

Report of the Public-Private Partnership Study Committee

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Report to the Select Board

Executive Summary

In the Spring of 2016, the Select Board created the Public-Private Partnership Study Committee, charging it to:

- Become knowledgeable about public-private partnerships in Concord and elsewhere.
- Solicit public input.
- Consider whether the town should make the process transparent by providing ways for the public to participate in reviewing short and long-term public-private partnerships.

The committee met frequently for approximately seven months. This report documents the recommendations of the committee, as follows:

1. There should be a standing “P3 Committee,” charged with evaluating proposed Public-Private Partnerships (P3s) and monitoring ongoing P3s.
2. That committee should have dedicated staff support, especially with respect to keeping the records of all P3s in a consistent place for public review.
3. The Town Manager or his/her designee should act as the “gatekeeper” to the P3 processes documented herein.
4. Every new and existing P3 should be governed, in addition to any lease or contract, by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which clearly sets out the requirements for that particular P3.
5. The standing P3 Committee should review all Town of Concord P3s on (at least) an annual basis.
6. Efforts should be made to expand this process to include partnerships between the schools (including the Regional School District) and private entities.

Introduction

In April 2016, the Select Board, recognizing that the Town of Concord's reliance on the use of tax-based funds is limited and therefore public-private partnerships will continue to be used to fund Town and school-related projects, appointed a Public Private Partnership Study Committee—P3 Study Committee. The Committee was charged "...to explore issues surrounding public private partnerships, including the benefits and the drawbacks of such arrangements." At the first meeting, Select Board chair Michael Lawson said the goal is to help the town develop a process to review and monitor future P3s in a responsible manner.

The Study Committee was asked to:

- Become knowledgeable about public-private partnerships in Concord and elsewhere.
- Solicit public input.
- Consider whether the town should make the process transparent by providing ways for the public to participate in reviewing short and long-term public-private partnerships.

Committee Members: Carol Aronson, Ingrid Detweiler, (representing the League of Women Voters of Concord-Carlisle), Miguel Echavarri, Abraham Fisher (Clerk), Jean Goldsberry (Chair), Robert Grom (School Committee Liaison), Dorrie Kehoe, Peter Mahler (representing the Rotary Club of Concord), Tom McKean (Select Board Liaison), and Tom Rarich. The charge included a representative from CC@Play, but the designated member was unable to participate.

Goals of a P3 Process

Public-Private Partnerships have existed in Concord for many years and are a substantial benefit to the Town. Historically these relationships have been managed by public officials (e.g. Town Manager and Boards, School Superintendent and School Committees) on an *ad hoc* basis.

The purpose of this report is to propose a consistent process for managing existing and new partnerships and the projects they create going forward. Much as town ordinances define what can and cannot be done on private property, all citizens and organizations who envision a partnership with the town will be able to reference, and use, a standard P3 process as they plan and manage their project.

The Study Committee proposes a common, standardized P3 process. This would accomplish several goals. It would include multiple opportunities for public involvement in planning and carrying out a project that may affect them and the community. It would provide up-front enumeration of all the costs, revenues, and benefits that may accrue, and provide a standard review process to assist with the management of contingencies that might arise during a project. The proposed P3 committee and its documentation would also provide an institutional memory to aid future project planning and supervision.

Recommendations

This document recommends methods to the Select Board for evaluating and approving new P3s as well as monitoring ongoing P3s to ensure they are fulfilling their original mission.

The Study Committee adopted a working definition of a P3 to guide the process.

A public-private partnership (P3) is a relationship between a public body and a private body, in which the resulting product is a governmental asset or a public benefit (not always physical). This relationship involves monetary or physical assets of the town. A service contract, grant, and/or gift do not necessarily create a public-private partnership. A P3 may receive grants and/or gifts.

The Study Committee's research and deliberation about what makes a successful public-private partnership confirmed the need for a clear explanation of the purpose and process for each proposed partnership. Sources of funding to pay for the project as well as what will be accomplished, the time frame, and any contingency plans should also be made clear. No partnership should be undertaken without clear public education and involvement. The Study Committee is convinced that if the public is aware of proposals and has an opportunity to follow a project through to fruition, there is less likelihood of misunderstandings.

The Study Committee recommends:

1. The establishment of a P3 Committee to study proposals forwarded from the Town Manager's office or passed at town meeting. This committee shall serve as the liaison with the public, ensuring an open process.
2. The creation of an open process with opportunity for public input to evaluate all P3 projects.
3. As part of this process, private organizations wishing to undertake a project on Town property or affecting Town interests or finances must notify the Concord Town Manager's office where the project will be reviewed and a determination made whether to consider the proposed P3.
4. Each new and existing P3 should be governed by a Memorandum of Understanding approved by all parties.
5. Any 'stakeholders' acting as a town decision maker should recuse themselves from votes on whether the project should go forward.

Process

The Study Committee met 2-3 times per month throughout the spring, summer, and fall. Two public hearings were held—one in September to solicit public input and one in December to receive public comment on a draft report.

The Study Committee reviewed P3 information from the League of Women Voters, the National Council for Public Private Partnerships, as well as from other towns and groups. Committee members researched former or existing P3s in Concord to glean information about how they were started, the relationship between the town and the private entity, what each P3 had in common, and what worked well.

One example of an ongoing P3 is the Doug White Fields located behind the high school. In 2007, Friends of Concord-Carlisle Playing Fields (FCCPF) served as the private partner in proposing and overseeing construction of two artificial turf fields at the regional high school campus. Through its fundraising efforts, FCCPF provided a large share of the money to pay for the project, while the Town of Concord oversaw the work. FCCPF has continued the P3 partnership with the town by providing \$50,000 a year towards field maintenance. In addition to these funds, FCCPF is obligated to raise funds to cover future costs of replacing the artificial turf. The use of the fields is co-operatively managed by the high school athletic director and town youth sports programs.

Another example of an ongoing P3 is the Concord Visitor Center. The facility is owned by the town and run by the Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber pays \$1.00 per year plus utilities for the building, and it provides the staffing. The committee identified many P3s ranging from small partnerships such as the Center for Restorative Justice, to large projects initiated by the Concord Free Public Library Corporation, Emerson Umbrella and CC@Play.

The Study Committee worked to devise a process that would allow greater transparency for the citizens of Concord and yet not be onerous for P3s. The objective was to involve citizens early in the process so they could be informed and participate. The Study Committee charge states in part that the Committee should “consider whether the Town should make a special effort to guarantee transparency, access to information, and public participation in either short-term public-private partnerships focused on a specific project or in long-term partnerships providing an ongoing service or creating an enduring relationship.”

The Study Committee strongly recommends that such an effort be made. While there are many legitimate reasons a private entity might choose to operate privately when reasonable, in accordance with its mission, ultimately a P3 is performing a governmental function and thus should provide the same kind of public access that a purely public enterprise would be legally obligated to provide. “Transparency” has perhaps become a cliché, but it represents a desire for openness to public input and public scrutiny without which public trust will inevitably be lost.

Key Participants

There are five key participants in the P3 process.

Town Manager's Office

The Town Manager's office (TM) is the gatekeeper for most P3 partnerships. A partnership can be initiated by a citizen, a private entity, a town meeting article, or the Town Manager's office. Typically, a P3 is initiated by a private entity, although there have been examples, such as the Ball's Hill land acquisition, where the Town Manager initiated the conversation with a private entity.

The Town Manager or his designee will determine if the proposed relationship meets the definition and criteria of a P3 and will decide if the proposal should be forwarded to the P3 Committee. The P3 Committee will evaluate the proposal and suggest guidelines and conditions which the Town Manager will then incorporate into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Once the draft MOU is completed, the Committee will review the MOU prior to forwarding it, together with its recommendations, to the Select Board for a determination whether the proposal should move forward.

The Study Committee suggests that the Town Manager should forward a P3 proposal to the committee if the total cost of the proposed project exceeds \$150,000 or the duration of the project is expected to exceed one year.

Town Staff Person

The staff person designated by the Town Manager will provide administrative support to the P3 Committee and will coordinate with town departments to provide input to the Committee. This person will be knowledgeable about P3 policies and criteria. The staff person will maintain a document file for all P3 projects, adding relevant documents to the Town website.

The Study Committee recognized that there is a cost to the town in staffing the P3 Committee. It is important that the community understand that P3's are not free – there is a cost to insuring that the outcome is a benefit to both the public and the private entity.

P3 Committee

The Committee will be responsible for evaluating the potential P3 and making a recommendation to the Select Board to approve or deny the public private partnership and monitoring ongoing P3s .

The P3 Committee is composed of five members who will serve three-year staggered terms.

- 1 representative from the most recent Comprehensive Long Range Plan Committee
- 1 representative from the Schools—K-8 or Regional School Committee
- 3 members-at-large appointed by the Select Board
- A liaison from the Finance Committee

All P3 Committee meetings are open to the public and minutes are taken in conformance with the state Open Meeting Law. The Committee reviews all new P3 proposals and may hold a public hearing to explain

the project and receive public comment. Information gathered from the review process is forwarded to the Town Manager for inclusion in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and is the basis for making a recommendation to the Select Board. The Committee may also review a list of gifts made to the Town and may also elect to review the impact expired P3s have had on current Town operations and finances.

The P3 Committee is also responsible for monitoring each active P3 project, making sure the project meets the milestones outlined in the MOU. The Committee also conducts an annual review of each ongoing P3 to ensure it conforms to the MOU and to consider any changes to the scope of work. Additional meetings could be scheduled as needed to consider questions or issues about existing P3 projects.

P3s in existence at the time of this report should be scheduled into the annual monitoring process. As part of this process, if no conforming MOU exists, one should be created.

The P3 Committee would report to the Select Board on the status of existing P3s and alert the Board to any problems that could require future action.

Private Partner

The Private Partner is typically an organization that can be a non-profit or a for-profit entity. The private partner can have its own board of directors and is not bound by public meeting requirements. The private partner may have a lease or some other type of legal agreement with the town.

Select Board

The Select Board is responsible for determining if a specific Public-Private Partnership should be created. They will receive a report and a copy of the Memorandum of Understanding developed by the Town Manager and the P3 Committee for each new partnership. They will then vote to approve or deny the partnership. The Select Board will also assist with transitioning of existing P3s into this new process.

Memorandum of Understanding

In its research, the Study Committee found that in many cases the details of the agreement between the public and private entities can be difficult to determine. It became clear that good practice requires that such agreements be made explicit and recorded carefully, to the benefit of all parties.

The Study Committee recommends strongly that in addition to any contract or lease with the Town, each P3 should be governed by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). MOUs should outline specific requirements that must be met by the private organization. To the greatest extent possible, MOUs should be written in language that is clear and understandable to a layman. MOUs should describe the nature of the project/partnership with regard to a number of key elements.

1. The MOU should clearly describe all costs and revenues to both the Town and the private entity. This should include: costs of the initial project, ongoing operating expense (including labor), any projected long term maintenance expenses, any required town services, any capital replacement costs, and any other burdens on Town resources. The MOU should further describe the anticipated sources of revenue—pri-

vate donations and taxpayer funds, including any Community Preservation Act grants. If taxpayer funds are needed, it may be appropriate for the MOU to require explicit Town Meeting approval of those funds.

2. The MOU should clearly set out the impact on the Town. This should include a statement of how the proposal aligns with town goals and needs, how it will affect other town activities, and how it will benefit the town character. This statement should include estimates of the number of residents, households, and businesses affected both by the project work and by the completed project. Any connection with the Town's Comprehensive Long Range Plan should be identified, and any conflict with that plan should be explicitly justified.
3. The project schedule should be described in the MOU. For larger (more expensive) projects and projects of longer duration, the MOU should set out measurable milestones and a timeframe for completion. Milestones should exist for both project goals (i.e. construction targets) and fundraising. The MOU should clearly describe contingency plans in case milestones are not met. These contingencies may include minor extensions (subject to continued oversight), renegotiation of the agreement, and termination of the partnership.
4. The MOU should commit the P3 to regular public review by the P3 committee. For an ongoing partnership, such review should be at least annual. Reviews of specific projects may be conducted on a cyclical basis (i.e. quarterly), at specific milestones, or as desired by the Committee. For example, the MOU might commit the P3 to quarterly review, to review at specified milestones (i.e. 25% and 75% design points), AND to review when such review seems necessary to the committee.
5. The items on this list are a minimum suggestion. Other requirements may be imposed by the P3 committee as it sees fit.

The Study Committee recognizes that P3s already in existence at the time of the adoption of this report may or may not already be governed by an MOU. It is envisioned that the above recommendations will eventually apply to all existing, as well as new P3s. Where P3 lease agreements and MOUs are already in place, the provisions therein would be included in a P3 MOU, which may – or may not – require enhancements to cover all the topics recommended above. It is not envisioned that every minor change to a lease or rental agreement will require a review by the P3 committee prior to approval.

School Connection

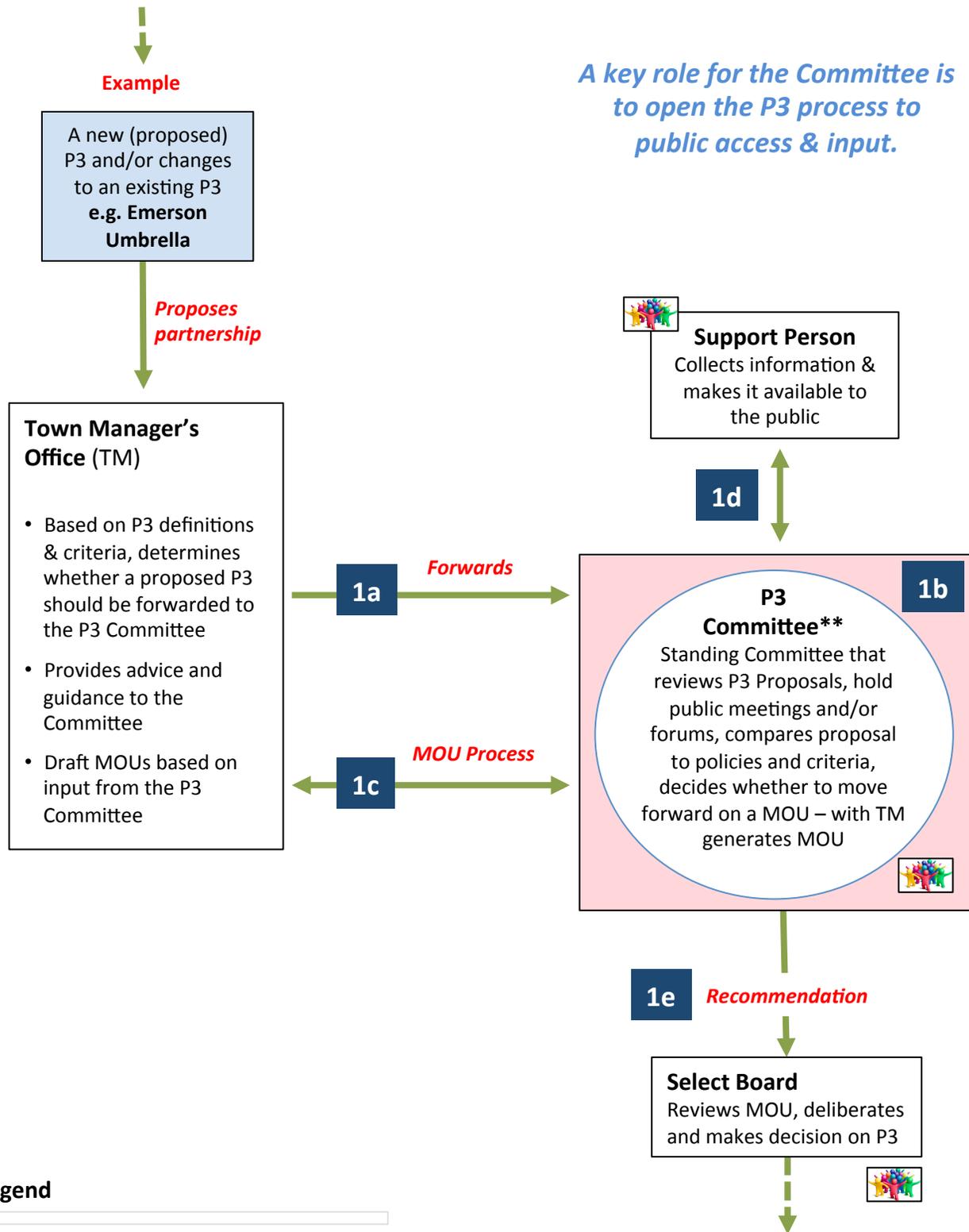
The P3 Study Committee has discussed and deliberated on the benefits of including Concord Schools—both K-8 Concord schools and the Concord-Carlisle Regional High School—in its recommended procedures. The Study Committee agreed that the Town of Concord and the Concord schools would benefit by having a common process for approval of new projects as well as monitoring of current and ongoing projects.

It is the consensus of the P3 Study Committee that the Concord Public Schools—K-8—and Concord-Carlisle Regional School District participate in a common process involving the Town P3 Committee for approval and monitoring of public-private partnerships.

Conclusion

The Study Committee devoted many hours considering a wide range of questions. Ultimately the committee determined that P3s in Concord should be addressed in a more consistent fashion, designed to increase the opportunities for public participation without becoming too burdensome on the generosity of the private partner. The Study Committee believes that the process and structures outlined in this report have the greatest likelihood of achieving the goals of consistency and openness while remaining cognizant that the operation of a private entity is not normally subject to public scrutiny. Just as the Town Governance Study Committee recommended creation of an Audit Committee, which includes town and school representatives, we hope this proposal will be adopted whenever a partnership is created between private organizations and the Town.

Chart 1 -- Evaluating P3s



A key role for the Committee is to open the P3 process to public access & input.

Legend

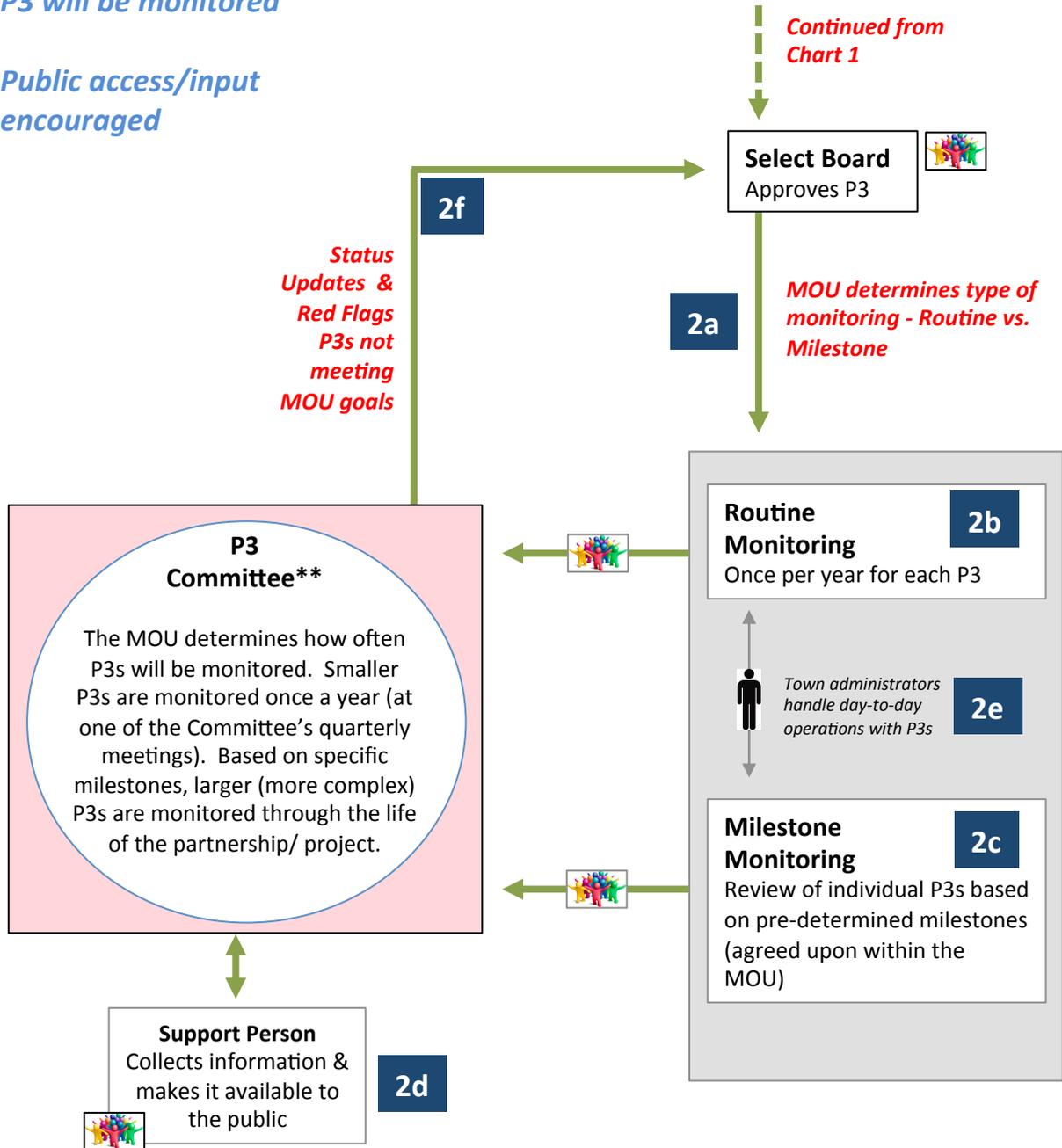
** Members Include 1 Long Term Strategic Plan member, 1 School Committee member, 3 residents, and 1 FinCom Liaison

Meetings open to the public and subject to Open Meeting Laws and/or information made available to the public

Chart 2 -- Monitoring P3s

The MOU determines when a P3 will be monitored

Public access/input encouraged



Legend

** Members Include 1 Long Term Strategic Plan member, 1 School Committee member, 3 residents, and 1 FinCom Liaison

 Meetings open to the public and subject to Open Meeting Laws and/or information made available to the public

Narrative for the Diagrams

Note that:

- Chart 1 shows the evaluation process for new and existing P3s.
- Chart 2 shows the process by which the Committee monitors existing P3s.

P3 Process – Evaluating P3s (Chart 1)

The following icon in **Chart 1** shows where the public has access to Committee meetings and P3 related documents.



As shown by **Chart 1 – 1a**, the Town Manager’s office starts the evaluation process by determining which proposals should be forwarded to the Committee. Smaller proposals that don’t meet P3 criteria, will remain within the purview of the Town Manager’s office.

If the Town Manager refers the proposal to the P3 Committee, the Committee will then review the proposal to determine whether it meets P3 policies and criteria and whether it is a good fit for the Town (Refer to **Chart 1 – 1b**). With the approval of the Committee to move the proposal forward, the Town Manager’s office drafts an MOU in collaboration with the Committee and negotiation with the private entity.

Chart 1-1c The MOU is drafted, based on the recommendations in the MOU section of the report

Chart 1-1d shows the role of the Support Person during the Evaluation process. For more information, please refer to the section detailing the Support Person’s responsibilities.

The Committee makes a recommendation to the Select Board on whether to accept or reject a P3 proposal. The decision to accept or reject a P3 resides with the Select Board. If the Committee recommends that the Select Board accept the P3 proposal, then it provides the MOU agreement between the Town and the private entity. (**Refer to Chart 1-1e**).

P3 Process – Monitoring P3s (Chart 2)

Please note that the following icon in **Chart 2** shows where the public has access to Committee meetings and P3 related documents.



With the Select Board's approval of a P3, the Committee assumes the role of overseeing the project. The MOU determines the frequency with which the P3 will be reviewed by the Committee. Note that in all cases it is anticipated that ongoing P3s will be reviewed at least annually (**Refer to Chart 2-2a**).

It should be noted that the day-to-day relationship with the partnership would remain with Town staff (Refer to **Chart 2-2e**). While not shown on Chart 2, the Town Manager's Office will alert the Committee of any P3 seeking to change its MOU. Such an action would trigger a new evaluation process, as outlined in **Chart 1**.

The Committee will review smaller (simpler) P3s annually during one of its quarterly review meetings (Refer to **Chart 2-2b, Routine Monitoring**).

For larger (more complex) P3s, the Committee is likely to review them several times over the life of the partnership (**Refer to Chart 2-2c, Milestone Monitoring**). Reviews are based on milestones identified by the MOU. For example, a construction related P3 might have several open meeting reviews when 25 % is completed and 50% is completed.

Chart 2-2d shows the role of the Support Person in the Monitoring process. For more information, please refer to the section detailing the Support Person's responsibilities.

During the monitoring process, the P3 Committee will provide the Select Board with a status update on the partnerships and will red flag any P3s that are not meeting the requirements outlined by the MOU and would thus require further action by the Board (Refer to **Chart 2-2f**).

Appendix 2 - Useful links

League of Women Voters "Best Practices" position paper:

<http://lww.org/content/strategies-best-practice>

League of Women Voters "Privatization Policy Debate"

<http://lww.org/content/privatization-public-policy-debate>

National Council for Public-Private Partnerships "7 Keys to Success"

<http://www.ncppp.org/ppp-basics/7-keys/>