

# TOWN OF LISBON MASTER PLAN

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## CHAPTER VI - COMMUNITIES FACILITIES, UTILITIES AND RECREATION

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## **A. INTRODUCTION**

Historically, rural communities in New Hampshire have had very few community services. In many cases, these services were limited to a Town Hall and a public school. However, as the population of New Hampshire increased, more services were added to meet the needs of the citizens. Today, communities are expected to provide police protection, fire protection, as well as highway crews, recreational facilities, and professional staff to manage the daily operations of Town government.

This section of the Master Plan identifies public and semi-public facilities that serve the residents and property owners of Lisbon. An important function of town government is to provide residents and property owners with a level of service that is proportionate with taxes and fees paid that meet the current needs of the populace. In Lisbon's case, these include public safety (police, fire and ambulance), public works (water, sewer, roads, solid waste disposal and cemetery maintenance), schools, recreation, cultural facilities, health and welfare services, and town government operations (selectmen, property maintenance, and assessment).

The degree to which these facilities are developed has a significant impact on the quality of life and general character of a community. This chapter of the Master Plan presents an inventory of such facilities and services, an assessment of the adequacy of the current level of service, and any plans or recommendations to expand, improve, or add to an existing facility or service.

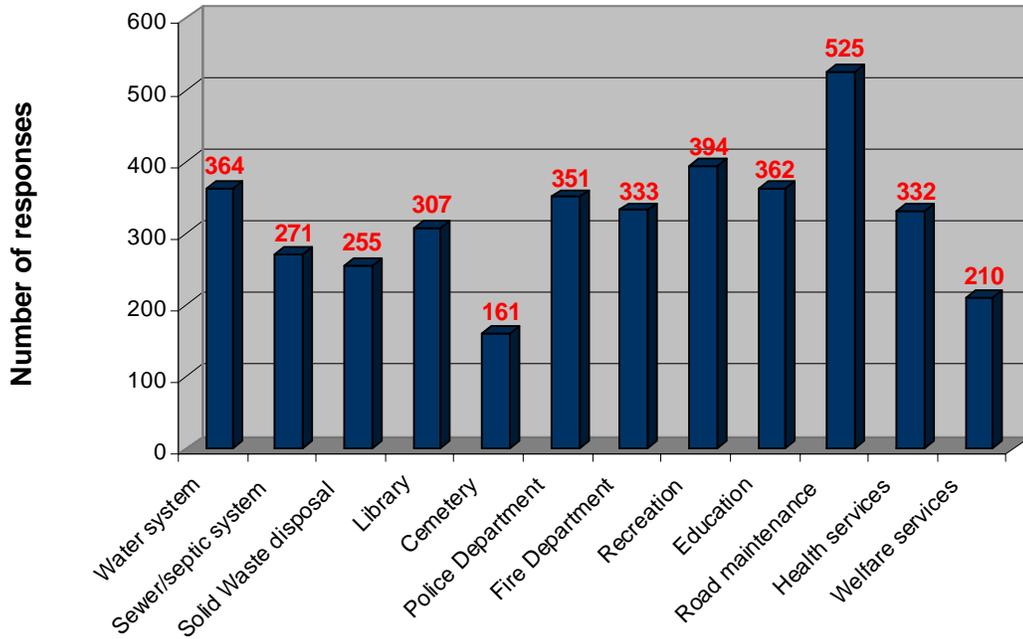
## **COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS**

A Master Plan Community Attitude Survey was distributed to all residential households and non-residential landowners in the Fall of 2003. Approximately 1,200 surveys were mailed out with 295 surveys returned, resulting in a 25% response rate.

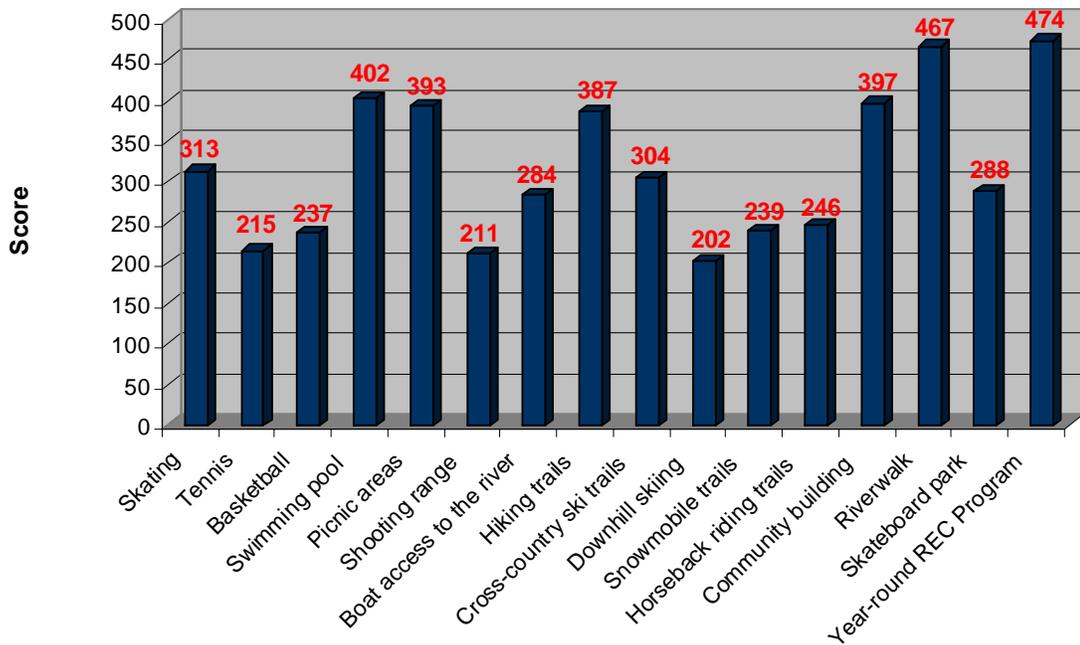
When asked to comment on what local issues are of major concerns to them, respondents identified property taxes as being the main issue. Local taxes are directly affected by the level of services offered by the community and without efficient and careful planning, the burden of facility improvements or construction could considerably increase the tax rate.

Graph 6.1 identifies the town services that respondents felt needed to be improved upon. Road maintenance comes first, followed by recreational services and the water system. These results could be used by town leaders to help them set priorities and establish a schedule of future improvements.

**Graph 6.1: Town Services that need to be Improved Upon**



**Figure 6.2: Types of Recreational Opportunities the Respondents would like to have Offered by the Town**



Graph 6.2 on the previous page presents the type of recreational opportunities that respondents would like the town of Lisbon to offer its residents. A year-round recreational program and a riverwalk along the Ammonoosuc River came first, followed by improvements to the public pool, a community building, and picnic areas. In the future, it will be important for town officials to keep these results in mind when planning improvements to town facilities as they give them an indication of the resident's needs and desires.

## **B. TOWN HALL/TOWN GOVERNMENT**

The administrative services of Lisbon are located in the Town Hall on School Street in the village area. The lower level has space for Police and Fire Departments. The first floor has a large auditorium style room and town offices. The second floor is currently finished storage space without heat and with minimal lighting.



This facility lacks proper ADA accessibility as the offices are located up from the street. The office space is adequate for the present but lacks sufficient conference/meeting space. There are no plans for relocating or expanding the office space at this time.

## **C. POLICE PROTECTION**

The mission of the Police Department is as follows:

“...to serve all, safeguard lives and property, protect the innocent against deception, the weak against oppression, the peaceful against violence and disorder, to respect the Constitutional rights of all persons and the preservation of Liberty, Equality and Justice with Honor, Loyalty, Integrity, Excellence and Compassion.”<sup>1</sup>

From 1997 to 2003, the Police Department has had a fairly constant increase until 2002 where it started decreasing. The year 2003 revealed to have the lowest number of calls of the past seven or so years, which can be seen below.

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<sup>1</sup>Lisbon Police Department website.

**Table 6.1: Summary of Police Activity, 1997-2003**

<b>Year</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
<b>Calls</b>	1,772	1,721	1,711	1,959	1,973	1,813	1,270

Source: Town Reports 1997 to 2003.

Police protection in Lisbon operates at full staff, employing a chief, a sergeant and seven patrolman/officers. The department is located in the lower level of the Town Hall. The office space is adequate but lacks meeting room space. When and or if the new fire station is built, the police space will be expanded into some of the former fire department space.

#### **D. FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES**

Fire protection is provided by a volunteer Fire Department of 20 members. The department is located on the lower level of Town Hall on School Street. The department continues to train in-house and out of house, with terrorist and WMD training at the top of the list.

In 2004, the Fire Department responded to 143 calls. Response time is a critical component of providing effective emergency services. Currently, the average response time is approximately 8 minutes for general Fire Department calls. As response time to emergency calls increases, the likelihood of increased property damage or loss of life increases. It should remain a priority of the Fire Department to keep their response time as low as possible.

The Fire Department is currently seeking to build a new facility on Main Street. The plan is to seek voter approval in 2006 for funding. The current location has several issues including poor space for equipment and vehicles, poor ventilation from exhaust fumes affecting areas throughout the town building, no parking for emergency responders personal vehicles.

The lack of volunteer membership due to the amount of hours required for training is also a problem for the Fire Department.

#### **E. DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS (DPW)**

The role of the Lisbon Department of Public Works is to maintain town roadways, as well as water and sewer infrastructure, and make improvements that are necessary to provide safe and convenient services. Road maintenance duties of the Department include road grading, paving,

snow removal, drainage improvements and other repairs as they are needed. The Department purchased equipment as approved at Town Meeting and performs most repair and maintenance in-house at the Town garage.

The Highway Department Garage is located on Ecology Drive close to the Transfer Station. Six full-time employees are responsible for all town roads, water and wastewater distribution systems. The Department maintains about 64 miles of road mostly gravel and some paved. The employees also assist in maintaining public buildings, vehicles and land owned by the Town. The DPW equipment includes two dump trucks, one 1-ton dump truck, one pickup truck, one grader, one loader, one utility can and one backhoe.

## **F. SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL**

The Town of Lisbon operates a transfer station/recycling facility on Ecology Drive that services the towns of Lisbon, Lyman and Landaff. Solid Waste not recycled at the Transfer Station is currently transported to the NCES facility in Bethlehem. Recycling is very successful in Lisbon with approximately 42% of the waste recycled. The facility accepts about 650 tons of MSW per year. Trash pickup is limited to private contractors, but most of them bring their trash to the facility themselves.

## **G. MUNICIPAL WATER AND SEWER**

Both water and sewer services serve approximately 380 users throughout the village area. The sewer treatment plant has a capacity of approximately 600,000 gallons a day, but currently handles approximately 200,000 gallons per day. The treatment plant was originally built in 1978 and was upgraded in 1992. No additional upgrades or expansions are anticipated at this time.

Water is provided by two gravel packed wells located off Bishop Road along the Ammonoosuc River. One well yields approximately 350 gallons a minute and the other 175 gallons per minute. Water is pumped from the wells to two storage tanks totaling 850,000 gallons and gravity feeds to the users from the tanks. There is no treatment facility for the water as none is necessary to meet current water quality standards. A 1.2 million line improvement project in the Highland Avenue area was completed in 2003. A chemical feed system is currently being proposed to address lead and copper compliance issues.

## **H. LIBRARY**

The Lisbon library is located on School Street in front of the Town Hall in the village area. The building was constructed in 1927, and has been used continuously as a library ever since. Staff consists of one full-time librarian. In 2003, the library had about 9,500 books and more than 9,700 circulated that year.



The library space is currently sufficient but ADA improvements are needed for the building to be in compliance. The library offers a Summer Reading Program once a week for 6 weeks and has story times sparsely scheduled in the winter.

## **I. RECREATION**

The Lisbon recreation program is seasonal and takes place only during the summer months. In the summer of 2003, the program was able to offer activities for youths (ages 6 to 12) with recreational opportunities including: field games, swimming, board games, arts & crafts, the Summer Reading Program at the Lisbon Public Library, and the use of the Lisbon Regional School facility for the gymnasium and a classroom for video and board games during days of inclement weather. Swimming lessons in the community pool are offered and operated by the Lions Club and partially funded by the town budget. The program employs a part-time director during the summer. From the survey results presented at the beginning of this chapter, there seems to be a need/desire for a year-round recreational program in Lisbon.

## **J. EDUCATION**

The Lisbon Regional School District is made up of the towns of Lisbon and Lyman and received tuition students from the towns of Landaff and Bath. Originally established in 1891, Lisbon Regional, a small K-12 school, opened its doors to a new middle and high school addition in 1993. The school offers all state required courses. In addition, K-8 students receive instruction in music, art, industrial arts and family/consumer science. Technology education is offered to grades 4-8; French & Spanish are the foreign languages.



Sixty-one staff members serve the needs of 410 students. The staff comprises a principal, an assistant principal, two guidance counselors and three special education teachers, among others. Eight and a half paraprofessionals provide assistance to the professional staff. Beyond this, the Supervisory Union provides a number of specialists for Lisbon Regional students including an occupational therapist, a speech pathologist, a school psychologist, a physical therapist and a Title 1 coordinator. A student assistance program is available to students through a grant. The school's sport programs includes soccer, golf and basketball, all for both boys and girls. Co-ed skiing, boys baseball and girls softball are also offered.

School needs, more than any other community facility, are dictated by the future population trends of a community. As the numbers of school-aged children rise and fall, staffing, facility and operating projections need to be made and budgeted for. Because many of these expenses, such as an addition to a building, can take years to plan and finish, enrollment projections are vital to ensuring that adequate budgeting and planning are done. The following are the school enrollment figures for the past three years (2003 through 2005).

**Table 6.2: School Enrollment Figures, 2001-2002, 2002-2003 & 2003-2004**

Year	K & Elementary	Middle	High
2001-2002	163	121	123
2002-2003	171	114	144
2003-2004	165	117	151

Source: Lisbon Regional website

In 1993, the new junior and high school addition was built and today space is limited. There are no plans for any building expansion and tuition students may have to be limited to meet future space needs.

## **K. CEMETERY**

There are two cemeteries in Lisbon, the Salmon Hole is no longer available and the other, Grove Hill Cemetery, has space available for the next 20 years or more.

## **L. HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES**

Littleton Regional Hospital operated the Lisbon Family Health Center. The facility is open 2 1/2 days per week mostly by appointment only. A doctor is on staff one day a week and a PA is on

staff one day per week. Ambulance service to Lisbon is provided by a contract with a private ambulance service located in Littleton, Ross Ambulance.

### **M. ELDERLY SERVICES**

The Lisbon Inn is an independent living facility with 15 apartment style units for elderly persons able to live independently. The units each have their own kitchen and baths. There is no full time staff at the facility and a contract manager manages the property.



### **N. STRATEGIES TO MEET COMMUNITY FACILITY NEEDS**

The following is an inventory of alternative financing sources and strategies Lisbon could employ to help pay for needed staff, equipment, and facilities in various Departments. These suggestions should be reviewed by Department Heads and the Selectmen as ways to meet the goals and recommendations outlined in this Chapter.

**Impact Fees:** As Lisbon continues to grow, it is recommended that the community review the feasibility of instituting an Impact Fee Ordinance. Such an ordinance would require a study of growth trends and impacts on municipal facilities. Based on a series of calculations, impact fees could be established for road improvements, schools, library, fire and police service, as well as recreation. Impact fees are charged to all new residential and commercial development, with some exceptions. Impact fees can range from a few hundred to several thousand dollars per dwelling or commercial unit.

**User Fees:** During the 1980s, the concept of user fees for the funding of numerous public facilities and services were widely adopted throughout the nation. To help finance community facilities and programs, several communities in New Hampshire have adopted user fees. Examples of user fees in New Hampshire communities include water district charges and transfer station fees.

**License and Permit Fees:** Fees, such as building permits, zoning applications, and planning board subdivision and site plan fees are all examples of permit fees. Such fees are highly equitable and are successful for minimizing the burden of taxpayers for specific programs, such as building code enforcement.

**Grants-in-aid:** New Hampshire communities are eligible for various grants in aid for financing school construction and improvements. Examples include:

- Foundation Aid to help schools provide minimum education
- Building Aid
- Area Vocational School Tuition and Transportation Aid
- Handicap Education Aid
- Sweepstakes Aid
- Nutrition Grants
- Driver Education

**Community Development Block Grant:** Depending on the location, social value, and functional use of a community facility, Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) can be a good source of financing. CDBG funds are allocated from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development and, in New Hampshire, are administered by the Community Development Finance Authority (CDFA). Each year, communities are invited to submit grant applications for funding of projects.

**Capital Reserve Funds:** Capital reserve funds are similar to savings accounts, as they allow the Town to contribute money to a specific account for the purpose of purchasing or defraying the cost of significant items such as school additions, highway equipment, fire trucks, and municipal buildings and facilities.

**Sale of Surplus Town Property and Land:** Sale of town owned property is another viable option for raising funds to pay for a new community facility. Parcels that should be liquidated include those that have no significant conservation or cultural value, or limited potential for future community facilities.

**Bonds:** Bonding is a popular method of raising revenue to construct or purchase town equipment and facilities. Though viable, the Town should avoid encumbering too much debt, as it can limit the ability of the Town to provide for future, unidentified needs.

**Private Foundations/Trusts:** For years, communities have been the beneficiaries of trusts and donations created by private citizens and foundations. The Town should actively solicit such

resources for assistance regarding the development or expansion of recreational facilities and programs.

**Capital Improvement Program:** To better anticipate the Town's future and existing needs, and to minimize fluctuations in the tax rate, the Town should create a Capital Improvement Program (CIP). This is a six-year plan created by the Planning Board or CIP committee that would outline all major purchases for every town department and entity, including the school department and water precinct. The plan would be amended annually and would serve as a guide for the Selectmen and Budget Committee during the budget process.

## **SUMMARY**

The provision of community services and facilities is one of the primary functions of government. As the population and demographics of Lisbon grow and change over time, it is important that the community make adjustments in its delivery of services to meet those changes.

Efficient community facilities and services that meet the needs of the public are important for maintaining and improving the quality of life in Lisbon. It is evident that some department in Lisbon is in need of additional staff, new or expanded facilities, or equipment upgrades. Although many of these requests have already been planned for, Lisbon needs to be proactive in its financing and planning to ensure that the community services remain at their current level of quality and that the residents are not burdened with large tax increases to pay for such services all at once. Lisbon is a desirable community to live in because of its small-town feel and numerous amenities.