Policy and Recommendation Ideas

Collaboration examples: 1) 8-9 towns sharing resources about housing, based in Concord; 2) cross-town connect collaborating on commuter options and providing shuttle buses for edge communities; 3) regional stormwater utilities (don't have revenue sharing)

- Boards of Health could use regionalism (example of recent crisis with COVID-19), emergency dispatches, etc.
- Chelsea, Revere, Winthrop sharing staffpeople on sustainability & wind energy. This would allow for sharing staff members, resources, websites, etc. But also lack of data on this approach makes people skeptical
- Collaboration between towns that I've seen work and why they work: resource-sharing (i.e. minuteman library network) - could that model be replicated in other parts of the region? (i.e. DPW town network)
- Who are you planning for? Are you planning for the people you have? Are you planning for the people you want to have? Are you planning for people? Are you planning for place?
- If towns are sharing resources, the relationship would allow towns to access each other's resources.
- Prop 2.5 - prior to this school committees had own taxing ability - this changed dynamics of school funding
- Regional METCO program - potential type of solution
- When talking about Governance - Education always comes up. Idea that your Government should be educating youth, setting up for success - big factor in leading with equity
- Change the way to fund schools.
- Focus groups and training for running for office, running town meeting, and more.
- All towns need to be open to the idea of interacting with and sharing with their neighbors. Edit: guessing that it is a way of life - wanting to control where local money goes?
- In collaboration between cities with different financial situations might always create some sense of loss for the better off community - mitigating that
- Asking: if your suburb is not very diverse, then why? what are the things that caused that?
- Language line services for real-time translation - verbal needed, b/c not everyone has reading literacy
- Newton riverside planning: hybrid - night meeting, recorded, paper where you could read, website you could engage in (people could share comments) → formed several committees to talk about things.

Actors

- Dept of public services is so nominal in terms of staff and what they can do - to implement things costs a fortune because I can't engage city staff with it
- Small city mayors - worst form of gov.: politicizes what should be an administrative task. Policy & good programs get associated with administration they were created in. And if that administration changes then the policy and program needs to change too.
- Politics of having mayoral form of government can have negative impact - policies and programs can be colateral of political change
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- Question of sharing resources vs. sharing staff
- Question isn't asked because of structure of city council and town meeting - inherent representation of existing residents + those most likely to speak up at public meetings (i.e. white male homeowners) - their voices are being heard most and represented
- School committees and school commissions are separate from other leg bodies - their process depends on charter (i.e. in Boston - appointed, in some communities - elected)

- School capacity and impact of new people on schools is one of the main reasons cited in people rejecting new housing
- Could involve: councils on aging, rec departments, workforce development, etc.
- Changing select board membership to represent communities better
- A lot of places have a very closed atmosphere, which translates to boards and commissions
- The structures of boards and councils can be barriers in and of themselves (part time, requiring expertise, hiring criteria, etc.)
- Awareness: the concept that we need to all promote municipal/state government as sexy career options
- Some local communities have hiring priorities for within the Town. you can't create more diversity if you are limiting your workforce to your (already not diverse) local population
- Implementation of community-led solutions doesn't fit in within the current system and power structure. Trust building is limited. Taking into account grassroots and comm engagement.
- Local government management systems often fail to change or adapt, leaving critical programs poorly managed and funded.
- Resources local staff can't access, not enough time
- For people who live in underrepresented communities - after elections there will have been a lot of movement behind a candidate, but then feeling that there is not a lot of change happening after this. Breeds apathy, people feel that nothing is going to change and are checking out
- Union leadership skews older - great presence and benefit, but moving things/people around, not getting new employees with new skill sets or fresh ideas
- Business communities kicks and screams about taxes so they go elsewhere
- Revenue sharing with police and firefighter union for town revenue - not other unions - represented vs non-represented groups in town
- Women paid less, social services that go to women and children often cut first compared to other services in communities - racism, other biases built in
- Budget is going to other highly-funded departments - spending and revenue. If you're understaffed but don't fund ED or changing zoning for biz dev, not going to see new biz coming in, going around and around
- Not many in local gov speak additional languages of the community - try to increase diversity in hiring - offer staff language learning (though already resource- and time-strapped)
- Local info from JP Gazette (weekly local publication) - where ppl can learn what issues are happening in specific community, not sure where else that information lives. Lack of the info availability is barrier to people knowing what's going on and then showing up to meetings that will change neighborhood
- Legal couns. public records law - hide behind language that ppl can't understand. Could we collectively advocate for changes to open record and public meeting law that reflect our use of technology? Get caught in outdated regulatory frameworks
- Didn't realize state restricts communities from certain funding
- Any revenue towns would like to raise have to be approved by state legislature

Challenges and Opportunities

- Lack of efficiency & effectiveness (both on volunteer and staff level)
- Ignorance by local governments that there are issues that don't pay attention to municipal boundaries (i.e. environmental, economic development, relationships between different communities on housing prices)
- Lack of infrastructure or adequate staff to execute things in an efficient & effective way and to support other departments within the city (isolated and narrow-focused on individual duties because so understaffed and overtaxed)
- Intersection of historic Yankee sensibility and the theory that we have moved away from communal action (single family homes/living - people are less involved) + social media. Less communal exchange. Thinking about how community has evolved in suburbs.

- Distrust & low communication
- Disenfranchisement - happens in many ways and there are real side effects: i.e. over 3/4 of people here rent and yet every city councilor is a home-owner -> consequences: on street parking is sacred (privatization of public space) even in areas where 50%
- Boundaries are small between municipalities
- Town hall or town culture that can exist - tends to be not a stress on career development, learning orientation. Single loop learning & blaming. (We don't really reflect on how to avoid problem in the future)
- i.e. the wealthy don't get to know the poor. We don't take enough time to get to know our neighbors. The benefits of taking the time outway the cost. This lack of knowledge ties back to racism (perceived safety worries). Mixing people together would addre
- Lack of true understanding of all responsibilities that fall within a certain realm
- Lack of participation and/or apathy lack of awareness of what is happening in town government
- Real side effects: i.e. over 3/4 of people here rent and yet every city councilor is a home-owner -> consequences: on street parking is sacred (privatization of public space) even in areas where 50% or more of population doesn't have access to vehicle
- Lack of local press
- System set up for those already on the inside & empowered by it
- Finances
- Lack of information dissemination
- Strong desire by community members to seek best education for their family
- Dept of public services is so nominal in terms of staff and what they can do - to implement things costs a fortune because I can't engage city staff with it
- How do we get people plugged into information sharing across municipalities
- Small city mayors - worst form of gov.: politicizes what should be an administrative task. Policy & good programs get associated with administration they were created in. And if that administration changes then the policy and program needs to change too.
- Politics of having mayoral form of government can have negative impact - policies and programs can be colateral of political change
- Discrepancies in municipal infrastructure - is it having more staff/positions? More finances?
- Regional Collaboration & Resource-Sharing
- It has taken longer in MA for these collaborations to evolve because of the culture in MA of individualism between towns
- Collaboration examples: 1) 8-9 towns sharing resources about housing, based in Concord; 2) cross-town connect collaborating on commuter options and providing shuttle buses for edge communities; 3) regional stormwater utilities (don't have revenue sharing,
- Question of sharing resources vs. sharing staff
- If we had more city infrastructure in place we would not need to worry as much about contracting out
- Question isn't asked because of structure of city council and town meeting - inherent representation of existing residents + those most likely to speak up at public meetings (i.e. white male homeowners) - their voices are being heard most and represented
- Who are you planning for? Are you planning for the people you have? Are you planning for the people you want to have? Are you planning for people? Are you planning for place?
- If towns are sharing resources, the relationship would allow towns to access each other's resources.
- Funding & tax processes related to schools
- Divergent from traditional planning that we do (often not in masterplans)/has been set aside, and yet for many people it's one of the biggest thing people think about re: Government
- Redundancy, i.e. both Marblehead and Swampscott needed to build two HS - could have built 1 between the two towns. Reason given for not: who would we play for football on thanksgiving? Idea of individual identities of towns

- I.e. in Oregon: more unified groups vs. separate entities
- Prop 2.5 - prior to this school committees had own taxing ability - this changed dynamics of school funding
- Education is one of main services that governments provide and have to provide
- School capacity and impact of new people on schools is one of the main reasons cited in people rejecting new housing
- Regional METCO program - potential type of solution
- Expanding education - lifelong and thinking about it as 'enrichment' -> emphasize community living, learning, participation, enrichment
- Inequity starts at very beginning with lack of access to pre-school and early childhood ed
- Inequity in education is so off the charts - especially with COVID-19 & remote learning
- When talking about Governance - Education always comes up. Idea that your Government should be educating youth, setting up for success - big factor in leading with equity
- Homogeneity of communities due to home prices and schools.
- NIMBY
- Change the way to fund schools.
- Idea: Affordable Housing is going to reduce home prices locally.
- Civic's education for both children and adults.
- Chelsea Civic Education
- Employee Citizen Academy was built out after the first Citizens Academy.
- Focus groups and training for running for office, running town meeting, and more.
- Without preparation how are we setting people up for success to take part in local government?
- Zoom had increased public participation. Virtual engagement has helped.
- MMA new select board training. MAPC could also provide this.
- Getting to the core root of racism. Trying to understand why it's hard to make a change.
- Training needed on things like how to read Bylaws and other items
- Time issues getting in the way of people taking part in local government. Lower the barriers to entry in local government.
- Citizens Academy. People of every ethnicity are taking part. 10 week course in the evening. Goes over every aspect of how town government works. People talk about what type of committees they want to join. The process has worked will in diversifying local
- Volunteering in local government doesn't feel as an effective use of time as other volunteer opportunities.
- The regional nature of things doesn't line up with existing town boundaries
- Long tradition and history of "going it alone" among older Towns and Cities
- All towns need to be open to the idea of interacting with and sharing with their neighbors. Edit: guessing that it is a way of life - wanting to control where local money goes?
- Rail trails require multi-municipality collaboration
- Educating people on the different impacts and benefits that extend beyond town boundaries
- In collaboration between cities with different financial situations might always create some sense of loss for the better off community - mitigating that
- There needs to be a clear understanding of what benefits you're trying to achieve and what the goals is and how it will impact different groups. Making it explicit up front will help
- Maybe focusing on a specific topic area that can help develop that collaboration
- Some towns are opposed to growing industry in their areas - they want to stay bedroom communities
- Bringing industry to communities will help diversify communities. They work there, they stay there, they become more involved. If we keep commuting to Boston forever I think that's a huge barrier
- A lot of places have a very closed atmosphere, which translates to boards and commissions

- The structures of boards and councils can be barriers in and of themselves (part time, requiring expertise, hiring criteria, etc.)
- Some local communities have hiring priorities for within the Town. You can't create more diversity if you are limiting your workforce to your (already not diverse) local population
- Asking: if your suburb is not very diverse, then why? What are the things that caused that?
- Strategically looking for people in different places than "normal"
- Pipeline for promotions
- Systemic structure change is needed. Changing the town structure is hard. People have connected to system for a long time. Family connected to power.
- Stong attachment to history. Hard for people to understand the hard part of history (the untold part).Many people are proud of the history.
- History. Wealth disparity and Homeownership widened
- The cost of healthcare and access
- Excluding people and their participation in society
- Implementation of community-led solutions doesn't fit in within the current system and power structure. Trust building is limited. Taking into account grassroots and comm engagement.
- Rank choice voting
- Resources local staff can't access, not enough time
- Governance not representative of towns
- National and state educational system is unequal and not supporting POC and historical marginalized folks to become future leaders.
- Biased policies - a lot of dominant culture folks making these policies and thus solutions are not reflective of the needs of all folks in the town
- Failure to address regional issues and every town for itself mentality
- Disconnect bt stated values of town and the work it takes to live up to stated value (i.e. zoning).
- Local government management systems often fail to change or adapt, leaving critical programs poorly managed and funded.
- Resources local staff can't access, not enough time
- For people who live in underrepresented communities - after elections there will have been a lot of movement behind a candidate, but then feeling that there is not a lot of change happening after this. Breeds apathy, people feel that nothing is going to change and are checking out
- Micro and macro aggressions towards BIPOC people, which make government spaces feel unwelcome and lead to BIPOC not running for office because they may feel they are not welcome, don't have the power
- New positions limited, not always happening, pay compared to level of experience isn't comparable - good benefits/pension doesn't feel the same for millennials as higher pay/flexibility would mean - diff from previous generations (+1)
- Union leadership skews older - great presence and benefit, but moving things/people around, not getting new employees with new skill sets or fresh ideas
- Budget makes this hard - every year - admin help denied, one person serving board and planning needs
- Business communities kicks and screams about taxes so they go elsewhere
- Revenue sharing with police and firefighter union for town revenue - not other unions - represented vs non-represented groups in town
- Women paid less, social services that go to women and children often cut first compared to other services in communities - racism, other biases built in
- Budget is going to other highly-funded departments - spending and revenue. If you're understaffed but don't fund ED or changing zoning for biz dev, not going to see new biz coming in, going around and around

- Budget as a statement of values - personal infrastructure in community, what does it mean for town, who are demographics of people who hold those positions (white men) and how does that fit into overall system
- Opportunities for help - TDI in gateway cities - MassDevelopment using resources and capacity to help gov and ED with a Fellow to increase housing and ED (limited resource)
- Challenges of language (33 languages) and culture - how to teach civics? youggest to adults
- Lag in hiring, can't always find people with skills you want
- 1st gen immigrant communities - relationship differences trying to overcome fears of talking to the govt, fear that immigration will be called or people will feel like a "problem"
- Hesitation to do anything wrong with gov or ask anything of it for fear of being deported
- Money is a challenge
- Not many in local gov speak additional languages of the community - try to increase diversity in hiring - offer staff language learning (though already resource- and time-strapped)
- Glimmer of hope - having truthful conversations - young generation movement on Internet, education happening, social media
- BU initiative on cities/towns - how to communicate with culturally diverse community? Randolph Ambassadors Program - internship (unpaid) for HS in town hall for immigrant communities - census, local/ fed elections, how to communicate, periodicals and resources - how to tap in when colleagues not from other cultures - more engaged in civic gov, establish relationship
- Language line services for real-time translation - verbal needed, b/c not everyone has reading literacy
- Seeing the "Squad" of AOC, Ayanna - seeing people to look up to and shared stories - hire people in our govt who represent these voices - keep going until you find someone! not keeping the same voices over and over, need white people to step aside to share power and give opportunity, lift other folks up
- Impact at high school age internship city hall, law firm, etc.
- Citizen training academy - more young people to serve on boards and commissions - Framingham government academy
- Diversify town hall + more cultural competence
- Increase civic awareness through innovative programs, youth opportunities
- Barrier in terms of work (people choosing to work in gov)
- Local info from JP Gazette (weekly local publication) - where ppl can learn what issues are happening in specific community, not sure where else that information lives. Lack of the info availability is barrier to people knowing what's going on and then showing up to meetings that will change neighborhood
- Strong freedom of information rules - every person whether they were elected, employee, appointed - had to consider that every thing they wrote or said was going to be on front page next day. Knowing that - that's how gov operated (this was in a state with strong county gov, 20 yrs ago)
- Technology - it has become very clear as we are hosting everything online that we are not very forthcoming, and there is an expectation of ultra-transparency right now. How do we use tech to be more engaging and inclusive?
- Legal couns. public records law - hide behind language that ppl can't understand. Could we collectively advocate for changes to open record and public meeting law that reflect our use of technology? Get caught in outdated regulatory frameworks
- Police academy - eyes opened to what police actually did, what they actually had to deal with, and now she supports police in community and will try to volunteer in some way. Supports people feeling less alienated from law enforcement.
- Guidance (high level) - about use of email comms., what constitutes a discussion. More realistic expectations/clarity around social media and how individuals use it
- What's the right way to share documents that may change. How do we catalog that evolution
- Weekly public engagement meetings for citizens to listen and stay up to date + provide opinions and input. Ppl all together listening to each other - could hear each other and could see how many ppl were involved. Pushed planning department to be very careful about how they presented things and offer pros & cons. Became very effective over

- Going into schools and talking to students about local leadership and all the options they had to be involved in local leadership and encouraging them to get involved
- COVID-19 - can't have those kinds of meetings right now, but technology is evolving to the point that we will be able to have 100 ppl together all sharing and all looking at the same thing and all being able to say what they need to say
- Civic education (both for young people but also adults) i.e. civic academies in towns/cities (i.e. Lexington, Chelsea). Allows for knowledge and capacity building, but also develop relationships between gov staff and constituents - staff might consider constituent for opportunities now knowing them
- There may be folks who want to come back to in person town meeting, but for others this may not be as possible - can they weigh in and vote in other ways
- On demand engagement - you plug in how and when you want to plug in
- Contentious planning process, but people had different ways to engage
- Newton riverside planning: hybrid - night meeting, recorded, paper where you could read, website you could engage in (people could share comments) –> formed several committees to talk about things.
- How do we budget for these tools? (In Newton case - framed it as bringing in partners and public participated in voting for who the partners would be; reached out to folks in different age groups + had funding to do an RFP process)
- Didn't realize state restricts communities from certain funding
- Any revenue towns would like to raise have to be approved by state legislature
- Regional ballot initiative - taken long to get through
- New development impact fees (fund roads, schools, etc.)
- Stormwater as potential opportunity
- State zoning laws - very controversial - allowing at a local option to levy impact fees (some communities can do through formal petition, but not very many)
- Enterprise funds

Long-Term Issues, Big Questions, and Root Causes

- How do we get people plugged into information sharing across municipalities
- Regional Collaboration & Resource-Sharing
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