



## WINCHESTER MASTER PLAN 2030

# PHASE I EXISTING CONDITIONS

## REPORT

This report prepared for the Master Plan Steering Committee (MPSC) details the findings of Phase I of the Winchester Master Plan 2030 Existing Conditions analysis for the Town of Winchester, Massachusetts.

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# Chapter 7: Facilities and Services

## Introduction

The Public Facilities and Services element of the Master Plan serves as an inventory of existing municipal property that has been improved to serve a public purpose or a municipal service such as provision of sewer, water, or other public utilities. This element should help guide future decisions for improvements to—or expansions of—public facilities and services to meet the needs of the Town’s population today and into the future.

The way services are delivered—and facilities adapted—depends heavily on future changes to population, employment, and the built environment. They must also adapt to meet the expectations of the people who live and work in Winchester. Over time, new facilities and services may be needed to accommodate a changing population which may impact the way services are delivered, the facilities that house them, and the staff that administers them. These changes will require forward-thinking capital planning, a commitment to adequately invest in routine maintenance, and proper funding for capital and operation costs.

### Trends and Challenges

- School enrollment continues to increase in Winchester, placing added stress on the Town’s budget and quickly filling space in schools that recently underwent major expansions and rebuilds.
- The Town is actively preparing for two elementary school capital projects for the Lynch and Muraco schools.
- The Town has undertaken several large-scale capital building projects in recent years while operational and staff budgets have remained relatively unchanged.
- The Department of Public Works (DPW) provides a wide array of services and is responsible for the maintenance of all town and school facilities. Adequately maintaining town and school facilities is challenging but critical to extending their life.
- The Town has invested money in flood mitigation, energy services, and various forms of recycling.
- Police, Fire, and EMS staff are well-trained and equipped to provide emergency response services to Winchester’s residents, businesses, and visitors. However, challenges do exist with staff retention, succession planning, and dispatch services.

## Inventory of Existing Conditions

The Town of Winchester, officially incorporated in 1850, operates under a town form of government providing for a Representative Town Meeting comprised of 192 representatives divided between eight precincts. Each precinct is represented by twenty-four Town Meeting members elected to three-year terms. Elections are set so one-third of members’ terms expire every year. Town Meeting typically occurs twice a year. Spring Town Meeting is held in the first half of year and primarily addresses financial matters.

Fall Town Meeting is held during the last four months of the year and deals primarily with non-fiscal matters.

The Town is governed by a five-member Select Board that meets weekly with a Town Manager who oversees day-to-day operations. The Town manages facilities and administers services for its population through 21 different departments.<sup>152</sup> These include:

- Assessors Department
- Building Department
- Comptroller
- Conservation Department
- Council on Aging
- Engineering
- Fire Department
- Health Department
- Human Resource Department
- Information Technology
- Library
- Planning Department
- Police Department
- Public Works
- Recreation Department
- Retirement
- School Department
- Town Clerk
- Town Manager
- Treasurer/Collector
- Veterans

In addition to the various municipal departments, Winchester has a variety of boards and committees working on a wide range of efforts in town. While the Town's executive branch is made up of an elected Select Board, there are six additional elected boards in town which include<sup>153</sup>:

- Board of Assessors
- Board of Health
- Board of Library Trustees
- Planning Board
- School Committee
- Housing Authority

The remainder of boards, committees, and commissions are comprised of volunteers who are appointed to oversee a variety of tasks in Winchester. These include<sup>154</sup>:

- Audit Advisory Committee
- Archives Advisory Committee
- Board of Appeals
- Cable Advisory Committee
- Capital Planning Committee
- Climate Action Advisory Committee
- Field Management Committee
- Finance Committee
- Greenway Initiative Committee
- Heritage District Commission
- Historical Commission
- Open Space & Recreation Committee

<sup>152</sup> Winchester Town Website. <https://www.winchester.us/129/Departments>

<sup>153</sup> Winchester Town Website. <https://www.winchester.us/216/Elected-Boards>

<sup>154</sup> Winchester Town Website. <https://www.winchester.us/251/Appointed-Boards>

- Commissioners of Trust Funds
- Committee on Intergovernmental Regulations
- Committee on Names
- Committee on Rules
- Community Access & Media, Inc.
- Conservation Commission
- Constable
- Council on Aging
- Cultural Council
- Design Review Committee
- Disability Access Commission
- Education Facilities Planning & Building
- Energy Management Committee
- Permanent Street Tree Committee
- Personnel Board
- Registrars of Voters
- Retirement Board
- Senior Citizen Tax Committee
- Town Forest Committee
- Town Manager Advisory Recycling Committee
- Town Retiree Health Insurance Advisory Committee
- Traffic Review Committee
- Wildwood Cemetery Advisory Committee
- Wright-Locke Farm Conservancy

### **WINCHESTER COMMUNITY ACCESS AND MEDIA**

WinCAM serves as the Town's "electronic forum for the free exchange of information and ideas" and to showcase the interests and concerns of the community. WinCAM provides television coverage of most board and committee meetings, Town Meeting, and town events.

## TOWN FACILITIES

The Town of Winchester has a total of 1,070,286 square feet of municipal building space, with 224,633 square feet for town facilities and 845,653 square feet for school facilities.<sup>155</sup>

**Table X: Town of Winchester Facilities Overview<sup>156</sup>**

Facility	Use & Age	Size (Square Feet)
Auxiliary Pumping Station	Utility – 120 Years	3,072
Carriage House	Academic – 111 Years	7,500
DPW Barn	Storage – 118 Years	5,540
DPW Main Building	Office – 40 Years	15,225
DPW Maintenance Shop	Garage – 68 Years	7,860
DPW Other Buildings	Garage – 68 Years	30,318
Mystic School (Parks & Rec)	Academic – 68 Years	26,500
Salt Storage Shed	Grounds/Site – 3 Years	3,630
Sanborn House	Academic – 118 Years	6,300
Town Hall	Business – 131 Years	36,200
Water Treatment Plant	Utilities – 22 Years	13,000
Wedgemere Train Station	Transportation – 62 Years	1,250
West Side Fire Station	Public Safety – 44 Years	3,264
Winchester Center Train Station	Transportation – 68 Years	3,888
Winchester Fire Department	Public Safety – 104 Years	18,560
Winchester Police Station	Public Safety – 104 Years	17,000
Winchester Public Library	Library – 88 Years	25,526
<b>TOTAL BUILT SPACE:</b>		<b>224,633</b>

**Table X: Town of Winchester School Facilities Overview<sup>157</sup>**

Facility	Use & Age	Size (Square Feet)
Ambrose Elementary School	Elementary – 13 Years	65,265
High School	Academic – 1 Year	288,840
Lincoln Elementary School	Elementary – 115 Years	71,920
Lynch Elementary School	Elementary – 58 Years	82,270
McCall Middle School	Academic – 86 Years	172,426
Muraco Elementary School	Elementary – 51 Years	54,700
Parkhurst Administration Building	Academic – 70 Years	32,632
Vinson-Owen Elementary School	Elementary – 5 Years	77,600
<b>TOTAL BUILT SPACE:</b>		<b>845,653</b>

<sup>155</sup> VFA Report from Facilities Department, Town of Winchester, 2018.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

## TOWN OFFICES

Built in 1887, Winchester's Town Hall is located on Mount Vernon Street in Winchester Center. The two-and-a-half-story building is one of the most prominent buildings in Winchester and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Most town departments dealing with administrative, finance, and permitting functions operate out of Town Hall. Departments like DPW, Schools, Library, Police and Fire, Recreation, and the Council on Aging operate out of separate buildings located elsewhere in Winchester.

### *IT Department*

Winchester employs a full-time IT Department to manage the Town's main computer hardware and software systems. IT provides direct technology support to all departments and town employees and supports connectivity between town and school buildings.

## SCHOOL FACILITIES

The Winchester public school system is one of the defining public services the Town offers to residents and is one of the primary drivers of recent demographic, land use, housing, and budgetary shifts. The school district is consistently ranked as one of the top school districts in Massachusetts and across the United States.



*Winchester Town Hall. RKG, 2018.*

*The school district's reputation has created a situation where demographic changes driven by the turnover in the single-family housing stock and recent tear down/rebuilds have led to an increase in enrollment.*

Between the 2006-07 and 2017-18 school years, enrollment increased by 790 students or 20.4 percent.<sup>158</sup> This took place during a time period when Massachusetts saw a 1.5 percent decrease in overall school enrollment, showing the strength and draw of Winchester's schools. According to the Town's Fiscal Year 2018 budget the Town employed 586.5 FTE employees for all school related services. The Fiscal Year 2019 budget request sought to increase that figure to 604.8 FTE employees.<sup>159</sup>

The school district is comprised of five elementary schools that serve pre-kindergarten through fifth grade<sup>160</sup>, one middle school serving grades six through eight, and one high school serving grades nine through twelve. Over the last fifteen years, several school buildings have gone through rebuilds or substantial retrofits to accommodate the growing enrollment figures. The Ambrose and the Vinson-Owen elementary schools were recently upgraded, including the addition of modular classrooms at Ambrose in 2009. The Town reopened the High School in 2017 after a \$120 million renovation project. The McCall Middle School Phase I renovations were just completed with anticipated Phase II renovations to be

<sup>158</sup> Winchester Public Schools Master Plan, 2017. MA DOE, 2018.

<sup>159</sup> Town of Winchester Town Manager's Financial Plan, Fiscal 2019.

<sup>160</sup> Only Lynch and Vinson-Owen offer pre-k classes.

completed by 2020. The only two schools that have not undergone substantial renovations are the Muraco and Lynch elementary schools.

**Table X: Town of Winchester Public School Breakdown<sup>161</sup>**

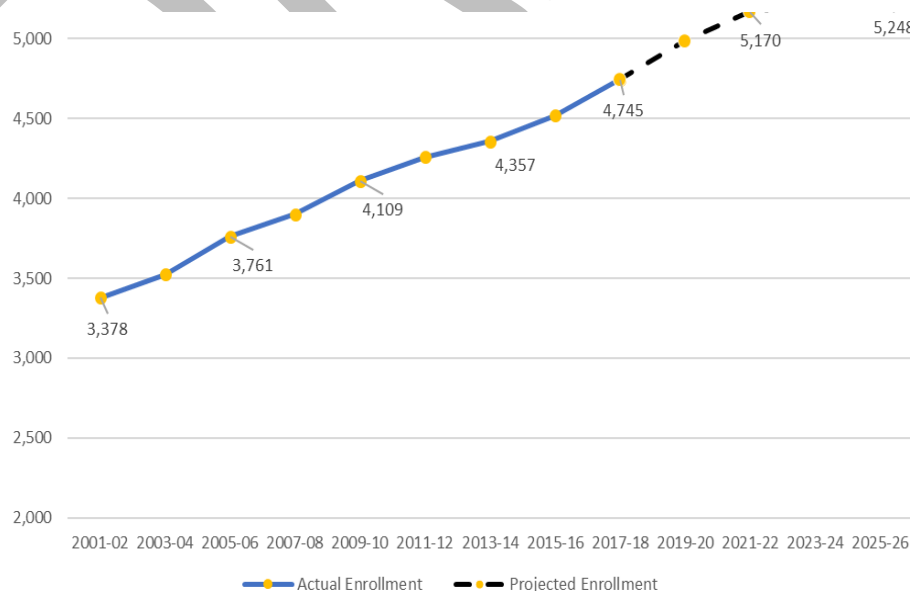
Facility	Grades	Year Built/ Renovated	Students (2017-18)	Student/ Teacher Ratio
Ambrose Elementary School	K-5	2005	421	11.5 to 1
High School	9-12	2017	1,351	14.9 to 1
Lincoln Elementary School	K-5	1904	403	12.4 to 1
Lynch Elementary School	PK-5	1960	540	11.3 to 1
McCall Middle School	6-8	1932 <sup>162</sup>	1,111	13.3 to 1
Muraco Elementary School	K-5	1967	381	11.1 to 1
Vinson-Owen Elementary School	PK-5	2013	455	13.0 to 1

### Enrollment Trends

As enrollment grew, the Town approved and completed many school facility upgrades, but some schools continue to be at or over capacity. To better understand how demographic and development changes may impact school capacity, the Town completed a *Facilities Master Plan* for Winchester Public Schools in July 2017. The master plan developed a set of enrollment projections out to the year 2025 based on changing demographics and the impact of future development proposals, including several 40B housing proposals.

**The master plan projects that enrollment will reach a high of 5,248 students over the next eight years, which is an 11 percent increase.**

**Graph X: Winchester Public Schools: Enrollment Trends<sup>163</sup>**



<sup>161</sup> MA DOE, 2018.

<sup>162</sup> Renovations are nearing completion on a portion of the McCall Middle School.

<sup>163</sup> Winchester Public Schools Master Plan, 2017. MA DOE, 2018.

To address current capacity issues and the projected enrollment growth, the *Facilities Master Plan* recommended several goals to be addressed within a five-year and ten-year time period. These include:

- **Elementary Schools:**

- The Town should reconstruct the Lynch Elementary School on a schedule to open in September 2020. Costs for this project are estimated to be as high as \$50 million, with the Town's share coming in around \$30 million. The application the Town submitted to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) was not successful.
- The Town should reconstruct the Muraco Elementary School on a schedule to open in September 2021. Costs for this project are estimated to be as high as \$45 million, with the Town's share coming in around \$27 million if MSBA funding is authorized.
- The Town should expand classroom space at Vinson-Owen Elementary in light of recent enrollment increases and anticipated impacts of future development in this section of town. Costs for this project are estimated to be as high as \$3.5 million.

- **McCall Middle School:**

- Interior classroom renovations were recently completed as part of a Phase I expansion project at the McCall Middle School. Town Meeting recently approved Phase II which will increase the number of classrooms by four. Construction is set to begin shortly on the project. This project is anticipated to cost upwards of \$5.6 million.



*Lincoln Elementary School. RKG, 2018.*

- **High School:**

- Although brand new, the High School is already experiencing capacity challenges and enrollment is likely to increase over time. The *Facilities Master Plan* recommends flexible schedules so classroom space can be used for different purposes, offer students opportunities to learn outside of school, and blend classroom and online learning.

In addition to classroom and school capacity improvements, the *Facilities Master Plan* also recommended spending \$3 million to renovate the Carriage House and move the school's central administration offices out of the Parkhurst School facility. The Parkhurst School has been deemed to be too small for swing space for future elementary school renovations. The Parkhurst School could be converted to an active elementary school at some point in the future should the Town determine it is needed.

***It is anticipated that these investments in the school's physical infrastructure will accommodate future enrollment growth and administrative service needs.***

## PUBLIC SAFETY

### Police Department

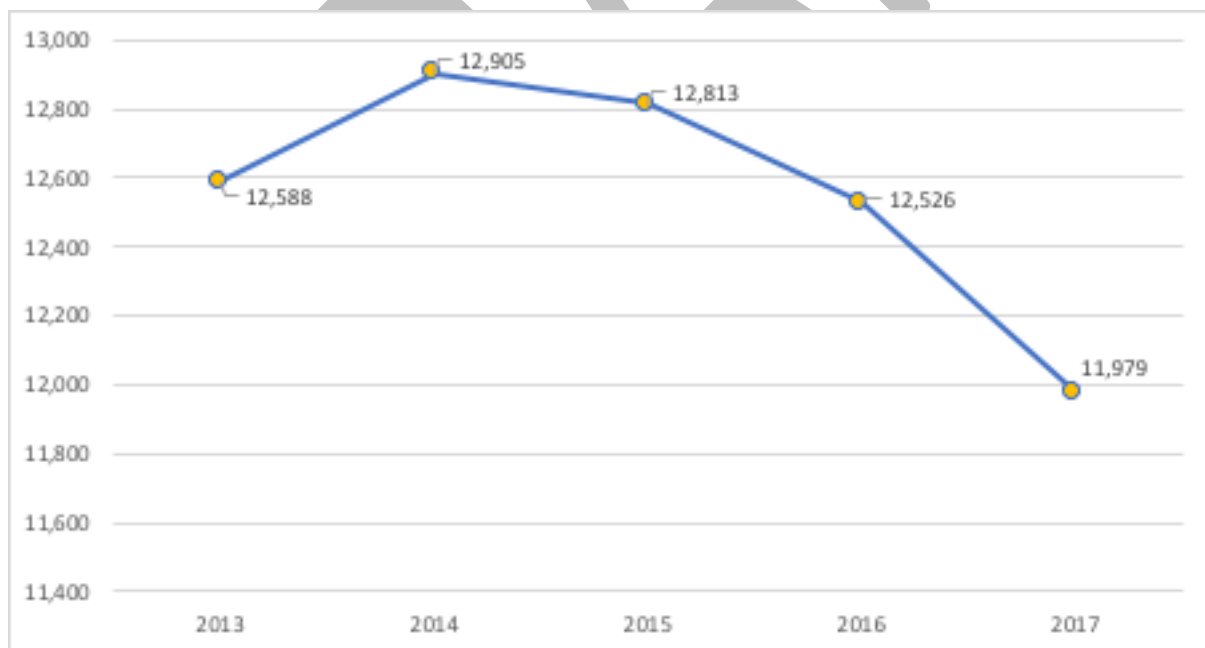
The Winchester Police Department's primary function is to enforce laws and protect people and property in the Town of Winchester. The Police Department responds to emergencies, ensures safe and efficient movement of vehicles and pedestrians, manages and trains crossing guards, handles animal control, enforces parking regulations, and serves as the primary dispatch point for all police, fire, and emergency service calls. The department currently has thirty-eight sworn police officers on staff, twenty-five part-time crossing guards, and five full-time and two part-time civilian dispatchers.

The Police Department operates out of the public safety building located on Mount Vernon Street in Winchester Center. This is the only police station in town and serves the department's needs for detention, personnel space, vehicle storage, property and records storage, and dispatch services. Winchester is unique in that the police dispatch handles all calls for police, fire, and emergency services using only a single dispatcher. Many other communities have double coverage, meaning two dispatch officers are staffing the phone system at the same time in case more than one call comes in simultaneously. Back up dispatching is provided by the shift commander (when available), and calls will be diverted to Lexington if Winchester's dispatch system is overwhelmed with calls.

### Calls

Call data provided the Winchester Police Department indicates that total call volume has declined since a high point in 2014.

**Graph X: Total Police Calls 2013-2017<sup>164</sup>**



*The department has seen a steady decline in total calls, but an uptick in calls related to mental health and substance abuse.*

<sup>164</sup> Winchester Police Department

The Police Department works closely with local community organizations on programming and training. This includes partnerships with the Coalition for Safer Community where the School Resource Officer works with parents and students on programs around drug abuse and safety. The department also offers Rape, Aggression, and Defense (RAD) training to middle school and high school students, and recently opened the training up to the broader Winchester community. The Town's School Resource Officer (SRO) is embedded within the High School, but also tries to keep up on issues that may be happening in the Middle School and assist where possible.

*Ideally, the Town would fund two SRO positions, one for the High School and one for the Middle School to ensure adequate assistance to the school district and its students.<sup>165</sup>*

The Police Department also has an on-going relationship with the Winchester Hospital where patrol officers are making routine stops at the hospital's emergency room twice a day. This is in response to an uptick in calls for assistance with patients in the emergency room who become disruptive or violent to the point where hospital security staff are not comfortable containing the individual. The Police Department meets with hospital staff once a month to continue working through potential changes or new policies that could reduce instances of police intervention.

#### *Fire Department*

The Winchester Fire Department provides fire response and medical services to members of the community. The Department is staffed by forty-four line-firefighters, with two additional firefighters anticipated to join through a federal grant the Town received. Twenty-eight of the forty-four firefighters are trained paramedics who also perform emergency response services for the town.



*Central Fire Station. RKG, 2018.*

The Fire Department adheres to a policy of hiring and/or training staff to be certified paramedics in order to perform Advanced Life Support services for Winchester and through mutual aid to surrounding towns.

The Fire Department operates out of two stations. The Central Station on Mount Vernon Street in Winchester Center is the primary fire station and houses one engine, one aerial ladder truck, and one ambulance. Although the building is over 100 years old, it went through a three-stage renovation five years ago. Most of the upgrades took place on the Police side of the building, but the fire station saw some minor renovations.

The second fire station, West Side Fire Station, houses one engine and three firefighters. The Department keeps one spare engine and one ambulance at this location for back up. During an interview with the Fire Chief, it was noted that the West Side station is in a state of disrepair. The Town had a feasibility study

<sup>165</sup> Interview with Police Chief, October 30, 2018.

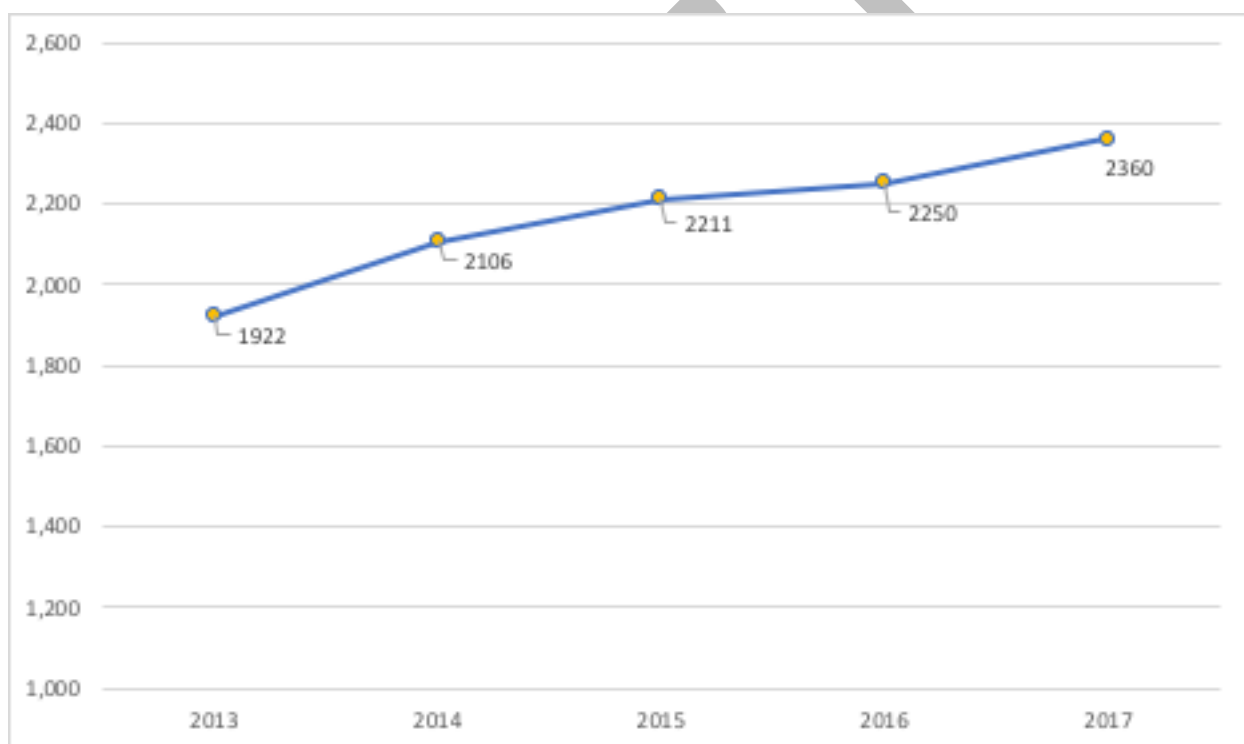
completed that determined the building should be replaced entirely. Preliminary costs for that project are estimated at \$6 to \$8 million, and no funding has been identified for this project.<sup>166</sup>

### Calls

According to National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) data provided by the Winchester Fire Department, total call volume has increased by 23 percent over the five-year period from 2013 through 2017.

*The large majority of the call increase is from the uptick in EMS calls which grew 44 percent or 320 calls over the five-year period.*

Graph X: Total Fire/EMS Calls 2013-2017<sup>167</sup>



### Programs and Services

In addition to providing fire and emergency services, the Fire Department also participates in educational programming teaching fire safety at the elementary schools in Winchester. The Fire Department also assists in Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, and Evacuate (ALICE) training at the local schools. Winchester is a leader in regional trainings through their participation in the thirty-five town MetroFire Rescue Task Force Training for active shooter scenarios.

The Fire Department also maintains a close working relationship with the Winchester Hospital. Periodically, the Hospital puts on a lecture series for continuing education and training purposes that fire

<sup>166</sup> Interview with Fire Chief, October 4, 2018.

<sup>167</sup> Winchester Fire Department

fighters can take part in. The Hospital also serves as the pharmacy for the Fire Department when drugs or medical supplies run low.

## COMMUNITY FACILITIES

### *Winchester Public Library*

Built in 1931, the Winchester Public Library is located on Washington Street in Winchester Center in a two-and-a-half-story granite building. In 1966, an addition was put on the original library structure that included a children's room, reference room, workroom, expanded reading room, and increased storage capacity. Additional renovations to the full library were completed in 1996, which provided a complete reconfiguration and upgrade of the library's interior spaces and improvements to exterior finishes.<sup>168</sup> Today, the library spans 25,500 square feet with spaces for learning, reading, computers/technology, art displays, meetings, storage, and administrative offices.



*Winchester Public Library. RKG, 2018.*

### *Staffing, Visitation, and Circulation*

The Winchester Library is staffed by forty-three employees with twelve full-time staff and thirty-one part-time staff.<sup>169</sup> In 2017, the Library staff was assisted by eighty-six volunteers who donated nearly 2,500 hours of time helping the Library deliver services to the community.<sup>170</sup> Staff and volunteers assisted 258,700 visitors at the Library in 2017.

According to visitation data from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC), total annual visitations at the Winchester Library have been steadily declining. Since 2011, annual visitations to the Library are down about 12 percent.

Libraries around the Commonwealth are shifting their focus from traditional lending institutions to community facilities that not only circulate materials but serve as locations for gathering, learning, training, and community programs. Libraries have greatly expanded their general circulation offerings. In addition to books and periodicals, patrons can find non-print resources such as DVDs, music CDs, audiobooks, E-books, computer software, video games, cake pans, costumes, and more at local libraries. This concept, often called “The Library of Things”, is transforming the way libraries offer services. Many libraries have changed their interior layouts and introduced expansive security equipment and tracking systems for circulation and in-house usage.

*In Winchester, the Library has seen a dip in circulation numbers for books, periodicals, audio, and video lending; but items such as E-books, downloadable media, and miscellaneous items (museum passes, E-book readers, hotspots, etc.) are all increasing.*

<sup>168</sup> Winchester Public Library. <http://www.winpublib.org/about-the-library/history-and-architecture>

<sup>169</sup> Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC), 2017.

<sup>170</sup> Winchester Public Library, Annual Report, 2017.

**Table X: Winchester Library Statistics <sup>171</sup>**

Category	2011	2013	2015	2017
Library Visits	294,683	282,411	269,797	258,707
Total Circulation	612,402	584,282	560,041	516,345
Books and Periodical Circulation	354,641	343,218	336,717	316,884
Audio/Video Circulation	199,997	174,639	153,828	127,538
E-books/Downloadable Circulation	1,471	6,819	15,855	22,786
Miscellaneous Circulation	3,340	3,022	2,772	3,454

### Programming

In addition to print and electronic media, the Library also offers a series of programs for residents of all ages. The children's programming is very popular—consisting of core programs such as regular weekly story times and unique offerings like STEAM story time, family cooking club, special performances, and “Read to a Dog” to help boost children's reading confidence. With the addition of a new staff person focused on teens and programs, the Library will start new teen programming in late 2018/early 2019. The Library also offers adult programming, like the “Rush Out and Read” program where teens read to seniors, the international film series, and tech programming through “The Library Online” series that teaches adults how to use computer apps and programs. The Library also partners with the Jenks Center and the public schools to offer additional programming or to host events.

To understand and address the changing needs of the Library's users, staff intend to undertake a strategic plan in 2019. Library staff have indicated that the strategic plan will consider how the interior of the library is used, consider flexible space and new furniture to accommodate new programs, look for ways to accommodate a variety of meeting and study spaces, create a flexible teen-oriented space, and consider how shifting circulation trends are changing storage and security needs.

### Jenks Center

The Jenks Center serves as Winchester's community center and the base of operations for the Council on Aging (COA). In the 1970s, the Winchester Senior Trust took title to the land at 109 Skillings Road with the intent of creating a building to serve as a senior center. The building was completed in 1978 using funding from primarily James Jenks, Jr. and contributions from 800 others. A major \$2.8 million renovation was completed in 2016.

<sup>171</sup> Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC), 2017.

The Winchester Senior Trust, a 501(c)(3), owns and manages the Jenks Center building. An elected Board of Directors determines policies, raises funds, and serves Winchester's seniors. Day-to-day, the Jenks Center is overseen by a Director, who also serves as the COA Director. Winchester has a unique situation where the Winchester Senior Trust and the COA each have their own separate boards who meet and discuss funding, operations, and programming. The COA has state and local funding support, while the Trust primarily relies on donations.



Jenks Center. RKG, 2018.

*While both boards work together in a coordinated fashion, there is an effort underway to look at ways of combining boards into one group. The “Blue Print Plan” is a strategic planning effort aimed at creating a Jenks Center Board that would oversee the direction of the Center and services for aging in Winchester.*

#### Council on Aging

The Jenks Center and its Director also serve as the Town's Council on Aging (COA) agency. The COA identifies the needs of seniors and meets those needs through programs, services, education, and advocacy. The COA is staffed by a director, secretary, clerk, transportation coordinator, nurse, and a social worker/housing counselor. The COA provides a wide range of services for seniors over the age of fifty-five in Winchester.

Approximately two-thirds of the COA budget is dedicated to transportation services. Seniors can request rides for medical appointments or shopping trips. The COA also provides discounted cab vouchers (\$3 for local trips in Winchester), and subsidizes door-to-door trips for medical appointments through Boston Area Medical Transportation. The Winchester Mount Vernon House, a senior living facility, and Salter HealthCare, a rehabilitation and nursing center, supplement COA transportation services with their own services. The Mount Vernon House runs shopping trips to the mall and to Market Basket, while the Salter HealthCare provides rides to the Jenks Center for the Eating Together Program. The Town's Volunteer Rides program also provides transportation to destinations in Winchester (limited to two rides per week). These rides are all organized through the COA's part-time Transportation Coordinator. According to the Director, approximately 150 residents participate in the transportation program.<sup>172</sup>

The Council on Aging has a trained nurse and a geriatric social worker/housing counselor on staff to help seniors with medical questions, nutritional services, housing counseling, and other health services. An elder law attorney is available once a month for individual consultations with seniors.

#### Senior Programming

The Jenks Center is open Monday through Friday from 9AM until 4PM<sup>173</sup> and offers a wide array of programs for seniors. Programs fill the entirety of each weekday at the Center. Classes/programs range

<sup>172</sup> Interview with Phillip Beltz, October 4, 2018.

<sup>173</sup> Closing time varies depending on programs planned each day, but generally 4PM to 4:30PM.

from exercise and yoga, to card and board games, to dancing, to conversation time in multiple languages. The Eating Together program provides hot meals and socialization for seniors on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

Special programs are also available to seniors for a fee or a small donation. These include movie nights, educational seminars, day-long symposiums, and music/art/literary activities. The Jenks Center also organizes trips to museums, restaurants, tourist attractions, and overnight stays. Multi-generational programming continues to evolve through engagement with the Library and the public schools. The Jenks Center has a program with the McCall Middle School called Literary Lunch where students and seniors read the same book and share their perspectives over lunch. The High School just employed a part-time community services teacher which will hopefully lead to additional programming opportunities between students and seniors.

Jenks/COA staff also help seniors with housing needs and tax assistance. The Jenks Center has a three-volunteer Handy Person Program to help with tasks around homes.

Winchester has a Senior Citizen Community Reimbursement Program where seniors can volunteer at thirty-five different locations to work off a portion of the annual tax bill. Seniors over the age of sixty who are income eligible can volunteer to work 125 hours a year and write off up to \$1,000 of property taxes.

Finally, Winchester manages an endowment fund known as the Fletcher Fund which serves as a source of assistance for income-qualified residents who are in financial crisis. According to the COA Director, these requests are typically for capital projects such as a roof repair, hot water heater, car repair, etc.<sup>174</sup> Residents can request these funds through the COA Director or the COA Social Worker. The request then goes to the Select Board for approval.

### *Recreation Department*

Winchester's Recreation Department is located in the former Mystic School building at 263 Main Street. The full-time six-person staff is responsible for a broad base of leisure and recreational programs covering a variety of age groups in Winchester. The department also runs the community education program for preschool age students and after-school care for K-8 youth. The department also manages the Youth Center at McCall Middle School. The Recreation Department's annual budget is administered as an enterprise fund, meaning user fees are the primary generator of revenue each year.

The Recreation Department offers a wide range of recreation and education programs ranging from youth and adult sports leagues, to art, music, and dance programs, to education and training programs. The Recreation Department also runs Winchester's preschool program and before- and after-school care.<sup>175</sup>

### *Veteran's Services*

Veteran's Services is located in Town Hall on Mount Vernon Street. This service assists Winchester veterans with obtaining payments they are permitted to receive under State and Federal programs. Currently, the Building Commissioner in Winchester also serves as the Town's Veterans Agent. It was noted in the *Fiscal Year 2019 Town Manager's Financial Plan* that 75 percent of the payments made to veterans are reimbursed to the Town, and annual payments to veterans have declined.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Interview with Phillip Beltz, October 4, 2018.

<sup>175</sup> More details on recreation programming included in the Open Space and Recreation Chapter.

<sup>176</sup> FY19 Town Manager's Financial Plan.

## TOWN INFRASTRUCTURE AND UTILITIES

### *Department of Public Works*

Winchester's Department of Public Works (DPW) is responsible for maintaining and improving public health and safety for Winchester residents through the maintenance, repair, and improvement of town infrastructure. The DPW handles all municipal and school facilities, streets and sidewalks, parks, water and sewer systems, fleet maintenance, refuse disposal, cemeteries, and snow and ice removal. The department is staffed by sixty-two full- and part-time employees, which includes twenty-five school custodial staff.<sup>177</sup> To manage the infrastructure and buildings in town, DPW is divided up into the following sub-programs:

- **Administration** – responsible for developing and monitoring departmental operating and capital budgets as well as the Town's energy budget. This includes payroll, bid documents, and contract administration.
- **Maintenance** – responsible for maintaining the Town's roads, sidewalks, municipal and school grounds, and parks.
- **Buildings** – responsible for maintaining and repairing all school and municipal buildings, and for custodial services at all school and municipal buildings.
- **Garage** – responsible for maintaining and repairing the Town's 120 vehicles and equipment pieces. The garage staff is also responsible for maintaining the mechanical equipment at the Transfer Station.
- **Transfer Station** – responsible for providing a way to dispose of trash and recycle items. This also includes supervision of the swap shop, clothing and book collection, and managing the yard waste and composting areas.
- **Cemetery** – responsible for maintaining Wildwood Cemetery and advises the Select Board on the operation and development of the facility.
- **Snow and Ice** – responsible for ensuring roads and sidewalks are safe for traveling during snow and ice events.

### *Roadway, Sidewalk, and Park Maintenance*

This sub-program of DPW is responsible for maintaining Winchester's ninety-eight miles of streets, all municipal and school grounds, and all sidewalk and roadway repair and resurfacing. This sub-program also oversees all engineering consultants and has been instrumental in implementing the multi-phase flood mitigation program in Winchester Center. DPW is also responsible for the maintenance and snow removal at both commuter rail stations, as well as handling parking permits in each of the town-owned lots.

On the transportation side, DPW continues to resurface roads and conduct routine road maintenance. Recently the Town has focused on improving streets for all users through Complete Streets retrofits. These have included traffic calming, sidewalks, and installing twenty-seven new ADA compliant ramps on roads that have been recently resurfaced.

*Discussions with DPW staff highlighted on-going challenges with funding and a desire to begin fixing sidewalks and lighting in Winchester Center. These sidewalks have not been upgraded since 1983.<sup>178</sup> Field maintenance and upgrades are also a challenge, as heavy*

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Interview with DPW Managers, October 4, 2018.

*utilization wears down playing surfaces. Taking fields out of rotation for repair/maintenance is challenging.*

Over the past several decades, Winchester experienced several substantial flood events due to the routing of the Aberjona River from Woburn to the Upper Mystic Lake. Since the mid-1990s, DPW has been responsible for project oversight and implementation on all flood mitigation projects to try and relieve major flooding issues in Winchester Center and surrounding neighborhoods.

*The Winchester Flood Mitigation Program was approved as a series of sixteen projects to be constructed within the town to fix bridges, culverts, water channels, and dams to greatly curtail flood issues. In the end, thirteen flood projects were undertaken between 2002 and 2017 (three of the original sixteen were eliminated).<sup>179</sup>*

#### Buildings & Facilities

The DPW is responsible for the maintenance and repair of all municipal and school buildings through their buildings sub-program. The Facilities Manager is responsible for developing an annual five-year capital request update that includes prioritization of funding for short-term maintenance needs of facilities. Several years ago, the Town hired a consultant to complete a full building inventory of every municipal facility including building age, condition, replacement value, and replacement schedule. The Facilities Manager uses this program to track maintenance and replacement needs over time and make annual budget requests to the Town's Capital Planning Committee. The Town is also working with DPW to generate a ten-year capital plan for longer-term capital and maintenance funding requests.

Most of the routine maintenance of facilities is taken care of by in-house staff. Larger projects outside the expertise or capacity of staff are contracted out, as are routine maintenance like boiler inspections, HVAC, elevators, fire testing, and sprinkler testing.

#### Water and Sewer

The Water and Sewer Department, while organized under Winchester's DPW, is a separate entity funded through an enterprise fund. This division of DPW is responsible for maintaining and improving water storage, treatment, and distribution systems as well as the sewer collection system. Water is partially provided by the North, Middle, and South Reservoirs in Winchester, as well as a treatment center off South Border Road. The Town has an agreement with the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) that excess water in Spot Pond can be pumped into the Town's reservoirs for Winchester users.



*Winchester Reservoir. RKG, 2018.*

<sup>179</sup> Town of Winchester. <https://www.winchester.us/159/Flood-Mitigation-Program>

***Sewer coverage is excellent in Winchester with very few homes still on septic systems.***

The Town is responsible for the maintenance and improvement of eight pumping stations and the sewer collection system. Discussions with DPW staff indicated that the Town does not have any capacity issues with either the water or sewer system, and additional development could be accommodated over time.

***The only issue noted with the sewer system is the occasional overflow during heavy rain events. Since so much rainwater and runoff drains into Winchester's waterways and stormwater system, the sewers get overwhelmed and trigger a sanitary sewer overflow (SSO) near the Upper Mystic Lake. This means some untreated sewage is discharged into the environment prior to reaching a treatment plant.***

#### Transfer Station

Located off Swanton Street in Winchester, the Town's Transfer Station accepts refuse from residents, commercial haulers, local businesses, and landscapers. There are four components to the operation at the station: operating the refuse collection building and hauling the refuse to a station in Haverhill; recycling waste items; and operating the swap shop and clothing and book collection items; and managing the yard waste and composting areas. DPW staff provides numerous opportunities for residents to separate and discard various forms of household waste which includes:

- Trash and Refuse
- Recycled Materials
- Food Waste
- Items for Swap Shop (furniture, clothes, books, used goods, etc.)
- Yard Waste
- Hazardous Materials
- Electronics, Batteries
- Paper Shredding Service

**Table X: Transfer Station Waste Statistics**<sup>180</sup>

Category	2014	2015	2016	2017
Recycle Tonnage	1,744	1,753	1,738	1,841
Compost Tonnage	2,007	2,331	1,483	3,052
Wood Chips	0	0	0	974
Solid Waste Tonnage	8,760	8,747	9,095	9,060

For Winchester residents, the Town offers two different types of trash programs at the Transfer Station. The first is a regular trash permit where residents pay a flat fee of \$225 and can discard their refuse. The second permit is through the Town's Save Money and Reduce Trash (SMART) program where the initial permit is \$50, and residents purchase special pay as you throw trash bags as needed throughout the year. The SMART program is intended to help residents recycle more and generate less trash since bags have to be purchased separately. In 2018, the Town offered SMART program permits to 2,500 households due

<sup>180</sup> FY19 Town Manager's Financial Plan.

to increased demand from the previous year. The Town does charge an additional fee for larger items or items that require special handling. According to DPW staff, approximately 90 percent of Winchester residents purchase permits for the Transfer Station, and 10 percent choose to contract with private trash haulers.

## Conclusions

### **SCHOOL ENROLLMENT**

Winchester's school enrollment continues to climb year-over-year due to the successful reputation the school district has earned. The increasing enrollment has created challenges for the Town with limited classroom space and older school buildings that were not built to accommodate current enrollment figures. The Town has made substantial investments over the last ten to fifteen years in the existing schools to retrofit, renovate, and rebuild them. The recently completed School Facilities Master Plan projects enrollment to continue to climb which has the Town looking at two new elementary school building projects, a second phase of renovations at the McCall Middle School, and potentially reconfiguring space in the newly constructed High School to accommodate growing class sizes. Over the next several years, voters will be faced with additional capital investments choices for the schools with costs projected in the tens of millions of dollars.

### **CAPITAL AND OPERATION FUNDING**

While the Town has invested considerably in capital projects such as school facilities, roads and infrastructure, and flood mitigation, operations and maintenance funding seems to lag behind capital funding as a priority for Winchester. Capital projects are necessary for moving the community forward, but maintenance for buildings and infrastructure must be adequately funded to ensure the useful life of capital projects are realized. Adequately funding routine maintenance can be just as important as building a new school.

### **STAFFING AND SUCCESSION PLANNING**

The operations and delivery of service in Winchester are dependent upon the adequate staffing of departments. Discussions with several department leaders revealed challenges with retaining younger staff and offering them opportunities for advancement that are competitive with other nearby cities and towns. In some cases, salaries for Winchester employees may not be competitive with other nearby communities which results in turnover. This can create difficulties in establishing a pipeline of younger employees who can move through the management ranks to eventually qualify for leadership positions. Turnover in some departments creates difficulties with outlining succession plans in cases where departmental managers are nearing retirement age.

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