8. Community Facilities & Services

Introduction

Tewksbury's historic Town Hall. (Photo by Mary Coolidge, October 2002.)

Community facilities and services are the civic building blocks of a city or town. A community facility is any municipal property that has been developed for public purposes, such as a town hall, library or school buildings. The term also includes local utilities such as public water and sewer, a municipal light plant or a cable television enterprise. Nearly all communities have the "basics" – a city or town hall, a police and fire station – but some have unusual facilities, such as a municipal hospital, airport or civic center. Whether ordinary or unique, the buildings, infrastructure and utilities that local governments offer are designed to provide services for the good of the community. From the tax collector to classroom teachers, the people employed by local government to deliver public services rely on community facilities for their base of operations. It takes both adequate facilities and adequate personnel to serve the public well. Since the capital and operating costs of local government are financed mainly by property taxes, community facilities and fiscal impact are mutually dependent public policy issues. Each is driven by land use choices made at the local level.

Town Government Structure, Operations and Finance

Tewksbury was incorporated in 1734. Throughout its history, the town governed itself under a combination of general and special laws. Today, Tewksbury operates under a Special Act Charter (Chapter 275 of the Acts of 1986), which assigns the town's chief executive powers to an elected five-member Board of Selectmen and a Town Manager appointed by the Selectmen. Other elected and appointed officers such as the Town Clerk, Planning Board and Board of Assessors share some executive-branch responsibilities, but the Board of Selectmen and the Town Manager control most policies, personnel and financial management. The town also has a number of volunteer committees that perform a public service. As would be expected for a town of Tewksbury's size, many local government functions are overseen by professional department heads, e.g., Director of Public Works, Community Development Director and Finance Director, all of whom report to the Town Manager. The town's legislative body is an open town meeting that convenes annually in May.

Tewksbury employs 850 people (full-time equivalent) and the total municipal payroll is $36.8 million.[1] Most of the town's buildings are public schools, but Tewksbury has a beautiful, historic town hall in the center of town, along with a new library and police station, three fire stations, public

[1] Town of Tewksbury to Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR) , "FY02 Schedule A Report and Certification," in EXCEL format [SCHEDA02.xls], 4 February 2003.

works buildings, and several parks, a water supply, treatment and distribution system, and a sewer system. About 57% of Tewksbury's total general fund expenditures support the cost of public education, including school costs shared by town departments.[2]

Expenditures for Community Services

The Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR) collects fiscal year-end data from all 351 cities and towns in the Commonwealth. DOR maintains a substantial database, periodically issues statewide profiles and transmits a variety of data to the U.S. Census Bureau, which in turn reports state and local government data through the national Census of Governments. Both federal and state sources use conventional public finance categories to report local expenditures: general government, public safety, education, public works, health and welfare, culture and recreation, debt service, fixed costs, intergovernmental transfers and simply "other." During the 1990s, Tewksbury's expenditures in several service areas rose significantly while other categories increased minimally (and in constant dollars, they declined). Education, police, culture and recreation and health and welfare all increased by more than 60%.[3] Although the amount expended for debt service increased by nearly 60% during the decade, debt service as a percent of the total budget fluctuated very little – a pattern that indicates sustained attention to debt management. The town issued bonds for the Ryan School, the new library, police station and South Fire Station, and public water and sewer projects in the 1990s. Overall, however, local government expenditures per capita rose by a low 38%. Table 1 presents general fund expenditures in Fiscal Year (FY) 1990 and 2000.

Table 1: General Fund Expenditures, 1990-2000

Category	1990 Expenditure	% Total	2000 Expenditure	% Total	90-00 %Change
General Government	1,564,061	4.3%	2,184,576	4.1%	39.7%
Public Safety	5,540,808	15.3%	8,305,786	8.5%	49.9%
Education	17,246,574	47.5%	27,407,665	51.7%	58.9%
Public Works	4,221,095	11.6%	5,770,662	10.9%	36.7%
Health and Welfare	251,314	0.7%	560,370	1.1%	123.0%
Culture and Recreation	320,169	0.9%	967,639	1.8%	202.2%
Debt Service	3,320,939	9.2%	5,218,730	9.9%	57.1%
Fixed Costs	2,993,235	8.2%	2,302,960	4.3%	-23.1%
Intergov't & Other Exp.	835,037	2.3%	256,185	0.5%	-69.3%
TOTAL	36,293,232	4.3%	52,974,573	4.1%	

Source: DOR, Municipal Data Bank.

Under Tewksbury's general bylaws, the annual budgeting process begins in January when all department managers submit their requests for salaries, operating expenses and small capital needs to the Town Manager. The Finance Department prepares a report of all requests and the Town

[2] Massachusetts Department of Education, "Integrated Education Spending and Per Pupil Cost Report, FY01," in EXCEL format [intcostsum01.xls], 15 January 2003.

[3] DOR, Municipal Data Bank, [database online] "General Fund Expenditures," in EXCEL format [exp90.xls sequentially through exp01.xls], INTERNET at <http:// http://www.dls.state.ma.us/> [updated 24 February 2003; cited 7 March 2003].

Manager meets with department heads to review their requests during January and February. The Town Manager then prepares his recommendations and presents them to the Board of Selectmen in mid-March. A nine-member Finance Committee reviews all reports and recommendations, meets with department heads, holds a public hearing and files its own recommendations the Friday before Town Meeting. The budget must be approved at the Annual Town Meeting in May.

Capital projects – ones that that require separate capital outlays or bond financing – undergo a parallel review process that begins when department heads submit capital requests to the Town Manager while the Town Meeting warrant is open. In Tewksbury, "capital outlay" means "moveable property, of a permanent nature having a normal life expectancy of more than three years or having a purchase cost of $10,000 per item or more and including items such as furniture, office equipment, rolling stock including items purchased on a leasing or lease-purchase basis."[4] The Town Manager reviews all capital requests, prepares and updates the town's Five-Year Capital Improvements Plan and submits it to the Board of Selectmen in early spring.

Revenue for Community Services

The general fund is the mechanism used to account for nearly all of a community's revenue and expenditures each year. There are four categories of general fund revenue: the local tax levy, state aid, non-tax receipts for local services, and miscellaneous funds. Local receipts come from a variety of sources, mainly user fees paid for recreation programs, water and sewer service, building permits, inspections and other direct services provided by local government. During the 1990s, the amount of general fund revenue obtained from property taxpayers in Tewksbury increased by 70% and state aid increased similarly.[5] The percent contribution of each revenue source to total revenue remained nearly constant, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Sources of Revenue in Tewksbury, FY 1990-2000

	1990		2000		90-00
Category	Revenue	% Total	Revenue	% Total	% Change
Tax Levy	19,654,112	52.13	33,434,468	54.54	70.11
State Aid	8,706,781	23.09	14,121,280	23.04	62.19
Local Receipts	7,239,807	19.2	9,667,717	15.77	33.54
Other Revenue	2,102,295	5.58	4,078,411	6.65	94
TOTAL	37,702,995	100	61,301,876	100	62.59

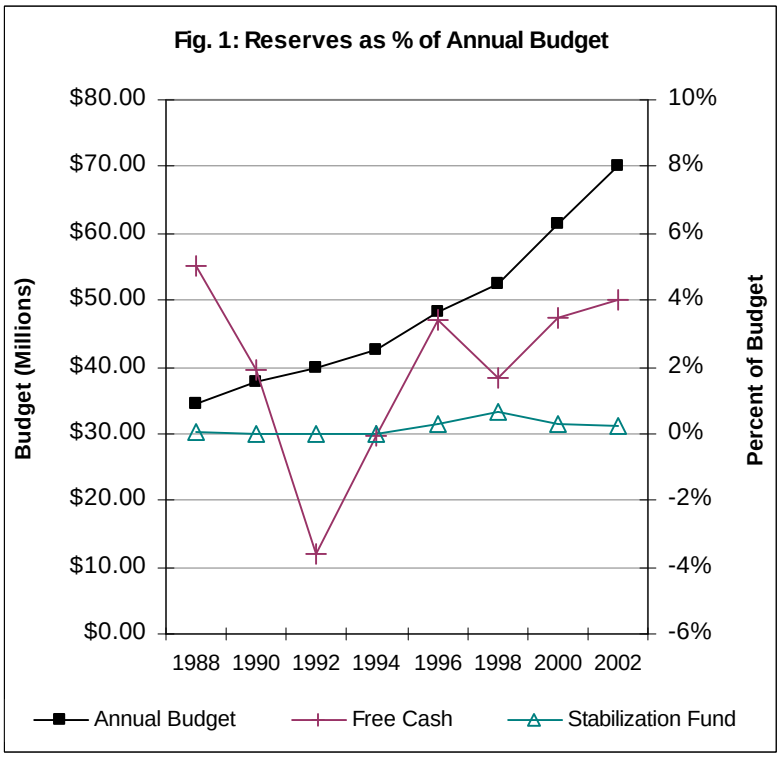
Source: DOR, Municipal Data Bank.

After the recession of the early 1990s, the Commonwealth's fiscal condition remained strong for the rest of the decade. By 2002, the economy had weakened and state government was undergoing a change in administration. Last December, the incoming governor signaled that state aid cuts would begin to take effect this year. Only days after taking office in January, Governor Romney announced a 2.53% reduction in lottery aid to cities and towns, a move that resulted in a $279,477 revenue loss

[4] Tewksbury General Bylaws, Section 2.20.035.

[5] DOR, Municipal Data Bank, [database online] "Revenues by Source," in EXCEL format [revs90.xls sequentially through revs00.xls], [updated 24 February 2003; cited 7 March 2003].

for Tewksbury.[6] Most communities expected to lose even more state aid in FY2004, and they were right. The final FY 2004 aid package approved by the legislature resulted in a $1.1 million reduction for Tewksbury, or an amount that is 7.8% less than what the town received in state aid two years ago.[7] For a middle-class community without large amounts of surplus revenue, losses of this magnitude may affect the level or amount of service provided by many town departments, particularly if the legislature reduces state aid again next year.



While Tewksbury's average single-family tax bill narrowly exceeds the median for the state overall, the town has traditionally levied taxes close to or at the maximum allowed under Proposition 2 ½ each year,[8] which means it has no excess levy capacity on which to draw. In addition, the town operates with fairly low reserves. For example, Tewksbury's "free cash" balance has been only 3-3.5% of the town's total budget for the past several years and the town sets very little aside in what many communities call their "rainy day" account, the Stabilization Fund (see Fig. 1).[9] Overall, Tewksbury appears to devote as many resources as possible to town and school services while keeping residential property taxes low. It has accomplished this with a substantial contribution from business and industrial taxpayers (about 34% of the entire levy each year), hefty state aid increases toward the end of the 1990s, and frequent use of bonds to finance capital projects – a practice desirable to many communities when interest rates on the municipal bond market fell to an all-time low. Table 3 illustrates some of these trends.

---

[6] Massachusetts Municipal Association, "January 2003 9C Cuts to Fiscal 2003 State Budget Local Aid Accounts," in EXCEL format [9Ccuts.xls], INTERNET at <http://www.mma.org> [accessed 15 January 2003].

[7] DOR, Municipal Data Bank, "Net Cherry Sheet State Aid: FY 2000-2004," in EXCEL format [Netscaid0004.xls] [accessed 19 July 2003].

[8] DOR, Municipal Data Bank, "Average Single-Family Tax Bills," "Excess Levy Capacity," in EXCEL formats [bill87-99.xls sequentially through bill02.xls; excp8999.xls sequentially through excp03.xls].

[9] Ibid, "Stabilization and Free Cash as a Percentage of the Budget," in EXCEL format [stab87-01,xls, stab02.xls].

Table 3: Assessed Valuation, Tax Levy and Bonded Indebtedness, 1990-2000

Fiscal Indicator	1990	2000	% Change
Total Assessed Valuation	1,681,233,430	1,931,920,710	14.90%
Residential-Open Space Valuation	1,217,767,600	1,461,418,400	20.00%
Residential-Open Space Tax Levy	12,335,986	21,921,277	77.70%
Levy % of Assessed Value	1.01%	1.50%	
Non-Residential Assessed Valuation	463,465,830	470,502,310	1.50%
Non-Residential Tax Levy	7,318,125	11,513,191	57.30%
Levy % of Assessed Value	1.58%	2.45%	
State Aid	8,706,781	14,121,280	62.20%
Outstanding (Long-Term) Debt	20,490,000	44,132,396	115.40%
Long-Term Debt Per Capita, % Per Capita Income	4.1%	5.7%	
Long-Term Debt % of Assessed Valuation	1.22%	2.28%	
Debt Service % of General Fund Budget	8.80%	8.05%	

Source: DOR, Municipal Data Bank.

Municipal Facilities and Services

Town Hall

Historic Town Hall was built in 1918. It is the locus of the town's services and a distinguished three-story building on the town common. Tewksbury Town Hall houses the town's traditional municipal functions, primarily general government – the Board of Selectmen, the Town Manager, the Town Clerk and Administrative Services. Eighteen employees work in the building. The Town Hall Annex located behind Town Hall is the former public library and 14 employees work here. A renovation project was completed in 2000 and it now houses the Assessor's Office, the Treasurer/Tax Collector, the Auditor and Computer Services. The Building Commissioner, the Board of Health and the Planning and Community Development Department are located in the Department of Public Works (DPW) building on Whipple Road.

The town built handicapped accessible bathrooms and constructed a new roof at Town Hall in 1998, but the building needs additional repairs, renovations and architectural barrier removal. The building's basement and the second floor are not handicapped accessible. In 2000, $150,000 was appropriated at Town Meeting to hire an architect to develop plans to renovate Town Hall, to make it handicapped accessible and to create appropriate office and storage space to relocate 13 town employees housed at the DPW building to Town Hall. (DPW staff would remain at Whipple Road.) The Town Hall plan has been completed, but the implementation has been suspended because funds are not available. Tewksbury residents did not approve $2.8 million at Town Meeting in May 2001 to complete the project.

Public Safety

"Public safety" includes police, fire, emergency medical response, dispatch and inspection services. Like most communities, Tewksbury spends the largest portion of its public safety dollars on police, fire and emergency medical services. Only the public schools are a larger expense to the town.[10]

[10] DOR, Municipal Data Bank, [database online] "General Fund Expenditures," in EXCEL format [exp90.xls sequentially through exp01.xls], [updated 24 February 2003; cited 7 March 2003].

The Tewksbury Police Department receives over 8,000 service calls per year and employs 70 people including, 16 lieutenants and sergeants, 39 full-time detectives and officers, 11 full-time dispatchers, 36 reserve officers, and 2 part-time dispatchers. The town built a new Police Headquarters on Main Street in 1996. This large, modern building has an auditorium-style hall that doubles as meeting space for community groups and the Municipal Police Training Facility. The old police station is surplus property.

The Tewksbury Fire Department employs 51 people at its headquarters and two substations. The Central Fire Station is located near Town Hall at Main and Pleasant Streets. A new substation opened in South Tewksbury in 2000 and the third station is on North Street. The Central Fire Station's roof is the only major system in the building that has been replaced in more than 30 years. The town plans a number of building improvements and repairs in FY04.[11]

The Fire Department also operates Tewksbury's ambulance service and more than 40 of the Fire Department's staff are certified Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT). The Fire Department responds to more than 6,500 calls annually. The Department collected about $353,000 in ambulance fees in 2001, a revenue stream that increased by approximately $50,000 in each of the three previous fiscal years. In addition to fire and ambulance services, the Fire Department is responsible for various inspection functions including smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, underground fuel storage installation and removal permits, and hazardous material response.

The Tewksbury Board of Health and the Building Commissioner are both responsible for a variety of inspections and permits. The Board of Health employs three staff and the Building Department employs six. Their offices are located in the Department of Public Works Building on Whipple Road. This building cannot accommodate any future growth and there are plans to move all of these departments to Town Hall after it is renovated. There are 51 town employees housed at the DPW building.

Public Works

In Tewksbury, all traditional public works functions are consolidated into one Department of Public Works (DPW). The DPW maintains 130 miles of public roads, parks and a cemetery, it manages the water system, the sewer system, sanitation and recycling services, and it handles miscellaneous transportation and equipment hauling. The full-time DPW Director reports to the Town Manager. With recommendations from the DPW Director, the Town Manager sets water and sewer rates. The town does not charge fees for trash removal and recycling services. The DPW employs 38 people and maintains three facilities – the main building on Whipple Road, the Water Treatment Plant and the Parks and Recreation building at the Livingston Street Recreation Complex. DPW equipment is stored at Whipple Road and a small amount is at the Recreation Department.

According to the DPW Director, the equipment inventory is generally adequate. However, Tewksbury needs a vacuum truck for cleaning catch basins. According to the Stormwater Management Plan that Tewksbury filed with the EPA and DEP in July 2003, the town plans to clean catch basins by contracting with a private company until the town's capital budget can accommodate the purchase of a vacuum truck.

[11] David G. Cressman, Tewksbury Town Manager, Capital Improvements Plan FY03-07, 1 February 2002.

Recreation, Culture and Human Services

Recreation

The Tewksbury Recreation Department coordinates the use of the recreational facilities at the town's schools and its seven parks, it provides after school care at the Teen Center, and it runs three summer programs.[12] There is a full-time Recreation Director and a number of part-time, seasonal staff. The Recreation Department supervises the Livingston Street Recreation Complex, which is maintained by the DPW. Private sports leagues and individual schools are responsible for maintaining the other facilities.

Tewksbury Public Library

The new Tewksbury Public Library at 300 Chandler Street opened in March 1999. This facility is the culmination of a 10-year planning effort by community volunteers, library staff, and local and state officials. Construction was funded by a combination of long-term debt ($3 million), a state library construction grant ($2.3 million) and private fundraising ($600,000). A Board of Library Trustees comprised of town residents provides general policy guidance, long-term planning and oversight. The library has 18 full-time employees, including a director, six part-time employees, five part-time pages, along with full-time and part-time custodians. Its 35,750 ft^2 of usable floor space provide plenty of space for shelf, administrative, technology and reading areas needs. In addition, the library has a full kitchen and six meeting rooms, the largest of which seats 100 people. Nearly 500 community meetings were held at the library in FY 2002.

There are 191,000 materials available for circulation in the library's holdings. About 3,000 books and periodicals and 675 videos/cassettes/CDs circulate each week. There are also 28 computers available for public use. The library reports no pressing capital needs at this time, but the Library Director and the Board of Library Trustees have identified three long-range goals: providing current technology, services, programs and materials; preparing a disaster plan to protect library assets; and evaluating long range staffing needs and training.

Elder Services

The Tewksbury Council on Aging (COA) is housed at the town-owned Senior Center at 175 Chandler Road. The COA operated Senior Center is a significant community service provider that has three full-time staff, two part-time employees and more than 125 volunteers. The Senior Center is open 42 hours a week and occasional nights and weekends. In each of the past three years, more than 1,000 of Tewksbury's seniors participated in an event or received a service at the Senior Center. Activities and services include: exercise programs, an orchestra, craft classes, monthly dinner socials, lectures, health and nutrition services and screenings, tax preparation, and assistance with transportation, home heating, tax preparation and insurance. The COA served more than 14,000 congregate meals at the Senior Center and delivered 9,760 meals through its Meals on Wheels Program in FY02. In addition, the building has been used occasionally as an emergency shelter.

The elderly (age 65+) as a percentage of Tewksbury's population increased from 9.4% in 1990 to 11.5% in 2000.[13] In absolute terms, the elderly population in Tewksbury increased by 746 people, or an unusually high 22.5% – mainly among persons between 75-84 years of age. In addition,

[12] See also, Open Space and Recreation Element.

[13] See also, Technical Paper #5, Population and Housing.

Tewksbury's soon-to-be elderly population (age 55-64) increased by 19% between 1990 and 2000. These demographic trends combined with current space limitations at the 8,000-ft2 Senior Center have prompted local officials to begin planning for a new building for the town's seniors. The present facility has only two program rooms and its three offices are shared by the director, staff and volunteers of the COA, and the town nurse. The building is located on a 3-acre site and lacks enough space for all of the COA's program, storage and office needs. The facility also needs more parking. In FY 2001, the town appropriated $150,000 to procure designer services to renovate and expand the Senior Center. A nine-member Senior Center Building Committee comprised of the COA Director, local officials and senior residents has retained an architect and the building's renovation and expansion is in the design stage. They are expected to propose a 23,000 ft^2 facility.

Public Schools

The Tewksbury School Department currently employs 465 people full-time, including 297 teachers, 37 teaching assistants, 19 administrators, along with support, clerical and custodial staff. Approximately 70% of the school district's budget is devoted to staff salaries. The School Department's administrative offices are located at the Dewing School on Andover Street with additional offices at the Center School on Pleasant Street. There are presently 4,608 K-12 students and 115 Pre-K students enrolled in the Tewksbury Public Schools. The town has eight school buildings – the historic Ella Fleming School, Dewing, Heath Brook, North Street and Trahan Elementary Schools, Ryan Elementary, Wynn Middle and Memorial High School (see Table 4). In addition, some Tewksbury students attend the Shawsheen Valley Regional Vocational/Technical High School in Billerica, which accommodates a total of 1,172 students from Bedford, Billerica, Burlington, Tewksbury and Wilmington and is governed by a regional school committee.

Table 4: Tewksbury Public School Buildings

School	Year Built (Renovated)	Gross Floor Area (Sq. Ft)	2000-03 Enrollment
Ella Fleming (Pre-K)	1744	4,200	109
Dewing Elementary (K-4)	1970	78,207	681
Heath Brook (K-4)	1957 (1975)	55,467	498
North Street (K-4)	1952 (1975)	40,350	438
Trahan School (Pre-K-4)	1954	40,350	380
Ryan Elementary (5-6)	1999	106,000	780
Wynn Middle (7-8)	1963 (2003)	123,590	821
Memorial High (9-12)	1959 (1981)	182,800	1,016

Source: Tewksbury School Department, February 2003.

The New England School Development Council (NESDC) provides enrollment forecasts to school districts throughout New England. In 1999 – before Census 2000 – NESDC prepared a 5-year enrollment forecast for the Tewksbury School Committee and projected that there would be 4,439 K-12 students in the Tewksbury Public Schools in 2003 and 4,409 in 2004,[14] yet the town has already surpassed these estimates. Between 1989-1999, the number of K-12 students in Tewksbury

[14] New England School Development Council, Enrollment Projections by Grade for Tewksbury, MA, 21 October 1999.

increased by 16%, placing Tewksbury among the Commonwealth's "low growth" school systems in a state Department of Education study three years ago.[15] However, between 1990- 2000, the number of school-age children increased by 24% (see Table 5), although Tewksbury's under-5 population declined in the same period. NESDC projected only a 3.2% enrollment growth between 1999-2004.

Table 5: Population Change by Age, 1990 – 2000

Age	1990	2000	% Change
Under 5 years	2,120	2,020	-4.72
5-9 years	1,814	2,163	19.24
10-14 years	1,657	1,980	19.49
15-17 years	1,177	1,619	37.55
Total Under 18	6,768	7,782	14.98
Total 5-17	4,648	5,762	23.97

Sources: Bureau of the Census, Census 2000, Summary File 1, Table DP-1; 1990 Census of Population and Housing, Summary File 3, Table PO-13.

Two large projects – one ongoing and another recently completed – represent the town's first major school additions in nearly 20 years. In 1999, the 106,000 ft² John F. Ryan Elementary School was built on Pleasant Street behind the administrative offices at Center School. A year later (2000), residents agreed to renovate and expand the Wynn Middle School on Griffin Way. This $17.5 million project should be completed in the fall of 2003. During construction, the town's 7th and 8th graders have been housed at the Ryan and Memorial High Schools. In addition to the Wynn Middle School renovations, Tewksbury's Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) calls for several school projects in the next five years. For example, the Center School needs an elevator to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In addition, the High School needs a new gym floor and one of the elementary schools requires renovation and expansion. Other than the Ryan School, all of Tewksbury's elementary schools are more than 30 years old and none have had major system upgrades. The CIP anticipates projects to address needs in all elementary schools over the next 5-10 years. A School Space Study Committee is working on an analysis of long-range school building improvement priorities.[16]

Other Facilities

Public Water

Though most governmental services are "salary intensive" in that a majority of their expenditures apply to personnel, a water system is "capital intensive," i.e., expenditures are mainly for capital asset maintenance, repair and improvement, and upkeep and replacement of fixtures and equipment. Not surprisingly, about 19% of Tewksbury's total long-term debt is attributable to water system improvements. Households and businesses that obtain water from the town pay user

[15] Massachusetts Department of Education, "Foundation Enrollments in Massachusetts Cities and Towns, 1993-1999," in EXCEL format [founden_app.xls], INTERNET at <http://www.mass.gov.doe> [accessed 24 October 2001].

[16] Christine McGrath, Tewksbury Public Schools Superintendent, to Andrea M. Underwood, 12 March 2003.

charges in accordance with a rate schedule set by the Board of Selectmen. Ratepayers generate more than $3 million in revenue each year.[17]

Since 1998, the Merrimack River has supplied all of the water for Tewksbury's municipal water system, which serves nearly the entire town. Only a few homes and Tewksbury State Hospital rely on private wells. The DPW Water Division manages an extensive distribution network that includes a water treatment plant, a one-million gallon underground storage facility on Catamount Road and a recently refurbished, one-million gallon water storage tower on Astle Street. In the past, Tewksbury has purchased supplemental water from Andover and Lowell, but this was not necessary in 2002. The town also owns several wellfields, all of which have been abandoned as public water supplies. According to the DPW Director, bringing these wells back on line would be very expensive and the water would require extensive treatment.[18] In 2002, the town sold the 68-acre Court Street wellfields for $2.8 million.[19]

Public water supplies are regulated by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), which operates under a layering of federal and state environmental laws that emanate from the U.S. Clean Water Act of 1972. As a supplier of public drinking water, the town is required to monitor the quality of water it distributes to households and other customers, to track and report annual consumption statistics for the community as a whole and for each major class of land use, and above all, to live within the guidelines of state-issued permits for total water withdrawal under the Massachusetts Water Management Act (WMA). In Tewksbury, total water consumption increased 20% between 1997-2001, from 907 million gallons (mg) to 1,051 mg.[20] Residential demand for water increased by 11% during these years and residential water users accounted for 61-63% of the total demand on the system. The remaining demand comes from industrial and agricultural users (22%) and a significant portion is unaccounted for (17%). According to the town manager, leaks and unmetered municipal and school buildings are the cause of most of the unaccounted water use. To remedy some of these problems, the DPW tries to find and repair leaks and replaces faulty meters.

In 1996, Camp Dresser and McKee prepared a report for Tewksbury and outlined a plan for the town's water treatment system.[21] This report analyzed the town's critical water supply and treatment needs and outlined three significant priorities: increase the capacity of the town's water treatment plant from 3.5 to 7.0 million gallons per day (mgd); provide permanent residuals "sludge" dewatering facilities; and develop ozonation improvements to meet future drinking water standards. Since the report was issued, the town completed a project (2002) to increase the capacity of the water treatment plant to 7.0 mgd and it will begin a project this summer to expand the town's sludge facility. The third phase of the plan is scheduled to begin in FY06.[22] The DPW Director has

---

[17] Town of Tewksbury, "FY 02 Schedule A," Parts I, X.

[18] William Burris, Tewksbury Public Works Director, to Andrea M. Underwood, 12 February 2003.

[19] Town of Tewksbury, "FY02 Schedule A."

[20] Town of Tewksbury to DEP, Annual Public Water Supply Statistical Reports, (1997, 2001).

[21] Camp, Dresser and McKee, Inc., Town of Tewksbury, MA Water Treatment Plant Facilities Proposed Development Plan, (May 1996).

[22] Cressman, Capital Improvements Plan FY03-07.

also described several water distribution needs.[23] For example, South Tewksbury needs another 2 mg in water storage capacity. In addition, the town has many 50-year old transite (cement) pipes and some two-inch water mains that need to be replaced, along with interconnections to increase water pressure. In July 2003, the Board of Selectmen appointed a committee to study water storage and alternative solutions to the town's water distribution needs.

Public Sewer System

During the 1980s and 1990s, Tewksbury planned and built five phases of a town-wide sewer system that was to be constructed in 17 phases.[24] The sewer system discharges to the Duck Island Waste Water Treatment Plant on the Merrimack River in Lowell. After completion of the first five phases, the project was suspended and presently 40% of the town is sewered. However, town meeting approved funds three years ago to establish a Sewer Committee that would develop a plan to complete the final six phases. The Committee and its consultant presented their report to the town in October 2002. Phase six will be sent out to bid in April 2003. The remainder of the project is expected to cost $80.6 million and should be completed in 2011. It will be funded separately from the general fund through an enterprise fund – a type of revenue fund for municipally owned public utilities, hospitals, airports and other revenue-generating capital assets that provide a self-supporting service. This is the first time an enterprise fund has been used in Tewksbury. The connection fee from the main pipe to individual houses or buildings is increasing from $800 to $3,000, payable over five years at $600 per year, at no interest to town residents, and sewer rates are expected to double.[25]

Cost of Community Services

Tewksbury is a pleasant, attractive suburb of middle-class residents who value what their community offers: good schools and recreation facilities, safe, friendly neighborhoods, and conveniently located businesses that provide most of the goods and services people need on a daily basis. The town's continued growth has largely reinforced what living in Tewksbury means to the majority of its population: an affordable, family-oriented community.

For towns like Tewksbury, providing a stable base of high-quality community services is more difficult than many realize. Its declining population growth rate since 1970 has not alleviated pressure to provide services on one hand or maintain its affordability on the other. Instead, the pressures have changed. Between 1990-2000, Tewksbury absorbed new housing units and households at a rate that significantly exceeded the statewide average. Its household size may be smaller today, consistent with national trends, but the percentage of family households with school-age children in Tewksbury remains above average for the Commonwealth as a whole. During the past decade, the number of family households in Tewksbury increased by 8.5%. Moreover, the town absorbed a 24% increase in its school-age population – growth that occurred not only because of new homes built during the 1990s, but also homes built during the last half of the 1980s, the recycling of older homes and, to a lesser extent, turnover within the town's rental units. Regardless of whether

[23] Burris, to Andrea M. Underwood, 12 February 2003.

[24] Tewksbury Open Space and Recreation Committee, Open Space and Recreation Plan, 1998-2003, (1998), 43-44.

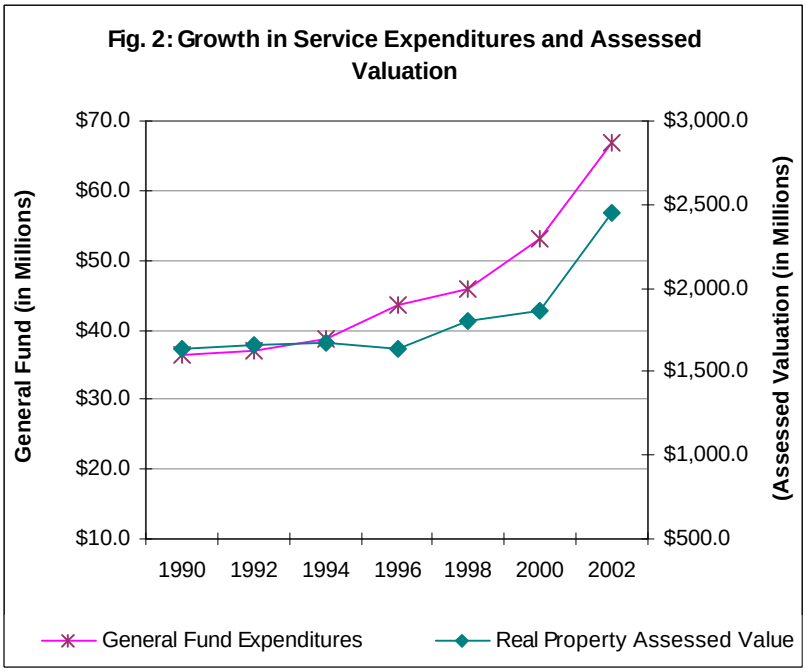
[25] Burris, to Andrea M. Underwood, 12 February 2003.

Tewksbury's school enrollments qualify as "low-growth" compared to many rapidly growing towns along I-495, demand for school services has played a major role in shaping the town's fiscal profile.[26]

Unlike the state's highest-growth communities, many of which are also its most affluent, Tewksbury does not have a sizeable base of high-value homes. Even though new homes are assessed at higher values than its mature housing stock, Tewksbury's appeal to middle-income homebuyers owes in part to the affordability of its housing market – a condition that helps to explain the town's modest property values. These modest values directly influence the amount of tax revenue Tewksbury receives to pay for town and school services. Table 6 illustrates the estimated present-day gap between residential service costs and revenue in Tewksbury. It confirms what local officials and most residents know from living in town: a surplus in revenue from business, industrial and open space taxpayers helps to pay for community services that benefit everyone and reduces the cost of local government for homeowners. In Tewksbury today, the aggregate cost of residential services – municipal and school – is about $1.27 for every $1.00 generated by residential taxpayers.

Not all of Tewksbury's community service cost increases are attributable to new residential development. The town has also absorbed new non-residential development: commerce and industry that generate needed revenue but also create service costs. During the 1990s, Tewksbury gained about 57% of its "new growth" tax revenue from homes and 43% from commercial and industrial expansion.[27] However, as in most communities across the state, commercial and industrial property assessments in Tewksbury declined throughout the decade because even though housing starts improved after the recession, non-residential property values recovered slowly. In many towns, commercial and industrial values did not reach pre-recession levels until 1999. As a result, while Tewksbury gained new business investment and incurred the associated cost of local services – mainly police and public works – the taxable value of business property did not grow at the same pace as total government spending. This, coupled with the amount of new-home development and its associated service costs, partially explains the widening gap between Tewksbury's residential and non-residential tax rate.

Fig. 2: Growth in Service Expenditures and Assessed Valuation



[26] Bureau of the Census, Census 2000, Summary File 3, Tables DP-1, P15, P16; 1990 Census, Tables P011, P021, P023.

[27] DOR, Municipal Data Bank, "New Growth Revenue," in EXCEL format [grow92-00.xls, grow01.xls, grow02.xls].

Between 1990-2000, the residential tax rate in Tewksbury rose by 48% while the tax rate for commercial, industrial and personal property taxpayers increased by 55%.

Tewksbury may need to consider ways to reduce its overall development potential. However, compared to areas already developed for homes, shops, offices and industrial employers, the town's remaining developable land is not very substantial. As Tewksbury's established housing stock recycles and brings new residents into town, there will be periodic surges in service demands. Costs will continue to rise, and if recent trends provide a basis for anticipating future possibilities, the cost of town and school services in Tewksbury will rise at a faster rate than the assessed value of its taxable real estate (see Fig. 2). Costs generated by inefficient land use – excess miles of roads to maintain, water consumption that demands both an adequate supply and more storage and distribution facilities, sewer extensions, storm water drainage facilities, and more public safety personnel – may be reduced or avoided by policies that encourage reinvestment over new growth.

Table 6: Cost of Community Services[28]

"Fall Back" Ratios by Land Use		81.30%	16.30%	2.40%
Expenditure Category	FY 2002	Residential	Commercial-Industrial	Open Space
General Government	2,608,141	2,120,419	425,127	62,595
Public Safety	9,577,832	7,786,777	1,561,187	229,868
Public Works	7,181,980	5,838,950	1,170,663	172,368
Health & Human Services	613,431	613,431	0	0
Culture & Recreation	1,253,168	1,253,168	0	0
Schools	30,940,807	30,940,807	0	0
Debt Service	5,750,149	4,674,871	937,274	138,004
Insurance & Benefits	8,923,666	7,254,940	1,454,558	214,168

[28] Notes to Table 6. (1) The "Cost of Community Services" (COCS) analysis shown in Table 6 is based on a land use-fiscal policy model developed by the American Farmlands Trust in the late 1980s. Like all other widely used fiscal impact tools, COCS assumes a direct relationship between the proportional value of real property and the community service costs it generates. In COCS parlance, the proportional values of residential, commercial-industrial and open space properties are called "fall-back ratios." It is important to note that in a COCS study, "open space" means Chapter 61 and 61A land and larger land holdings, both vacant and underdeveloped. It does not include publicly owned open space or land owned by non-profit organizations. As a result, some land that the local assessor would classify as residential, commercial or industrial for tax purposes must be reclassified as "open space" in the COCS model. This is why the proportional values (fall-back ratios) differ from the relative share of assessments on Tewksbury's tax rolls: in FY 02, residential property constituted 79.6% of the town's real property assessed valuation and commercial-industrial property, 20.4%. (2) The model captures and distributes all sources of revenue to the town, not only property taxes. The estimated allocation of revenue in Table 6 is based on an analysis of the town's FY02 "Schedule A" report to the Department of Revenue and the authors' experience in other communities. (3) Costs have generally been assigned to land uses by fall-back ratio except for human service and culture-recreation costs, which are generated almost entirely by residential land uses, and schools, which are exclusively generated by residential land uses.

General Fund Total	66,849,174	60,483,363	5,548,808	817,002
% Expenditures/Land Use		90.48%	8.30%	1.22%
Revenues (Local/Non-Local Totals)	66,127,295	47,650,163	16,982,785	1,494,347
Cost-Revenue Ratio		1.27	0.33	0.55
FY02 Tax Levy (Approx. Allocation)		24,739,573	12,389,395	818,020
Ratio on Levy Alone		2.44	0.45	1.00

Data Sources: Tewksbury Town Accountant, Tewksbury Assessor's Office. Calculations by author.

Seemingly, the challenge for Tewksbury has less to do with the amount of future growth than with the kind of growth that occurs and the town's competitiveness for attracting residential, commercial and industrial reinvestment. For example, many of Tewksbury's existing commercial properties are developed at low rates of land utilization, as evidenced by floor area ratios of .20 or less along portions of Route 38. Although the corridor seems "built up," its visual and operational problems mask what is actually an inefficient land use pattern and, in turn, a collection of sites assessed at low values per square foot compared to other communities with substantial commercial zones. The issue is not artificially low assessments by the town's assessing department. Rather, it is underutilized land that reduces both the income and investment worth of commercial property. Development that helps to control the rate of cost growth, makes best use of existing infrastructure and maximizes the value of non-residential property appear crucial to providing community facilities and services at a price that remains affordable to Tewksbury's population, young and old.

Master Plan Goals

The Master Plan Committee's Community Vision Forums (October-November 2002) identified the town's strengths and problems, several of which directly influence this element of the Master Plan. Participants identified recreation facilities, quality schools and municipal services (the police and fire departments in particular) among their town's key strengths. Notably, however, they expressed concern about the adequacy of school space: in particular, classrooms. They also expressed concerns about an erosion of public trust in town government, yet many of the practices they objected to seem to have occurred because town officials have tried hard, with very few resources, to preserve Tewksbury's affordability as the town grows and changes.

The visioning process culminated in 15 goals. Three of them relate directly to the town's present and future needs for community facilities and services:

- Establish and follow capital improvement and asset management plans to assure the adequacy of municipal and school facilities.
- Provide quality municipal and school services at a price affordable to average homeowners.
- Establish and follow sustainable economic development policies to provide local employment and tax revenue, encourage a diverse economic base and direct business and industrial growth to appropriate locations.

It is possible to realize these goals by capitalizing on Tewksbury's assets, encouraging lower cost, higher value development, providing a climate that encourages elected and appointed leaders to work together, and strengthening the town's civic culture. The Land Use Element addresses

alternatives to increase the value of Tewksbury's land and reduce or stabilize growth in the cost of serving new development. Tewksbury's most significant public facility and service needs involve local government's capacity to provide services, and to manage, maintain and finance improvements to land and buildings controlled by town and school departments.

Analysis of Needs and Planning Considerations

Tewksbury delivers a wide range of services to its residents and businesses. The services range from public safety provided by the police and fire departments to human services such as a senior center, town water and sewer service, waste collection and disposal, cemeteries, and cultural and recreational programs. In addition, the town operates its own K-12 school system. All of these services require various buildings, parks, playfields and other facilities from which to operate. Tewksbury has recently invested in several capital improvement projects in order to provide adequate facilities for local government and school operations. For example, the town has built a new library, police station and elementary school, and renovations at the middle school have been underway for more than a year. Plans are currently underway to expand the existing senior center or build a new one. As a result of these projects, Tewksbury has incurred a considerable amount of long-term debt since 1990. The town's debt service payments rose by nearly 60% during the 1990s and by another 30% between FY 2000-FY2002.

Tewksbury's new Police Station on Main Street. (Photo by Mary Coolidge, October 2002.)

What is remarkable about Tewksbury is not how generously funded its town and school departments are, but rather, how much they accomplish each year even though the town spends less per capita than many comparably sized communities in Massachusetts. Still, Tewksbury has many unmet or minimally addressed needs. Three important ones were identified during the Master Plan process, all involving Tewksbury's capacity to provide quality, affordable services as the town continues to grow and change.

1. Tewksbury's local government would benefit from a comprehensive approach to capital planning and asset management.

Tewksbury's Five-Year Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) is an annual report from the Town Manager to the Board of Selectmen. It lists and forecasts a schedule for building construction, repair and various public works projects, along with sources of funds. The town does not have a facilities maintenance division, so each department is responsible for maintaining its own buildings while

municipal and conservation land appear to have no active property management.[29] In addition, Tewksbury does not yet have a comprehensive school building and renovation plan. Six of the town's eight schools have not been updated in more than 30 years. The School Space Committee, comprised of School Committee members and school administrators, is trying to prepare a space needs report but this effort is not completed. Like most towns in Massachusetts, Tewksbury seems to plan for school and municipal needs separately. The town provides little in the way of planning resources to elected or appointed officials and departments that have to manage the town's capital assets, and there is not a long-range capital planning process in place that enlists broad participation by all agencies affected by the CIP.

The procedures for developing Tewksbury's capital improvements plan should be strengthened and made more inclusive, considering models in towns like Tewksbury that have a large physical plant, multiple demands for services and limited financial resources. A comprehensive capital planning process can help towns maintain high quality services and broaden local understanding of the relationship between capital needs and operating needs. By increasing access to the decision-making process, a comprehensive CIP can also build public support for programs, policies and directions chosen by a community's leadership. Tewksbury has pressing needs for modernization and upgrades to its school facilities, town hall renovations and expansion, and land management. Given the uncertainty of future School Building Assistance Bureau (SBAB) support for school projects, the burden of school construction finance may fall entirely on cities and towns – a situation that will be all but impossible for communities like Tewksbury, with many moderate-income households, little new growth revenue.

2. The process for identifying and disposing of surplus municipal property needs to be made open and more inclusive.

There appear to be no clear policies for disposing of obsolete buildings and surplus town land in Tewksbury.[30] The town manager tries to engage town boards and departments in reviewing properties that may be candidates for disposition, but there has not been a forum to discuss potential sites, the implications of retaining or selling them, or choosing from one or more reuse possibilities. Many residents have expressed strong feelings about the disposition of the Foster Street School and the Court Street well field, which suggests that a different kind of disposition process should be instituted. It may not always be obvious to those inside town government, but in communities like Tewksbury that have so little open space and only the most basic public facilities, improved and unimproved assets – buildings and land – mean a great deal to residents, especially those who live near property owned and controlled by the town. A participatory process to dispose of decommissioned buildings and surplus land, including opportunities for public comment and discussion, could generate entrepreneurial ideas and increase public trust in town government. Local officials should never move forward with plans to dispose of town property without first consulting with neighborhood residents (see also, Open Space & Recreation Element).

[29] Steven Sadwick, Director of Community Development, to Andrea M. Underwood, 13 February 2003.

[30] Ibid.

3. Tewksbury needs more capacity to focus on water resource management.

Water management, be it drinking water, wastewater, stormwater, flood plains or wetlands, appears repeatedly throughout the Master Plan. Two 75-year rain storm events in 1999 and 2000 and a 25-inch snow storm in 2001 all caused considerable flooding, destroyed culverts and bridges and presented a variety of challenges to the Public Works, Fire, Police and Civil Preparedness Departments.[31] These events, together with continued development and a new federal stormwater mandate, underscore local government's responsibility to protect public health and safety and the town's natural resources.

The Land Use and Natural and Cultural Resources elements reinforce that Tewksbury has had significant problems with flooding, septic system failures, nutrient loading and wetlands protection. There are a number of plans, projects and regulations that impact the town's hydrology and its water resources. A new federal stormwater management mandate combined with existing local and state wetlands bylaws, the Rivers Protection Act, and the town's Groundwater Protection Overlay District, subdivision regulations, zoning bylaws and sewer expansion project all place demands on local government to protect public safety and water resources and guide land development.[32]

COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES ELEMENT

The Community Facilities and Services Element focuses mainly on the capacity and preparedness of local government to finance and deliver services. Tewksbury has not grown very rapidly in recent years and there is no indication that its growth rate will increase in the foreseeable future. Its capital facility needs have less to do with serving more people than with addressing deferred maintenance and renovating or replacing outgrown or obsolete buildings. Similarly, the town's operating challenges have little to do with population growth. Rather, the challenges involve paying for ordinary local services in a state with fluctuating aid policies, a cap on property taxes and no authority for cities and towns to collect impact fees or otherwise require development to offset the costs it generates.

Tewksbury's recent accomplishments – a new fire substation in South Tewksbury, a new police station, library and elementary school, and middle school renovations – are commendable. The town has many more capital improvement needs to address, however, including attention to its historic town hall, building a new senior center and most likely, major renovations to other school buildings. In addition, the town needs to examine the adequacy and condition of its existing recreation areas and increase the amount of public open space while still maintaining a basic commitment to routine capital expenditures, e.g., road maintenance and reconstruction. All of these

---

[31] David G. Cressman, Tewksbury Town Manager, Annual Report Town (2001), 72.

[32] Under the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Storm Water Phase II Rule, coverage of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) storm water program was expanded to include small MS4s, e.g., Tewksbury. In July 2003, Tewksbury filed the required Storm Water Management Plan, which includes a comprehensive storm water management program to improve the town's waterbodies by reducing the quantity of pollutants that can enter storm sewer systems during storm events.

improvements will need to be funded if the town expects to maintain the quality of life that residents expect.

Community Facilities and Services Policies

Capital planning: structure and process. Tewksbury should revise its capital improvements plan process in order to increase access to decision-making and strengthen public understanding of the relationship between community facilities and the operations they house. The town would establish and institute a capital planning process with four features:

- Define acceptable levels of service and building/facility standards. The acceptable levels of service would form the basis for indicators of facility adequacy or improvement needs, and guide a system of ranking and prioritizing town and school facility projects.
- Set criteria to guide financing decisions. In addition to need indicators, capital project criteria might include competitiveness factors such as population served, number of employees affected by a project, likelihood of leveraging other funds, or a project's capacity to meet multiple objectives of the town. They should also include debt capacity thresholds such as a maximum for net debt per capita and debt service as a percent of general fund revenue, and standards to distinguish general fund from non-general fund projects.
- Identify non-local sources of revenue. For example, town hall renovations may be eligible for a historic preservation grant, a very-low-interest loan from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, or CDBG funds to help pay for architectural barrier removal. In some cases, the scheduling of projects that qualify for non-local revenue sources may need to be adjusted to reflect application deadlines.
- Integrate school and municipal space needs.

Toward this end, the town should adopt a capital improvements plan bylaw that authorizes a capital planning committee to review and rank each year's project requests, make recommendations to town meeting, and assist with long-range planning and financing policies. The committee's review and ranking process should be open and participatory, enlisting other local officials affected by the CIP to advise and reach agreement about the town's short- and long-range priorities. A process such as this will help to improve communication among town boards and increase consensus about Tewksbury's most important capital priorities.

Town buildings study. Tewksbury has not conducted a comprehensive review of its municipal buildings in many years. Like most communities, Tewksbury seems to handle extraordinary maintenance and repairs when deferring them is no longer an option. The town clearly needs to invest in town hall improvements, a project that will likely be expensive due to the building's historic significance, deteriorating condition and space inadequacies. Tewksbury should retain a qualified architect to conduct a comprehensive building inventory, space needs study and code analysis, including recommendations and a capital plan for preferred options.

Asset management. A standing public assets committee with advisory and oversight responsibility for planning, extraordinary maintenance and repair, and construction of public facilities may be very useful in Tewksbury because it would bring sustained attention to the town's building improvement needs. It makes sense to charge the same group with responsibility for advising the town on facilities that are obsolete for their original purpose and cannot reasonably be altered to serve other public purposes today. From time to time, Tewksbury has sold town-owned land or buildings that

were deemed to be surplus property. In at least two cases, the dispositions have been controversial and they shed light on the need for a better process to identify and dispose of municipal assets. A committee that can evaluate all town property and advise the Selectmen and Town Manager, following an appropriate public review and comment process, could help Tewksbury reach broad agreement within the community about the long-term use of town buildings and land. The committee should establish criteria not only for identifying land and facilities to retain and those to be declared surplus, but also for choosing reuse options for property the town decides to sell or lease for private development. In addition, a public review process that includes residents, boards, committees and town departments in designating developers would also provide citizens with more control over the outcome of disposition decisions. Land retained for permanent open space should be transferred to and managed by the Conservation Commission.

Water resources management. As presently organized, Tewksbury does not have adequate capacity to coordinate water resource management policies and regulations. The town needs a single review agency for projects that exceed certain thresholds and are located in areas of wetland and water resource significance, including contributing upland. The review agency's responsibilities should include:

- A comprehensive review of Tewksbury's zoning, local wetlands bylaw, subdivision regulations and storm water management plan for regulatory and policy consistency.
- Recommendations to town meeting to strengthen or modify existing policies and regulations, and to set thresholds for water resources review. Depending on the proposed regulations, Tewksbury may need to seek a special act of the legislature for additional review and permitting powers beyond those allowed by general law.
- Technical review and recommendations to permit granting officials on all projects that exceed locally established thresholds.
- Public education and advocacy to protect water quality, public health and safety throughout the town.