vocal and therefore powerful than citizens without school age children. The schools need to widen their appeal and usefulness to all segments of the demographic range of citizens. When EVERYONE can use the new schools, they will be more widely supported.

1. Create a legislative agenda that is communicated to the town's legislative delegation. 2. Issue a year-end rating as to the efficacy of the legislative delegation and legislators in fulfilling the town's legislative agenda.

Unfunded mandates: work with statewide organizations, peer communities to address funding (or elimination of mandate for) unfunded mandates Infrastructure costs: Investigate grant monies that may be available for facilities of innovative (e.g., green) design. Parental involvement: develop asynchronous online tools so that parents can access information on their children's classes, school programs (and provide their own feedback) out of traditional work hours (or occasional evening school events)

Greater tolerance by the town and more cooperative effort by the school committee and schools to work jointly to promote the needs of the schools. The work done last year was unsuccessful in working toward that goal. Greater promotion and support for Keefe Tech- underutilized resource in Natick Override for all town services for 2009 to meet the actual needs of the schools and the town, not just what we think we can afford. Greater transparency in the school budget. Clarity around what is grant and tax levy funded and what are the costs for the unfunded mandates (all unfunded mandates less grant and state aid)

Better and more consistent communication between the school committee and other town boards, and between the schools and the town as a whole, will help any solutions proposed come to fruition. Participate in regional and statewide efforts to correct inequities in education funding. Seek to satisfy a greater range of learning styles to keep more children in the system who are otherwise attracted to charter schools. Develop methods for greater accountability and transparency in budgeting, and bring forward the school budget 2 months earlier in the budget process.

Get the cooperation and brain storming of the teachers through group consensus (i.e., Math Dept H.S., Middle, Elementary). They are on the 'front lines' of education, their knowledge of the system and practical experience is unmatched.

I have seen other towns begin 'Educational Trust' Funds by tapping into the graduates and creating a fund that in future years will be able to contribute to both broad and specialized needs that are under-funded. We desperately need a new High School, the current building is an embarrassment.

1. Curriculum enhancements
  - o High school electives: Economics, Engineering, Theater Arts and Media Production, Non-European languages (Japanese, Chinese), enhanced Latin, enhanced Literature and History
  - o Foreign language instruction earlier in middle/elementary school
  - o Program for Gifted and Accelerated Learners
    - i. Enhanced in-system offerings
    - ii. Assistance with outside programs for learners who exhaust in-house curriculum, when cost-effective vs. developing in-system offering.
  - o Enhanced arts
    - i. Orchestra
    - ii. Digital Media
    - iii. Jazz Ensemble
2. New High School
  - o Enhanced athletic facilities available for community hours
    - i. Swimming pool and diving facility
    - ii. Gymnasiums
    - iii. Track
    - iv. Tennis courts
    - v. Outdoor basketball courts
    - vi. Fitness Center
    - vii. Artificial turf fields (to standard of Marshall Road fields in Holliston)
  - o Auditorium capacity and capabilities beyond maximum state-subsidized standards
  - o WiFi-enabled, with parallel secure and public accesses
3. Middle school model affirmed and evolved
  - o "Early Middle School" grades 5-6, continuous with elementary
    - i. eliminate letter grades
    - ii. increase recreational time
  - o "Later Middle School" grades 7-8, continuous with high school
    - i. more electives
    - ii. more academic clubs
  - o structure 6-to-7 transition with careful attention to individual students' experiences
4. Upgrade to Kennedy Middle School
  - o New roof
  - o Renovated auditorium
  - o Enhanced landscaping
5. Enhanced web presence and information access
  - o Consistent and complete curriculum descriptions at high level, with accessible graphics and fuller click-through backup detail
  - o Consistent and complete homework postings at all levels, useful for parents and students
6. Increased guidance resources
7. Dedicated facility for public pre-school
- o Freeing capacity for elementary schools
8. Feeless transportation and sports
9. Longer school day and year

Constant scrutiny of budgets, personnel, policy, etc. merit based raises.

In all times and in all communities public education has been an important issue that to some extent both reflects and sets the tenor of a community. Central to this is the level of financial investment that the community is willing to make in education. Whatever the level of this investment it will generate competition with other Town needs. I am not sure how one would resolve this other than to put 5-year caps on personnel and payroll. The Superintendent and the School Committee would have to manage within these parameters. It would be the same for the use of equipment. Building usage would be a different matter. The schools would then know that they have a certain amount of money for their disposal over this 5 year period and could use it at their discretion. This would allow for greater planning and fiscal control on both the school and municipal sides of the budget.

### ***What other issues can you identify? What actions would you suggest?***

- 1) Lack of clear grading standards at the elementary level, leading to a lack of clarity as to goals.
- 2) Lack of consistent quality between general levels of the system (elementary, middle and high).

Reorient the schools and town to understand that education is something that should be expected to, funded to, and organized to, keep getting better --rather than simply maintain. Actions include communications, clear goals, a fine superintendent hire.

The issues like growth, environment, resources can all be included in a school program as issues students can work on.

a. As we prepare for the inevitable override question, to make the public more comfortable with the financial picture of the school budget, to provide the new Superintendent an analysis of the fiscal picture of the school system, and to help the town to further enhance its budgeting process, I believe we need to strongly consider a financial and operation audit of the schools. b. better financial reporting of the true revenue and expense picture of the schools i.e. Better articulation of Staff positions that are on grants and the impact to benefits, staff etc.,

Funding. Overall funding not just for education. I would like to see 360 be the spark for revamping the way local government is funded. Because the property tax is so regressive ( a \$100 per household override is a 0% income tax equivalent tax hike to some and a 0.10% to others and everywhere in between. The basic premise is flawed and outdated from pre colonial times when ownership of property was the only proxy for wealth and ability to pay. Prop 2.5 doesn't need to be thrown out , it needs to be improved or replaced with a better proposition that governs all local sources at a CPI = or - volume level (Prop CPIV) with a local income tax option component that goes into an overall capped mix of tax revenue. Or we could have everyone's tax bill change by CPI +or - V and through the assessment system out the window. We can provide fiscal restraint but not have to tax fixed income elderly or struggling families. An idea like this needs to start somewhere. Why not with 360? The single biggest issue at the local level is funding. It effects everything. And the current formula is badly broken in many many ways; perhaps even condemning local government to go out of business in the long term. Expenses per unit and overall because of volume growing at greater than 2.5% in total means that services disappear. If we do not start to raise this as an issue, especially while the state is watching and while the new governor is looking, it will never be raised. If it is never raised, then it can never be solved.

Investment in energy saving programs.

Community outreach - newsletter; volunteers from the senior center and possibly the churches (might have CORI issues and need background checks) not making charter school families feel bad for making that choice for their kids improving access and information about Keefe Tech as a great and underutilized Natick resource

More focus on 'average' students. More outreach to those not caught up on the college track (Both of my sons, class of 1997, and class of 2007) My youngest would have done better if the concept of 'senior privs' (i.e. the 'privilege' of not coming to school for study periods or leaving school during those, was more closely tied to his performance. Privileges should be earned. If he had been required (based on his grades) to be in school during those study periods he would have done better. I could have withdrawn permission for this but the rules should be enforced by the schools. A small and personal item, but one which may have had substantial impact on his achievement.

Enhance interaction of schools with community. Encourage (allow) parents to interact with students and faculty before and after school.

Statewide issues on balancing teaching and testing... but those must be addressed at levels significantly above those of the town.

MIS and Work Order (prioritized) system for all school buildings (town buildings as well). Management Information Systems could establish and manage the school's work order control system, facility assets records and coordination of major maintenance and renovation projects. This would give the school the ability to provide management and committees with reports as needed to assess the efficiency of maintenance operations, set renovation priorities and establish appropriate procedures and practices.

The middle schools should be split by age, not location. For example Kennedy should be 5th and 6th Grade and Wilson 7th and 8th. There would be enough synergies to offset any extra bussing and the quality of education would improve as well as social and athletic logistics.

After school programs might be better coordinated with the Recreation Department. Also, this might allow for more participation by parents.

## Increasing Civic Engagement and Leadership

- Leadership fatigue
- Appropriateness of the current form of government
- Communications between government and citizens
- Citizen engagement
- Lack of a useful compendium of town information and resources
- Business involvement and leadership
- Lack of coordination, collaboration between boards/committees/town departments
- Town needs to be more welcoming
- Need for better long-range planning
- Other

### ***What actions do you suggest the town consider to address these issues?***

1) Find ways to more actively ask citizens to participate in general government as board members and volunteers, through more active communications and more clear communication of the governmental process. 2) Administrations (both school and general government) must prepare information earlier and more clearly, to allow the volunteer boards more time to evaluate that information without the intense involvement currently required. 3) Prepare alternative reports that present budgetary information with less jargon. 4) Present all expenditures in a budget and offset those budgets with all sources of revenues and funds, even if those amounts do not require appropriation. (i.e.: The School Budget is far more than the \$40M appropriated due to grant funding -- show us the total budget and reduce the required budget by available grants and other sources to arrive at the required appropriation, instead of not showing the additional sources with their expenditures).

Leadership fatigue: Should Finance Committee's jobs be split into two -- budget and non-budget articles? Communications between town and people: Town newsletter School Annual Report Perception that town has enough income from mall, etc: Include information about this in communications mentioned above. Details can be on the website, a pointer to the details can be on a newsletter

See suggest to 6 - 'Teach kids the value and 'goodness' of government. Remember parents and the news media maybe their main source of information.

I personally do not have major concerns with this area. While I do think that most of Natick's political decisions are made by a 'few' and that TM has some challenges with Precinct #1 representation, I think generally if a member of the public 'wants' to get information it is readily available on the web, in town hall or with the various boards & committees. Suggestions: 1. Study redistricting in the town to take care of the precinct #1 problem 2. when an article comes to TM and is sponsored by a member of a board, or a board or committee who are also members of TM ( i.e. - school committee members ), these persons should be required to excuse themselves from voting

The form of government is actually designed to work very, very well. Working on the TMMH Committee, I came to appreciate how carefully well balanced Natick's powers and duties are among the various boards and bodies. We have had problems . More problems more recently. I firmly believe this was due to people in key leadership positions (both elected and appointed) deliberately violating the way things are supposed to work and having absolute disregard for the provisions of the Charter and Bylaws. There is another problem of sorts which is that the Town Administrator has too much town wide power but is accountable only to the Selectmen. This is especially true with regard to budgeting and providing financial information and answers to Town Meeting. Factually bad answers at TM have been an issue for over 10 years. One of them cost us Natick High School in 2000. Perhaps the solution is to allow points of order to be called whenever the administration misspeaks or to limit the number of times an administrator can speak on a question. Town Meeting should be allowed to discipline or terminate an Administrator who gives materially incorrect information. The administrator controls the resources that are necessary to allow all the committees to function ( with the exception of the School Committee.) Each of these committees should have the ability to provide input on the TA's review.

Leadership fatigue: set shorter term limits for appointed positions, so dedicated volunteers move around more and bring their expertise to new assignments. Make Finance Committee more efficient by setting membership below 10 members.

Leadership fatigue. Some screening procedure to raise the bar on items that go before the selectmen and on Town Meeting articles. Present structure seems appropriate. Expand the volunteer base. Perhaps more news releases to the local media when committees are looking for volunteers. Long term. An advisory committee that meets a minimum of twice a year to explore needs (such as the 360 Comm. is doing).

Long range planning - permanent committee composed of the key boards and committees to keep looking at long range planning and doing this annually.

One thing contributing to all these issues is that the town is woefully understaffed. Volunteer board members can only do so much in their spare time. There needs to be more staff in the Community Development Office, for example, to support collaboration and planning. A full-time planner is needed. Boards should have regularly scheduled cross-board meetings for planning purposes: i.e., the Planning Board, ZBA, Con Com and Design Review Board should have regular joint meetings. Such joint meetings are open, of course, and selected stakeholders should be specifically invited. If a joint meeting is held for downtown planning, for example, Natick Center Associates could be specifically invited. The Town's website should contain all the information you could get by going to Town Hall. It should list all boards, members, meeting schedules, minutes, reports, everything. This will require a town employee who has the responsibility for keeping the site updated.

Newsletter format on the website more publication of meeting minutes and agendas website explanation of what each group does Clarity around where town reports etc are available in the library

My experience in Town Hall is that every staff member I have had reason to encounter has been as welcoming as I would reasonable expect. Leadership fatigue is an issue that I have observed (and am experiencing!!) But the solution is simply to encourage new people to become involved, especially when reasoned thoughtful people come forward on an issue. Encourage civil and civic engagement, keep meetings civil in behavior to show people that being involved does not need to be threatening. Encourage 'cross-breeding' between boards to increase collaboration. Better long range planning requires investment, either in staff, consultants, or involvement in planning organizations such as MetroWest Growth Management Committee.

Enhance and realign department staffing to better support the work of oversight boards and committees.

In coordination with Town Clerk's office and other Town departments, work to ensure that print and online information about Town government is as current and accessible as possible. Develop mechanisms for board to meet in cross-Board meetings on a regular (quarterly?) basis. Work with realtors, local businesses, to ensure that new arrivals to Natick have information on Town government and how they can get involved.

Use of town website to promote volunteer opportunities, the charter and bylaws; Use of a town newsletter that is part of the census or water bills to communicate to our town.

Establish a framework for soliciting questions, ideas and suggestions from the public, and respond to them through public channels such as web, print, notices, forums etc. This is very haphazard. Publish a comprehensive and up to date local government directory. Consider an annual planning summit among town boards as a forum for information exchange. Identify best practices for solving these issues and consider which can apply to Natick.

Lack of coordination, collaboration between boards/committees/town departments Complete a 'top to bottom' audit (financial and operational NO 'golden cows'), of all town departments. Rethink the budget process (time frame, information provided etc

This Town is Very welcoming. I disagree with that point. Long range planning needs to be more realistic and the residents need to be educated as to the true cost of all of the nice things we have in Natick. Maybe give away free trash bags to people who come hear town meeting and attempt to educate themselves. We need to streamline the process to make the time-commitment less on leadership.

More on-line collaboration. Revisions to Open Meeting law to accommodate on-line and other asynchronous interactions. KEEP TOWN FORM OF GOVERNMENT. DO NOT CHANGE TO CITY/MAYOR FORM OF GOVERNMENT.

Address leadership fatigue by limiting duration of night meetings to 10PM or earlier. Better use of web site needs to occur to better inform citizenry. Business needs to participate more in Town related issues (downtown improvements, parking, costs, etc). I have found the Town very welcoming.

Communication between government and citizens is a very important aspect of successful government. Town government must be made aware of what its residents need and require. Residents must be aware of what their tax dollars get them. The Town has a responsibility to inform its residents about what services are available, and that these services are provided in the most efficient means possible. I believe that a newsletter that is published every other month (at least quarterly) would be a good start. The Town's website is another obvious place for people to obtain information about the town, and to let the Town know about any complaints that the residents may have. Finally, a live monthly call-in TV show with the Town Administrator, Chair of the Board of Selectmen, Chair of the FinCom, and Chair of the School Committee would be a good way to better communication with the residents.

***What other issues can you identify? What actions would you suggest?***

1) Too much government information is presented using jargon (i.e.: Free cash is actually a sort of savings account; why is it called 'Revenue' on the budget -- can't we call it 'use of savings'?)

The Town needs a teach in among the various boards on the way the Charter really works. An example of what might be clarified in such is that the Selectmen are in fact NOT the chief policy making body in Town. They are the chief policy making 'agency' which is a subset of all the 'bodies' in the Charter. TM is explicitly not included among the 'agencies'. There are other examples. If the various boards knew and understood the process, they would probably be more effective. Natick also needs administrators who know how to work the balanced complementary system that Natick has.

Town operational budgets should be smoother over time. For example, in good times, such as more state aid, increase the percentage of funds that go for nonrecurring expenses such as capital needs and hold back on operational budget increases. The above mentioned long term committee could perform this function.

The town needs a mission for how to interact with the citizens- (Good to great in the public sector) and each dept needs to be able to identify how they can work to meet their aspect of the mission. This leads to identifying good leaders who want to help the town do more.

Continue to support and encourage and publicize the Town website and the role of cable TV (Natick Pegasus). I am amazed how many people actually watch televised board meetings.

Create a separate Board of Public Works Commissioners to better oversee the DPW and shift insufficient time resource from the Board of Selectmen (and other entities, Parks, School, Planning Board)

Refer to previous MIS. This will take the 'guess and fudge work' out of the Facilities budgets.

We are spending a lot to money and energy reinventing the wheel. We need to privatize both the Ambulance and the Trash after a more inclusive bidding process.

## Improving the Natick Environment and the Health of the Population

- Limited access to health care for some residents
- Air pollution
- Milfoil in lakes
- Lack of green building and development standards
- Impact of contaminated lands
- Open space protection for local farms
- Recreational and open space acquisition, preservation and management
- Protection of water supply
- Water, energy conservation
- Alternatives to automotive transportation
- Other

### *What actions do you suggest the town consider to address these issues?*

1) Expand regional transportation, so that residents can reliably get around town using public transportation (especially to the mall areas). This would be especially useful on weekends.

More bike racks in Natick Center. Bike lanes.

The foundation in many of the environmental issues is there for town operations. We have policy (check the web-site) and we're implementing many creative programs (Environmental Management Systems, waste reduction options, routine compliance checks). I think the missing pieces are improving consumer/resident awareness of the impact of their buying habits on the environment, improving the use of town contracts to choose contractors who meet or promote environmental thresholds and practices and upgrading the patch work of town bylaws to consolidate environmental concerns. Finally, we need to pass CPA to help fund open space and we need to develop an implementation plan for the use the open space funds.

a. Town wide energy audits - DPW, Schools, and town buildings

We need to move buildings to a green standard. We need to address traffic congestion. We need to protect the water supply. We need to buy land for open space and preserve the Town. All this takes money which we do not have and are not going to get under the current system. Please see earlier point on a revised but still fiscally constrained revenue model.

I am afraid that health care aid for residents is out of the purview of town government. As mentioned earlier, energy conservation can lead to spending conservation. Transportation. Shuttle buses. Bike paths. Bike lanes on major streets such as in Denmark.

Better mass transit options, hopefully on a regional basis

We should explore how green building standards can be incorporated into the zoning bylaw or the building code, either as requirements or incentives. Bike trails and buses. Bike trails and buses. Continue with smart growth principles--promoting re-use of industrial sites as opposed to use of open space. Can we promote alternate energy systems--wind and solar, e.g.?

Adoption of CPA would have helped, unlikely in our current override climate. Continue to pursue projects with substantial transferable development rights payments (FAR) to elicit more open space funds. Encourage current owner of Lookout Farm (Steve Belkin) to consider APR restrictions on currently unprotected 60+ acres of residentially zoned land. The town could 'trade' for such protection by considering a 'Farm and Agriculture Support' zoning overlay that would allow some of the fundraising events that Belkin would like to pursue which could be strictly conditioned to satisfy neighbors concerns and preserve over 60 acres of developable land.

Publication of design standards. Establish an environment and health equivalent to the Design and Review Board. 1. Create a legislative agenda that is communicated to the town's legislative delegation. 2. Issue a year-end rating as to the efficacy of the legislative delegation and legislators in fulfilling the town's legislative agenda.

Develop green building standards, beginning with Town buildings. Ensure through deed restrictions, land acquisition, that open space is preserved. Ensure through easements, permitting, that sidewalks and walking trails are incorporated into development plans (has a side benefit for accessing public transportation)

Provide or publicize a robust referral service for people who need access to health care services. Invest our time and MBTA funds in a regional transportation authority, and seek to promote alternative transportation.

Lack of green building and development standards the Planning Board could use the LEEDS program as a guide. Limited access to health care for some residents - Air pollution - Protection of water supply - Milfoil in lakes - Impact of contaminated lands These should be addressed by the BOH in conjunction with state DEP and Fed CDC etc.

Natick is too free wheeling in allowing commercial and large residential development while turning down smart development. If the trash bag price was doubled it would be charging those who consume the most (and can afford to) and have less impact on seniors. It would raise enough money to meet budget shortfalls in coming years and would encourage more recycling.

1. Having health care coverage is not necessarily equivalent to having access to health care services:  
A. Youth and families in Natick who have MassHealth (Medicaid) coverage must find providers who accept their coverage, or if providers accept their insurance, providers who accept new patients. There are very few providers in Natick who meet these criteria. B. Older residents with Medigap policies or MassHealth often have difficulty finding local providers. Members of both these groups are also among those least likely to drive or have an automobile. Work with Great Brook Valley Health Clinic in Framingham. Perhaps open a satellite office in Natick one or two days/week. Improve transportation to existing clinic facilities in Framingham. 2. Open space/recreation space/preservation/management: Reopen conversation/education about CPA. CPA ballot question 3. Green building & development standards: Create incentives in property tax structure (e.g. deferred or reduced or graduated property taxes for some initial period such as first five or seven or ten years). Increased use of green building components paired to increase in property tax concessions. 4. Water conservation: Financial incentives in water bills for reduced consumption.

Use open space money to buy farm property. DCR needs to solve milfoil problem, not Town of Natick (within Lake Cochituate) – State Reps should push for this. Water supply IS protected by Town policies and actions. Town runs bus system as an alternative to auto.

***What other issues can you identify? What actions would you suggest?***

It would be great if the commuter rail system had more trains in the evening so people who can't leave the office every day by 5:45 could use the commuter rail without having to spend an extra hour plus at work.

Integrate the affordable housing plan with the environment and health issues.

This is so many issues taken together: transportation, public health, environmental issues, land use... it's hard to make sense of this question. I don't know that we have a quantifiable, serious town-wide pollution issue.

## Enlivening Natick Center

- Insufficient parking
- Insufficient mixed use (housing, commercial, educational, recreational, cultural, etc.)
- Level of vitality (e.g. too few restaurants, destination stores, etc.)
- Level of policing
- Insufficient playgrounds
- Other

### *What actions do you suggest the town consider to address these issues?*

1) All new building near Natick Center should require the provision of extra parking for general use.

A calm, nice pub in town center would be pleasant.

Not much to say.

a. Enhanced Planning Board, planning to consider and plan for and proactively frame the next logical building development areas of Natick . i.e. the Warehouse area, etc. so the town isn't faced with being blackmailed out of 40b or some other less palatable development b.

BOS/Zoning/Planning Board need to work together to enhance proactive networking with developers who will help the town with the “a”s above

Every one of these are issues. The issue of increasing vitality needs to be balanced with the increased traffic that too much vitality could bring. We need to develop a careful plan for keeping and growing downtown. Sort of like a green building equivalent except its for the downtown. Balanced uses with traffic at different times of the day, etc fitting into a complementary whole. Too much density of development will make downtown Natick like downtown Malden or Waltham. We need to be different. Parking is an issue. However, we should guard against one big parking structure. It might be better if parking destinations were more spread out.

Parking is being looked into. Important! Vitality. Over the last decade there has been good progress. The Natick Center comm. can take a lot of credit. Perhaps we could provide incentives for establishments to stay open longer, at least on specified days of the week.

Insufficient parking - better mass transit options with perhaps satellite parking

We need to build a new parking garage on the site of the Middlesex garage that will accommodate employees of a fully-used Natick Center. The garage can also be used at night for TCAN visitors and others. It can be funded by a DIF for the district, fees, a contribution from the MBTA in exchange for reserving a percentage of the spaces for commuters, and plain old debt. We need to do active economic development planning. Two aspects of economic development for Natick Center:

1. Attract a brew pub type restaurant that is open for lunch, after work, and in the evenings after shows at TCAN, where you can get a drink or an easy meal.
2. Actively recruit start-up or incubator businesses for the upper-floor empty spaces. This can be done in conjunction with Natick Labs (spin-off businesses from technology developed there) or other local colleges. Rezone the DMU zone to permit denser housing with less stringent parking requirements and an affordable housing component (like the HOOP)

Public/private partnerships for town owned parcels in the downtown area. Continued support for Natick Center Associates.

Rail trail from the north.

Develop structured (rather than open lot) parking in such a way that it is screened from the street, e.g., with the structure 'wrapped' in retail/commercial.

Build a parking garage, and set forward a joint vision and plan for Natick Center that identifies critical needs and pathways to meet them.

Natick doesn't allow enough restaurants with Liquor licenses - people won't come downtown for Pizza alone.

9. Municipal WiFi o Parallel secure and public access at all town buildings o Public access within quarter mile of: i. Town Hall ii. West Natick train station iii. Bacon Free Library 12. Additional Community Development resources to recruit desirable office/retail/commercial establishments.

1. Parking: Construct parking garage. Reliable shuttle bus service to downtown. 2. Mixed use should be partially addressed by the HOOP districts going forward. Increased residential will ideally create demand and support for restaurants, retail and services.

Over-ride possibly needed for parking garage. Business community also needs to step up to plate as a participant and joint partner. More housing is going in downtown which will bolster vitality level. Businesses need to stay open longer hours and on weekends. Some downtown Property owners need to better maintain their properties beyond bare minimum level. Policing appears fully adequate.

Parking and traffic have been issues that have faced Natick for years. Until these issues are resolved it might prove counter productive to try to attract more people to downtown Natick. However, Natick does seem to be rather quiet at night. A few more good restaurants and a pub or two might help to enliven the downtown area and make it more of a destination point. Perhaps regional transportation might help to alleviate traffic and parking issues while also attracting people to downtown Natick. Housing for the poor and moderate income people is definitely needed. We also need to ensure that the elderly and veterans have housing made available to them.

***What other issues can you identify? What actions would you suggest?***

Ball fields downtown would be great but I don't see where.

Access; Route 27 must be re-designed and re-constructed. A lack of current design diversity. Published design and signage standards.

Privatize a parking garage downtown - it will be profitable over time, someone will build it.

## Balancing Town Financial Resources

- Current budget shortfall
  - Revenues are insufficient to maintain current service levels
  - Public perception that revenue from recent developments should be sufficient to cover increased municipal costs
  - Conflict between educational and municipal service needs
  - Proposition 2 ½ limits revenue generation
- Rising costs, e.g., health care costs; energy costs; pension costs
- Conflict between citizen wants and willingness/ability to pay
- Increase charitable giving, support for nonprofits
- Pursuit and use of grant resources
- Level of public safety resources
- Disagreement over distribution of tax burden between businesses and residents
- Other

### ***What actions do you suggest the town consider to address these issues?***

Pursuit of grant resources: At least *vis-à-vis* the schools, it has to be clear that grants are usually for seed money -- starting a project that the town will subsequently pay for. This is a communications challenge.

Hire or contract with a professional grant writer to increase grant funding a routine resource. I think Phil has done a good job on communicating town funding and budgets - you should plan to continue his effort. It may help to explain what we have control over and what we don't have control over and how that drives the budget planning process.

a. Better policy statements at the Executive Level ( BOS ) about what the desired level the town will have for its reserves and stability accounts...this policy is subjectively set by the treasurer/controller  
b. Rising costs of health and benefits needs to be considered every year through tighter collective bargaining efforts, in the current year approx \$800k of health costs can be mitigated by moving our 65 & over retirees to Medicare i.e. using the Medicare provision  
c. energy costs can be mitigated by having a town wide energy audit and then having an on-going energy conservation program run by DPW  
d. We need to put the political pressure on our legislators to help town have better control over the pension process. Currently we have no control over how funds are invested, how expenses are controlled and general policy of our pension board. While the boards are elected positions, with the local controller being a member, the town have very little control over policy. Natick currently has the 3rd worst investment returns in the commonwealth. This requires more money from the tax levy to fund gaps in investments

Do not change to a split property tax rate. Transfer to the state health plan and the state retirement plan. All boards should include in their work the pursuit of grants and state and federal funds, and all staff should include that in their work. If staff don't have the time, add staff.

Most discouraging, because despite the private sectors investments, rising costs are outpacing all increased revenue from new development. There will have to be some limitations on employee benefits at some point. I still believe strongly in a single tax rate. Businesses pay taxes, provide JOBS!!!, and use little services. They are the Golden Goose.

This issue is the issue. Without funding, nothing can be done. Without a changed revenue model, services must be abandoned, either gradually or abruptly, because the cost per unit and from volume growth combined is greater than 2.5% Without a change, the long term strategic outlook for Natick is bleak. We might or might not get the citizens to fund certain things in the near term .However, over time, a regressive tax system cannot keep raising revenue. A government stuck with only a regressive system cannot continue as before but must decline over time. It is inevitable. No one would ever propose an income tax hike that hit fixed income seniors and struggling families at a 7.5% to 10% rate of taxable income while proposing a rate of 1% to 3% of taxable income for others. That would be crazy and unfair. Yet, when one measures the effect of a property tax override in its equivalent terms to an income tax hike, that is what it is. When property taxes are further subject to the subjective and volatile annual assessment system the picture gets worse. Where else can your tax bill on your property go up 6% , your town's revenue only go up 2.5% than under an assessment system like the one in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts which gave someone else a tax cut so your property tax could go up much greater than 2.5% When one considers the commercial tax burden that has been shifted to residents ( approximately \$500 to \$750 per household by my rough approximation) we can see how much override capacity has been 'consumed' People in Natick pay as if they had passed 500 -750 in overrides but they didn't pass them. The overall system is so badly designed that it looks like the intent was to destroy local government in the long run. That is what is happening in some towns. We need to act or we will follow sooner or later. The earlier comments about CPIV as an example would provide a balance of fiscal responsibility and restraint, fairness, reality and results. It may be a long way from Natick to Beacon Hill but the first steps need to be taken. Getting this issue solved is the most important task of 360 in my view.

RE: Rising costs health care: contract with the Group Insurance Commission to obtain better rates and assistance with cost containment energy: school dept. and general government reps should work as a team to manage Town costs pension liabilities: invest Town reserves immediately. in the PRIT fund managed by the State Treasurer

The shortfall is real. However the town may have to evaluate the number of services that it can provide. Rising costs. Employees may have to shoulder a greater percentage of health insurance costs. Other points made elsewhere. Prop. 2 1/2. Override seems to be indicated presently, but town should do its part by belt tightening for now and the future. Grants are good if they don't later reduce the funding for the new functions that they helped set up, and thereby force the town to continue the funding out of the levy.

1. Create a legislative agenda that is communicated to the town's legislative delegation.
2. Issue a year-end rating as to the efficacy of the legislative delegation and legislators in fulfilling the town's legislative agenda.

Increase public awareness of value choices. Many in town remain unaware of where Town monies go. Work with GIC to get the Town into the state's health insurance purchase plan.

Revive the 3-board financial planning process undertaken in 2006, and set clear goals and reporting steps as part of a disciplined and inclusive planning process towards FY09-13. Aggressively seek alternative revenue sources. Provide voters with a clear choice between level service and current levels of taxation. Develop a breakthrough, comprehensive taxpayer protection program to ensure that people with limited ability to pay property taxes have a clear and accessible process for relief and referral.

There has not been a bidding process on the health insurance in 5 years - which is ridiculous. That is the single fastest rising cost and its killing us. Also we can move retirees to Medicare under Tony Lista's proposal and save \$500k. Any future overrides should be presented as "all encompassing" needs for funding, schools, senior center, police and fire, don't let there be a division of loyalties.

Rising costs: Education program for the public re: what the town already does to limit the increase in costs. Including: facts re: the statutory requirements and collective bargaining obligations as they relate to health care costs; statutory obligation for paying down the unfunded pension liability; GIC potential and process if legislation is passed; C 32, section 18 acceptance (analysis of potential cost savings needs to be revisited).

Property tax overrides when absolutely necessary to maintain services and to achieve consensus vision. 8. Enhanced property tax relief for financially challenged residents 13. Increased "Friends of..." non-profit public auxiliary activity o Libraries o District-wide educational enrichment o School arts o School sports o Neighborhood watch Support state legislation for local option sales/meals taxes. Better financial management. Real separation of transaction and auditing functions. Use of optimal techniques for managing cash and municipal financial assets. Move town employee health and retirement benefits onto state programs for reduced cost of services.

Town should consider joining state pension program. Negotiate with insurance companies to maintain premium costs by increasing patient co-payments or join a larger consortium which will reduce expenses because of larger pool of participants. Give.

Possible split tax rate establishment. Possibility of selling surplus land holdings needs to be pursued. This visioning process needs to have an element focusing on costing so the public understands that their requests have financial implications.

Communication between the Town and its residents is essential in this instance. Meaningful dialogue has to be established to help set the priorities that will need to be developed during this period of budget shortfall. More discussions on local cable TV should occur. This will not rectify or alleviate the budget shortfall but rather help people to prioritize the use of limited resources.

### ***What other issues can you identify? What actions would you suggest?***

Educational needs vs. general government: School Committee and Board of Selectmen should prevent conflicts prior to budget development by negotiating budget assumptions for all departments.

Continue to encourage QUALITY development, which encourages other business/property owners to reinvest in their own properties/businesses which increase revenue to the town and encourages further improvements. Encourage such development by NOT splitting the tax rate, or pursuing other draconian tax measures.

Need to educate general populace of budget issues. Publication and general distribution of town budget and resources.

Some people consider a split tax rate as one option for the town; we should decide if the current basis for our policy requires review, and if so, set that process in motion now so it is complete by November.

## Improving the Town's Infrastructure and Transportation Options

- Traffic congestion, including truck traffic
- Lack of regional cooperation
- Lack of sidewalks
- Route 9 acts as a barrier
- Development/use of public buildings; e.g.: high school, senior center, youth center, community center, Natick Center garage, etc.
- Public transportation
  - Age and adequacy of infrastructure
  - Natick community public transportation inadequate
- Ongoing upgrade and maintenance: buildings, parks, roads
- Increased accessibility
- Other

### *What actions do you suggest the town consider to address these issues?*

Look for opportunities to promote sustainability through the use of LEED, LID, smart growth principals.

I do not see transportation as a major issue. We have MBTA, the commuter rail, town taxi's, town bus service, we have senior ride subsidies, etc. The development of the buildings is an issue. We have a good start with our capital budgeting process, but this needs to be enhanced. Additional policy mandates by the BOS might help. i.e. - a capital budget out earlier than March, general policies about how capital expenditures will be funded; i.e. by bond if over \$250k and with a useful life of more than 5 yrs., by tax levy if it's under \$250k, etc...

These are real issues and take money that we don't have. We have been ignoring capital because of scarce funds not irresponsible neglect. On traffic and Rte. 9, I don't have the answer. Just agreement that it needs a solution.

Failure to invest seriously in the Town's infrastructure: set a benchmark for annual capital investment, e.g. 3% of the operating budget [follow Wellesley's lead]

More sidewalks and bike lanes where indicated. More use of school buildings for evening functions, and thereby reduce the pressure on other centers. A steady schedule for building maintenance.

Route 9 requires a regional solution, with state involvement. We should work with Wellesley and Framingham at a minimum, and our legislative delegation, toward a solution. The Oak Street interchange, the Route 27 interchange, and Speen Street all need work. We should start using sidewalk funds and identifying main roads where sidewalks are needed. We should participate in a regional transit system, with buses up and down Oak Street, Route 27 and Speen Street and along Route 9 and Route 135. A new senior center and youth center should be built on the site of the parking lot behind the police station, with a parking garage included. I discussed the garage in a previous answer. We should undertake and complete the Route 27 traffic plan and improvements.

All 'through corridor' roads e.g. Dover, Pleasant, Cottage, Union, Glen, Woodland, Circular, Pine, etc. are going to have to be identified as such and improved with at least one sidewalk (a walker was killed last year on Dover Rd. because of no sidewalks) This must be done even on scenic roads.

Clarity around how we are going to prioritize capital projects and how we are going to pay for them. We need to take the plan to the next step. Website update on large construction projects like rte 135 link from town website to T website so people can find the train schedule easily. Clear plan on the timelines for the new high school and senior center so folks know what is coming or when a decision might be made.

Town issue a sidewalk bond for infrastructure creation. Task the state with correcting Route 9 & Oak Street. Underpass at Apple Hill. 1. Create a legislative agenda that is communicated to the town's legislative delegation. 2. Issue a year-end rating as to the efficacy of the legislative delegation and legislators in fulfilling the town's legislative agenda.

You can guess my thoughts on Route 9! Since MetroWest is becoming one of the major economic drivers in Massachusetts, it is time for the state act on the fact that Route 9 is a major regional transportation corridor and act (and fund) upgrades accordingly. The current town-by-town solutions are disastrous and ineffective.

Create a plan for a Walkable Natick and identify the elements (time and resources) needed to make this a reality. Establish alternative transportation improvement projects to complement public and private development. Set widespread standards for accessibility and provide a periodic, public audit of progress toward this goal.

Speen Street is a accident waiting to happen - there needs to be a truck exclusion like on Hartford St. even if its over the evening hours. Natick didn't get enough mitigation funds from the Mall for the burden it will bring. Increase the Mitigation money to a longer-term funding level.

1. Senior/Community Center 2. Roads and sidewalks well maintained. o Sidewalks and crosswalks by all major roads o Coordinated planning for excavation and resurfacing o Utility upgrades i. More undergrounding ii. Removal of paired poles iii. Relocation of poles leaning into roadway 3. Remaining Oak Street gravel facility converted into passive recreational area opening onto Morse Pond with canoe/rowing/sailing access 4. Public park at Speen St. Armory site, with public boating ramps 5. Walking trails maintained with access points through Sunkaway and Pickerel Pond areas. 6. Rail trail from downtown connecting to Saxonville trail 7. Regional bus service with Wellesley, Wayland, Needham, Framingham, Weston (if they would join) 10. Walking bridges over route 9 at Apple Hill, Walnut Street, Oak Street 11. Walking bridge over Speen Street at Hartford Street. 12. Branch libraries in West Natick and Wethersfield areas.

Transportation within Natick must be improved. Both older residents and youth need access to convenient, reliable local transportation. Increase number of bus routes and expand areas of service. Make routes shorter. Implement public transportation service between towns. Possibly join RTA.

State needs to invest more into transportation improvement projects in MetroWest – including Natick. State Reps. and Senators must push the State to make these investments. Again costing needs to be part of this discussion – otherwise the public thinks we're not interested in making these sorts of improvements – obviously we are.

***What other issues can you identify? What actions would you suggest?***

Update from the state on how the state highway projects impact our ability to impact transportation in the community such as Rte 9 or Rte 27.

This entire process (Natick 360) must come up with a reasoned approach to balancing all municipal needs. Buildings and equipment must be maintained, not allowed to deteriorate because of other needs. How to balance?

Tolls on the Turnpike create traffic transfer onto Route 9.

## Planning for Change and Managing Growth

- Aging of the population: e.g., health, housing, transportation
- Insufficient planning resources
- Inappropriate or insufficient codes and regulations
  - Lack of zoning for small lots and houses
  - Lack of green building and development standards
  - Lack of design standards
- Attracting high-level commercial development
- Loss of “small-town feel”
- Impact of 40B developments
- Public opposition to growth and development
- Improved/increased access to lakes and ponds
- Knowledge of/access to/maintenance of trail system
- Transit-oriented development
- Number and location of play areas for children
- Housing affordability, lack of first-time homebuyer opportunities, lack of affordable rental housing
- Increased tax burden
- Lack of social/ethnic/cultural diversity
- Other

### *What actions do you suggest the town consider to address these issues?*

1) Enhance zoning of areas where large developments are likely so that developers will prefer non-40B projects (40R, HOOP, etc.)

Not much to say.

a. Once again a twice yearly meeting with the various boards & committees to discuss the high level issues in this area  
b. More proactive Planning Board, planning for areas of Natick which are generally deemed the next development areas  
c. Proactive networking with developers to help create a blueprint for managing growth

Change the 40 B law. It is a pre Prop 2-1/2 law that is impossible to cope with in a post 2-1/2 world. The issue of affordable housing needs a solution other than a developer led cram down of a local community without any regard for that community or the people in it. The state could lead by getting Worcester and the central part of the state to be a development focus for jobs, etc. That way the growth would not be crammed into the eastern half of the state which has ocean on one side. The reason housing is not affordable here is the same as the reason for other coastal metropolitan areas. They can only grow in one direction. All the demand for housing is in 1/2 of the area and that causes the price to go up. It really is that simple. Natick alone cannot solve that problem. The real 'Smart Growth' strategy is at the state level to boost the central and western part of the state and take the pressure off.

Tax burden. More representation or consideration for the category of residents who have the most difficulty in coming up with RE tax payments. My sense is that they are under-represented in town governing bodies such as TM.

We should consider rezoning the older neighborhoods so that zoning is consistent with the existing lot sizes. Increase walking trails and public transportation. Direct 40B development to build apartments. We need another full-time planner on staff

Green building are expensive. How can we justify these costs or how can we incorporate cost effective green projects into new infrastructure without increasing our costs.

As population ages (my wife and I are 56), who will pay increased benefits to town employees? Will we leave the town? We will likely sell to a family with children, will population increase? Larger percentage of immigrants: diversity but possible conflict? Encourage Natick to grow more diverse, encourage neighborhoods to be welcoming.

Expand staffing in Community Development office.

Development of more senior housing downtown (which may have lower parking requirements), complemented with transportation services. Create tools for inclusionary zoning (am working on this as we speak), so that affordable housing minimums are incorporated in all new developments of any significance without having to be negotiated from zero.

I hate to bear the bad news but 'diversity' and 'affordability' are usually mutually exclusive. Many of the issues in this section are unrealistically juxtaposed. We all want Natick to be 'Nicer' and 'Cheaper' at the same time - Not Possible - we need to educate people on the realities of the current system.

Community Development Dept. requires staff resources to address issues as are raised above. We pursue addressing each of the above items but lack of staff and financial resources doesn't allow the Town to address them to everyone's satisfaction.

***What other issues can you identify? What actions would you suggest?***

Try to find and encourage a single 40B or 40R project that involves single family 'starter homes' instead of condos and apartments, even if modest in size just to prove it can be done. Encourage Natick to join a regional transit authority for the MetroWest area. Insist that Natick continue to take a seat at the table of regional planning organizations such as MetroWest Growth Management Committee.

Under-active Housing Board. Identify Board Members and identify what they are doing.

Everyone in my neighborhood experienced a 25% jump in property taxes this year. How is that possible. We don't mind paying our share, but seriously, where did the taxes drop 22.5% to off set our rise and still be at 2.5% ?? This is a glaring example of a failure to communicate to the citizens.

## Leveraging Regional Resources

- Lack of regional coordination, cooperation, and collaboration
  - Minimal or ineffective communication
  - Traffic and transportation
  - Education
  - Public safety and services
  - Planning resources
  - Financial management, e.g., pension administration, health care, purchasing power
  - Natural resources and environmental management
- Lack of town time and resources to commit to resolving regional issues
- Other

### *What actions do you suggest the town consider to address these issues?*

Many of these issues we share with other communities, regionally. Stress the importance of being more proactive in regional groups.

Huge area that will require annual assessments 1. Regionalization of Fire 2. Privatization of IT Pensions and retiree health care and employee health care need to be regionalized. The rest of it makes me very concerned. There is no faster way to irrevocably lose the ability to control your destiny than to regionalize and take away local control. My home town in Pennsylvania did it in 1966. Within four years it had destroyed its excellent school system which has only gotten worse with time. Property values did not keep pace with inflation. The sense of community was lost. Beware.

Include 'initiate regional coordination, cooperation, and collaboration' in the annual 'critical achievements' for the new Town Administrator and the new School Superintendent  
Regional coordination to provide a greater voice on state government issues that affect towns. More coordination between town fire departments, because equipment is a major factor, here, and some of it could be shared.

See previous answers

The BOS needs to take a leadership role in this project and represent us in the process so we can find out if we want to pursue these opportunities. We may need a new town administration before we can pursue this though

See previous comments on RTA and MetroWest Growth Management Committee. Continue to keep a staff position for environmental compliance.

Continue participation in Metro West Growth Management. Outsource pension and health administration

Consider not only joint board meetings within Town, but meeting with peer boards of neighboring towns on a periodic (quarterly? semi-annually?) basis. This can provide tools both for regional cooperation and sharing 'best practice' ideas among volunteer boards.

Here is one place Natick 360 could start this discussion. It can not be considered smart that neighboring towns have over \$30,000,000 dollars worth of firefighting equipment, in fact three neighboring towns just spent \$ 1,500,000 this year money that don't have, on more fire fighting equipment. The number of fires is way down. It is time to disturb one 'sacred cow'. This is enough for now. I am ready to help continue this debate. I hope I can hear this recommendation from 360 soon!

Invest in appropriate regional planning and cooperation, and identify the specific areas where we will concentrate our efforts to coordinate with other communities and statewide.

Need to get a home-rule petition to create a local sales tax to pay for the infrastructure burden that the businesses bring. Also need a higher real estate tax rate for commercial real estate.

7. Regional bus service with Wellesley, Wayland, Needham, Framingham, Weston (if they would join) Support existing department-level regional collaboration, and encourage additional collaboration where appropriate. **DO NOT FUNDAMENTALLY RESTRUCTURE HIGH-LEVEL GOVERNMENT IN ANY WAY THAT WOULD REDUCE THE MOST RESPONSIVE LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT - THE TOWN.**

It's unclear as to how the Town can be expected to solve regional issues outside of its borders when we cannot fully address such matters within our borders due to our many constraints.

### ***What other issues can you identify? What actions would you suggest?***

The identified focus areas are connected to one another. It will be difficult to isolate one issue from one area without it affecting other areas of concern. It may make sense to address the identified values and visions and barriers as a system. There is such overlap among these areas that the interconnectedness of civic engagement, Natick center, public education, environment and health, financial resources, infrastructure and transportation are challenging to tease apart. Natick residents who participate in our programs such as information, wellness, recreation, volunteer, and exercise fall within a rather typical range of engagement, awareness and concern regarding local issues and activities. Residents for whom we provide social services through the Human Services and Council on Aging Departments are much less likely to be involved in the activities of the town. These individuals would include families living in subsidized housing, elder caregivers, individuals of all ages with disabilities, families with children in special education, homeless, individuals with substance abuse histories, people unable to heat their homes, and people applying for food stamps. These people would probably not be seeking the assistance of a municipal department if they had any other resources. These residents are frequently struggling to meet their basic needs and are not likely to engage in a strategic planning process, but their concerns need to be considered by those who are engaged. There are some very specific actions in which I would like to see the Town of Natick involved:

- I would like to see Natick connected to the Massachusetts Partnership for Healthy Communities which is a project of the Boston Foundation. A description of this initiative follows and was taken from their literature. **HEALTHY COMMUNITY** Making your community a better place to live. What is a Healthy Community? A Healthy Community is where people come together to make their community better for themselves, their family, their friends, their neighbors and others in their community. A Healthy Community creates ongoing dialogue; generates leadership everywhere; shapes its future; embraces diversity; knows itself; connects people and resources;

and fosters a sense of community. What do Healthy Community Coalitions/Groups do? Healthy Community coalitions/groups in Massachusetts, like communities the world over who have joined the Healthy Communities movement, work together on local issues that affect health and quality of life, such as:

- Public health concerns such as heart disease, substance abuse & air quality;
- Housing and education;
- Youth development;
- Access to health/medical care;
- Child care and elder care;
- Recreation;
- A clean and healthy environment;
- A safe environment;
- Arts and cultural pursuits; and
- Transportation.

Who is involved in creating a Healthy Community? People are the key to a Healthy Community. Individual participants come in all ages, from all educational and economic backgrounds, and from all sectors of the community. Groups that may be involved include:

- Municipal & local government and planners;
- Local business, industry, economic development
- Civic/cultural groups
- CHNAs
- Local residents
- Faith organizations
- Hospitals and health care organizations
- Health and social service organizations
- Youth groups/organizations
- Education
- Local newspapers, local radio and TV
- Community foundations
- Recreational groups and facilities
- The arts
- Grassroots organizations and
- Environmental organization

How do you build a Healthy Community?

1. Work Together Local residents work together in an existing or new coalition or group to:

- Decide what health means for their community;
- Learn more about the healthy communities approach;
- Study the needs and assets of the community;
- Identify problems and strengths in the community; and
- Set goals to help the community build on its assets and become healthier.

2. Take Action

- Using the goals, the coalition/group sets priorities and develops a plan of action.
- The whole community works together with the coalition/group on the plan of action.
- The coalition/group reports on successful outcomes to the community.
- The process continues with the community building on its successes, setting new goals, initiating new activities and continuing the process of improvement.

Office of Healthy Communities, Mass Department of Public Health, 250 Washington Street, 2nd Floor, Boston, MA 02108, 617-624-5476 [www.state.ma.us/dph/ohc/reghealthcenters.html](http://www.state.ma.us/dph/ohc/reghealthcenters.html).

Mass. Partnership for Healthy Communities, 622 Washington Street, Dorchester, MA 02124 (617) 451-0049 [www.tmfnet.org/Partnership](http://www.tmfnet.org/Partnership). This one-page description was adapted, with permission, from a brochure developed by the Maine Dept. of Human Services, Bureau of Health, Division of Community Health.

This is very similar to the current activities of Natick 360. The Massachusetts Partnership for Healthy Communities sponsors a yearly Massachusetts Forum for Creating Healthier Communities during which teams of six to eight members from various communities are provided with information, training and resources to utilize in their own communities to improve the health of their communities. Natick could assemble a team comprised of members such as representatives from Police, Schools, Council on Aging & Human Services, Recreation, nonprofits such as VNA, A Place to Turn, TCAN, also businesses such as banks, insurance companies, industry--Boston Scientific, MathWorks, and MetroWest Medical Center. For very short money, I think \$3,500, Natick could access this opportunity and at the conclusion of the Forum would be eligible to apply for \$10,000 in funding for a planning grant. Following the planning grant period, application for another \$10,000 for an implementation grant would be possible.

- One of the goals of the Massachusetts Partnership for Healthy Communities is Positive Youth Development. Positive Youth Development arose from the initiative of Colin Powell's Promise for Youth. This program makes five promises to youth: a) an ongoing relationship with a caring adult, tutor, mentor or coach; b) safe places and structured activities during non-school hours for learning and growing; c) a healthy start and healthy development; d) marketable skills through effective education, and e) opportunities to make a difference through community service. The Promise for Youth is a national program, but our state sponsors a local version called the Massachusetts Promise for Youth. Under this positive youth development program is the Massachusetts Promise Fellowship Program. The Fellowship Program will place young adults (18-24) within an organization for a year for training and development of the youth and the organization. The Fellow must pursue one or more of the following: a) youth leadership development, b) mentoring, c) after-school enrichment, youth outreach and education, and volunteer recruitment and coordination. The Fellows are paid a modest stipend and travel expenses. Most of the stipend is provided by the Massachusetts Promise with a small contribution from the host agency. For the Council on Aging & Human Services Department the amount of the contribution the “match” would be \$6,725.
- One other opportunity that would address the identified focus areas of Natick 360 is the programmatic training developed at Temple University's Center for Intergenerational Learning. Their guiding principle is “Connecting Generations – Strengthening Communities.”