

# COMMUNITY SERVICES AND GOVERNMENT

## BACKGROUND

The town of Rochester continues to offer our citizens a broad array of municipal services. These services are in need of growth as the town population increases. Indeed, the need to balance the demand for municipal services with the desire to keep the town's rural character and curb rising taxes presents a challenge. This update addresses those services in immediate need of revision or expansion during the ensuing five years.

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## SCHOOLS

The Rochester School Committee continues to address the needs of growth within the town.

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## POLICE DEPARTMENT

Organized according to state law, it is headed by a Chief of Police appointed by the Board of Selectmen who reports on a day-to-day basis to the Town Administrator. In addition, there are 6 full time patrolmen, 3 full time sergeants, 4 part-time officers for cruiser details and 4 reserve officers for details which are not filled by full timers. All officers belong to the Rochester Police Brotherhood union. It is felt efforts should continue to obtain grants for the Police Department. Rochester is fortunate to have a low crime rate. Expansion of the department should be considered if the need arises.

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## FIRE DEPARTMENT

The Fire Chief is appointed by the Board of Selectmen. He continues to direct the

department according to state law and is responsible for appointing and removing call personnel. In addition, one EMT staffs the ambulance seven days a week during the day shift. The Fire Department shares communications with the Police Department in the Dispatch Center on Dexter's Lane.

Rochester's geographic location from the two closest hospitals puts the citizens at risk in a health emergency. Transport time from door to hospital can exceed twenty minutes from various locations in the town. The current yearly call volume for the ambulance is not sufficient to support EMTs trained to the Paramedic Level in skill retention or finances. However, it is felt crucial for the well being of the citizens to upgrade to EMT Intermediate Level.

We currently have a mutual aid agreement with bordering towns to provide Paramedic service. Upgrading will enhance that Paramedic intercept service.

At this time, the call department is capable of handling the volume of calls. Any change in the current call vs. full-time firefighters will need to be addressed by special study.

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## WATER SUPPLY

The majority of homes in the town continue to be serviced by private wells. The town is blessed by a highly productive aquifer. In addition, Rochester is part of the Mattapoissett River Valley Water Authority and has water rights through this resource if needed. At this time, no significant change is envisioned for Rochester's water supply system. However, it is prudent that the town's Water Supply Commissioners continue to maintain water quality and supply for the future.

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manages the parks and recreation areas.

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### ***SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL***

Rochester has curbside collection by a private contractor which is disposed of at SEMASS Waste to Energy Plant. In addition, there is a regional refuse disposal center on Route 28 near the SEMASS plant which accepts refuse and recyclable materials. The Highway Department handles recycling. Certain days are designated for certain areas for pickup. The town of Rochester is in great need of scheduled pick-up of large, non-toxic items which the regular refuse disposal will not handle. It is hoped that scheduling such a service will prevent the disposal of such items on the roadsides and in the woods and less populated areas. A periodic volunteer collection activity done by any of a number of organizations such as the Boy Scouts might help.

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### ***PUBLIC HEALTH***

There is a three member Board of Health. In addition, the town presently shares a Regional Sanitarian with Marion who witnesses the percolation tests, reviews proposed septic plans, and inspects septic systems during construction. In addition, public health services provides licensing of food establishments, investigation of housing code violations, smoking cessation programs, monitoring of landfill groundwater quality and landfill gas, and coordination of rabies clinics.

We feel there is a great need for better enforcement of animal control issues including fines and violations for uncontrolled domestic animals.

### ***PARKS AND RECREATION***

This is a three member elected board which

### ***COUNCIL ON AGING***

Established in 1971 to address the needs of the elderly population, the Rochester Council on Aging continues to be quite active. It provides many services to senior citizens.

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### ***VETERANS SERVICES***

The town of Mattapoissett, by agreement, continues to serve the needs of veterans and their dependents in Rochester. They provide assistance and advice to veterans to insure they receive the help to which they are entitled. Staff and services continue to be sufficient at this time.

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### ***ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE***

Although not usually included in the Master Plan, the original plan addressed the organizational structure. The current organization is heavily reliant on volunteers and part-time elected officials. Although volunteerism is certainly needed in many areas of town government, there is a need for a thorough review of the town's organizational structure and revision as necessary. Such a review with revisions will provide a clear and concise understanding for all publicly held offices and encourage interdepartmental communication and accountability. In addition restrictions must be placed on the number of offices a currently elected/appointed official can hold.

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2. Protect the town's rural character while providing necessary services.

3. Maintain fiscal stability while managing growth.

### ***VOLUNTEERISM***

It is felt there is a need for the members of the Board of Selectmen to encourage and seek out volunteerism among the town's citizens. Often there are town residents who feel their voices will not be heard above the voices of longevity. It is, however, imperative to blend new ideas with those currently successful and operational ideas in order to maintain town conditions and standards that meet the needs of all residents. This could be accomplished in educating new residents as well as long time residents on the benefits and needs of volunteering. Providing a booth staffed with town representatives at the annual town fair to seek out interested parties and encourage them to become more involved in their town is just one of many ideas to meet these goals.

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### ***TOWN MEETING***

Rochester practices the New England tradition of Open Town Meeting which is the legislative body of the town. As the town continues to grow, it will be necessary to consider a Representative Town Meeting format. However, these changes will most likely not be necessary for at least five years.

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### ***ELECTIONS***

The town elections take place prior to the Annual Town Meeting.

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### ***GOALS AND OBJECTIVES***

1. Provide adequate and accessible community facilities for public use.

### **IMPELENTATION ACTION TASKS**

The following actions have been identified to carry out the above goals and objectives:

#### ***ADMINISTRATOR:***

1. Continue exploration of regionalization agreements to cut the cost of services.

#### ***HIGHWAY SURVEYOR:***

Initiate a volunteer project for collecting large, non-toxic items for disposal. A nominal fee would be charged. The metal items could be sold for scrap.

#### ***BOARD OF SELECTMEN:***

1. Evaluate regionalization of emergency medical services to enable upgrade of Emergency Medical Technician status to the status of Intermediate Level of care.
2. Fully evaluate public water supply options for broad dissemination to residence. Take appropriate action.
3. Continue to practice fiscal responsibility while maintaining community facilities

#### ***BOARD OF HEALTH/PLANNING BOARD:***

Develop conceptual plans for a town center-wide treatment plant concurrent

with development of town center activities.

1. Distribute animal control regulations annually during licensing and enforce such regulations by means of fines for violations.

***COUNCIL ON AGING:***

1. Develop new volunteer opportunities for COA participants and identify candidates for:
  - a. Staffing and managing meals programs such as the current breakfast activity.
  - b. Website and other technical and how-to programs at Council on Aging.
  - c. Teaching and instruction on a broad array of Council on Aging arts and informational-material programs.
2. Expand outreach efforts to attract more senior resident participation.
3. Conduct feasibility analysis to identify or build senior daycare space.
4. Host a biannual welcoming meeting in the spring and fall for new residents. This would be sponsored by the Rochester Council on Aging. The benefits of such a gathering would serve many purposes. It would provide new residents with information regarding the town, an opportunity to volunteer, and would also provide a venue for vendors. In addition, it would blend new residents with long-time residents and elderly with youth.
5. Conduct an annual program survey of the Council on Aging constituency seeking updates on evolved interests and needs.

***TOWN CLERK:***