

OFFICE OF THE TOWN ADMINISTRATOR



TO: Whom it May Concern

FROM: Mel Kleckner, Town Administrator

SUBJECT: Report on the Organizational Assessment of Sustainability Functions

DATE: August 24, 2020

I am attaching the final report of the Collins Center of UMass Boston relative to their assessment of the Town's sustainability functions. I regret that this report was delayed, mostly due to issues involving the COVID-19 pandemic. However, I am pleased to state that I will support the main recommendation in the Report that elevates the classification of the Sustainability position to a full division head position within the Planning and Community Development department. The Fiscal Year 2021 Budget adopted in June includes funding for this position effective January 1, 2021, and we intend to fill it by that time.

The Report makes many important and interesting observations about the conflicts between advocates and staff when considering progressive regulatory or programmatic climate initiatives. I accept the criticism that the Town's administration has not provided the necessary policy direction to committees and departmental staff in this area. To be fair, in my ten years with the Town, major policy issues have dominated the policy landscape including school enrollment and siting of a new elementary school, operating and capital budgets requiring frequent tax overrides, extensive 40B housing proposals including the Hancock Village projects, financial planning and management capacity identified by BFAC, a world pandemic, and most recently the demand for more accountability on the Police department's use of force and other interactions with minority populations. We must find better ways to discuss the Town's resources and priorities, and understand that working on major climate initiatives will likely impact the ability to work on other important projects. It is simply not fair for Town Meeting to keep adopting policy directives and expect that staff or the Town's committees can deliver on all of them.

Having said that, I am proud of the Town's leading efforts on environmental sustainability and carbon reduction efforts and believe it should be a major priority for Brookline. The attached report provides a blueprint for establishing a more viable and sustainable organization over time to support the Town's climate activities and priorities.

I would like to thank the many Town officials, committee personnel, town staff and others who provided the Collins Center with valuable input and data for their report. I look forward to discussing the findings and recommendations of the Collins Center report with the Select Board and others.