

Town of Plaistow Water Supply Symposium

Existing and Future Needs and
Opportunities

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Bill Klubben

Director of Community Development
Town of Bow

I am a planner.

Masters in Community & Regional Planning in 1980
continuously employed in the planning field since.

- six years in Montana
- 11 years at the Central NH Regional Planning Commission
- 16 years at the Town of Bow, NH

2012 First new municipal water system
(MWS) in NH in 50 years

At conception, the Bow MWS was an
economic development project

In my opinion, Economic Development is a planning process

- How would you answer the following questions?
- Why do you want to develop a MWS for Plaistow?
- What are the public health, welfare, and safety issues?
- What are the other overall benefits?
- What are your goals and objectives?
- Who will benefit from a MWS?
- Who will pay for a MWS?
- How much vacant undeveloped or underdeveloped land could be served?
- Are the residents and businesses in a potential service area supportive?
- How will the Town of Plaistow benefit?

A little economic development history of Bow

Beginning in the 1950's & 1960's

- PSNH constructed Merrimack Station 1 and 2 coal fired electric generating facilities
- Major expansion of Boston Logan Airport and construction of Interstates 93 and 89 resulted in the removal of countless millions of cubic yards of sand and gravel from Bow
- Result = 1000 + acres of flat land with great development potential, but rather devoid of vegetation

In Economic Development terms, the plant was a walk off home run (or so folks thought)

- Bow built a fine public education system
- PSNH paid a large proportion of the cost (started around 80%, but declined to 40%, then 30%, now less than 20% of tax base)
- Bow's population consistently grew faster than state, county, and southern NH
- low taxes, excellent school system, homes in Bow a fine financial investment
- By 1990's we realized that we had to do more to generate non-residential tax revenue

Economic Development Activity

- 1978: Business Development Commission (BDC) established
- 1999: Town appropriated \$50,000 for economic development study
- 2000: Town appropriated \$100,000 for engineering feasibility study of water and waste-water for industrial area
- 2001: Town drilled its first test well in the Bow Aquifer

Economic Development Activity (continued)

- 2002: Town authorized \$12,500,000 bond to design and construct a water system and a sewage collection & transport system
- 2003: Pump test indicated well-field yield 1,000,000 GPD of high quality water
- 2004: Engineer hired to prepare final design, permit applications, and bid specifications for the water and waste water systems

Economic Development Activity (continued)

- 2006: Completed construction of the municipal water supply well, six-day pump test at 1,000,000 GPD completed, and large groundwater withdrawal application submitted to NH DES
- BDC recommended that the Select Board move forward on construction of the core water portion of infrastructure with “dry” sewer pipes

Push back. A vision for economic development

- 2007: Grant for facilitated visioning sessions to prepare a strategic business development and marketing plan.
- We have spent \$1.5 Million, now what?
- Engage community in visioning to achieve community consensus and participation before public investment for economic development
- Active community involvement on strategy for economic development
- Engage the social resources of the Town
- Identify economic development needs of community
- Balance infrastructure, environmental, and fiscal

Designed process to result in a detailed strategic development plan with realistic time lines and financial expectations that would result in a marketing plan for the economic development resources of the community

Design of Business Development Visioning Sessions:

Session 1 - Background information to bring participants to common factual background and understanding of the issues, goals, and status

Session 2 - Summarize visioning thoughts from Session 1; refine vision; and begin discussion of Strategic Planning

Session 3 - Finalize vision; strategic plan; action plan; policy direction; resources available / needed; time lines; consensus; and community participation

Visioning process did not go according to plan

- First visioning session broke down into “we have heard”, “he said - she said”, venting on poor treatment of existing businesses, “all a smoke-screen to push water and sewer”, hidden agenda, and other accusations
- Used remaining sessions to begin restoring faith and trust, re-open all our minds, and re-build bridges
- We spent the next two years reconnecting with our business community

Lessons Learned

- No matter how much good work you do, you will fail unless the people you serve are with you
- Reach out
- Then check to see if the reachee was reached
- Then reach out again
- DON'T ASSUME THAT JUST BECAUSE THE BENEFITS ARE OBVIOUS TO YOU, THAT THE BENEFITS WILL BE OBVIOUS TO THE BENEFICIARIES

Lessons Learned (continued)

- You need to hire expertise
- You need to use volunteers wisely
- You need to have enough staff to do it right or
- You need to slow progress on some items to do the right items

In the summer of 2010, we put the project out to bid

In the spring of 2011, construction began in earnest

By spring of 2012, sufficient construction was complete to start up the Bow Municipal Water System on July 2

We have fewer than 20 customers to date

But we have attracted new development that would not have happened without the MWS

Bill Klubben

Director of Community Development

Town of Bow

10 Grandview Road

Bow NH 03304

603 225 3008

FAX 225 2982

commdevel@bow-nh.gov

www.bow-nh.com