

BURLINGTON GOVERNMENT REVIEW COMMITTEE
Stakeholder Input Subcommittee Report
December 2025



It has been a best practice for Government Review projects to solicit input from individuals directly involved with Town Government (Stakeholders) as well as residents. For most projects of this kind, gaining insights from Stakeholders is done earlier in the project followed by a survey of the Town Residents later in the process. A subcommittee of the Burlington Government Review Committee was formed to interview Stakeholders to get direct feedback about what is working and what is not from those most intimately involved. This document describes the process that was followed and presents the comments from Stakeholder interviews.

The members of the BGRC Stakeholder Input subcommittee are:

- Corey Everett
- Betsey Hughes
- Jack Kelly
- Steve Mahoney

Please note: Interviewees were very open and candid in their responses and offered additional comments as they thought might be appropriate even though their comment went beyond the scope of the interview question and the interviewer included those responses. Whenever an interviewee's response was such that the interviewee's identity was obvious, the sub-committee modified the response to protect their identity without altering the essence of the response. Although a few interviewees sometimes had opposite or conflicting responses, the sub-committee felt it would be informative to know that some of the Stakeholders held such differing opinions about some aspect of the Town's governance.

Stakeholder Input Process

- Groups were identified to be interviewed. The groups consisted of:
 - Town Departments
 - Different roles from administrative to Department Head
 - Town Boards
 - Town Meeting Members (past and present)
 - Town Meeting Committee Members
- Individuals were identified
 - Those identified had different roles e.g. some leadership roles and some support roles.
 - Interviewees had different profiles in terms of length of time living in Burlington, demographic make-up, and tenure in their role
 - All individuals were assured confidentiality

- Questions were developed by the subcommittee using benchmark surveys from Andover and Natick as well as Burlington centric questions developed by the subcommittee.
- A script was developed for interviewers (see below) so that each person would have the same interview experience despite the fact that we had four different interviewers.
- Test interviews were done to assure that the questions were working as intended and to give the committee a chance to test the script so it could be refined as necessary.
- **In order to assure confidentiality/anonymity, interviews were not taped.**
- All responses were documented during the interview through note taking and then input into an Excel spreadsheet organized by question. The consolidated spreadsheet consisted of 950 lines of comments.
- Responses to the questions were de-identified as to interviewer as well as interviewee in order to assure that the promise of anonymity would be kept.
- Interviews began in late September and were completed in early December.
- Interviews were scheduled at the time and place of the interviewee's preference.
- Interviewees were very open and candid in their responses and added additional comments as they thought might be appropriate.
- On average each interview took about 1-1.5 hrs.
- The interview team met multiple times to review the results and discuss the best way to organize and summarize what we heard into a reportable format.

Stakeholder Input Demographics

Total Interviews*	Represented Entities**	Town Residents	Avg Service/Residence (YRS)	Director/Manager	Non Mgr.	Committee	Board	Town Empl	Town Meeting
26	17	57%	16	12	3	6	4	15	8
%				46%	12%	23%	15%	58%	31%

Male	69%
Female	31%
Non Caucasian	4%

Note: Some interviewees have more than one role so represent each in the interviews e.g., TMM/Cmte Member

**Represented Entities

Town Meeting
Town Clerk's Office
Administration
Planning
School Department

Conservation
Recreation
Economic Development
DPW
Library
Board of Assessors

Veterans Affairs
Ways and Means
Fire
Police
Council on Aging

Script for Interviewers

Thank you for taking the time to talk to me today. As you may have heard a Government Review Committee has been formed by the Select Board to quote "ensure an appropriate, effective and accountable organizational

structure of Burlington Town government for its residents and constituents and to recommend to the Burlington Select Board and Town Meeting suggested format and possible changes.” To do this the town has engaged the services of the Collins Center to serve as consultants on this process and has appointed a committee of 11 members of the Burlington community to work on this project. The Committee will be looking at our current structure, bylaws, and special acts and, develop a proposal to consolidate the important controlling language in one place through the development of a Charter to include those parts of our government where it makes sense to do so.

As the Committee undertakes this task it is clear that we need to hear the voice of those who are currently engaged with Town government either as an employee or a member of a Board or Committee. We feel that those who have hands on experience with the workings of our government will have the best insights as to what is working, or not, and their perspective on what might make things even better.

That is why I am talking to you. What is going to happen over the next hour or so is that I will ask you a series of questions which will be the same questions asked for all interviewees. If you don’t think it applies to you just let me know and we will move on to the next. I may ask you clarifying questions to assure that I understand the points that you are making.

Before we start, I want to encourage you to be totally candid in your responses. It is important that we have an accurate picture of how things are working today. **I want to emphasize and assure you that your comments will be confidential.** We have not shared the list of who we will be interviewing with anyone outside of the interviewers. This session will not be taped but I will be taking notes.

Once we are through with the roughly 25 interviews, the 4 interviewers will aggregate the findings by topic... for example, all of the comments we hear about Communications will be in one section. We will not be referring to any specific department, committee or person. Once we have the comments sorted, we will look for themes. It is those themes that will ultimately end up in our report to help inform our committee’s discussions.

Do you have any questions before we start?
Ok, let’s jump in.

Interview Questions

A. Board/Dept. Purpose:

1. Could you describe your board’s/dept. relationship to overall goal/mission of Burlington’s Town Government?
2. How does your board/dept interact with other board/depts in performing your tasks? What’s working well/needs to improve?
3. What about your board/dept’s work makes you proud?

B. Communication:

1. How does communication work:
 - a. within the board/dept,
 - b. through the Town hierarchy,
 - c. and in the community at-large?
2. Are there areas where communication is particularly easy? If so, why? Conversely, are there areas where communication is particularly difficult? If so, why?
3. Are there ways you think that communication could be improved? If so, how?

C. Town Governance:

1. What **is** working well with how Town government operates today?
2. What is **not** working well with how Town government operates today?
3. Is the Town government representative of the residents of Burlington?

4. *Is the Town government transparent to the residents of Burlington?*
5. *Is the Town government accessible to the residents of Burlington?*
6. *Is the Town government effective for the residents of Burlington?*
7. *Is the Town government efficient?*
8. *Is Town Meeting sensitive to the needs of your Board/Dept and is it timely in taking action?*
9. *Is Town Meeting reasonably and appropriately functioning as the Town's legislative body?*
10. *Are there provisions of the Town's bylaws that should be reviewed or reformed?*

D. The Future:

1. *What emerging patterns, technologies or issues do you believe are important to investigate for Burlington's future?*
2. *What are barriers to the success of your Board/Dept?*
3. *What single change or action would you take to make Burlington's government better*

Survey Analysis

- In order to assure confidentiality/anonymity, interviews were not taped.
- All responses were documented during the interview through note taking and then input into an Excel spreadsheet organized by question. The consolidated spreadsheet consisted of 950 lines of comments.
- Responses to the questions were de-identified as to interviewer as well as interviewee in order to assure that the promise of anonymity would be kept.
- Responses were reviewed, input was consolidated, and common points of input were summarized for each question.
- The responses to each question were reviewed and high level themes were identified. The theme categories are defined as:
 - Strategy
 - Leadership and Structure
 - Operational Effectiveness
 - Cooperation and Collaboration
 - Communication
 - Knowledge and Development
 - Tools and Technology
- Responses to each question were reviewed and "Representative Comments" were identified. These comments were selected as, in the opinion of the subcommittee, they conveyed the essence of what we heard.

What follows are the Consolidated Survey Results for the Burlington Government Review Committee. It is the hope of the subcommittee that it will prove to be helpful in providing a set of additional data points as the Committee considers each part of Burlington's Government Structure.

INTERVIEW SUMMARY REPORT

A. BOARD/DEPT. PURPOSE	THEME
1. Describe your dept/group relationship to overall goal/mission of Burlington's Town Government	<p><u>Key Takeaways</u> : Strong sense of and commitment to their group purpose however there is a general lack of awareness of Burlington's overall strategy/goal/mission.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><u>Strategy</u> <u>Leadership/Structure</u> <u>Operational Effectiveness</u></p>

Representative Comments

- My job focuses on and services Burlington residents.
- We run our group with a small town feel.
- We are the place where residents go to get things done.
- Within our framework, we try to push for things that are in the best interest of the Town.
- Work in the best interest of the Town...no political influence.

2. How does your dept interact with other board/depts in performing your tasks?	<p><u>Key Takeaways</u> : Personal Interactions work well to get things done.</p> <p>Need more and better interaction between departments. When departments/committees interact things work well. Siloed departments and resulting gaps in communication interfere with both cooperation and collaboration for operational efficiency.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><u>Collaboration/Cooperation.</u></p>
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Representative Comments

- First and foremost is to have a good rapport with and take direction from our Board.
- Contact is made with most other departments in all forms: e.g., in person, by phone, email, text etc. However, many of those departments are siloed and know very little about other departments and what they do. There needs to be more effort for more frequent and better interaction and communication between groups.
- On issues of mutual interest, we will make contact staff to staff or chair to chair. Could improve with annual or semi-annual Round Table meetings and discussions to improve shared knowledge.
- All departments/committees/Boards should tap into those who have expertise in the area under discussion and respect the subject-matter expertise of others.

2a. Working Well:

Key Takeaways : Things work well due to, and as a result of, personal relationships and technology improvements. Strong sense of professionalism. Knowledgeable leaders who are good at what they do. Services provided to residents and businesses work well. Technology improvements are good. Works well when they work together and share information especially when others understand their roles. Personal relationships make it better.

Collaboration/Cooperation
Operational Effectiveness

Representative Comments

- Technology is good but needs more complete adoption in other departments.
- Interdepartmental collaboration generally works well when individuals in different departments become familiar with each other and what their department does.
- There is a great org structure from an operations perspective. Department heads have a general understanding of what they need to do. Strong professionalism, passionate leaders, all service departments are good at what they do. Burlington is also a full-service municipality.
- Generally, have good relationships with other committees, but it often comes down to the relationships with individual committee members

3. What about your Dept/Board/Cmte's work makes you proud?

Key Takeaways: People like who they work with directly, like what they do and are proud of their group's contributions. Proud of the help provided to constituents and positive impact on the Town overall. Technology improvements have increased efficiency and improved the experience for constituents. Good people working together to help constituents and positively impact the Town. Burlington has committed volunteers who spend a lot of time working on behalf of the Town and proud of the quality of the Burlington Town employees.

Operational Effectiveness,

Representative Comments

- Great staff who go above and beyond.
- Technology enhancements have increased efficiency and improved experience for constituents.
- Kept everything going through COVID
- Hard not to be proud of this department. People come to work happy, we are able to recruit/retain talent, there are people who are really qualified, confident, industry leaders. And we have a lot of them.
- All volunteers. Spend a lot of time outside of committee meetings working on issues. VERY COMMITTED
- The Board/Committee have diverse opinions and don't always agree. Debates are healthy and the public needs to see that debate. Having a split vote is a good thing

B. COMMUNICATIONS

1 .How does Communications work:

1a. within the department/board

Key Takeaways : Communication within the departments of Burlington tends to work pretty well. Smaller departments talk daily, while larger departments at least tend to have a quarterly meeting where the entire department gets together. There is a mix of formal communications through emails, as well as informal in-person communications as needed. There's an overarching culture of idea sharing and open communication, with clearly defined roles and most people being just a call away.

Tools and Technology
Cooperation/ Collaboration

Representative Comments

- Good. Mix of formal and informal communication, both are important.
- Works well within dept, cell phone calls and emails as well as weekly and monthly meetings
- Admin staff is down the hall makes things harder, they don't know we're here. Twice-a-week "huddles" to all meet and get on the same page. Lots of part-time staff who don't attend many meetings, huddles make it easier in 10 minutes. Try to keep up during day.
- Phone, email. Direct one on one communication between meetings.

1b. Communication through the Town hierarchy?

Key Takeaways : Substantial issues with top-down communications which are improving under new town admin, such as information being left to chance or rumor and a lot of "siloeing" where departments don't know what other relevant departments are doing. While there's an understanding that anyone can ask for information from anyone, people would like to be at the point where they don't have to ask because they're informed beforehand about info that's relevant to their department.

Structure/ Leadership
Operational Effectiveness
Collaboration/ Coordination
Communication

Representative Comments

- No communication/information from the top down. Hear things through the rumor mill. For example, when the new HR person was hired there was no communication heard it from rumor mill.
- Social media is not as good as it could be.
- Department heads need to meet and communicate better,
- There is a lot of siloeing
- Comfortable to go into anyone's office to ask a question
- Burlington has an "opt in" communication process so constant process to stay informed and a task to proactively look on Towns website, agenda etc. to find out what is relevant and what they need to pay attention to.
- Communication between departments and committees could be better.

1c. Communication in the community at large?

Key Takeaways : A lot of communications to the Burlington's residents are done with an opt-in system, such as social media, reverse 911 system, and the town's website. Lack of interest in civic topics is a substantial factor in the difficulty of communication, as well as combating misinformation online from resident pages not affiliated with the government. Other negative factors include a lack of a unified message from the town/no cohesiveness, knowing how much information to send and to who due to lack of training. AND OVERUSE OF REVERSE 911 FOR NON URGENT MATTERS.

Communication Structure/ Leadership

Representative Comments

- Each dept on their own
- Need training on to what the best and most appropriate tools are and how to best use them
- Much of what happens is very specialized by a Board or Committee and most people (residents) do not care or cannot be bothered to take the time to learn what is going on and happening unless it directly impacts them.
- Board shares what they hear from others with staff so don't always hear feedback firsthand.
- Reach out to other communities through a network of similar professionals to find best practice that works well.
- Community generally don't come to meetings, but they do get a lot of phone calls.
- Social media is direct link but is a mixed blessing. Unclear who is responsible. Separate accounts and not directly connected. No real plan and kind of an afterthought. Need a person in the department to understand it and own it.
- There is no outward push of information. No central point. Either opt in to be on a list or you will hear nothing.
- People take notice of big projects; others take notice of the projects they care about...other than that don't seem to care.
- Social media, 10,000 households in software, not used as mass mailing list, just for things that affect others, notify residents. BCAT is easily accessible as well
- No way for Town people to find those who represent them. If it's on the website, it is very hard to find...should be easier.
- Use the reverse 911 system as needed for really important things, for construction/traffic related items. Standardize and formalize a policy for what kinds of communication is used for what.

2a. Are there areas where communication is particularly easy? If so, why?

Key Takeaways : Burlington department members identified that easy areas of communication include small departments, face-to-face, within the same department, communication with people they already know, and at town events. Mixed opinions on current ease of social media, with it being easy to post but not easy to post effectively. Direct one on one communication is effective. Technology makes communication easier as well.

Communication
Operational Effectiveness

Representative Comments

- Communication within team/committee. Face to face interactions with colleagues works well. Communications comes down to relationships.
- A lot of communication comes down to relationships
- Getting communication out there is easy, a lot of it is point-and-click. Communications director figures out at what threshold we release big info.

2b. Are there areas where communication is particularly difficult? If so, why?

Key Takeaways Department members expressed particular difficulty with lack of communication across departments, and even different departments all butting heads. They cite a lack of department head meetings, lack of instruction from town admin (though this is improving under current), and lack of understanding long-term goals or town's mission for certain departments. They also say it is difficult to communicate with residents on social media and in person, as finding the threshold at which to provide certain info via reverse 911 and other avenues is a fine line.

Structure/ Leadership
Communication

Representative Comments

- I know what our dept is doing but not what other depts are doing....those things may impact us and can get blind-sided. No communication about major project for each department and unless that department makes the connection between what they are doing and what our department is doing we can work at cross purposes. No forum or expectation for sharing information (cultural issue?) at a senior level. Loose opportunity for coordination.
- Lack of understanding of the long term goals and objective of Town Leadership e.g., the Select Board, Administration, Planning Board, and others...not done for years.
- No mobile enabled communication tools...website is almost impossible on the phone but that is what most people use to access Town information.
- No cross department meetings. Need to do that in order to coordinate efforts and enhance communication which would be very helpful to be sure we are all working in the same direction and not at cross purposes.
- Outside of bubble (Town Meeting/Boards) not clear how you communicate with residents.
- Not sure what I can and cannot do with social media....no policy. If I write my opinion on my FB page, will I get in trouble??

- Sometimes Open Meeting Law restrictions make communications more difficult
- External communications. There is no design, it just happens not clear its effective.
- Reverse 911 is effective for emergencies...if overuse will no longer be effective. Should NOT be used for non-emergency purposes. Should find a separate system for general push communications.
- Difficult to get resident engagement
- Resident network misinformation. Access to it, frustrating more than difficult.

3. Are there ways you think that communication could be improved? If so, how?

Key Takeaways : Some department members think the town is doing alright, but common points of pain include the need to improve the town's website, better communication across departments, more department head meetings (historically just 3), and a better grasp of newer ways to reach out to the public that align more with the 21st century as most of them don't keep up to date with town politics. HR problems with hiring, website needs to be reevaluated also said that communications director could help internally as well, pointed out space planning for two town halls is inefficient.

Structure/ Leadership
Operational Effectiveness

Representative Comments

- How do we make Burlington familiar/available to everyone? We need to understand what people want to know. What will affect them. We need to think about modes and methods of communication. We don't have many forms of digital communication besides the website, they don't want to spend an hour and a half watching an entire meeting, they want highlights and relevant info. We need to bring the public communications lens and how we're going to communicate that info, who are our stakeholders, and it is an important part to break things down into bite-sized pieces.
- Face to face regular department head meetings. Build solidarity, enhance communications, and create a better overall work environment.
- We need to think about the website differently....how the user perspective not the webmaster perspective. Need to make it easier for the user to navigate.
- We are lucky to have the BUZZ. That may not reach everyone e.g. those who don't use electronic media so not a perfect solution but really good.
- Amount of email from outside entities trying to push products is huge. Would like some way to filter them out of the email.
- Presently the Town does a pretty good job. As conditions and situations change stay aware of changes and respond appropriately.

- We (the Town overall) could do a better job communicating with the general public. The responsibility for that rests with the Town because most people do not make contact with the Town until they need something or have a problem thus most interactions are negative. The Town needs to take the initiative to create opportunities for individual citizens to have positive interaction with Town employees and officials.
- Have meetings between departments when projects come up to discuss them and understand who is going to do what to assure that everyone is working in the same direction. Need to understand overarching goal and trust others to do their part to get it done.
- Departments could work together to address issues that cross over both departmental areas of responsibility. Some resident issues will require more than one dept to address.

SECTION C: TOWN GOVERNANCE

1 What is working well with How Town government operates today?

Key Takeaways Most things seem to be working well, especially finances, tax base, and services. Town Meeting is effective

Structure/Leadership

Representative Comments

- Financially we work well. The Finance dept and Ways and Means are very effective, and the Town is managed financially very well.
- Most residents appear to be satisfied with the Town administration according to past surveys
- Town runs well. Fortunate to have very good Administration. Department Heads work together, not too much drama. We have better services than neighboring towns.
- The structure of our government is our strength. Even though Town Meeting may seem antiquated, it operates as it should. Sometimes it is slow and may seem painful but allows for the thoughtful discussion and debate on issues.
- TM is a strength in that people must convince most of 126 members that an idea is good. City gov is a lower bar

2. What is not working well with how Town government operates today?

Key Takeaways : There is a lack of focus and vision in town government. There are issues between the Select Board and the Planning Board. Some committees are not working well (Capital Budget, Land Use) or appear not to meet at all (Facilities)

Strategy for Burlington
Operational Effectiveness
Communications

Representative Comments

- It lacks an overall vision. In the 70s & 80s the town had a clear vision for growth and development
- School Board has lost its credibility...no accountability for poor performance on the part of school administration

- Animosity between groups (Boards, Depts.). Gets in the way of moving forward and distract people from working toward the best outcome for the Town. Hope that this can be fixed.
- Town employees reporting to boards does not make sense. Gets weird about who those people work for (Town vs Board) and the stress it brings to the departments and stress of being pulled in two directions.
- Voter turnout a reflection of satisfaction with Town Government. If not satisfied on an issue get more turnout.
- Lack of understanding of functions and services available in Town government.
- Budgeting is "use it or lose it". Encourages wasteful spending. If you don't spend everything and give some back at the end of the year you are penalized the next year as budget is reduced. Should be recognized for being fiscally responsible, not have negative effects.
- Select Board and Planning Board don't trust each other.
- Capital Budget committee seems rudderless and ineffective. Need a capital planning function badly so maybe it should change. Maybe a subcommittee under Ways and Means?
- Most residents and businesses don't know how Town Government works. They don't know that they can and need to show up for things like Select Board Meetings or ZBA.
- Certain committees should be combined or reviewed to determine if they are still of value
- Appointed committees can come together quickly, but it is often difficult to get people to run for elected positions

3. Is the Town Government representative of the residents of Burlington?

Key Takeaways : 84% of interviewees think Town Government is not representative of the residents. Some demographics are not represented.

Structure/Leadership

Representative Comments

- No, Town government (Boards, Employees and Town Meeting Members) is not demographically representative of the Town especially in the Asian and Indian American group.
- Yes and No...Yes in that a lot of differing opinions shared by elected officials...Diversity of Thought. NO in that the Boards do not reflect the demographics of the community.
- Divide between younger and those new to Town who have one level of expectation and others who have lived here longer with different expectations.
- No, we're all white. Doing better with the male/female ratio but demographically on elected Boards we do not reflect the makeup of the Town.
- No, Town Government representatives are people with more time on their hands so skewed towards town's older people, those semi-retired, underemployed or those who have flexible schedules.
- Demographically no. However, the population of Burlington may not be interested in politics. Lack of Asian and Indian representation may be an issue of lack of outreach to those communities.

4. Is the Town Government transparent to the residents of Burlington?

Key Takeaways : Although 58% think Town Government is transparent, answers here are mixed. There is a lot of information posted on the website, but it is not always easy to find. Residents need to make a effort to look.

Communication
Tools and Technology

Representative Comments

- Need tools to enhance....website not intuitive and need revamp. Not using all of the capabilities of the system to take advantage of the full potential for our website.
- Have functionality in the purchased software packages but don't use it as no one knows the full capabilities and is managing it.
- Yes, core value in that everything we do is public, not here to hide anything from anyone. My salary is paid by the taxes so I have a responsibility to listen and understand their perspective to see if there is anything I can do to help them. Others in Town Hall feel this way as well. It is a privilege to be a public employee.
- Organizational chart needs to be fixed and shared with everyone both in the community and with those who work for the Town.
- Some Town Meeting Committees meet without inviting the proponents which is NOT GOOD. Need to invite whoever is proposing something to be considered at Town Meeting to the committee meeting where the topic is being discussed and/or voted on.
- Schools are not at all transparent.
- Mostly yes as far as things that need to be sent out to the residents, but residents do not get to see what other residents send to the town. Think WAZE where people see what others report: e.g., traffic backup, accident, police speed trap etc.
- Information is definitely out there but residents don't access it. Not easy to find things so transparent yes, easily accessible information, no. Volume of information can be overwhelming.

5. Is the Town government accessible to the residents of Burlington?

Key Takeaways : 75% of interviewees say Yes, but residents need to make an effort. Extended office hours help.

Communication
Tools and Technology

Representative Comments

- For non-technology competent people it can be a challenge.
- Not sure. Difficult for the typical resident to figure out what is going on.
- Yes, there is a lot of information on the town website, the ability to pay bills and file plans. There are also extended Town office hours.
- Ask this question on the "Resident Survey"
- We have events like Podcasts, BCAT meet the TA but to what end? What are we trying to accomplish? Seems like just throwing things at a wall to see what sticks.
- Should benchmark best practices in other towns to see what works and be more creative.

- Mostly yes, but the residents need to make some effort to seek access. Maybe find some way to better inform public how to access the Town government and many available services.
- Maybe a Town wide version of Parent Square (or something like it) so information can be shared proactively from the Town. Not use reverse 911 for non-emergency announcements e.g., Rec schedule now available.

6. Is the Town government effective for the residents of Burlington?

Key Takeaways : 78% of interviewees think Town Government is generally effective, provides services keeps and taxes low. Particular departments stand out

Operational Effectiveness

Representative Comments

- Yes in that we put forward best project and are effective in getting the best results for the town.
- Yes, there is a functioning government that meets when it's supposed to, passes budgets with reasonable tax levy.
- Yes if you are involved with town government. No if you are resistant to change. Town has policies that are effective but need support from committees and residents. Example, the high school where a committee worked for a year to address issues but were not supported.

7. Is the Town government efficient?

Key Takeaways : Responses are mixed. Some processes seem outdated and can benefit from automation. Staffing levels questioned. Government is by nature less efficient than private sector.

Tools and Technology
Operational Effectiveness

Representative Comments

- STILL USING PAPER FOR PAYROLL. Very inefficient and wastes employee time. Should have an employee portal.
- Relative to peers in other communities, our structure of Representative Town Meeting, three Town Meetings a year lend to more efficient and beneficial outcomes for the Town as we can respond to needs in a timely way. Envy of other Towns.
- Space Planning needs to be addressed to add to efficiency and effectiveness of Town Departments.
- Could be more streamlined. Example during COVID everyone was required to work from home. IT could track activity and large percentage didn't work. There was no lapse in services, so you need to ask yourself if we are not overstaffed.
- Growth in personnel has been huge. There are redundant positions for example the current proposal for a Human Services Coordinator is duplicative and will only create layers that delay response to those in need. Maybe need more Burlington taxpayers in Town Government as they pay taxes that pay salaries and benefit costs for staff.
- Need to streamline things...every department is growing but not sure that is necessary.
- Some departments not given the same level of scrutiny as others for budget requests. For example, the Town Departments closely scrutinized and is one of the most effective in Town but the schools are not and although we pay teachers in the top 20% of all in MA our schools' ratings have fallen to top 100...a low bar. No accountability.
- No...Town Meeting voted on redoing fields, yet the Conservation Commission has held it up for 2 years based on questionable wetland issue. Working in cross purposes with each other rather than in collaboration with each other.

8. Is the Town Meeting sensitive to the needs of your department and is it timely in taking action?	<u>Key Takeaways</u> : 85% of interviewees felt that Town Meeting is effective and generally supportive.	<u>Operational Effectiveness</u>
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Representative Comments

- Having 3 Town Meetings a year allows Burlington to be uniquely able to be more nimble and react to the market or state requirements.
- Town Meeting doesn't understand what it takes to get an article to them which leads to disconnects within the body... they don't know what they don't know.
- No. An increasing number of Town Meeting Members are those who have a general distrust of government, and their first instinct is to say NO to any discretionary spending.
- Generally, yes. Many decisions are reviewed by administration and Ways & Means before the matter goes to the Town Meeting so the TMMs may not be aware of the department requests and wants by the time the Warrant Article is printed and presented to the TMMs.
- Yes, Town Meeting is very supportive. Needs are met but sometimes Town Meeting approves too easily. Don't necessarily get pushed on budget and probably should be challenged more.
- Yes, most democratic way of governing. Not necessarily efficient and a bit messy but very good.

9. Is Town Meeting reasonably and appropriately functioning as the Town's legislative body?	<u>Key Takeaways</u> : 40% of interviewees feel Town meeting is functioning reasonably and appropriately, but could benefit from electronic voting, more remote participation, reviewing the charter of all committees, redefining the role of the Capital Budget Committee, scrutinizing TMM attendance and preparedness, and ensuring residents have a chance to speak.	<u>Tools and Technology</u> <u>Operational Effectiveness</u>
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Representative Comments

- Participation is not same as pre COVID....need remote participation.
- Many people on Town Meeting do not do their homework. Need to understand the background not just one learning moment at the Town Meeting itself.
- Should be more consequences (hold people accountable) for those who don't show up to represent their constituents.
- Should have electronic voting so that voters can see how their representatives are voting on issues that are meaningful to them.
- Town meeting has a Capital Budget Committee which is historically dysfunctional and redundant. No one pays much attention to it so credibility is in question. Needs redirection. Maybe call it Capital Planning Committee and have its purpose redefined under the bylaw to long at long range planning (both facilities and capital expenditures).
- Could be, people need to stand up and ask tough questions and follow up to be sure that what they are promised is actually delivered.
- Town Meeting committees need to be reviewed and see if they are operating as they should of if they are still needed.

- Residents of the Town come to the meeting to speak but if someone moves the questions, they can't...not right that someone sits through one or two nights thinking they can speak and then not allowed to.

10. Are there provisions of the Town's bylaws that should be reviewed or reformed?

Key Takeaways : Bylaws should be reviewed regularly. It is not clear that the Bylaw Review Committee is doing this work. Changes to the laws are in order as technology advances. Modernization is in order, but changes should be made with care.

Operational Effectiveness

Representative Comments

- Committees should do what the Bylaws say they are supposed to do (which many are not) or suggest changes in the Bylaw for the Town Meeting to vote on.
- Our policies are not business friendly.
- Yes. Move some of the Bylaw language (legalese) into easier to understand rules and regulations.
- Minor adjustments are ok but don't make wholesale changes to them. Lots of wisdom over the years have gone in to making our bylaws so respect that and change things where it makes sense.
- Yes, should always look. Never-ending cycle to be sure that things are as good as they should be.
- Need clear roles and responsibilities for Boards and Committees. Who has authority to do what. Work together but don't overstep Board's authority.
- Almost certainly - Folding Capital Budget Committee into Ways and Means.

D. THE FUTURE

<p>D 1. What emerging patterns, technologies or issues do you believe are important to investigate for Burlington's Future?</p>	<p><u>Key Takeaways</u>: Silos and lack of inter-department communications seem to be the dominant issue. Although Town seems okay w/ most current technology, AI & automation are quickly changing how we work so Town leaders need to start training our different board/ committee/ department work forces to better communicate (internally & externally) to prepare to quickly respond to coming changes that will impact the Town's revenue and the evolving needs of a changing Town demographic both residents and businesses. Some concerns that Union negotiations blocking adoption of some technology.</p>	<p><u>Knowledge/ Development Operational Effectiveness Strategy</u></p>
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Representative Comments

- Training and onboarding for technology platforms.

- Union compliance with using technology platforms. Union/Town agreements that allow for more effective and efficient workings of the Town.
- Eliminate the silos and get everyone leaning in the same direction. More coordinated.
- More department head meetings to help communications and silos.
- Software. Keep looking for and evaluating the best, safest, and latest for ways to improve the operation of the Town.
- Town seems to be on top of current technology. New technology is rapidly emerging, so we need to anticipate what is coming and how to safely deal with the opportunities and threats. Can the Town use emerging technology to make communication with the residents more of a two-way process. Think "crowd-sourcing" and something like WAZE for government.
- Housing in Burlington is at an inflection point...what balance do we want/need and who do we want to be? Need a vision and a strategy.
- Need a real economic development strategy....how will we fill the empty buildings with commercial tenants that fit our Town's culture.
- How will AI affect our community? Need to study the implications for both the Town and the business community in terms of opportunities and threats.

D2. What are barriers to the success of your department?

Key Takeaways: Interdepartmental communication, collaboration and appreciation is lacking. Executive too focused on financial matters & should acknowledge other needs of the Town. Need better communication between boards/ committees/ depts to undo the silo behavior and foster an appreciation of what other boards/ committees/ depts are tasked to do. Executive needs to let independently elected Boards do their job. Think more of the future needs when replacing a retiring employee and not just next person up with the same ideas and skills.

Leadership/Structure
Cooperation/
Collaboration
Operational Effectiveness
Strategy

Representative Comments

- Need leadership experienced in leading a broader group of departments. Leader who has experience in overarching management and decision making for a broader group of departments across a Town's structure without micromanaging.
- Lack of leadership from the Select Board...vision for the Town and departments is lacking other than financial e.g., to keep the taxes low.
- HR issues with hiring the right people. Hard to find the right people but trend starting to turn. HR ineffective recruiting and hiring/interview process does not make sense. Not using tools where candidates are e.g. LinkedIn, BUZZ or other effective recruiting tools.
- Department Head meetings. To encourage communication and facilitate open dialogue and cohesion/alignment of Town Departments. Whatever the Town Administrator needs to do to make this happen, they should do it.
- No big barriers, Burlington has been very successful.
- State requirements can emphasize things that are not in line with Burlington's priorities.
- Problem between the Select Board, Planning Board and Economic Development.
- Succession planning might be an issue.

- No huge barriers - W&M should take over capital budget for better financial planning in town
- Tenure....so many Town Meeting members and committee members have been on it for so long and don't want to give us their seat that it is hard to break in. More tenured members should make way for younger folks to come in. Not good for Town Meeting and committees as they lack the young voice.

D 3. What single changes or action would you take to make Burlington's government better?

Key Takeaways : Encourage more residents to participate in the government, Town needs a better way to communicate, and emergency 911 robo-calls is not the answer. Attract elected board candidates with better qualifications. Break down the silos. All Boards/ Committees/ Depts need to agree on a unified long-term Vision & Master Plan for the Town so various departments can function as intended without petty turf wars and interference. Resist pressure to becoming a city. School Dept accountability an issues and Schools and Town-side need better cooperation. Better long-term planning for infrastructure and building needs. Need plan for economic development and strengthening the business community and the Town's relationship to them.

Strategy
Leadership
Structure
Cooperation/Collaboration
Communication
Operational Efficiency

Representative Comments

- Communication; Government to residents and business community. Need a formal strategy. Loss of newspapers is a part of the problem. Town needs to take better control or social media will dominate and social media is not a reliable replacement for many reasons.
- Break down the silos.
- What is the vision for Burlington? Or are we content to keep doing what we've been doing.
- Top down communication lacking. Need for all departments to be on the same page. If structure is changed, need to be sure that we have the right leaders (those with the skills, ability, and desire to lead) in the leadership roles.
- Move all department heads (non-school) under the Town Administrator and not under an elected Board. Would avoid head butting.
- Need balance in our planning. Strategic in planning our growth.
- Need more pressure on the Select Board to be leaders and move more authority to the TA and then hold him accountable for the results.
- Town people need to understand the difference between a Town and a City. In a city people are hired and paid to manage everything. Suspicion of graft and corruption can occur. In a Town, everyone (Boards, committees etc.) are all volunteers and neighbors working together for the best interest of the Town....not paid...like a giant HOA.
- Schools have national prominence for doing bad things on big issues e.g., hate crimes, survey etc. yet no one in the schools is held accountable. The performance of our students is decreasing, and it is time to spend more time and emphasis on the fundamentals of learning e.g. reading, math, science.
- Better anticipation of needs related to infrastructure, building maintenance and expansion / replacement of older or outdated buildings.
- Find a way to get more people / Citizens involved in government. Have a communication system that makes for easier communication government to citizens and citizens to government.

- Town seems to be on top of current technology. New technology is rapidly emerging, so we need to anticipate what is coming and how to safely deal with the opportunities and threats. Can the Town use emerging technology to make communication with the residents more of a two-way process. Think "crowd-sourcing" and something like WAZE for government.
- Lot of "old boy network" exists which protects the status quo...may not be a good thing.
- Need to develop an economic development strategy to get new and growing businesses into town. Should be the focus and not housing at this point.
- Need to improve communications and relationships with the Business Community. SB, PB and Econ Dev need to have strong and positive relationships with businesses.
- Select Board needs to stay in their lane and keep their nose out of the business of other boards and committees.
- School Committee has too much control over too much money. They are hesitant to share the details and hide issues as they arise.
- Our state reps should help Burlington in our efforts to move forward e.g., grants, projects etc. doesn't look like they do much.