

ADDRESS OTHER COMMUNITY ISSUES

6

Overview

Other issues for the Town to consider and address over the ten year planning period include:

- Community facilities, including schools,
- Transportation systems,
- Utilities,
- Private institutions,
- Telecommunications facilities, and
- Community spirit.

These facilities and resources support community character and influence the quality of life in a community.

Community Facilities



Transportation



Utilities



Community Spirit



Washington has adequate community facilities for the next ten years with one major exception – public works storage and maintenance facilities – and several minor needs to maintain Town services.

Address Community Facility Issues

Major Facility and Service Needs

Public works storage is a key issue. Even though a new public works facility was recently established on Blackville Road (Route 109), the former site on Titus Road is still needed for storage of equipment and materials. This complicates the department's operations and prevents reuse of the Titus Road site until this situation is resolved. A study is needed of different options, which should include site identification, cost of relocating to a new site, operational and opportunity costs of continued Public Works use of the Titus Road site, and the cost of a new site.

At Bryan Memorial Hall, it will likely be necessary to relocate the resident State Trooper's office to ensure adequate space for the Trooper and expansion potential for other municipal operations. The former fire station adjoining Bryan Memorial Hall may be an attractive option for the Town to consider. This move would free up space in Bryan Memorial Hall for other municipal activities and functions.

Ongoing Facility and Service Improvements

Planned improvements to the recreation facilities on the Primary School grounds will address current issues. Over the longer term, additional recreation fields are being sought and a long term plan for recreational facilities should be considered by the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Adequate Facilities and Services

Fire and emergency medical facilities and services appear to be adequate for community needs for the next ten years. Maintaining an adequate volunteer force will be a continuing issue.

Washington is a member of the Region 12 School District, which serves Washington, Roxbury, and Bridgewater. Based on projected enrollments, no major new educational facilities will be needed over the ten year planning period to serve Washington. However, there will likely be a need to renovate and upgrade the existing schools to meet building codes and educational objectives.

A future elementary school site may be needed if the District's elementary school population increases faster than currently anticipated by the State Department of Education. If regional school populations increase beyond current expectations, other options may include a consolidated regional elementary school. If determined necessary by the Region 12 Board of Education, the Town and Region should be prepared to participate in a search and evaluation of a potential future school and to support a public information program justifying the need. Similarly, if consolidation is considered, plans should be initiated for alternative use of the existing elementary school facility.

Maintain Town Roads

The road system in a community like Washington is an important component of its character and self image, as well as being functionally important to the day-to-day lives of community residents, visitors, and businesses.

The location and number of existing roads appear to be adequate for the foreseeable future. The current subdivision regulations and ordinances pertaining to construction of new roads are thorough and technically up-to-date.

Any road maintenance should be undertaken with a view towards maintaining the scenic character of the roadway and to minimizing impacts on natural habitats and wildlife to the extent possible. While it may make sense to straighten or flatten roads to enhance safety, this must be balanced with the impact on character. In no event should a road be made wider than is necessary, based on existing width or Subdivision Regulation standards, unless there is a compelling reason. Road maintenance planning should include consultation of Appendices E and F in the Natural Resources Inventory report addressing scenic roads.

The Town considers the condition of roadways when scheduling road improvements. However, the Town is aware of Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) Directive 34 which requires that municipalities account for the physical condition of all assets in their control (including roadways). As a result, an effective and efficient pavement management schedule will take on greater importance in managing the economic and physical conditions of roadways.

Washington has some roads that are not currently in public use and these roads can be a cost liability in the event that they need to be maintained or improved. The Board of Selectmen has appointed a committee to evaluate and propose procedures for abandoning such roads to relieve the Town of the financial responsibility for construction and maintenance, as recommended in the 1993 Plan of Development. This Plan also adopts that recommendation, with the additional recommendation that, before abandonment, the Town should evaluate whether any rights should be retained for community trails or greenways.



Dirt Roads

Washington has nearly 24 miles of dirt roads (about 26 percent of the Town-maintained road mileage). These roads are aesthetically pleasing to many people and contribute to the Town's rural character.

Water Supply

The water supply well in the Depot, previously contaminated by high salt levels, has been approved for use after salt levels dropped to meet State standards. No other water quality concerns have been identified.

Small stratified drift aquifers are located in the Depot area, along the Shepaug and Bantam Rivers in the northeast part of Town, and along Route 202. A bedrock aquifer extends along Route 202 from the New Milford boundary to the Litchfield boundary. Public drinking water supply wells of the Judea and New Preston Water Companies are located in the Depot and New Preston, and community system wells are at the Gunnery, Rumsey Hall, Devereux Glenholme, Wykeham Rise, Dodge Farm, Riverwoods Senior Housing, and at Bee Brook Crossing Condominiums.

Consider Possible Future Utility Needs

Most properties in Washington are served by private wells and septic systems.

Public water service is provided in three of the village areas of Washington – the Depot, the Green, and New Preston – by the Judea Water Company which also manages the New Preston Water Company. According to the company, adequate capacity exists to supply additional customers in all service areas.

Overall, the soil-based zoning in Washington and the Public Health Code have served Washington well and no significant widespread septic problems have been identified. However, potential problem areas could eventually develop in the future in the older and more densely developed areas of New Preston, the Depot, Marbledale, and the Green. Washington should consider the need for alternative sewage treatment capacity for these village areas. This may be necessary since adequate land area may not be available on some individual parcels to accommodate a new or repaired septic system.

It does not appear at this time that the potential for development in any of the village areas would require or justify the expense and administration associated with community sewage treatment facilities. However, the Town should consider a provisional plan for dealing with future constraints caused by septic management requirements and well as potential problems in the densely developed areas near the Shepaug (Depot area) and East Aspetuck Rivers (New Preston and Marbledale areas). Such a plan could include identification of sites, such as the Primary School fields in the Depot, that may be available for future development of community septic systems.

Continue Cooperation with Private Educational Institutions

Washington has long been home to a number of private educational institutions, and they have been an integral part of the community. The prosperity of these institutions and their relationship to the community at large should be part of an ongoing effort by the Town to maintain and improve its overall cultural and economic health. Plans for the growth and development of these institutions should be shared with the Town as early and fully as possible in order that they may be carefully considered in the interest of balancing their needs with the interests of the Town and its residents.

Continue to Address Telecommunications Issues

Today's demands for amenities such as wireless telephones, and the State's jurisdiction for location approval of most such facilities, requires that communities prepare for and participate in decisions on new telecommunications facilities.

Washington's Zoning Regulations include comprehensive standards for telecommunications facilities, which provide the community with ample control over facilities not subject to State jurisdiction. At the same time, the regulations provide a basis for the Town's participation in any State proceedings on telecommunications facilities. The Town was represented by the Zoning Commission in two recent tower applications.

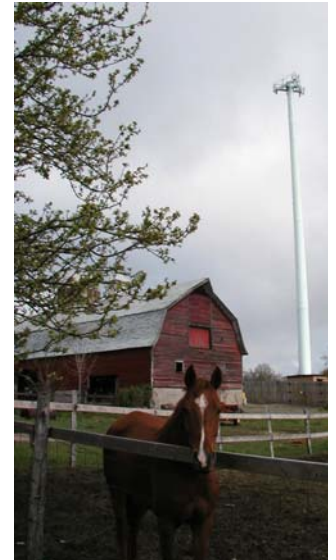
To address the growing interest and concern in tower siting, appropriate boards and commissions should review the recommendations developed by the Conservation Commission and consider developing a town-wide telecommunications facility plan. Such a plan could include an analysis of potential tower needs and identification of areas particularly sensitive to tower installations. This would be an effective means of positioning the Town to participate effectively in tower siting decisions.

Information that would be helpful to this process can be obtained from the Connecticut Siting Council, the state agency responsible for issuing approvals of tower sites for public utilities and Federal Communications Commission regulated companies. Washington Zoning Regulations should also be reviewed to assure that they provide the necessary protection and flexibility for Town reviews and approvals as applicable. The Town may want to designate the Zoning Commission as the official representative for Town participation in State proceedings to assure meaningful influence on decisions and avoid confusion and conflict.

Maintain and Enhance Community Spirit

Washington has a very strong sense of community pride and community spirit. This is evidenced, in part, by local residents and organizations making private donations and contributions to implement local projects. Civic and municipal events are important to maintaining a sense of community, and the Town should continue to support and promote such activities.

Perhaps the most valuable expression of community spirit is the effort put forth by many volunteers on boards, commissions, trusts and civic associations. Awards are issued by the local Grange, the emergency services associations, and commission volunteers acknowledge these contributions. Continued support for and publicity about these awards and other recognitions will help maintain this volunteer spirit.



Community spirit tends to be a reflection of the emotional or social connection that people feel to their community.

Summary

Community facilities, town roads, infrastructure issues (town, region, and state), and community spirit are all components of the goal of sustaining the character and quality of life in Washington.

Other Community Issues – Strategies Summary | Responsibilities*

A. Community Facilities	Primary	Others	
1. Address public works storage requirements	BOS	PW	
2. Evaluate needs and space availability for municipal uses of Bryan Memorial Town Hall and other municipal properties	BOS		
3. Plan for long-term recreation facility needs	PRC	BOS	BOE
4. Monitor elementary school capacity and anticipate future needs and uses of school facilities	BOE	BOS	

B. Town Roads	Primary	Others	
1. Evaluate abandonment or discontinuance and restricted use options for unused roads	BOS	PC	
2. Plan road maintenance to preserve scenic character of Town roads	BOS	PW	
3. Evaluate and as necessary revise the pavement management systems	BOS	PW	

C. Future Utility Needs	Primary	Others	
1. Monitor potential need for alternative sewage treatment capacity in village areas and anticipate need to plan for future septic treatment requirements	DOH	CC	ZC

D. Private Educational Institutions	Primary	Others	
1. Continue long-standing cooperation with private educational institutions, but balance their needs with the interests of the Town and its residents.	All		

E. Telecommunications	Primary	Others	
1. Consider developing town-wide telecommunications facility siting plan	BOS	ZC	CC
2. Identify appropriate municipal representation before state tower siting proceedings; monitor and reevaluate zoning regulations for guidance in such participation	BOS	ZC	CC

F. Community Spirit	Primary	Others	
1. Explore means of expanding dissemination of information on important Town issues through the Town web site, the Washington Times newsletter, and public workshops.	All		
2. Support and publicize volunteer awards	All		
3. Continue to support and nurture community spirit and civic pride	All		

*For key to abbreviations, see Page 7-4