

## **CHAPTER 9 SERVICES AND FACILITIES**

### **9.1 INTRODUCTION**

The Town of Reading has undergone a number of significant changes since the last Master Plan was approved. The Town administration has reorganized several times, primarily due to financial constraints and the Town Manager's priorities. Reading has continued to maintain a relatively low tax rate, which has constrained Town services and facilities in a period of escalating costs. The demographics of Reading has also shifted somewhat, resulting in a population that desires more family oriented services and facilities services for less money. Prioritization of services and facilities has become a much more challenging exercise during the budgeting process, and the Town has resorted to charging higher fees merely to maintain existing programs.

Reading also relies on many volunteers to assist in the provision of services, and the dedicated involvement of these individuals allows the Town to maintain more programs and public hours. The Town has sought to centralize facilities in the Downtown area to make services convenient and accessible. Within a short walking distance are the Town Hall, Police Station, Main Fire Station, Main Library, Senior Center and main public park. Serveral large, municipal parking lots in the downtown allow for convenient access to Town services in the same area where most residents conduct their daily business.

Municipal services are largely dictated by the Selectmen with input and recommendations from the Town Manager, Town Department Heads and the Finance Committee. Ultimately Town Meeting votes to appropriate the fiscal year budget at Annual Town Meeting. Budget shortfalls have on occasion been subject to a Town-wide referendum on an override to maintain services. Reading's residents have shown their appreciation for the value and efficiency of Town government by passing recent override ballot questions on additional funding to maintain services. The Town always seeks ways to expand services for its residents but is mindful of their fiscal responsibility to the tax payers in doing so.

Much of this chapter is focused on documenting the current state of the Town's services and facilities, with emphasis on those that have changed or evolved, and an eye toward identifying those needing changes going forward. The goals and objectives found at the end of this chapter are derived directly from the 10 year capital plan (reference, November 8, 2004).

## **9.2 ANALYSIS**

### **INVENTORY OF BUILDINGS**

Reading has 16 major public buildings for administration and public services, public works, public safety, and education.

#### **Town Hall**

The Town Hall, facing the Common at Lowell, Salem, and Woburn Streets, consists originally of two buildings, the Municipal Building, built in 1917, and the Old Library, also built in 1917, both renovated and connected together in 1989. It houses the administrative offices of the Town Manager, Town Clerk, Finance and Collections, Accounting, Assessors, Public Works, Human services, and Community Development. In addition it house one large meeting room, for major Boards and Commissions, and two smaller meeting rooms. It is adequate in size and condition to meet projected future needs.

#### **Public Library**

The Public Library, occupying the former Highland School, built in 1895 and renovated in 1984, is located at the corner of Middlesex Avenue and Deering and School Streets, in the older residential neighborhood west of downtown. It houses all public library functions, principally reference, circulation, administration, adult and children's rooms, historical room, and two meeting rooms. It is adequate in size and condition for projected future needs.

#### **Public Works Garage**

The Public Works Garage was built in 1987 on New Crossing Road, replacing an antiquated facility, now demolished, on Walkers Brook Drive. It houses all Public Works vehicles and vehicle-maintenance, as well as some associated administrative offices. It is of adequate size and condition to serve projected future needs.

#### **Water Treatment Plant**

The Water Treatment Plant: below see Public Utilities--Water and Sewer

#### **Police Station**

The Police Station, on Union Street just east of Reading Square, was built in 1999. It houses all police functions as well as central dispatch for police and fire protection. The new station is a state of the art facility with expanded roll-call space, office space, locker and shower facilities for female officers, physical fitness equipment, contraband and evidence storage, equipment storage, general storage and a community meeting room.

#### **Central Fire Station**

The Central Fire Station, located on Main Street just north of the Common, was built in 1990 as a three-bay facility, housing Fire Department administration, one engine, one ladder truck, and one ambulance. For projected future needs it is adequate in condition and in size, provided that the West Side Fire Station is retained. The Town converted the previous Central Fire Station on Pleasant St. into a permanent Senior Citizens Center.

### **West Side Fire Station**

The West Side Fire Station, on Woburn Street between Prospect and Berkeley Streets, was built in 1956, and houses one engine and one fire-alarm truck. It also houses the mechanic shop. While some renovation will be needed in the future, it is of adequate size to function as a satellite station.

### **Senior Center**

The new Senior Center on Pleasant St. replaces the Old Police Station and contains several meeting rooms and a modern kitchen for ongoing senior activities. The Center is staffed entirely by elder volunteers who conduct activities coordinated and administered by the Town's Office of Elder Affairs contained in Town Hall. The Senior Center also serves as public hearing venue for various Board, Committee and Commission meetings.

### **School Buildings**

Schools (with 1990 enrollment levels):

- 9) Joshua Eaton Elementary School, built in 1948 at the corner of Summer Avenue and Oak Street: 18 classrooms, 458 students.
- 10) Birch Meadow Elementary School, built in 1957 on Arthur B.Lord Drive between Birch Meadow Drive and Forest Street: 18 classrooms, 406 students.
- 11) Alice M. Barrows Elementary School, built in 1964 on Edgemont Avenue, off West Street: 15 classrooms, 324 students.
- 12) J. Warren Killam Elementary School, built in 1969 between Charles and Haverhill Streets: 26 classrooms, 542 students.
- 13) Walter S. Parker Middle School, built in 1927 on Temple Street, off Woburn Street and Summer Avenue: 24 classrooms. 418 students.
- 14) Arthur W. Coolidge Middle School, built in 1961 on Birch Meadow Drive: 24 classrooms, 408 students.
- 15) Reading Memorial High School, on Oakland Road just south of Birch Meadow Drive, built in 1954 and enlarged in 1971: it also houses the administrative offices of the school system: 91 classrooms, 974 students. This facility was undergoing renovations and new construction as of 2005, including demolition of the 1954 portion.
- 16) Wood End Elementary School, on Sunset Rock Lane just off Franklin St. New construction completed in 2005.

The following school buildings have been closed and turned over to the care and custody of the Board of Selectmen and have been converted or slated to be converted to other purposes:

- 1) The Old High School, between Sanborn and Linden Streets, was sold to the private sector in 1986 and converted to residential condominiums.
- 2) The Prospect Street - and Lowell Street schools were demolished and the land sold for single-family house lots in 1980 and 1977 respectively.

- 3) The Pearl Street School, on Pearl Street between Thorndike and Charles Streets, was built in 1939 and abandoned as a school in 1984. Consisting of 24 classrooms, the building was rented to a variety of commercial tenants, and in part used since 1988 as a temporary Senior citizens Center. The building was sold and after an addition was added it operates as an assisted living facility. In addition, the School Committee turned over to the Town the Batchelder Field property (37.14 acres) on Franklin Street which is now Wood End Cemetery. The School Committee site on Dividence Road (11.6 acres) and on Oakland Road (4.6 acres) are not projected to be needed for new school facilities.

### **Town Administration**

(Departments and Programs) [Note the majority of this section was taken directly from the FAQs found on the Town Clerk's website]

*“The administration of all the fiscal, prudential and municipal affairs of the Town shall be vested in an executive branch headed by a Board of Selectmen and a Town Manager.”* (Section 1-3 of the Reading Charter)

**Board of Selectmen** – 5 members elected for overlapping 3-years terms, unpaid. The executive powers of the Town are vested in the Board of Selectmen. The Board of Selectmen acts as a Board of Directors of the Town, providing general direction to the community, and exercising their statutory responsibilities in a number of areas. The Board is responsible for policy directives regarding the department of public works, police, fire, personnel, including collective bargaining, building maintenance and inspection departments. The Board issues licenses required by businesses to operate within the Town. The Board appoints the Town Manager to administer its policies. The Board of Selectmen also appoints the Town Counsel, Town Accountant, not more than five constables, and most appointed boards and commissions. These include the Conservation Commission, Historical Commission, Community Planning & Development Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, Housing Authority, Board of Health, Recreation Committee, Council on Aging, and Cemetery Trustees. As the chief executive board in Town, the Board of Selectmen represents the Town at all types of ceremonies.

### **DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**Town Manager** – The Town Manager is the chief administrative officer of the Town and is responsible to the Board of Selectmen for the proper administration of all Town affairs in his charge. The Town Manager appoints and may remove a number of administrators, such as the treasurer/collector, Town Clerk and most department heads and employees except those serving under the school, library and municipal light. The appointment of any full or part-time department head under the direction supervision of an appointed board must be approved by that board. The Town Manager appoints the police and fire chiefs and the civil defense director subject to confirmation by the Board of Selectmen. The Town Manager is responsible for administering all personnel policies, negotiates and awards contracts, prepares and submits a proposed annual operating budget, a proposed capital improvement program and development and implementation of the long range vision of the community. He approves all financial

warrants submitted by the accountant for payment by the treasurer. The Town Manager is responsible for the maintenance and repair of all Town property under his control and for the purchasing of supplies and equipment. The Town Manager or his appointee serves as an ombudsman whose function is to provide a connection between the public and Town government.

**Town Clerk** – The Town Clerk acts as the chief election official, supervising elections and election officials, maintaining voting lists and registering voters. Duties also include keeping minutes of all regular and special town meetings, conducting annual Town Census, preparing the street list of residents and jury list to the Office of the Jury Commissioner. The Town Clerk's Office is responsible for recording and certifying all official actions of the Town; recording state tax liens and Uniform Commercial Code filings; reviewing and recording campaign finance statements; registering all vital events of local residents; maintaining public records for the Town; issuing licenses and permits; including marriage licenses, hunting, fishing and trapping licenses, permits for raffles and bazaars; business certificates; dog licenses, and fuel storage permits.

**Town Counsel** – The Town Counsel serves as legal adviser to all Departments of the Town providing general legal advice and services.

**Board of Health** – 3 members appointed by the Board of Selectmen for 3 year terms, unpaid. The Board of Health enforces regulations of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, establishes policies to safeguard the health of citizens of the Town, enforces state regulations and plans programs to promote and maintain good health for all ages. A **Hazardous Waste Committee** serves as an advisory committee to the board.

**Council on Aging** – 10 members appointed by the Board of Selectmen for overlapping 3 year terms, unpaid. The Council on Aging provides numerous social services to the senior citizens of the Town. The council also makes educational and recreational activities available to older residents.

**Housing Authority** – 4 members appointed by the Board of Selectmen and 1 appointed by the state for overlapping 5 year terms, unpaid. The Housing Authority provides, manages and processes housing for low income families and the elderly through both housing and rental assistance programs

**Veterans Services** – The Director of Veterans Services, a position required by state law, provides information, advice and financial assistance to eligible veterans.

**Sealer of Weights and Measures** – The sealer protects buyers and sellers in Reading in any transaction involving weights or measurements by periodical inspections of all weighing devices, such as scales in commercial use, gasoline and fuel oil meters, taxi meters and containers used in measuring. Pre-packaged foods sold in Reading are checked by the department periodically during the year and retail markets are also inspected for unit price compliance. Consumer complaints about weights and measurements of food or fuel or any other commodity, with regard to weight or measure, should be reported to the State Division of Standards.

**Town Planner** – Town Planner’s functions include providing technical and professional support to the Community Planning and Development Commission, Master Plan Advisory Committee, Selectmen and ZBA, in the areas of site plan and special permit review, subdivision regulation, master planning, and zoning by-law drafting and review. The Town Planner is actively involved in most development projects, and serves as a point person for the public, Board of Selectmen and staff-level Design Review Team on a wide spectrum of public and private projects related to economic development, land use, housing, new development and redevelopment.

**Community Planning & Development Commission** – 5 members appointed by the Board of Selectmen for overlapping 3 year terms, unpaid. This commission is charged with making studies and preparing plans concerning the resources, developmental potential and needs of the Town. The commission has the power to regulate subdivision of land. It must hold a public hearing on any proposed zoning changes and report its findings to town meeting. It is responsible for updating, maintaining and implementing the master plan for development of the Town.

**Conservation Commission** – 7 members appointed by the Board of Selectmen for overlapping 3 year terms, unpaid. The Conservation Commission’s function is to promote natural resources and to protect watersheds at the local level. The Wetlands Protection Act gives the commission the responsibility for advertising and conducting public hearings regarding activities in or near any wetlands. The commission has the power to issue orders regulating this activity. The act does not prohibit wetland development but directs how the development should be carried out. The commission has a major responsibility to ensure the water quality of Reading’s municipal water supply.

**Zoning Board of Appeals** – 3 members and 3 associate members appointed by the Board of Selectmen for overlapping 3 year terms, unpaid. This board acts on petitions for variances in zoning and building bylaws, including the sign bylaws. It also grants special permits, such as for accessory apartments and carriage house conversions, hears appeals from decisions of the building inspector.

**Code Enforcement Officers** – appointed by the Town Manager for indefinite terms, paid. A building inspector, wire inspector and plumbing and gas inspector are each appointed to enforce zoning regulations through inspections and permit issuance.

**Historical Commission** – 5 members appointed by the Board of Selectmen for overlapping 3 year terms, associate members appointed for 1 year terms, unpaid. The Historical Commission is charged with the identification and preservation of the Town’s historic assets. The commission serves as the Town’s advocate on historic matters, continually updates an inventory of historical or architecturally significant structures and implements a preservation plan within the Town. The Commission also administers the Town’s demolition delay-by-law.

## **DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE**

**Board of Assessors** – 3 members elected for overlapping 3 year terms, paid for certain duties. While the town meeting decides how much the Town departments may spend, the Assessors determine the equitable assessments of all real and personal property to raise money to meet

these expenditures. The Assessors appoint the Town Appraiser to assist them. The Assessors are responsible for updating the assessed valuations as required by state law.

**Town Treasurer/Collector** – The treasurer/collector is the manager of the Town’s funds, who collects all taxes and payments due the Town, except the electric bills; pays all bills and payrolls; negotiates all bonds and is authorized to borrow in anticipation of revenue and to invest idle money.

**Technology Division** – The Technology Division’s responsibilities include providing computer and communication support for all of the Town Departments (as well as software support for the business functions of the School Department), purchasing hardware, software and computer related supplies, providing computer training for all departments, and developing long range, Town wide communication systems.

**Town Accountant** – The accountant prescribes the methods and supervises the accounting records of Town officers and agencies. He examines all bills and payrolls submitted for payment to see if they are correct. The accountant receives the budget estimates from all departments, prepares monthly statements of the status of each appropriation for the officer authorized to spend money from it and prepares the annual financial report which is published each year in the Town Report. His work is subject to periodic audits required by the state director of accounts.

**Commissioners of Trust Funds** – 3 members appointed by the Board of Selectmen for 3 year overlapping terms, unpaid. The commissioners oversee various trust funds, which are earmarked for specific purposes. Among these are the workman’s compensation fund, the Town and municipal light pensions funds, and cemetery and library trust funds.

**Personnel Administrator** – The Personnel Division is staffed by the Personnel Administrator whose responsibilities include the following: Professional Development and Training programs, Safety Committee, Employee and Retiree Benefits, Monthly Employee Newsletter, Personnel Policies review, pay and classification updates, Affirmative Action, Workers’ Comp and Indemnification programs, information gathering for Union Contracts, and Drug & Alcohol Screening.

## **DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS**

**Director of Public Works** – The direct control of the department is under the Director of Public Works. The policy, rules and regulations of the department of public works are established by the Board of Selectmen. The Town Manager is responsible for the overall supervision of the department. The Public Works Department is responsible for all public works activities: water supply and distribution; protection of natural resources; sewers and sewerage systems; streets and roads; parks and playgrounds; refuse collection, disposal and recycling; forestry services; and maintenance of all municipal buildings and grounds except those of the School Department and municipal light.

**The Board of Cemetery Trustees** – 6 members appointed by the Board of Selectmen for overlapping 3 year terms, unpaid. The Board of Cemetery Trustees sets rules and regulations for the operation of the cemeteries in Town including policies for eligibility to purchase lots, prices

for services and regulations for memorials. The board also controls the expenditures of special cemetery trust funds.

**Town Forest Committee** – 3 members appointed by the Board of Selectmen for overlapping 3 year terms, unpaid. The Town Forest Committee is charged with the care and supervision of the use of the Town Forest, including recreation use and protection of Town water supply.

**The Land Bank Committee** – 3 members appointed by the Board of Selectmen for overlapping 3 year terms, unpaid. This committee keeps information, maps and copies of deeds pertaining to Town owned land.

**Recreation Committee** – 9 members, 8 appointed by the Board of Selectmen and 1 by the School Committee for overlapping 3 year terms, unpaid. This committee evaluates program activity and formulates overall plans for program direction. It is responsible for scheduling the use of the Town parks and the field house and other public school recreation areas when not in use by the schools.

## **DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY**

This department is comprised of the police, fire, animal control and civil defense. All of these functions are under the policy direction of the Board of Selectmen and the administrative direction of the Town Manager.

**Police Department** – the police station in Reading is located on Union Street. There is no jail as such but rather a lock up where persons are confined temporarily awaiting bail or arraignment before the Middlesex Court in Woburn. Reading has approximately 40 permanent police officers. These officers are hired and work under civil service regulations. Reading Police Department protects and serves the public through police action. They provide services in several board areas: crime prevention and suppression, crime reduction, investigation of crimes and apprehension of offenders, movement and control of traffic, the maintenance of public order and public emergency services.

**Fire Department** – There are two fire stations in Reading. The central station is on Main Street, near the center of Town and additional station is on the west side of Town on Woburn Street. Firefighting and control and fire prevention are the main jobs of the fire department. The Fire Department also manages ambulance service for the Town and provides a high level of emergency care. Inspection of commercial and manufacturing properties, school, apartments, nursing homes and other buildings used by the public are an important part of the department's work. The department also checks fire alarm systems in new construction for proper location and tests for proper installation and operation and conducts a similar inspection for smoke detectors whenever private homes change ownership. The department's personnel, who are under civil service, number approximately 50.

**Civil Defense** – State law requires each town in Massachusetts to have a civil defense director who is responsible for establishing and maintaining an organization for civilian defense in case of enemy attack or for disaster relief in any natural emergency. The Fire Chief presently serves as civil defense director.

## **LIBRARY DEPARTMENT**

**Board of Library Trustees** – 6 members elected for overlapping 3 year terms, unpaid. The Board of Library Trustees controls the selection of library materials, has custody and management of the library and its property, and administers monies received as gifts or bequest. The actual maintenance of the library building and its grounds is the responsibility of the Town Manager.

## **SCHOOL DEPARTMENT**

There are 8 public schools in Reading – 5 elementary, 2 middle, and 1 senior high school. The Reading school system has been the recipient of numerous state and national awards and staff members have also been highly recognized. In addition to strong academics, the school system also stresses a strong after school athletic program and an arts and music program.

**Superintendent of Schools** – The superintendent is the chief architect of the educational program in the community and the chief administrator of the programs and policies decided upon the School Committee. He attends all School Committee meetings and supervises the school curriculum, personnel and property.

### **FINDING**

Before the Charter was adopted many of the officers and committees were independently elected, resulting in a lack of coordination and cohesiveness. The Charter provided for the appointment of most of these positions. However a few important boards continue to be elected, allowing voters to maintain direct control over them so that the boards can retain their independence. These boards include the Board of Selectmen, the School Committee, the Library Trustees, the Municipal Light Board and the Board of Assessors. The administrative branch of government is organized into operating agencies each headed by a director.

## **INDEPENDENT BOARDS AND COMMITTEES**

**School Committee** – 6 members elected for overlapping 3 year terms, unpaid. The School Committee determines the educational policy of the Town of Reading and monitors the operation of the school system. They appoint the superintendent of schools and upon his recommendation select administrators and teaching staff. They are responsible for developing budget, evaluating programs and implementing all state laws related to education.

**Regional School District Representative** – elected for 4 year term, unpaid. Reading voters elect a representative to the Northeast Metropolitan Regional Vocational School. This regional school, which is located in Wakefield, serves 12 communities.

**Municipal Light Board** – 5 members elected for overlapping 3 year terms, unpaid. The Municipal Light Board has charge of all the real estate, facilities, personnel and equipment of the Town pertaining to the production of electrical power and establishes policy regarding the administration of the department. Reading Municipal Light purchases power and resells it to consumers in Reading, North Reading, Wilmington and part of Lynnfield. A percentage of the net income is returned to the Town in lieu of taxes.

## **TOWN INFRASTRUCTURE**

### **Public Water**

The Town owns and operates a public water system, with approximately 100 miles of distribution mains and lines serving the entire Town. The water is drawn exclusively from groundwater through wells, in the Town Forest and the Revay Swamp (Ipswich River watershed). Eight wells are located within the 100-Acre Wellfield in the Town Forest, with a maximum combined pumping capacity of 7.55-mgd (million gallons per day); however, due to groundwater contamination traced to North Reading, one of the larger-producing wells has had to be taken offline and aerated to oxidize petrochemical pollutants. There are two wells in the Revay Swamp, with a combined pumping capacity of 1.22-mgd; the smaller of these serves as a back-up, while the larger has been out of service due to salt contamination from Interstate Highway-93 and the near-by State Public Works highway maintenance and storage yard on Lowell Street. The Water Department is exploring two potential new well locations, one additional in the Town Forest, and one in Bare Meadow, a location previously untapped but so far proven inadequate. There are two sources of recharge to the groundwater supply: permeability through the ground surface in the aquifer area, and subsurface infiltration from the Ipswich River and its minor tributaries.

The water drawn from all wells is treated at the Water Treatment Plant, located in the Town Forest. Concentrations of sodium, not removable in treatment, exceed State-recommended levels and are continually monitored. High levels of iron and manganese, naturally occurring in the groundwater, are removed in treatment. Extensive renovations were completed at the Treatment Plant to update this treatment and to eliminate surface discharge of the resulting flocculant and sludge by introducing it diluted into a newly constructed sewer main. A new facility is being planned to further enhance water treatment.

The Town's water system includes three storage tanks, from which water is distributed by gravity to various parts of the network of mains. Located atop the highest point in the center of the Town, the Elevated Tank, built in 1953, holds 750,000 gallons. On top of the second highest point in Town, the Bear Hill Reservoir, a large cylindrical tank built in 1930, holds one-million gallons. In addition, the Water Department owns a tract of land, consisting of 32,000 square-feet on Lothrop Road, at the highest point of Town, Dobbins Hill, to provide for any additional storage that may become necessary.

Average water consumption equaled 1.91-million gallons per day (mgd) in 1990; and throughout the period from 1980 to 1990 has fluctuated between a low of 1.70-mgd in 1982 and a high of 2.64mgd in both 1985 and 1986. Maximum water demand in 1990 was 3.81-mgd and has fluctuated between 2.84-mgd in 1989 and 4.34-mgd in 1983. Commercial and industrial

enterprises account for 14% of the Town's water consumption. Average consumption is projected to equal 2.11-mgd in 2010, and maximum consumption is projected to equal 3.90-mgd in 2010, both within existing ranges. While voluntary water consumption reductions have been sporadically imposed during periods of excessive drought, there has generally not been a problem with meeting peak water demands.

As the Town is entirely dependent for potable water on groundwater sources, the safeguarding of the water quality and quantity of the aquifer and of the river water, which replenish the groundwater, is critical. The aquifer is vulnerable to reductions in impervious surface caused by land development, to snow-removal and ice-control practices of the state and municipalities, to the use of fertilizers and pesticides by property owners, to leachate through contaminated soils and from leaking underground fuel storage tanks, to erosion and contaminated surface runoff, and to sewage infiltration from faulty septic systems and sewer mains. The aquifer is protected by an Aquifer Protection overlay District, specified in the Zoning By-Laws. This district includes those parts of the Ipswich River watershed upgradient of Revay Swamp and the Town Forest Wellfield. It does not protect the groundwater sources of any wells which may be developed in Bare Meadow or Cedar Swamp. The largest unsewered area of the Town is partially located in the aquifer district, and several homes in that area with sewer availability still retain septic systems.

The Aquifer Protection District contains a commercial area, in which 3 gasoline stations and several commercial parking lots are located, posing potential, if not actual, dangers of contamination of groundwater from leaking underground tanks and from surface runoff. The Zoning By-Law restrictions relative to the Aquifer Protection District do not apply retroactively to preexisting land-uses, and they contain some ambiguity regarding the application of the 20%-maximum impervious lot area to the subdivision of existing lots. Furthermore, since the physical extent of the aquifer includes lands in North Reading and Wilmington, not subject to Reading's Zoning By-Laws, the protection of the quality and quantity of groundwater is subject to measures which can only be taken by other jurisdictions.

### **Public Sewer**

The sewer system is owned and operated by the Town and serves approximately 87% of all properties within the Town. While some individual properties throughout the Town are not yet connected to available public sewer, the only major unsewered areas are in the vicinity of Mill and Short Streets and Main Street north of Mill street, and the westerly portion of Longwood Road. There are approximately 90 miles of sewer line within the Town, with 9 pump or lift stations, and with 5,971 local service connections. The system, through 2 outfalls, along the Aberjona River in the west, and along Summer Avenue in the south, and through a small collector in the Border Road/West Street area, discharges into the regional sewerage system operated by the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA), with principal treatment at Deer Island in Boston Harbor. Reading's water is pumped out of the Ipswich River basin and is discharged through the sewer system into Boston Harbor. This diversion deprives downstream communities in the Ipswich River basin of potential water flow, and causes riparian rights throughout the basin to be of increasing concern. A long-term program, with required participation by developers building new subdivisions, has largely been effective in eliminating inflow and infiltration of stormwater and groundwater into the system.

The operation of the sewer system, as well as the water system, is overseen by the Department of Public Works, and is on an enterprise basis, by which the full costs of operations is borne by the water and sewer users, and not through local property taxes. The Water and Sewer Advisory Board recommends all rate changes to the Board of Selectmen. The MWRA projects the installation of metering at the 2 outfalls to determine and charge the Town accurately for the sewer volume entering its system from Reading. Town policy has been to require new development to tie into the public sewer system and to require conversion to public sewer when residential septic systems fail. Still, there are still hundreds of septic systems in the Town, regulated and monitored by the Board of Health.

### **Electrical (RMLD)**

In 1891, the Massachusetts Legislature passed a law enabling cities and towns to operate their own gas and electric plants. This act marked the beginning of public power in the nation, planting the seed that eventually grew into Reading Municipal Light Department. On October 2, 1891, the citizens of Reading held a Special Town Meeting where the first of two required votes was taken to exercise the Town's authority under Chapter 370, Section 1, of the new state law. Those who attended the meeting unanimously voted to study the feasibility of operating a publicly owned power plant within the community.

After several years of study, another Special Town Meeting to discuss the matter was held on May 21, 1894. On August 14 of that same year, voters agreed to appropriate bonds totaling \$50,000 to finance construction of a light plant. Reading's generating station began producing electricity for 47 streetlights and 1,000 incandescent lamps on September 26, 1895.

In 1908, Lynnfield residents applied to RMLD for electric service for their community. They were quickly joined by North Reading residents, some of whom were so eager to obtain electric service that they wired their homes in anticipation. Preliminary negotiations were already underway to furnish a minimum of 200 streetlights in Wilmington, with assurance that 100 customers would apply for service.

Special legislation was enacted on April 8, 1908, authorizing the Town of Reading to sell and distribute electricity to Lynnfield, North Reading and Wilmington. As a result, RMLD began delivering power to Lynnfield Center on December 10, 1909; to North Reading in 1910 and to Wilmington in 1912.

As more customers were added, it became necessary for the plant to increase its capacity and update its generators. The demand for electricity had increased to such a degree that by 1925, the generation equipment was inadequate to carry the peak load. A portion of the current was purchased from Boston Edison Company, and by 1926, the Reading Municipal Light Board had entered into an agreement to purchase all required current from Boston Edison.

There have been decades of advancement and achievement since those early days of electricity, but some things have remained constant. After more than 110 years, RMLD is still committed to reliable service at competitive rates, maintaining that commitment requires astute planning, innovative ideas and close attention to detail.

The Gaw substation on Causeway Road in Reading, constructed in 1969-1970, marked a milestone in allowing RMLD to connect to the grid and purchase power from almost anywhere on the northeast power pool.

Recent technological advances at RMLD include a fiber optic cable network that links all substations for state-of-the-art system monitoring and control. Computer systems are also state-of-the-art, and now include a sophisticated website. Even meter reading is modern and efficient, with an automatic system that uses radio transmitters for optimal accuracy and efficiency. In June 2000, construction was completed on a distribution substation connected to 115,000-volt transmission lines in North Reading, designed to accommodate growth and enhance the entire system's efficiency and reliability. Because reliability is key, RMLD has an ongoing preventive maintenance program aimed at solving problems before they occur.

Today, RMLD serves more than 27,000 customers in its four-town service area. A professional staff of 80+ employees brings a broad scope of utility experience to RMLD's daily operation, including an up-to-date understanding of the evolving energy market. With its peak demand for electricity at more than 155 megawatts, RMLD purchases electricity from a number of different sources through long-and-short-term contracts.

RMLD supports in-lieu-of-tax payments, community development and energy education programs. This includes energy conservation programs, school safety projects, school-to-work partnerships, outreach to senior groups, community support and active memberships in local civic groups.

### **Communication Infrastructure/Cable**

Advancements in technology have resulting in a changing landscape for many services offered directly to Town residents. Specific items include the prevalence of high-speed broadband, DSL and now lasar technology access to the internet offered by companies such as Verizon, Comcast, and whole host of other competitors. The local phone service market has been opened up to competition with local number portability allowing consumers to keep their home phone number if the switch. Cable TV, once a market controlled by capital intensive cable operators is under fire from satellite TV companies as well as telecommunication (phone) firms that are poised to provide higher bandwidth access over improved networks. Cellular service has improved dramatically and federal law has allowed placement of cell phone towers in neighborhoods regardless of local zoning. Even the Town has improved its internal infrastructure, and much of the day to day Town business is conducted via email, with information posted regularly on the Town's website. The impact of this changing landscape has yet to be fully understood. One example may be in the area of Cable TV. As the current broadband service provider (Comcast) customer base is eroded by satellite and other competitors (Verizon), their commitment to the Town to support public service programming (RCTV) may become less attractive given the resulting landscape. The Town will have to understand these type of issues as it crafts policy and negotiates for license renewals with these organizations.

## FINDING

The Town owns and operates a public water system, with approximately 100 miles of distribution mains and lines serving the entire Town. The operation of the sewer system, as well as the water system, is overseen by the Department of Public Works, and is on an enterprise basis, by which the full costs of operations is borne by the water and sewer users, and not through local property taxes. The sewer system is owned and operated by the Town and serves approximately 87% of all properties within the Town.

RMLD serves more than 27,000 customers in its four-town service area. Recent technological advances at RMLD include a fiber optic cable network that links all substations for state-of-the-art system monitoring and control. Advancements in technology have resulting in a changing landscape for many services offered directly to town residents. Specific items include the prevalence of high-speed broadband, DSL and now laser technology access to the internet

## Community

Reading benefits from a vibrant community filled with numerous business, religious, sporting and other community based organizations. A listing of those and their websites can be found below: (**Disclaimer:** The Town does not warrant or make any representations as to the content, accuracy, or completeness of the information contained on this page or any other linked page. Such materials have been compiled from a variety of sources, and are subject to change without notice.)

Chamber of Commerce	<a href="http://www.readingreadingchamber.org/">http://www.readingreadingchamber.org/</a>
Church of the Good Sheperd	<a href="http://www.goodshepherd-reading.org/">http://www.goodshepherd-reading.org/</a>
First Baptist Church	<a href="http://www.fbcreading.org/">http://www.fbcreading.org/</a>
First Congregational Church	<a href="http://www.churchofreading.org/">http://www.churchofreading.org/</a>
Old South United Methodist Church	<a href="http://old-south.org/">http://old-south.org/</a>
Reading Unitarian Universalist Church	<a href="http://www.uureading.org/">http://www.uureading.org/</a>
St. Agnes	<a href="http://www.st-agnes-reading.org/">http://www.st-agnes-reading.org/</a>
St. Athanasius	<a href="http://www.rc.net/boston/stathanasius/">http://www.rc.net/boston/stathanasius/</a>
Reading Pop Warner	<a href="http://www.readingpopwarner.com/">http://www.readingpopwarner.com/</a>
Celebration Trust	<a href="http://www.ci.reading.ma.us/celebration.htm">http://www.ci.reading.ma.us/celebration.htm</a>

Community/Adult Education	<a href="http://home.comcast.net/~rpsadulted/">http://home.comcast.net/~rpsadulted/</a>
Connect the Tots	<a href="http://www.connectthetots.org/">http://www.connectthetots.org/</a>
Girls Scouts Patriots' Trail Council	<a href="http://www.ptgirlscouts.org/">http://www.ptgirlscouts.org/</a>
Boy Scouts Boston Minuteman Council	<a href="http://www.bsaboston.org/">http://www.bsaboston.org/</a>
La Leche League	<a href="http://www.prairienet.org/lli/WebReadingMA.html">http://www.prairienet.org/lli/WebReadingMA.html</a>
Lynnfield, Reading and North Reading Community Partnership for Children	<a href="http://www.partnership4children.org/">http://www.partnership4children.org/</a>
Mystic Valley Elder Services	<a href="http://www.mves.org/">http://www.mves.org/</a>
Newcomers and Neighbors	<a href="http://www.newcomersandneighbors.com/">http://www.newcomersandneighbors.com/</a>
Quannapowitt Players	<a href="http://www.qptheater.com/">http://www.qptheater.com/</a>
Reading Art Association	<a href="http://www.readingart.org/">http://www.readingart.org/</a>
Reading Community Singers	<a href="http://www.readingcommunitysingers.org/">http://www.readingcommunitysingers.org/</a>
Reading Garden Club	<a href="http://www.ci.reading.ma.us/garden.htm">http://www.ci.reading.ma.us/garden.htm</a>
Reading Rotary Club	<a href="http://www.readingmarotary.org/">http://www.readingmarotary.org/</a>
RCTV	<a href="http://www.rctv.org/">http://www.rctv.org/</a>
YMCA	<a href="http://www.ymcaboston.org/">http://www.ymcaboston.org/</a>

The Town is also home to the Burbank Ice Arena, providing a location for local and regional ice related events (hockey and skating).

## **PUBLIC PROPERTY**

### **Public Lands**

Public lands of all types, owned by the Town, Commonwealth, and Federal Government, amount to 2692 acres, or 42% of the Town's total land area. Of this acreage, 1297 acres are either developed or dedicated to established improved uses, and 1395 acres (uplands and wetlands) are undeveloped or unimproved.

The lands, both developed and undeveloped, owned by the Town itself equal 2223 acres, or 35% of its land area; 860 acres of Town-owned land are developed, with public buildings or with

dedicated and improved uses; and 1363 acres are undeveloped open space lands, of which 1189 acres comprise the Town Forest and all conservation lands. State and Federal lands total 469 acres, of which Camp Curtis Guild occupies 275 acres, the two Interstate Highways consume 124 acres, and the railway tracks utilize 32 acres; the only Federal property is the Post Office in Downtown, occupying one acre. Streets and highways occupy 730 acres. Public buildings and facilities occupy 377 acres (including 64 acres schools and 9 acres Municipal Light Department), parks 110 acres, cemeteries 42 acres, public housing 5 acres, and public parking lots 5 acres.

Lands devoted to semi-public institutional uses, such as the YMCA, Austin Preparatory School, two theatrical companies, four fraternal and veterans organizations, and nine churches, total 14 acres. The three privately owned assisted housing complexes occupy 24 acres of land. In addition, the seven properties owned by the Reading Open Land Trust contain a total of 61 acres dedicated as permanent open space.

Several Town-owned properties have been sold to the private sector for re-use. The Prospect Street School and the Lowell Street School were sold and the land divided into house lots. The Old High School on Sanborn and Linden Streets was sold for rehabilitation, subject to the Municipal Building Re-Use Special Permit Zoning By-Law, as condominiums. The former Public Works Garage and Incinerator property on John Street (now Walkers Brook Drive) was sold for redevelopment as a professional research and development' complex.

Of the 801 acres of publicly owned upland, some tracts are suitable for development, and have been declared surplus and offered for sale to the private sector for re-use. The former Landfill (33 upland acres) has been placed under a Purchase and Sales Agreement to a major national developer for construction of a regionally-oriented 750,000-square-foot office park with hotel, subject to a Special Permit Planned unit Development Zoning ByLaw. The former Nike Site at Bear Hill (10 acres) has been offered for sale, subject to a Special Permit Planned Residential Development Zoning By-Law, for development as a residential condominium or apartment complex. The Pearl Street School (5 acres) has been offered for sale, subject to the Municipal Building Reuse By-Law, for residential, life-care facility, or professional office re-use. Attempts are underway to secure financing for the conversion of the Old Central Fire station at Pleasant and Parker Streets for rehabilitation as a permanent Senior Center.

The specific uses, or, reuses, of additional Town-owned property have yet to be definitively ascertained. The Town needs first to keep sufficient uplands to accommodate public uses and facilities for which there is a definite need, such as for cemetery, recreation, affordable housing, and open space and open space corridors (greenways). Not only should individual properties, particularly vacant parcels, be examined for any suitability for definable public uses, particularly for the types outlined above, but public lands which are designated and used for single purposes should be examined to ascertain if additional publicly-needed uses can be suitably accommodated on them. Examples include parcels assigned to the Water Department and uplands portions of Conservation lands which may be suitable for neighborhood oriented recreation and for inclusion in an open-space and greenway network. There are surplus lands, due to size, location, access, or topography, which would not be suitable to meet any identifiable public need. As the retention of public ownership of some of these lands may constitute a potential liability for the Town and would keep them off the tax-base, examination and

determination of an orderly process for disposition, with appropriate re-use parameters and safeguards, should be undertaken.

Public lands of which portions may be appropriate for development, either for public uses such as parks and cemeteries or for private development through sale, include Camp Curtis Guild (195 state-owned upland acres), the Haverhill street Nike Site (15 upland acres), the Dividence Road School property (11.6 upland acres), and the Oakland Road School property (5 upland acres). It is important to note that decisions to dispose of public property must be carefully considered, both as to the appropriateness and timing of sale and as to development and re-use restrictions, because once lands are sold they are no longer available for any needed public use, and because once they are developed they can no longer serve as open space.

### **9.3 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

#### **Fiscal Management**

The requirement for the Town to take this particular goal seriously is grounded in the Town Charter, which establishes the various Town committees and boards, the position of the Town Manager, and an entire section dedicated to Finances and Fiscal Procedures. Passage of Proposition 2 ½ in the 1980's has been a significant external factor affecting the Town and is in part a reflection of this goal. Town Meeting, as the ultimate fiscal decision maker, provides the checks and balances twice a year within the domain of Town Government.

#### **Goal 1 Maintain Fiscal Strength and Responsibility**

##### **Objectives:**

- A. Maintain a fiscally sound annual and multi-year capital planning budget
- B. Apply for grant and other funding mechanisms for federal, state and other organizations consistent with the goals and objectives of the Town
- C. Work with local, state and federal legislative and executive government officials to enhance and secure revenues for required services
- D. Develop an Impact Fee bylaw consistent with State legislation and Town's Master Plan goals to apply to new developments of mid- to large-scale.

#### **Health and Safety**

Health and Safety are issues to consider within the Town Government. While often only viewed in terms of Police and Fire departments, they extend to the Board of Health, Council on Aging and other departments and governmental service providers involved with Civil Defense and Emergency Preparedness. With the creation of a Federal Department of Homeland Security, and new responsibilities levied upon state and local governments on issues such as terrorism, catastrophic events and national health crises, the Town must create and maintain the necessary

infrastructure and procedures to address those events. In addition, the Town continues to be responsible for the mundane but critical day-to-day functions of inspecting local establishments (restaurants), spraying for mosquito control, running flu clinics and maintaining necessary infrastructure.

## **Goal 2 Support Public Health and Safety**

### **Objectives:**

- A. Create and maintain appropriate Town-wide disaster, security and/or health outbreak plans and ensure Town services, departments and nonprofits and other service providers are trained and prepared
- B. Ensure Public Health and Safety is addressed as a result of the expansion and development within the Town

### **Planning**

Strategic Planning is a tool reserved not only for the corporate world, but also the public sector. In order to achieve many of the goals and objectives defined within this Master Plan (which could actually be considered the Parent Strategic Plan for the Town), each responsible individual, department, organization and committee should be following a strategic planning process including the requirement to set internal goals against which progress can be measured. However this should not be a process performed in a vacuum, it must include all stakeholders to be effective, and then kept open with regular communication. This strategic planning process should be instilled at all levels, projects and activities.

## **Goal 3 Utilize Strategic Town Planning to enhance infrastructure and resources**

### **Objectives:**

- A. Strengthen DPW's budget and participation in strategic planning action items in a manner compliant with Master Plan Goals.
- B. Continue to utilize planning as a tool to manage and improve the services of the Town, including but not limited to Pavement Management, Water Distribution, Sewer Improvements, Open Space and Recreation, and initiate new plans as needed.

### **Infrastructure**

To keep existing infrastructure in a state of good condition, capital investments need to target areas requiring attention, before the cost of repair escalates. A large part of this Mater Plan emphasizes those investments that are essential to sustain the Town's assets. New projects as well as other enhancements are given a chance to succeed as long as they are based on a solid and reliable infrastructure.

#### **Goal 4 Maintain Infrastructure**

##### **Objectives:**

- A. Maintain a multi-year budget and review it annually to address short and long-term infrastructure needs.
- B. Fund building maintenance to ensure new and existing buildings lifespans are extended to the fullest extent possible and provide the right environment for intended function.
- C. Investigate and improve the Town sewer system to a capacity that meets demand, and finalize improvements in water treatment.
- D. Expand the Town's parks and recreation areas to a level that meets demand.

##### **Communication**

Communication must be considered in its most broad sense when considering what this goal is trying to achieve. That is a wide reach of effective and clear communications on items ranging from formal Town Governmental responsibilities to a method to facilitate the underlying and accompanying information communication that is inevitable. The Town must encourage active, two-way communication with all stakeholders and utilize both public and private "means." It will be necessary to differentiate communication into unfiltered versus targeted communications, and look at communications at a strategic tool for accomplishing goals and objectives. The Town will need to take advantage of new technologies to improve communication speed, accuracy and reach.

#### **Goal 5 Provide qualitative communications of Town Government issues to residents**

##### **Objectives:**

- A. Develop strategies to disseminate information from Town Government to residents and businesses in the most effective manner.
- B. Evaluate existing communication means to identify needed improvements.

##### **Services**

A set of Town services that lies outside Town administration includes, but is not limited to, public utilities, non-Town services, recreation programs and the compost center. Public and private utilities are part of the infrastructure required for the residents. They need to be reliable, in terms of their performance, as well as non-intrusive, in terms of their appearance. Reading Recreation has a successful history of various programs that are supported by several residents

throughout the year. The programs are intended for the youth, adults and special needs and they use school facilities, Town fields and occasionally initiate group trips.

**Goal 6 Evaluate and Improve Services in Town**

**Objectives:**

- A. Implement technology improvements as planned within various Town departments to improve services.
- B. Perform a comprehensive customer service survey.
- C. Collaborate with public/private utility carriers to ensure a quality service throughout the Town.