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Presentation

Potential Annual Town Report Enhancements

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Slide 1 – Annual Town Report as a Communication Tool

This presentation explores the Annual Town Report (ATR) as a communication tool that may help strengthen community understanding and engagement.

The presentation draws on VLCT best practices, examples from award-winning Vermont Town Reports, observations from Town and committee meetings, conversations with community members, and independent research. The ideas are intended to support committee discussion and explore practical ways to strengthen communication through the Annual Town Report.

Tables_Data – Illustrative formatting only.

Slide 2 – Why the Annual Town Report Matters

Many residents do not regularly attend Selectboard, Planning Commission, School Board, or other public meetings. For many, Town Meeting Day is their primary opportunity to participate in local government.

The Annual Town Report represents the culmination of a year's work and provides the Town's opportunity to communicate with residents before Town Meeting, helping them better understand budgets, articles, projects, and municipal operations.

Slide 3 – Communication Can Build Engagement

This slide presents a communication model illustrating how clearer information may contribute to:

- Better understanding
- Greater confidence
- Increased trust
- More informed participation

The intent is to show how improved communication may support both the **quality** and **quantity** of civic participation.

Slide 4 – Vermont Best Practices

VLCT recognizes outstanding Town Reports through its Annual Town Report Contest and provides Best Practices guidance.

This slide highlights common characteristics of award-winning reports and provides context for the examples that follow.

Slides 5–10 – Examples of Communication Enhancements

The following slides present illustrative examples of communication tools that could make information already contained in the Annual Town Report easier to understand.

These examples are intended to demonstrate possible formats rather than recommend specific reporting requirements.

Slide 5 – Potential Communication Enhancements

This slide provides an overview of communication ideas discussed throughout the presentation. Some elements may already appear in Waterbury's Annual Town Report, while others are examples drawn from best practices or developed for discussion.

Slide 6 – Budget Highlights & Significant Variances

Illustrative example showing how major budget changes, savings, deferred projects, and significant variances might be summarized in one location.

Purpose:

- Highlight important changes.
- Explain why they occurred.
- Improve understanding of annual budget performance.

Slide 7 – Budget at a Glance

Illustrative example of a one-page financial summary presented before the detailed budget schedules.

Purpose:

- Provide a high-level overview of financial trends.
- Help readers understand the Town's overall financial picture before reviewing detailed spreadsheets.

Slide 8 – Local Option Tax Dashboard

Illustrative example of a project tracking table for Local Option Tax (LOT) funds.

Purpose:

- Show approved allocations.
- Track expenditures and remaining balances.
- Monitor multi-year projects.
- Provide a simple annual status update.

Because the LOT is relatively new, this may represent an opportunity for an easily understood communication enhancement.

Slide 9 – Professional Services Summary

Illustrative example of a summary table showing professional services and operating expenses by department, service, and funding source.

Examples include engineering, information technology, grant writing, planning, and other contracted professional services.

Purpose:

- Organize information already included within the budget.
- Improve readability.
- Clarify funding sources.
- Connect expenditures with Town projects and services.

Given recent staffing transitions, interim positions, and consultant use, a summary such as this may help residents better understand how professional services support Town operations.

Slide 10 – Additional Community Summaries

This slide explores the value of brief annual summaries from organizations that significantly affect the community.

Examples include:

- School Board
- Edward Farrar Utility District (EFUD)

These summaries could provide additional context about education, infrastructure, community planning, and other topics that influence residents but may not be fully reflected in the Annual Town Report.

Slide 11 – Supporting the Committee's Goal

This slide summarizes how improved communication through the Annual Town Report may support the committee's charge of exploring ways to strengthen both the quality and quantity of citizen engagement.

Slide 12 – Potential Recommendations to the Selectboard

If the committee finds merit in these concepts, this slide outlines potential recommendations for Selectboard consideration.

The emphasis is on practical, scalable communication improvements that build upon existing information, VLCT best practices, and available staff resources.