

TOWN of BARNSTABLE  
TOWN COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN  
FISCAL YEARS 2024-2025

***MISSION STATEMENT***

Our mission is to protect the Town of Barnstable's quality of life and unique character, engage our citizens, and enact policies that respond to and anticipate the needs of our community.

***GUIDING PRINCIPLES***

We believe in our oath of office:

*I will perform my duties as a Town Councilor for the Town of Barnstable to the best of my ability, keeping uppermost in my mind the rules and laws that govern my office and my responsibility to the citizens of the Town of Barnstable.*

We also believe in:

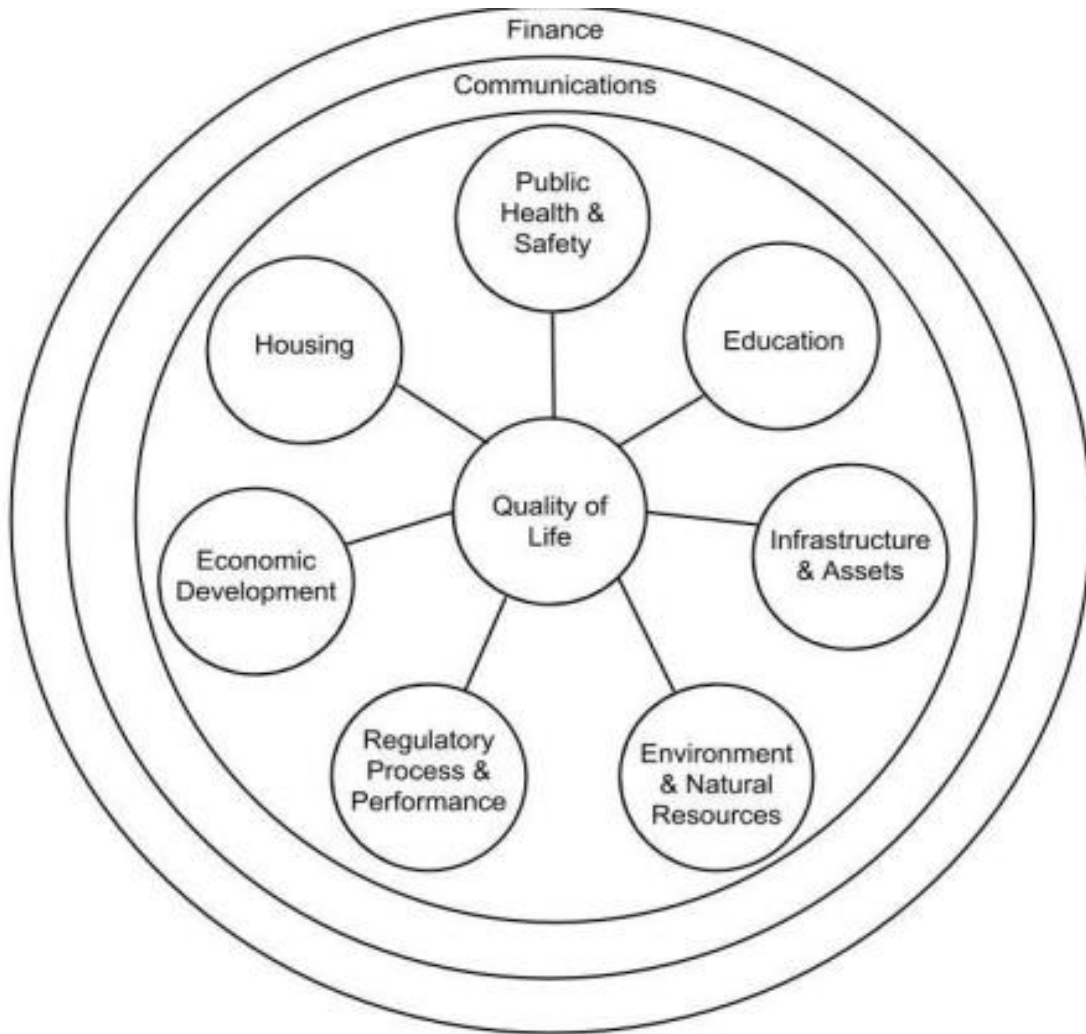
- ✓ Involving residents in the decision-making process
- ✓ Modeling ethical behavior
- ✓ Protecting citizen rights
- ✓ Protecting the health and safety of citizens
- ✓ Being fiscally responsible
- ✓ Being accountable
- ✓ Being respectful of the people and the process
- ✓ Giving the highest priority to the rules and laws that govern the office of the Town Council
- ✓ Operating fairly, predictably and efficiently
- ✓ Providing a consistent process
- ✓ Operating creatively and with flexibility
- ✓ The manager's job to manage the staff
- ✓ Preserving the integrity of the Town of Barnstable
- ✓ Each council member's stake in the betterment of the community
- ✓ Listening and respecting each other's contributions
- ✓ The right to disagree
- ✓ Being accessible and keeping the process open
- ✓ Decisions being made in the best interest of the whole Town of Barnstable

***PRIORITY AREAS***

We have identified a single goal and several strategies in nine priority areas. For each, it is understood that the Town Council will formulate and enact policy, the Town Manager and staff will implement and manage programs to achieve the policy goals, and the Town Council and Town Manager will communicate frequently to ensure accountability to the residents of the Town of

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Barnstable.



Shaped like a wheel, the strategic plan diagram shows *Quality of Life* at the hub, surrounded by seven priority areas: *Economic Development*, *Regulatory Process and Performance*, *Housing*, *Public Health and Safety*, *Environment and Natural Resources*, *Infrastructure*, and *Education*. These areas function like lug nuts, securing a high quality of life for Barnstable residents regardless of circumstances beyond their control (or “bumps in the road”). Finance, Communication, and Diversity Equity and Inclusion, support and protect the wheel like tires – if they deflate, any or all areas may be

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compromised.

**Finance**

**Goal:** Provide a viable financial plan for meeting the operational and capital needs of the town with a balanced budget that includes ongoing cost reductions, cost savings for residents, maintaining reserves, and aggressively pursuing new growth dollars and revenue sources, with an eye towards sustainability.

**Strategies:**

- Explore and create new growth dollars and revenue sources (including grants) for the town and schools to alleviate strain on municipal and school budgets, perform operational auditing, advance greater energy efficiency, and stimulate new growth.
- Ensure adherence to a sound financial plan to meet short- and long-term priorities and liabilities of the operating and capital needs of the town.
- Evaluate and assess, on an on-going basis, alternative methods to decrease the cost of services by exploring the financial benefits of regionalization, consolidation, privatization, and collective bargaining.
- Support and promote the Open Budget.

**Communications**

**Goal:** Improve communication amongst the Town Council and Town Manager and their staff; amongst Town Councilors; between the Town and its residents, boards, commissions, volunteers and visitors to foster participation and positive results that meet the needs of the community.

**Strategies:**

- Provide regular opportunities for Town Council members to receive briefings or updates on Town initiatives and other important topics from the Town Manager and department heads.
- Use the council liaison system to improve communication between Town committees, boards, and commissions. Encourage regular updates from the liaisons to Town Council.
- Utilize existing communication boards and partner media outlets to make public service announcements. Work with community groups to disseminate information to their members.
- Communicate Town information to non-English speaking community members.
- Utilize the Town website, social media, Town newsletter, Citizens' Leadership Academy,

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Channel 1075 (municipal television station), local school department, nonprofits and agencies, and local newspaper and radio stations as outlets to communicate with the public.

Specifically:

- Encourage all boards and commissions to record their proceedings and make them available to foster communication and increased transparency.
- Develop tactics to effectively solicit public input and feedback and promote active engagement.

**Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

**Goal:** Protect the Town’s quality of life and unique character, engage our citizens, and enact policies that respond to and anticipate the needs of our community, which is diverse in culture, gender, gender identification, race, ethnic background, religious beliefs, and national origin.

**Strategies:**

- Provide a staff that best meets the needs of the Town, which is diverse.
- Promote programs and services reflect the value of the Town’s diversity.
- Guarantee equal employment opportunity in the recruitment, application, selection, compensation, retention, transfer, promotion, benefits, work assignment and career progression process without discrimination for reasons of race, ethnic background, sex, gender, age, religious beliefs, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or marital status.
- Research, develop, recommend, and execute strategies to foster Diversity, Equity, Inclusion goals.
- Review current Diversity, Equity, Inclusion practices and policies to assess effectiveness.

**Economic Development**

**Goal:** Town Council and Town Manager to support and grow a vibrant economy with a diversity of businesses, both for-profit and non-profit, and a strong labor force, taking into consideration promotion of sustainability.

**Strategies:**

- Ensure that infrastructure in support of economic growth is consistent with emerging environmental concerns.
- Identify and encourage redevelopment of underutilized and/or blighted properties.
- Work with public and private schools in Barnstable and the community to help promote career opportunities, including job training.

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- Town Manager to work proactively to retain and/or expand existing businesses and to attract new ones using innovative approaches, such as:
- Provide economic incentives that increase business diversity in Barnstable and promote desirable economic activity, such as clean industries and smart growth.
- Create marketing specifically to attract desirable new businesses to Barnstable.
- Create or deepen connections between local educational institutions and businesses.

**Environment and Natural Resources**

**Goal:** Conserve and protect areas in the town that are most significant as natural and historical resources for water supply, visual quality, outdoor recreation, public access, wildlife habitat and cultural history.

**Strategies:**

- Implement the Comprehensive dredge plan.
- Pursue strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Improve accessibility to natural resources for our diverse community.
- Investigate innovative, cost-effective techniques for invasive species control.
- Investigate innovative techniques and legislative options to address beach erosion and otherwise prepare for and adapt to extreme weather events.
- Support programs that emphasize environmental protection while ensuring economic development as articulated in the Regional Policy Plan.
- Raise awareness of conservation areas and Town-owned open space, establish management and maintenance plans for conservation areas and Town-owned open space.
- Investigate the acquisition of property by the Town in coordination with the Town's Open Space Policies.
- Work in conjunction with federal, state, regional, and local agencies to protect critical environmental areas, including fragile coastlines, marine embayment areas, and all water bodies vulnerable to nitrogen loading.

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**Regulatory Process and Performance**

**Goal:** Work with Town Manager and staff to have an efficient, customer-friendly, predictable regulatory process.

**Strategies:**

- Continue to evaluate the permitting process, including policies, rules and regulations, personnel, customer/citizen experience, and impact on economic growth. Identify necessary changes.
- Evaluate staff training methods, to ensure necessary steps to achieve a high level of customer service and streamlined process for all applicants.
- Maintain adequate staff to enforce regulations and agreements.

**Public Health and Safety**

**Goal:** Protect and promote the health, safety, wellbeing, and high quality of life of all town residents and visitors.

**Strategies:**

- Support collaborative action to protect and expand our drinking water supply, including (but not limited to) ongoing monitoring for existing and emerging contaminants.
- Coordinate water resource management planning in our community inclusive of all water districts.
- Develop and implement a substance use prevention plan in collaboration with key stakeholders.

**Focus on:**

- Prevention through educating youth in schools, working with YMCA Young Achievers, and leveraging recreation programs.
- Collaboration among community stakeholders working on substance use from a range of perspectives.
- Establishing appropriate oversight and support for programs and entities in Barnstable that offer treatment.
- Support village-based and community-oriented public safety agencies, and joint programs that police/school/youth/seniors/disabled/homeless and other vulnerable populations' programs.

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**Housing**

**Goal:** Identify needs, and develop, promote, and monitor town-wide initiatives for income-equitable, affordable, workforce, senior, and rental housing to meet the needs of residents and increase the overall quality and quantity of housing in Barnstable.

**Strategies:**

- Review zoning issues identified by the Council, the Planning Board, and the Zoning Board of Appeals to determine how best to achieve housing goals through zoning and regulatory changes. Proactively engage stakeholders with influence over this issue. Review the Housing Production Plan to support this goal.
- Work in partnership with developers so they can take advantage of the available resources, funding, and assets to initiate housing projects.
- Explore housing solutions, including regional collaboration and creative financing, to address homelessness, housing insecurity, and lack of available and affordable housing in Barnstable.
- Explore the possibility of using town assets to create affordable private housing opportunities.
  - Pursue innovative structures and formats, and use of town-owned land, to expand quality workforce housing.
  - Explore opportunities, incentives, and other strategies to promote increased supply of home ownership.

**Town Infrastructure & Assets**

**Goal:** Maintain and improve existing infrastructure, capital assets, and aquatic resources, make improvements when necessary, and ensure town assets are managed, maintained, or disposed of to serve the highest and best uses moving forward.

**Strategies:**

- Facilitate comprehensive infrastructure improvement planning for municipal roads, buildings, facilities, sewers, transportation systems, communication systems, information infrastructure, water and wastewater systems, historical properties, and other capital assets, with an eye toward permit-ready and shovel-ready projects.
- Continue to implement the Towns approved Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan, and create opportunity to encourage Council and public input.

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- Support the exploration of traditional and non-traditional methods for comprehensive water management and monitoring of implementation efforts.
- Continue to inventory and evaluate the status of Town assets and dispose of or acquire assets as appropriate.
  
- Evaluate options for effective and economic development of renewable energy resources, energy conservation programs, and solid waste and recycling programs.

**Education**

**Goal:** Support the provision of a safe, high-quality public education for all students in an increasingly diverse student body, in partnership with local, state, and federal entities.

**Strategies:**

- Work cooperatively with the School Department to approve a budget that adheres to standard municipal accounting practices, is clear and understandable for all residents, and meets the short- and long-term operating and capital needs of the school system and the municipality.
- Work in conjunction with the School Department to deliver a substance use prevention model for grades PreK-12.
- Strive to reduce the impact of unfunded state and federal mandates in addition to the revised Chapter 70 funding and make public aware of impact of same.
- Work cooperatively with school administration to develop plans for administrative and infrastructure consolidation. Conduct periodic assessments of consolidated services.
- Support initiatives to create a culturally diverse educational environment for all public-school students.
- Explore funding opportunities for early childhood education and day care.
- Work towards coordinating the Barnstable School Committee Strategic Plan with the Barnstable Town Council Strategic Plan.



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**Appendix A**

**Sept. 2020 Town Council Guidance on Finance**

- *Impacts of COVID-19:* The COVID-19 pandemic and its resulting economic contraction should lead to an examination of the Town’s top financial priorities and motivate the Town to remain as affordable as possible by avoiding tax increases where possible. Despite the extraordinary circumstances, small local businesses stepped up during the pandemic, and the Town should consider exploring more incentives and support for local businesses.
- *New Business Growth:* The Town should consider that future business growth may include a departure from traditional brick and mortar businesses, which could both open up an opportunity for more housing and increase the need for support for home businesses (zoning, permitting, etc.). Additionally, the Town should explore new growth opportunities from the redevelopment of underperforming parcels, PILOT opportunities, and the “grey” economy.
  - *Auditing Best Practices:* The Town should hire independent organizations to evaluate spending and department operations; those audits should be available as a tool for Town decision-making.
- *Cost-Sharing:* The Town should explore cost-sharing opportunities between its schools and its municipal operations; operational audits could be used as a tool to surface potential opportunities.
- *Cost Savings:* The question was posed whether independent fire and water districts could be a place where cost savings could be pursued. If so, the Town should determine the correct forum to start this conversation.
- *Equitable Resource Allocation:* The Town should explore what an equitable allocation of resources should look like between villages.

**Sept. 2020 Town Council Guidance on Communications**

Desired Outcome: The professional credibility of the Town’s government should be well regarded by its residents and stakeholders. The Town’s citizenry should be active, involved, and feel heard; Town decisions should be made with community buy-in.

- *New Town Government Positions:* The Town should explore creating a volunteer coordinator position as well as a grants coordinator position.
- *Role of Town Council:* The Town should consider developing guidance for what it means to serve in the role as Town Councilor. The Council itself should have clarity in its role versus the role of Town management, especially as it pertains to community engagement and communications.
- *Audience for Town Communications:* The Town should examine any gaps in the audiences it is currently reaching, such as generational gaps, and target its communications to reach those missing constituencies. Focus groups could be a tool to design tailored messages for missing audiences, as could partnerships with civic associations, the formation of a Community Engagement Committee, and/or the formation of a task force with residents on communications.

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The Town should also be cognizant of economic gaps among its residents that may increase barriers to online access and virtual participation for some households.

- *Additional Modes of Communication:* Some options for additional modes of communication the Town could capitalize on include a mailer about Town Council updates distributed through the schools, increased utilization of the popular Town Manager video updates, and posting recorded meetings and applications to Town RFPs online for public access. The Town's web presence generally should be made more accessible and user-friendly. Additionally, the Annual Report could be an

opportunity to provide residents with an overview of the Town's structure, roles, and goals and achievements. The Town Council could also use feel-good communication opportunities, like Channel 18 programs on volunteer opportunities, to highlight the strength of the Barnstable community.

- *Town Council Accessibility and Participation:* Holding special, issue-focused Town Council workshops and holding Town Council meetings on Saturday at least once per year could increase accessibility and participation. Promoting and accepting remote participation in Council proceedings could also help increase citizen involvement, and the Town should explore any legal or procedural barriers to allowing remote participation.

**Sept. 2020 Town Council Guidance on Economic Development**

- *Economic Development Task Force:* As part of its disaster preparedness and economic resilience strategy, the Town should support the Economic Development Task Force and conduct scenario planning.
- *Support for Residents:* The Town should support its residents working from home – for example, through ensuring adequate broadband connection. Additionally, the Town should consider using Town money to subsidize early childcare for its residents.
- *Relationship with Community College:* The Town should leverage and improve its relationship with the Community College to increase local job opportunities.

**Sept. 2020 Town Council Guidance on Housing**

- *Representative Zoning Committee:* The Town should either explore forming a new committee to address zoning issues, with representatives from each of the 7 villages, or amend the membership of the existing committee.
- *Priority Housing Types:* The Town should prioritize quality, affordable workforce housing as well as single-room apartments. There may be incentives to consider through the property tax system to increase affordable housing. The Town should consider promoting home ownership through the prioritization of smaller housing over larger developments, but 2-acre zoning may be a regulatory barrier.
- *Creativity to Navigate Barriers:* Where the cost of land and labor can act as a barrier, the Town can eliminate the cost of land barrier by providing its assets, as demonstrated in Seattle with long-term leases with below market rate restrictions. There are opportunities for the Town to be creative with its assets (e.g., tiny homes with a community garden), and developer partners should be sought with

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creative solutions in mind. Moreover, the Town can explore reducing the cost of construction through streamlining regulations.

- *Alternative Wastewater Solutions:* There may be Town support for alternative wastewater processes in areas that will not be sewerred in the near- or medium-term. The CWMP should address these needs and options.

**Sept. 2020 Town Council Guidance on Town Infrastructure & Assets**

Desired Outcome: The Town should have more infrastructure leading up to and on the water, and its deployment of energy resources should be consistent with state targets.

- Acknowledge climate change and the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by utilizing renewables in accordance with the Global Warming Solutions Act.

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TOWN COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLANNING MEETING: FISCAL YEARS 2024-2025  
Thursday, August 10, 2023 | Meeting Notes

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**Meeting Recording:**

**Attendance:** All Town Councilors were in attendance. Town Manager, Mark Ellis, and staff.

**Opening:** The meeting opened with remarks from Council President Matthew Levesque and the entertainment of new business with Agenda Item 2024-020 Determination under Section 19 of the Conflict-of-Interest Law regarding participation in matters relating to potential changes to the percentage contributions of the town and its employees for health insurance, which passed. Afterwards, President Levesque continued with the meeting by reminding attendees that this strategic planning session is an opportunity to address the challenges the Town of Barnstable will face going forward by suggesting changes to the Council's strategic plan. He stressed their good fortune to be living in this great community on the Cape and then turned to the CBI Facilitator, Dorit Price-Levine, to explain the structure of the session, which focused on priority for higher level needs of the strategic plan, rather than focusing on details within the plan.

**Review of the Strategic Plan, Diagram, and Priority Areas:** To begin the discussion, the Council started by examining the structure of the diagram that outlines the strategic plan and its priorities.

- *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI):* President Levesque introduced the notion of ingraining DEI initiatives into the priority areas of the strategic plan, perhaps by adding an extra circle

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around the diagram for DEI. Many council members noted that this change would and should involve understanding how DEI would relate to each facet of the strategic plan, as well as policymaking.

- *Financial:* Members of the group discussed possible language changes, such as removal of the word “aggressively” in the phrase “aggressively pursuing new growth dollars” which was met with pushback by those who emphasized the importance of pursuing financial growth for the town. Other council members also mentioned how adding language about sustainability could be added to improve the current wording while still emphasizing the importance of growth.
- *Communication:* Some council members suggested that there should be more avenues for the public to provide feedback, while others mentioned utilizing and working with the school districts to improve engagement by disseminating information to the public through school fliers. Council members also suggested partnering with nonprofit organizations and agencies who could support the dissemination of information.
- *Economic Development:* There were calls to strike the first two committees mentioned in the Strategies, the Zoning and Regulatory Committees. Others in the meeting recommended planning with the school district and the College to promote job training to best meet the needs of the Town’s workforce, which many said has been lacking due to high housing costs. Members also recommended taking sustainability and climate change into account for planning.
- *Environment and Natural Resources:* Council members mentioned a desire to focus resources towards ensuring proper enforcement of environmental regulations. Other members expressed that the strategy to find opportunities wherever possible to reduce greenhouse gas emissions should be added. Additionally, there were calls to ramp up accessibility to natural resources, such as beaches, for folks with disabilities and seniors. Council members also suggested elevating the priority of searches for new municipal water sources to the level of priority of wastewater management. Members also sought to remove bullets that refer to specific plans such as the dredge plan and regional policy plan. Some members noted that language could be added referencing the library of plans, rather than removing any mention of plans entirely. Lastly, council members suggested adding a strategy to pursue every opportunity to acquire more land for the Town to be used for open space, housing, or recreation.
- *Regulatory Processes and Performance:* During the meeting, council members mentioned adding language around site plan review ordinances, while also streamlining permitting for construction and business applications. Also, some called for more follow-up after agreements to ensure that the terms of the agreement are properly carried out and that projects comply with regulations. Sentiments were expressed that in general, there is a need for more efficient and simple processes for permitting and applications, as well as proper enforcement.

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- *Public Health and Safety:* Some council members suggested that the Public Health and Safety section should be split into two different sections to be able to provide greater focus on specific initiatives. Additionally, some other members thought this section could remain one but be renamed to Human Services and Safety. However, that suggestion was met with pushback that this might require the creation of a new Human Services Department. The original proponents clarified that they only wished for a name change for the section, not the creation of a new department. Some wished to add the word, “wellbeing,” to the goal of this priority area. Members also called for greater intention to protect and promote the expansion of work between water districts to ensure synergy.
- *Housing:* Some requested that homeownership be named explicitly as one of the strategies in this section, particularly in the context of DEI, to ensure that people would be able to live and subsequently work in Barnstable. This led to a discussion of the importance of publicly funded developments, including improving not only the quality of housing but also quantity. However, raised concerns about satisfying building codes. From a development perspective, some proposed strategies that would provide incentives or funding for the building of more affordable housing. Lastly, some council members mentioned partnering with the Housing Trust in ways that would encourage development of new housing.
- *Infrastructure and Assets:* Council members primarily called for further promotion and implementation of CWMP while also further utilizing the Water Resources Advisory Board.
- *Education:* There were discussions around whether the strategy should be to continue to grow funds under Chapter 70, or whether there should be a shift to focusing on monitoring this funding. Some also mentioned a desire to expand funding to support early childhood education, such as preschool.