

Annual Selectboard Goals
Adopted by the Brattleboro Selectboard at Its Meeting on June 4, 2019
Status of Implementation (*in bold italics below*) as of January 2, 2020

Governance

1. Together with the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, continue to support the Vermont State Legislature's passage of S.106 to create a Municipal Self Governance Pilot Program. ***S.106 was adopted in the Senate in April but did not make it out of the House Government Operations Committee before the session ended in May. Town Manager Elwell is working together with the VLCT Board and staff to develop and implement a strategy for achieving adoption of S.106 in the House during the 2020 Legislative Session. Gwyn Zakov, Legislative Advocate on the VLCT staff, attended the September 17 Selectboard meeting at which this topic was discussed at length. Brattleboro Selectboard members and other Town officials will remain actively engaged in this work as the strategy is implemented.***
2. Together with the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, continue to lead a Regional Economic Hub Coalition to promote information exchange and collaborative action among Vermont's larger and more complex municipalities. ***Town Manager Elwell facilitated a Hub Town session at the 2019 Town Fair (the annual conference of municipal officials from all over Vermont) regarding transportation related issues and the challenges of addressing poverty, addiction, and homelessness in Hub Towns. Additional meetings are being planned for 2020 and beyond.***
3. Consider the possibility of proposing Town Charter changes to address housekeeping matters (e.g. the elimination of Town School District sections) and/or substantive matters that might otherwise be addressed via the municipal Self Governance Pilot Project. ***At this time, the Selectboard has decided not to appoint a Charter Review Commission.***

Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity in Town Government and the Community

1. After the new Human Resources professional is hired, conduct implicit bias training (and potentially other equity focused training) for the Selectboard and all Town employees. ***Human Resources Director Sally Nix joined our Town team on June 17. An RFP for this training was issued on September 24 and a contract was approved on December 3. The training will be conducted with all employees early in 2020, beginning with the Selectboard and the Senior Management Team on January 9.***
2. After the new Human Resources professional is hired, review all job descriptions and revise them and the Town's recruitment practices, as needed, to ensure that they are as free of bias as possible. ***Human Resources Director Sally Nix joined our Town team on June 17 and has begun working on this goal. We expect it to be completed during the first half of 2020.***
3. Continue efforts to develop a day-work program to provide employment to people living at the margins of Brattleboro's economy. ***The Work Today program was approved by the Selectboard for 90-day pilot project funding of \$65,000. The pilot project is intended to be implemented in Spring 2020.***
4. Continue to support and collaborate with organizations working to achieve racial equity, gender equity, economic equity, and social equity in and around Brattleboro. ***This work continues, both through collaboration with specific organizations on specific projects and as a guiding principle of our work in all areas of Town government.***

Housing

1. Adopt and Implement the Rental Housing Registration and Inspection Program. ***The ordinance was adopted in July and implementation began in September (after the State-mandated 60-day waiting period for the ordinance to take effect).***
2. Determine if there is an appropriate Town government role in collaboration with others in Brattleboro and beyond to address concerns related to the condition and affordability of Brattleboro's housing stock. If there is, take steps to start implementing that role.

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Opioids Crisis

1. Continue to support inter-agency efforts in the opiate crisis through active collaboration, raising awareness of unmet needs, and communicating effective strategies. ***All prior actions (most notably but not exclusively through Project CARE) are continuing. New efforts during the summer of 2019 included public forums for education/dialogue and distribution of the Project CARE brochure to every mailing address in Brattleboro. Inter-agency efforts have increased to share data and use data to drive decision making and trend monitoring as we continue to work collaboratively address this crisis.***
2. Consider additional Town funding for Project CARE and other opioid related initiatives with Groundworks, Turning Point, and the AIDS Project of Southern Vermont.

Energy Efficiency / Sustainability

1. Consider creation of a Sustainability Officer on the Town staff if there is agreement on a mission for this position that includes energy efficiency but also extends to a broader definition of sustainability. ***The Selectboard approved creation of this position. Stephen Dotson was selected from among a strong pool of more than 75 applicants. He will join the Town team on February 3.***
2. Continue to implement energy efficiency projects in Town facilities as recommended by the 2016-2017 Town Energy Audits and as other opportunities arise. Be specific about next steps in FY21 Budget.
3. Work with Southeastern Vermont Transportation to increase bus ridership (both by those who need the service and those who choose to use the service) by increasing the visibility, affordability, and frequency of bus service in Brattleboro. ***Some improvements have been specifically identified (especially regarding signage and other ways to increase public awareness of SEVT services) and will be pursued in conjunction with the SEVT staff.***

Facilities

1. Begin construction (and complete it, if possible) of the skatepark at Living Memorial Park. ***This project went to bid in June. Contractors' prices were higher than the Town can afford because contractors' schedules were already full for this summer's construction season. The project will be re-bid in the next month so that we will be at the front of the line for contractors as they schedule projects for the 2020 summer construction season.***
2. Develop a plan for capital improvement and future use of the Municipal Center. ***A partnership has been formed with the Windham and Windsor Housing Trust to plan and execute a restoration of the Municipal Center that will provide housing on the top 2 floors and Town facilities on the lower 2 floors.***
3. Develop a plan for future capital improvement of the Public Works Facility on Fairground Road. ***A facility needs analysis and site evaluation are underway as the first steps toward developing a plan to provide proper modern facilities for DPW (administration, highway, maintenance, and utilities).***

Utilities

1. Develop a plan for upgrading the Water Treatment Plant and addressing other capital improvements.
2. Update the Water and Sewer Ordinance and rates.

Public Outreach

1. Update and improve the Town's website.

(The Selectboard will review implementation progress in July, October, & January.)

The FY21 Proposed Budget is a separate document. See the Town's website (www.brattleboro.org) or contact the Town Manager's Office (251-8151) to obtain a copy of the budget.

MEMORANDUM

To: Selectboard
From: Peter B. Elwell, Town Manager
Re: FY21 Budget: Unfinished Business
Date: January 2, 2020



Town staff's proposed budget for FY21 was distributed on November 5, 2019. Since then, the Selectboard has considered staff's proposals and other budget matters in 6 public meetings with substantive public participation. Many line items are unchanged from FY20 and incremental changes in many other line items have been explained and accepted. However, several matters remain undecided at this time. The purpose of this memorandum is to identify the changes that have been made in the FY21 Budget since it was first proposed, provide the current status of the FY21 Budget and the property taxes required to fund it, and to address the unfinished items to assist the Selectboard in making its final decisions before the end of January. The list of unfinished items is divided between topics that will be considered at the January 7 Selectboard meeting and topics that will be considered at the January 14 Selectboard meeting. The budget that ultimately is approved by the Selectboard will be presented for consideration and adoption at the Representative Town Meeting on March 21, 2020.

CURRENT STATUS OF THE FY21 BUDGET

Total Property Taxes in the Adopted FY20 Budget = \$14,721,497

Total Property Taxes in Staff's Proposed FY21 Budget = \$15,095,827

That would require an increase of 2.5% (or 3.26 cents) in the property tax rate.

Changes during the Selectboard's 6 meetings to date in reviewing staff's proposed budget (and the resulting impact of those changes upon proposed FY21 property taxes):

Revenues

No changes to date

Expenditures

| | |
|--|------------|
| Increased Human Services Funding | + \$ 4,510 |
| Increased Community Marketing Initiative Funding | + \$ 1,629 |

Net Impact of All Changes to Date in the FY21 Budget + \$ 6,139

Property Taxes Required to Fund the FY21 Budget in its Current Status = \$15,101,966

That would require an increase of 2.6% (or 3.31 cents) in the property tax rate.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS IN THE SELECTBOARD'S REVIEW OF THE FY21 BUDGET

FOR THE JANUARY 7 SELECTBOARD MEETING:

Representative Town Meeting's Human Services Review Committee (HSRC)

Per the Selectboard's request, members of the HSRC will attend the January 7 Selectboard meeting to discuss their process and recommendations. Attached to this memorandum are copies of (1) the HSRC's report dated December 5, 2019, (2) a spreadsheet that summarizes the HSRC's FY21 Request for Funding, and (3) a document that lists the policies and procedures by which the HSRC operates.

Fund Balance Guideline

Policies that call for a certain amount of unassigned fund balance to be set aside for extraordinary circumstances are common and are often referred to as "rainy day funds." Sometimes they are drawn upon when significant unforeseen expenses arise (e.g. after the actual "rainy day" of Tropical Storm Irene in 2011) and sometimes they are drawn upon when significant revenue shortfalls occur (such as many municipalities experienced due to the Great Recession of 2008-2009). The Town's guideline calls for an unassigned fund balance equal to 10% of the annual General Fund operating budget. The Selectboard asked staff to provide information about best practices generally and about the policies and practices of comparable municipalities.

Best Practice

The Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA), the professional association for public sector financial managers, publishes best practice advice on many different aspects of public financial management. The GFOA's advice to municipalities regarding unassigned (or "unrestricted") fund balance is as follows:

The adequacy of unrestricted fund balance in the general fund should take into account each government's own unique circumstances. For example, governments that may be vulnerable to natural disasters, more dependent on a volatile revenue source, or potentially subject to cuts in state aid and/or federal grants may need to maintain a higher level in the unrestricted fund balance. Articulating these risks in a fund balance policy makes it easier to explain to stakeholders the rationale for a seemingly higher than normal level of fund balance that protects taxpayers and employees from unexpected changes in financial condition. Nevertheless, GFOA recommends, at a minimum, that general-purpose governments, regardless of size, maintain unrestricted budgetary fund balance in their general fund of no less than two months of regular general fund operating revenues or regular general fund operating expenditures.

Therefore, the GFOA's best practice advice is to maintain a minimum unassigned fund balance equal to 17% of the annual General Fund operating budget.

Other Municipalities

Town staff contacted 6 other Vermont municipalities (chosen because they are comparable to Brattleboro's population, municipal budget, or both); Greenfield, Massachusetts; and Keene, New Hampshire. Four of the communities have no adopted fund balance guideline. The other four have fund balance guidelines that vary between 10% and 25% of the annual General Fund operating budget, with an average of 16.5%. The actual unassigned fund balance in those eight communities varies between a negative balance (in two communities) and 24.3% of the annual General Fund operating budget, with an average of 8.2%.

Police Department's Contract with Axon for Body Worn Camera Services

The Selectboard requested additional information about the Axon contract primarily to better understand the context within which Axon is increasing the Town's storage costs by \$3,000 for FY21. Police Chief Michael Fitzgerald will attend the January 7 Selectboard meeting to describe the other services provided by Axon and to discuss this matter further with the Selectboard, as needed.

Project C.A.R.E.

Police Chief Fitzgerald will discuss with the Selectboard a proposed allocation of \$16,000 that would provide \$12,000 to pay recovery coaches \$15/hour and \$4,000 to pay for the transportation of participants to treatment.

\$16,000 = 0.14 cents on the property tax rate

Port-a-Potties and More Permanent Solutions

Attached is a memorandum dated December 24, 2019, from Planning Technician Andrew Graminski with information about permanent standalone public bathrooms for comparison with our current plans to re-install 3 port-a-potties during the summer of 2020. Town staff also will be prepared for a broader conversation with the Selectboard regarding potential additional Town actions to address the needs of people experiencing the impacts of homelessness, drug use, and extreme poverty in our community.

Windham Regional Commission

The Selectboard asked Town staff to confirm whether the Town's annual payment to the Windham Regional Commission (WRC) is voluntary or mandatory. Staff has confirmed that both the obligation to pay and the specific amount of the payment are mandatory for all member towns in the WRC. The WRC was created by the State of Vermont and the enabling legislation authorizes the WRC to adopt bylaws that govern its operation. The WRC's bylaws empower it to impose an annual assessment. This connection between statutory authority, locally adopted bylaws, annual board action, and member obligation to pay functions in exactly the same manner for the WRC as it does for the Windham Solid Waste Management District (WSWMD). The only way to avoid paying the specific amount of the imposed annual assessment is to withdraw from membership in the WRC or WSWMD. Attached for further information about the WRC are copies of (1) its last annual summary for the Town Report, (2) the "About the WRC" section of the WRC website, (3) the WRC's Municipal Services Policy, and (4) and excerpt from the WRC's website summarizing its recent activities.

FOR THE JANUARY 14 SELECTBOARD MEETING:

Living Memorial Park Pool House Renovation or Replacement

Staff will provide cost estimates. Selectboard will consider amending the 5-Year Capital Project Plan.

Selectboard Salaries

Staff will provide information about what Selectboard members in other Vermont communities are paid for their services. The Selectboard will consider increasing Brattleboro's Selectboard salaries, which were last increased in 2012 and 1996.

Southeastern Vermont Economic Development Strategies (SeVEDS)

SeVEDS' request is for \$3 per resident (\$36,147) from Program Income. The Selectboard will decide whether to recommend that amount, some other amount, or no SeVEDS funding for FY21. Currently, almost \$500,000 is available for expenditure from Program Income. *This decision will have no impact upon the property tax rate, unless the Selectboard decides to provide funding from the General Fund instead of from Program Income.*

Provide Visual Budget Information to Make It More Accessible to All Residents

Staff will provide pie charts and other graphical representations of summary information contained in the budget documents and will seek feedback from the Selectboard and the community regarding the use of those or other graphics in the 2019-2020 Town Report and in the preparation of the FY22 proposed budget.

**ARTICLES (SEPARATE FROM THE OVERALL FY21 BUDGET ARTICLE)
FOR THE 2020 REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING WARNING**

Selectboard Salaries

SeVEDS Funding

Human Services Funding

Community Marketing Initiative Funding

SCHEDULE OF REMAINING BUDGET MEETINGS

January 14 Special Meeting

Continue consideration of unfinished business regarding the FY21 budget and make final decisions, if possible.

January 21 Regular Meeting

Make final decisions regarding the FY21 budget and review the draft warnings for the Town Meeting Day elections on March 3, 2020, and for Representative Town Meeting on March 21, 2020.

January 28 Special Meeting

Approve the warnings for the Town Meeting Day elections on March 3, 2020, and for the Representative Town Meeting on March 21, 2020. If necessary, also provide final formal approval of the Selectboard's FY21 Budget recommendation to Representative Town Meeting.

PBE:

Attachments

REPORT TO BRATTLEBORO REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING FROM THE HUMAN SERVICES FUNDING REVIEW COMMITTEE

Thank you to the 33 agencies that submitted requests for consideration. We appreciate the time and resources put into the applications. Your missions, accomplishments and plans for improving our community are inspiring. The agencies that we recommend for funding are vital to the well-being of many vulnerable residents and to our community as a whole. We request the support of the Town Meeting Representatives at the recommended levels.

Process

The committee met in September to review and update the application for Town funding. The application information was emailed to previous recipients and was posted on the Town website and sent to other media outlets. Prospective applicants were invited to an informational meeting on October 15 2019. We received 33 applications requesting a total of \$241,200. Committee members reviewed applicant agencies' financial documents and fiscal controls, as well as their descriptions of services provided to Brattleboro residents, anticipated programmatic changes, evaluation methods, and collaboration with other agencies.

Our goal as a Human Services Review committee is to ensure the quality of life of the people in the town so they can be successful. The Town's human services allocations are important to each agency's ability to serve the needs of local residents. To determine how Town funding would assist each agency, we considered the size of the agency's fund balance relative to their operational expenses, fundraising capacity, the flexibility and predictability of other sources of funding, and the agency's positive impact on Brattleboro residents.

Funding priorities and recommendation

The Committee prioritized agencies whose main function is to provide food, shelter or other urgent and basic needs, as well as emergency and social services. We also prioritized vulnerable populations, including but not limited to elders, children, people without stable housing, people living with HIV/AIDS, people in recovery, and people living with lower incomes.

The committee recommends \$190,105 funding. The committee used a rigorous and thorough process to review all applications and all five members of our committee read every application and scored them individually. These scores were a starting point in the conversations about final funding recommendations.

It has been an honor to serve on this Committee. All of the current committee members would like to serve again next year. If you have any questions, please feel free to get in touch with us via Jan Anderson in the Town Manager's office at tmsecretary@brattleboro.org.

Sincerely,
Ann Fielder
Sue Graff
John Kennedy
David Miner
Kip Tewksbury

December 5, 2019

Human Services Review Committee – Town of Brattleboro

Purpose: To review human service funding requests from nonprofit organizations that serve the needs of Brattleboro residents and recommends appropriations to be voted into the Town Budget at annual Representative Town Meeting (Town Meeting).

Reporting: Members of the Human Services Review Committee are appointed by Town Meeting. Town Meeting formally established the Human Services Review Committee on March 23, 2019, with members of the committee appointed by the Town Moderator for FY20, and thereafter elected at Town Meeting, with the authority of the Town Moderator to fill vacancies throughout the year.

Policies & Procedures:

- Any private non-profit organization that provides human services for residents of Brattleboro on a nondiscriminatory basis may apply to receive funding from the Town. Organizations may apply every year.
- Organizations may ask for support for general operating expenses or for a specific purpose or project.
- Funding for approved requests will be disbursed in a lump sum after July 1.
- If an organization operates county-wide, regionally, or statewide, they must give specifics about their operations that serve Brattleboro residents.
- If an organization do not provide this level of detail, the Committee will consider the application unresponsive and will not recommend funding.
- If the Committee has questions about an application, they may contact the organization by email or phone, and/or they may ask the organization to make a presentation to the Committee.
- The Committee reserves the right to deny funding for a request if the application is late, incomplete, or unresponsive to the questions.
- Applicant organizations will be informed of the Committee's recommendations via the Town Report. Copies of the Report are available at the Municipal Center just before the Town Meeting.
- It is at the Committee's discretion to recommend no, partial or full funding of each request, based on a thorough review of each application, scoring, and discussion.
- Applications will be reviewed and funding decisions made based on the quality of the information provided, the extent to which the applicant shows how much they do, how well they do it, and if anyone in Brattleboro is better off because of their work.
- The Committee may ask for applications in any given year that focus on specific community issues of note, i.e. substance use and prevention, homelessness, food insecurity, the elderly, adolescent health and wellbeing, LGBTQ support and safety issues. This focus will be identified in the application materials and application information session.
- The Committee reserves the right to set a per application funding cap.
- The Committee will recommend an overall amount to fund to the Town Meeting based on the grant review process; this amount may be based on 1% of the prior year's town budget.
- Committee members with conflicts of interest will abstain from reviewing/scoring or discussing the application with which they have a conflict.

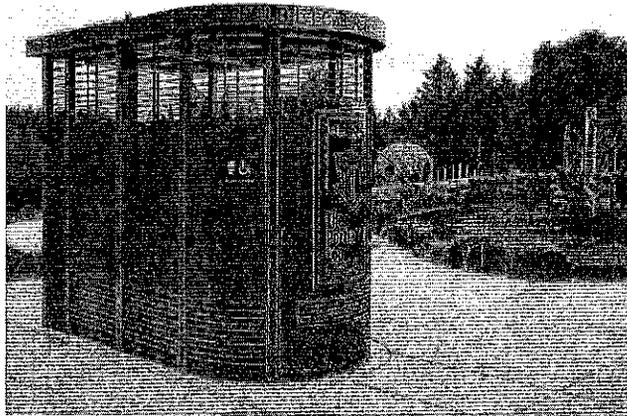
To: Selectboard
Via: Peter Elwell, Town Manager
From: Andrew Graminski, Planning Technician
Date: December 24, 2019
Re: 24/7 Public Toilet Facilities

Summary of Research

Three different public toilet models have been examined to see if they would be suitable for downtown Brattleboro. The models included the Portland Loo, Urban Blu's Automated Self-Cleaning Toilet, and porta potties, which Brattleboro currently has. Note that porta potties were examined in comparison to the other two models to see if porta potties could be a long-term viable option for the Town. This memo addresses the design of the units, features, costs, and overall viability.

The Portland Loo

The Portland Loo offers high durability and balances the combination of privacy and security. The design of the Loo deters illicit activity through crime prevention through environmental design which is the idea that designing a physical environment can positively influence human behaviors. Its easy to service/ or replace damaged components. It can be sited almost anywhere with water and sewer hookups. The Portland Loo can be open 24/7 without an attendant, is ADA accessible and can be powered by solar panels. The Portland Loo offers the following components:



Example of a Portland Loo

- Resistant to vandalism (anti—graffiti coat)
- Composed of few materials
- Louvers at the top and bottom of the wall create an interior environment that offers visual privacy, while remaining connected with the outside
- Lower louvers are angled to provide law enforcement the opportunity to observe the number of users within the unit without compromising privacy
- Unit's hand-washing station is mounted on the exterior to promote shorter use times
- At night a gentle light washes the exterior until it is occupied, at which time the interior lights activate, and the exterior lights dim, announcing that it is in use.
- All cleaning and maintenance apparatuses, as well as electrical components, solar batteries, etc., are housed a rear cabinet in the unit itself

Costs:

Installation Estimates-

- Base Price of Non-Solar Loo: \$95,000
- Utility Work (Water, Sewer, Electrical): \$22,000-\$25,000
- Foundation (Slab and Finish): \$7,200-\$9,000
- Shipping Costs (Packaging and Trucking): \$6,945
- Installation (Crane, Labor, Hookup): \$3,600-\$5,000

- **Total:** \$134,745-\$140,945

Yearly Maintenance Estimate (Servicing and cleaning unit)

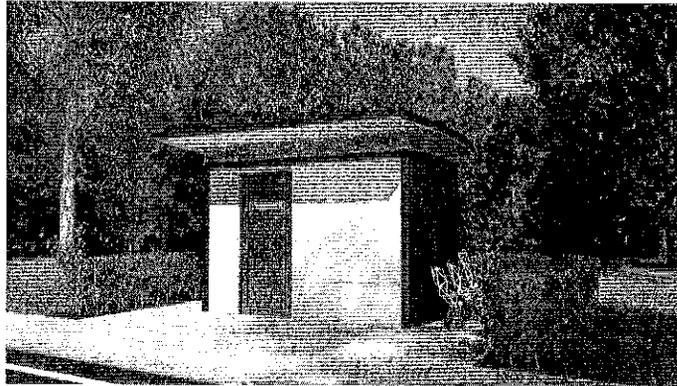
- \$11,000-12,000

Viability:

The impact of a facility like the Portland Loo would be a positive impact overall the Town of Brattleboro and all members of the public. Its design would make this a more desirable option during warm weather months than during colder weather months. Nevertheless, this model should be furthered examined by Town officials, especially looking at ways to fund such facility.

Urban Blu's Automated Self-Cleaning Toilet

This model of a public toilet facility is a type of unisex Automated Public Toilet (APT) that is self cleaning, fully automated for programming and requires no daily maintenance other than toilet paper stocking. The Canadian company Urban Blu manufactures an array of smart automated restrooms which can be deployed in public spaces and parks. This model offers the following components:



Example of an automated Urban Blu toilet

- ADA accessible
- Automated cleaning and disinfection of the toilet after each use
- Energy saving by using LED lighting only activated during use
- Low water consumption
- Economical controlled distribution of consumables that promote maximum use
- Compact and durable building that is resistant to vandalism and graffiti
- Fully automated and programmable
- Maximum occupancy time 15 minutes, adjustable if necessary. Automatic unlocking after 15 Minutes.

Costs: Urban Blu provides three varieties of public toilet facilities

1. *Automated – Smart Restroom – Self-cleaning – Single Unit (ADA Compliant)*
 - Prefab double building (8' x 13'): \$145,000
 - Wrap and transportation: \$5,600
 - Installation, final electrical and plumbing: \$10,550
 - Total: \$161,650
2. *Automated – Smart Restroom – Self-cleaning – Double Unit (ADA Compliant)*
 - Prefab double building (8' x 20'): \$210,000
 - Wrap and transportation: \$5,600
 - Installation, final electrical and plumbing: \$10,550
 - Total: \$226,150
3. *Automated – Smart Restroom – Self-cleaning – Triple Unit (1 ADA Compliant and 3 Standard)*
 - Prefab double building (8' x 20'): \$210,000
 - Wrap and transportation: \$5,600
 - Installation, final electrical and plumbing: \$10,550

- Total: \$226,150

Viability:

Urban Blu's automated self-cleaning toilets are by far the most expensive option the Town could pursue for 24/7 public toilet facilities. However, they offer the benefit that they do not need regular servicing and cleaning. The Town should further examine this option and look for ways to fund such facility.

Porta Potties (no change to current 24/7 public facilities)

Instead of getting any of the first two options, the Town could continue to use porta potties as their 24/7 public toilet facilities. The Town currently owns 3 porta potties which were given to the Town. However, these porta potties are considered "retired" units by the manufacturer. If the Town was to go this direction, we could investigate purchasing new units:

Installation Estimates (if new units where purchased)–

Units: \$700-\$2188

Maintenance/servicing –

\$10,000 per year

Viability:

Porta potties have been working well for the Town thus far, but they are prone to vandalism, crime and are not as durable as the other two models. The porta potties the Town currently has do not have hand washing facilities components with water and soap, but they are stocked with hand sanitizer. The Town could consider purchasing portable hand washing facilities to go along with the porta potties.

Funding opportunities

We have not identified grant funding sources for public restrooms at this time. More research needs to be done to see if there are private foundations that have funding available. Most communities that have provided an automated restroom funded it through direct support, sponsorships of restroom operations, advertising, and public-private partnerships.



The Windham Regional Commission

The mission of the Windham Regional Commission (WRC) is to assist towns in Southeastern Vermont to provide effective local governance and to work collaboratively with them to address regional issues. In the absence of county government, we provide an essential link between towns, the state, and the federal government. The region is comprised of 27 member towns: the 23 towns of Windham County; Readsboro, Searsburg and Winhall in Bennington County; and Weston in Windsor County.

The Commission, a political subdivision of the state, is composed of and governed by town-appointed Commissioners. Towns choose their own representatives to serve on the Commission. After town meeting, each Selectboard appoints up to two representatives to serve on the Commission for the coming year. Brattleboro is currently represented by Sue Fillion and Tom Mosakowski. Each Commissioner represents their town's interests before the Commission, brings information from the Commission back to their town, and serves on at least one of a number of WRC committees that address regional and municipal issues and concerns. Active service on these committees is very important because the WRC is organized around a strong committee structure. It's within these committees that most Commission decisions are made. All WRC meetings are open to the public and subject to Vermont open meeting law.

We assist towns with a number of different activities, including town plans and bylaws; community and economic development; local emergency and hazard mitigation planning, including flood hazard and river corridor bylaw assistance; natural resources, including assisting towns with watershed restoration projects and implementation of the state's new clean water law; Act 174 town energy planning; transportation, including traffic counts (automotive, bicycles, pedestrian), inventories (bridges, culverts, signs, road erosion), road foremen training, and serving as a liaison with VTrans to report damage to town road infrastructure to the state as a result of flooding; redevelopment of "Brownfields" sites (sites that are or may be contaminated by hazardous substances); review of projects submitted for review through Act 250 (land use), Section 248 (energy generation and transmission, telecommunications), and federal permitting processes; grant application and administration; training of municipal officials and volunteers across a range of topics; and mapping and geographic information system (GIS) analyses. The maps in your town office were likely produced by the WRC.

We help towns make the most of the financial and human resources they have both individually and collectively, assisting with projects between and among towns, building and augmenting the capacity of volunteer-based town boards and commissions, and providing professional services to towns that may want to take on a project that is beyond what they can comfortably manage with their own staff and volunteers. Our relationship with towns is inherently collaborative. For instance, towns may choose to have their plans reviewed by the Commission; town plan review and approval by the WRC is not mandatory. The regional plan, which was updated in 2014 following a two-year process, is developed in consultation with member towns, reflects town plan policies, and is ultimately approved by our towns.

Past year highlights reflect the range of services we provide to the towns of the region. We have submitted an application for a VT Public Service Department Broadband Innovation Grant in collaboration with Valley Net and the Center on Rural Innovation to develop a feasibility analysis and business plan to improve access to high-speed broadband to underserved communities for the region as a whole. This work will be done in collaboration with towns. We've established a regional Emergency Management Directors (EMD) Roundtable, and have worked with EMDs and assistance agencies to create a Vulnerable Population Phone Tree to facilitate outreach to those most at risk during a disaster. We continue to help towns apply for grants to support compliance with the state's Municipal Roads General Permit compliance. We also continue to be the primary GIS and mapping resource for our towns. An annual report is available on our website (www.windhamregional.org). Click on the heading "About Us." We encourage you to visit your town's page on our website to see your town's profile (<http://windhamregional.org/towns>). A video about the WRC is available on our homepage.

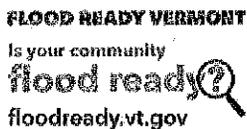
Funding for the WRC is provided through contracts with state agencies, federal grants, and town assessments. Town assessments make up a relatively small percentage of our budget; about 5% of a \$2.32 million budget for FY 2020, a substantial portion of which includes our brownfields revolving loan fund and modern wood heat and renewable energy grant funds. But it is the only funding we receive that has no conditions placed upon it by entities beyond the WRC's borders. Your town's assessment makes it possible for us to leverage the resources to serve you. The town's assessment for this year is \$27,339. To see our detailed Work Program and Budget for FY 2020, visit our website and click on the heading "About Us."

Search ... 0

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About The WRC

In the absence of county government, we provide the essential link between local, state and federal government. We are a public entity, constituted by law and required to meet statutory obligations.

We are an important resource to the 27 towns of the Windham Region in Windham, Windsor, and Bennington counties. Our mission is to assist towns in Southeastern Vermont to provide effective local government and work cooperatively with them to address regional issues. Towns choose to be members of the WRC.

There are 11 regional planning commissions in the state. The WRC was the first, established in 1965. The state's purpose in creating regional planning commissions was to:

- Promote economic development, increasing jobs and income;
- Preserve the natural beauty of Vermont;
- Obtain and maintain efficiency in government expenditure;
- Safeguard and extend local autonomy in planning and development decisions.

What We Do

Our core program of work focuses on the areas of: assistance to towns on planning and zoning; regional plans; transportation, including bike, pedestrian, transit, and rail; community development, including brownfield redevelopment and community development block grant support; energy; project review; natural resources; GIS mapping support for towns; and all-hazards emergency planning.

Who We Are

Each town's selectboard determines who will represent the town on the WRC. Each member town appoints two commissioners who represent that town's interest in regional affairs. The exception is Somerset, where the commissioner is appointed by the Governor.

Additionally, the WRC has up to ten citizen interest commissioners who represent other regional interests such as business and industry, health care, natural resources, energy, and housing.

How We Operate

The WRC is organized around a strong committee structure. These committees are where most of the work gets done and the decisions made. Commissioners serve on these committees and make the decisions. The WRC has 10 highly-qualified staff with more than 80 years of combined professional experience who provide support to the committees, and execute the Commission's program of work.

How We Are Funded

The WRC receives most of its funding through performance-based grants and/or contracts. Town assessments constitute a small but very important percentage of our funding (typically 5 percent of our total budget in a given year). For the 2020 fiscal year, the WRC's total budget of approximately \$2.32 million dollars is derived from 78 percent regional project grant funding, 5 percent town technical assistance funding, 12 percent state performance-based contract funding, and 5 percent from town assessments. This make up of our revenue stream is pretty typical. The funding we receive through the state performance grant is derived through the state property transfer tax.

The vast majority of the WRC's revenue sources are tied to contracts with specific scopes of work, guidelines and/or performance measures that are negotiated between all of the state's 11 regional planning commissions and the state agency that manages the funds and/or program in question. This means that the WRC has limited control over how it chooses to use the majority of its funding and, by extension, its own work priorities. Nevertheless, the grants we receive enable us to work with our towns on areas such as transportation, emergency planning, community development, brownfields redevelopment, energy, and natural resources.

Towns also retain the services of the WRC directly (referred to as town technical assistance above). These services typically relate to assistance with town plans or bylaws, flood hazard bylaws and river corridor bylaws, transportation system inventories (road erosion, bridge and culvert, signs, etc.), project management related to state or federal grants, and other specific needs such as local hazard mitigation plans or solid waste management plans. In some cases towns will enter into a municipal service

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agreement with the WRC and pay for the service solely with town funds. In most cases towns will secure state or federal grants to support the needed work, and most of these grants require a local match.

Funding received through town assessments is a small but very important percentage of our overall budget. While very limited in quantity, town assessments allow the greatest latitude to respond to WRC-identified needs in the region. Some grant sources, most notably transportation and emergency planning, come to us through state agencies but the funding originates with the federal government. Most funding with federal origins requires matching funds, and typically non-federal matching funds. Required match ranges from 10 percent (Transportation Planning Initiative) to 50 percent (Emergency Management Planning Grant). State performance contract and town assessment funds are essential sources for non-federal matching funds.

We have also received grants from private foundations. While not a major percentage of our funding, grants from private foundations typically support collaborative efforts between the WRC and partner organizations (such as the Windham County Conservation District, the Connecticut River Conservancy, the Vermont River Conservancy, and others) to pursue specific projects that help us implement the Windham Regional Plan and further develop regional policies.

Municipal Services Policy

The WRC has adopted a [Municipal Services Policy](#) that is intended to provide guidance for the Commission in the delivery of professional services to member municipalities. It describes technical assistance available to member towns as part of the commission's core activities, and the opportunities for expanded service when funded as a special project.

Last Updated: 04 November 2019

Windham Regional Commission Municipal Services Policy

Statement of Intent and General Policy

This Policy is intended to provide guidance for the Windham Regional Commission (WRC) in the delivery of professional services to member municipalities. It describes technical assistance available to member towns as part of the commission's core activities and the opportunities for expanded service when funded as a special project.

It is the general policy of the WRC to offer the maximum level of basic service feasible to all its towns and to continue to offer additional services, as needs require and opportunities arise. To promote efficient and economical use of professional staff in meeting the increasing needs for municipal planning services, the WRC shall consider the following priorities in evaluating requests:

- Projects addressing state legislative requirements;
- Projects involving issues of statutory compliance;
- Projects addressing local and/or regional priorities identified by municipal and regional plans; and
- Other projects as may be determined to be of local and/or regional significance.

Basic Services

The WRC is organized to assist its municipalities in the following areas:

- Regional Transportation Planning
- Natural Resources Planning
- Emergency Management and Hazard Mitigation Planning
- Project Review - Act 250, Section 248, federal review processes (NEPA, FERC)
- Community Development, including Brownfields and Downtown/Village Center designation
- Regional and Municipal Mapping, GIS Maps and Data, as well as Census Materials
- Municipal planning and zoning technical assistance
- Public Education - information and training workshops

General Town Services

Municipalities within the region shall be entitled to the following general services without charge, subject to budgetary and staff limitations.

- Transportation services, e.g., speed studies, bridge and culvert inventories, and sign inventories.
- Advice and application preparation assistance regarding Municipal Planning Grants and other federal and/or state grants programs, such as Downtown Board Village Center designation.
- Act 250 and Section 248 review assistance.

Contract Services

Municipalities may also obtain special technical assistance services to meet local needs and priorities. WRC will provide, when appropriate, Contract Services to member municipalities on a cost recovery basis. Cost recovery rates are calculated using direct and indirect charges. In some cases, grants may be available to cover all or a portion of the costs for Contract Services. WRC staff is available to assist towns in evaluating their options.

Definition of Special Services Requiring a Contractual Relationship

These Services are defined as specialized projects for municipalities for which a particular end product is anticipated and where the focus or benefit of the Study is primarily related to matters of local interest.

These include, but are not limited to:

- Updating or preparation of Town Plans, Zoning Bylaws, Subdivision Regulations, Flood Hazard Bylaws
- Provision of GIS Mapping, GPS locating, and cartographic services
- Assistance with community development grants applications, implementation, and administration
- Review of site plans and subdivision applications, critique for completeness
- Grant administration

Approved by Executive Board: June 11, 2013

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This week at the WRC: 12/16 - 12/20

- December 17, 4:00 pm: [Sibling Region Committee](#), WRC Conference Room
- December 17, 6:00 pm: [Executive Board](#), WRC Conference Room
- December 19, 5:30 pm: [Planning Coordination Committee](#), WRC Conference Room **CANCELLED**

[Full Meetings and Events Calendar, and Warnings](#) | [Current Newsletter](#) | [November 2019 Staff Report](#)

From the Director, Summer 2019 - When Growth Comes, Where Will It Go?

"To plan development so as to maintain the historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside." It's the primary planning goal established by Vermont statute, and it's repeated as a goal in the Windham Regional Plan and town plans. But when growth comes, is that what your town planning work will deliver? Will the policies of your town plan, and bylaws (if your town has them), result in your plan's stated goals and objectives? Have you tested them to see what settlement patterns are supported and discouraged?



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WRC Kicks Off Regional Broadband Project at Meeting On January 16th, 2020

The Windham Regional Commission (WRC) is pleased to announce a meeting to kick-off the Region's NEW Broadband Project. WRC and its partners, ValleyNet and Rural Innovation Strategies, Inc., recently received a Broadband Innovation Grant from the state's Department of Public Service. Please mark your calendars for **January 16th, 2020, at 6:00-8:00 p.m.** with a snow date of January 23rd. The meeting will be held at the **NewBrook Fire Department in Newfane, VT (698 VT Route 30 Newfane, VT).**

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WRC Mourns Loss of Our Friend and Colleague, Mike Shaughnessy

On Thursday, July 11th we learned of the unexpected death of our friend and colleague, Mike Shaughnessy. Mike had worked at WRC as finance manager since he was 21 years old, and for more than 30 years was central to the operation of the Commission and our strong financial integrity. He was a resource for our towns and a leader among the regional planning commission financial managers.



[READ MORE ...](#)

Broadband in Southeastern Vermont

Communities interested in improving high-speed broadband access met last week (9/11/19) in Wilmington to discuss options and ask legislators questions about Vermont's new broadband legislation. Representatives from Windham County, as well the Director of Telecommunications at the Department of Public Service, Clay Purvis, shared information about new planning grants that will help communities identify the best path forward. Communities were strongly encouraged to work together by creating Communications Union Districts, a model that is working in other parts of the state, including [EC Fiber](#) serving communities just north of the Windham Region, and [Central Vermont Fiber](#). Solutions to the problems around the lack of connectivity in Southeastern Vermont are complex and expensive. Connecting communities with broadband is a critical economic development issue, as well as a health and safety concern as it becomes as fundamental to basic communications as the legacy phone lines used to be. Communities in the Windham Region must collaborate to determine the best path forward for the region.

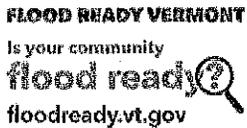
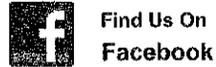
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VTrans Looking for Your Input on Public Transit

Got 5 minutes? Do you ride the bus? Carpool? Uber? VTrans want your input! VTrans is updating the [Vermont Public Transit Policy Plan \(PTPP\)](#), examining Vermont's transit needs and proposing programs and policies to address them. VTrans has heard from Vermonters across the state and have identified public transit issues and challenges, as well as potential strategies for addressing them. You can help VTrans fine tune these items by taking their new survey and letting them know what you think. Survey takers can register for a drawing for a \$50 gift card! Your input will help VTrans shape the future of public transportation in Vermont. The survey will be open until September 1st. You can access the survey [here](#).



Introducing WRC's Summer 2019 GIS/Transportation Technicians



Summer is the height of the field season at WRC, and to help get our work done we've hired two GIS/transportation technicians. Both Nick Young (left) and Mike Murphy (right) come to us from the Keene State College Geography Department. Nick hails from Pelham, N.H. and after pursuing a career in computer science enrolled in Geography at Keene State. He plans to graduate this December. Mike is a recent graduate of Keene State and calls Wayland, Mass home. Golf is his passion. He has worked as a caddie since age 14 and more recently doing maintenance at a country club.



Nick and Mike join Lisa Donnelly who came to WRC last year as summer employee and is now a full-time staff member. If you see someone on the back roads of the Windham Region, decked out in a safety vest and holding a tablet, GPS unit, or traffic counter tube, it might be one of our team. Say hello!

Windham Wood Heat Projects Gain Spotlight Across State Lines

Two advanced wood heat projects in Windham County funded in part by the Windham Wood Heat Initiative have been highlighted in the four-state effort to positively message automated wood heat. The Green Street School in Brattleboro (right) and the Windham and Windsor Housing Trust development Putney Landing in Putney are both featured as "Stoked Stories" on Feel Good Heat's website.



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WRC Project Showcased at the 2019 Leahy Summit at the ECHO Center

On Friday, April 5th, 2019, staff planner Emily Davis lead a panel discussion with her project partners at the 2019 Leahy Center Environmental Summit at the ECHO Center in Burlington. Hosted by the VT Clean Water Network, the Leahy Summit is a biennial clean water networking event designed to pull together clean water partners involved with community resilience, policy, funding, project development, and clean water implementation. Starting in response to the need for a more holistic approach to watershed planning following Tropical Storm Irene, each Leahy Summit has a theme. The theme for 2019 was: "The Alchemy of Arts & Science."



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Windham Regional Commission Receives \$300,000 Brownfields Grant

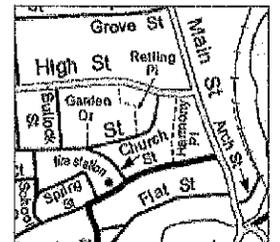
WRC was selected as one of six organizations in Vermont selected to receive a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency for environmental assessment work. The \$300,000 grant will cover five site assessments, five cleanup plans and the development of an area-wide plan. This work will be targeted in the communities with the most need, Brattleboro, Bellows Falls and Wilmington, although brownfields projects throughout the region are eligible. "The Windham Regional Commission is pleased to be able to help more communities and property owners clean up and redevelop contaminated sites in Southern Vermont", said WRC Senior Planner Susan Westa.

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New Brattleboro Road Map Now Available

WRC has completed a large version of a Brattleboro road map, with every named road and street in town, public and private, on one page, with no insets. The map also includes a name index to help you locate those streets you've never heard of before. Lisa Donnelly of the WRC staff gets much of the credit for being the cartographic contortionist, fitting nearly 340 road names into Brattleboro's very non-linear street network. Interested in a smaller size? WRC also has an 11x17-inch version, on two pages with insets.

PDFs of both maps are available on the WRC web site [here](#). Anyone can take the PDFs to a commercial establishment for printing, or WRC can print out copies of the large map for a small fee. Thanks to the Brattleboro Planning Services Department for reviewing the map.

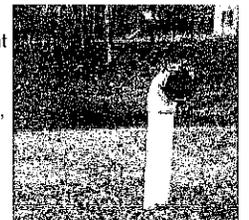


Funding Available for Dry Hydrant Projects, Other Rural Water Supplies

Are you a town or fire department looking to improve fire suppression capabilities? If so, you may want to check out grant funding opportunities from the Vermont Rural Fire Protection Task Force (formerly the Dry Hydrant Grant Program).

The 2019 program offers grants up to \$5000 for installation of new dry hydrants and other types of water supplies, along with repair, upgrade, replacement, or relocation of existing rural water supplies. New this year is funding for drafting site development.

The next round of applications deadlines are June 1st and August 1st, 2019. More information can be found at <https://www.vacd.org/programs/rural-fire-protection/>



WRC Welcomes Susan Westa as New Senior Planner

Susan Westa, AICP, joined the Windham Regional Commission in January 2019. Susan will be the new Community Development lead at WRC, including the Brownfields program and the regional plan update. Susan comes to WRC from the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission in western MA where she was working with Planning Boards reviewing large scale solar applications and helping develop marijuana zoning bylaws. She also led the development of a Joint Land Use Study with the Westover Airbase and surrounding communities.

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WRC Commissioners Visit Rich Earth Institute, Windham County SWMD

On November 15, 2018, the WRC's Energy and Natural Resources Committees attended a field trip to the Brattleboro-based Rich Earth Institute (REI), and the Windham County Solid Waste Management District (WCSWMD). The theme of the trip was energy-efficiency, resource recovery, and closed-loop systems, or sustainable processes that intentionally convert "waste" products into resources. This field trip was especially relevant to the Committees following the approval of the Windham Regional Energy Plan, which contains policies that encourage resource-conscious practices and industries.



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People Are Hitting The Trails This Winter

What were people in Brattleboro doing on Christmas Day? How about New Year's Eve? Would you believe that dozens of people each day were out on the West River Trail? Windham Regional Commission has expanded its pedestrian count program to the winter months, and recent data both surprised and pleased us.

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WRC Hosts Successful Emergency Management Director / Fire Chief Roundtables

Windham Regional Commission has held two of our first Emergency Management Director (EMD) and Fire Chief Roundtables. This began after WRC ceased work with the Local Emergency Planning Commission 6 in Summer 2018. WRC's Emergency Planner felt there was a need to engage EMDs as a group and the first quarterly roundtable was held in Fall 2018. The idea was to host an event that was casual enough to promote open discussion, while also bringing up topics to keep the conversations productive.



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- 1. [WRC Continues to Assist With Town Enhanced Energy Planning](#)
- 2. [Materials from the Forum on Wastewater Solutions for Unsewered Villages](#)

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WRC Kicks Off Regional Broadband Project at Meeting On January 16th, 2020

The Windham Regional Commission (WRC) is pleased to announce a meeting to kick-off the Region's NEW Broadband Project. WRC and its partners, ValleyNet and Rural Innovation Strategies, Inc., recently received a Broadband Innovation Grant from the state's Department of Public Service. Please mark your calendars for **January 16th, 2020, at 6:00-8:00 p.m.** with a snow date of January 23rd. The meeting will be held at the **NewBrook Fire Department in Newfane, VT** (698 VT Route 30 Newfane, VT).

What is this meeting about? This meeting will be the first in a series of meetings designed to share information and gain community input. The grant process involves two steps: 1) development of a feasibility study, and 2) development of a business plan. The first meeting will introduce the project in more detail and ask for your community's participation in the development of the feasibility study.

The goal of the feasibility study is to determine the interest and need for broadband development throughout the region and the best way to implement that development. Communications Union Districts (CUDs) have been used as a strategy to implement broadband in other regions. The feasibility plan will identify how many and what CUDs make the most sense to provide region-wide broadband coverage based on geography and existing services. The CUD model is especially useful in rural areas to engage a critical mass to provide this infrastructure in underserved areas.

The next step after the kickoff meeting will be the distribution of a survey to identify the level of interest and willingness to pay for these services throughout your town. WRC needs each town that wants to participate in this process to help administer the survey by developing a strategy that will best get the survey in front of your citizens. The entire project will be completed within six months, so we need to hit the ground running and we need your help with that!

What can towns do now?

1. Either before or immediately after the kickoff meeting we need the selectboard of towns that want to participate in this effort to pass a simple resolution stating a) their intent to participate in the Windham Region Broadband Project, and b) the identification of the individual who will be the official town lead/point of contact in this effort. You can communicate this to us by email (swesta@windhamregional.org). Please note that this is not intended to limit the number of people within the town who can participate in this project – the more people engaged in this effort the better! But we need a principal town lead/point of contact.
2. Begin thinking now about the best way to get the aforementioned survey in front of as many people in town as possible using electronic and paper formats. We're planning to host a workshop on or about February 6th to discuss the survey and its administration and other next steps. While it will be critical for each town lead to participate in this meeting, it will be open to anyone who is interested.
3. If your town has already included joining a CUD in its town meeting warning, that's great! If you've not, this process will identify what overall CUD structure makes the most sense. So wherever you are in the CUD deliberation process, that's fine.

What can towns expect from us? The WRC will help convene the towns that want to participate in this process so they can be active participants in the development of the feasibility study and business plan. We will also provide guidance and support to towns to assist them in their roles in this project – the most important being the conduct of the aforementioned survey. Our partners will prepare the actual feasibility study and related business plan and provide technical information and advice. The purpose of the business plan is to identify the business structure(s) and function(s) most likely to succeed in providing broadband to unserved and underserved areas based upon the information gathered through the feasibility study.

What we need from participating towns. The principal need is for towns to survey their citizens about their broadband needs and ability and willingness to pay for service. This may be supplemented by the engagement of schools, libraries and other institutions. This information is essential to the development of the feasibility study and an actionable business plan. We will also seek town engagement in the review of the draft feasibility study and business plan.

Please let us know if you're able to attend the January meeting and if you have any questions. The primary project contact at WRC is Sue Westa, swesta@windhamregional.org.

Last Updated: 13 December 2019

