

# COMMUNITY VISION AND VALUES PROJECT

From: *The Falmouth Focus*, October 2020, Volume 2, Issue 21

In 2019 the Town Council expressed strong interest in updating the 2013 Comprehensive Plan to lay a solid basis for any future land use decisions. Prior to commencing this work, the Council decided to first undertake a robust public process to identify the Town's "vision and values" to help inform the comprehensive plan update process.

What is a "Town Vision," you may wonder.

According to the 2003 Community Visioning Handbook by the former Maine State Planning Office, a community vision is a "mental picture of what residents want their community to look and feel like in 20 years." It describes the desired future community character. The purpose of a vision statement is "to capture a picture of the community's future that any resident quickly can grasp and appreciate. This vision does not represent one individual's or just one group's point of view. It must represent the consensus of a group of people.... A vision that works helps a community to reach for goals above and beyond what normally might be expected, to discover possibilities that were not apparent before. A good vision is a stretch, but still in the realm of the achievable. A good vision motivates people to take action together. A good vision makes people feel hopeful, optimistic, and focused. A good vision is presented in words and images that are concrete and easily understandable. A vision provides a test for determining appropriate policies in a community's Comprehensive Plan. It provides an explanation to the public of why the plan is the way it is. And it is a yardstick for determining the effectiveness of the plan and its policies over time."

The Council approved two resolutions in 2019 which addressed the need to seek the assistance of a professional consultant to work with the public to develop a vision and values statement. In December, a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for this work resulted in thirteen submissions. An Ad Hoc Review Team consisting of councilors and staff reviewed all submissions and interviewed six firms before recommending to the Council that Future iQ from Minneapolis, Minnesota be hired.

In February 2020, upon request by the Town Council, Future iQ developed a proposed Scope of Services and cost proposal that (a) best seeks community input in the development of the Town Vision and Values, and (b) obtains broad and meaningful public input before developing new policies for the Comprehensive Plan update. Review of this proposal and accompanying financial appropriation request by the Council was postponed due to COVID-19.

At its Annual Work Plan Retreat in July 2020, the Council decided to move forward with the Vision and Values project deeming it a high priority. In light of potential impact that COVID-19 may have on upcoming public outreach, Future iQ developed a revised proposal. On September 14, 2020, the Council approved a supplemental appropriation of \$63,000 for Future iQ's work.

Future iQ is proposing four phases of work: (1) background research and preparation of a benchmark report, (2) on-line community survey, virtual task force work by focus groups, and development of various scenarios of the future, (3) community vision engagement sessions (in-person or virtual as conditions allow), and (4) development of a Falmouth Community Vision and Values Statement.

The Vision and Values project is expected to start in fall 2020 and will be completed sometime in 2021. Two review or "pause" points are included in the process to allow for adjustment of methodology and/or timeline depending on prevailing conditions. When complete, the Vision and Values Statement will lay the basis for, and be followed by, the development of an updated Comprehensive Plan.

At its September 14, 2020 meeting, the Town Council reiterated the need for as many residents as possible to join in this effort to envision Falmouth's future and their hope to see robust participation from community members.

For additional details of this project, please consult the Council's [September 14, 2020 meeting agenda, item 2](#) or contact Theo Holtwijk, Director of Long Range Planning and Economic Development, at 699-5340 or [tholtwijk@falmouthme.org](mailto:tholtwijk@falmouthme.org).