



Hopedale, Massachusetts Community Master Plan: Town Government Chapter

June 2007

Prepared by the Hopedale Master Plan Committee

Technical Assistance Provided by:
The Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission

TOWN OF HOPEDALE, MASSACHUSETTS

COMMUNITY MASTER PLAN: TOWN GOVERNMENT CHAPTER

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HOPEDALE TOWN GOVERNMENT: FACILITIES AND SERVICES

This chapter of the Master Plan presents a general description of Hopedale’s town government, municipal facilities and services. For this chapter, each department head was interviewed and information was collected regarding organizational structure, staffing, budget, responsibilities, equipment, facilities, programs offered and upcoming capital needs. Before beginning an in-depth analysis of each municipal department, it is important to understand the level of services currently provided by Hopedale’s local government, where the Town gets its revenue and the tax implications for Hopedale households.

**Table TG-1
Hopedale Town Government Operating Budgets (2005-2007)**

<u>Category</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>% Increase (2005-2007)</u>
General Government	\$704,254	\$772,005	\$836,315	18.8%
Public Safety	\$1,550,202	\$1,582,087	\$1,764,451	13.8%
Schools	\$7,849,123	\$8,091,223	\$8,819,433	12.4%
Public Works	\$447,332	\$469,875	\$618,620	38.3%
Human Services	\$482,067	\$492,878	\$540,410	13.3%
Culture	\$279,743	\$278,723	\$285,823	2.2%
Debt Service*	\$2,176,584	\$2,097,779	\$2,191,408	0.1%
Intergovernmental Transfers	\$514,496	\$565,144	\$500,988	-0.3%
Misc. (retirement, insurance, etc.)	\$1,641,238	\$1,968,183	\$2,114,382	28.8%
Water & Sewer	\$916,518	\$1,150,930	\$1,273,745	39.0%
Total:	\$16,561,557	\$17,468,827	\$18,945,575	14.4%

Source: Hopedale Town Coordinator.

* = Town debt service does not include Water and Sewer bonds because both departments operate as enterprise systems. Thus, the Water and Sewer Department’s bonds are included as part of their operating budgets.

Overall, the operating budgets for the various entities of Hopedale’s Town government have increased by 14.4% between 2005 and 2007. The biggest increase was in the Water and Sewer Department budgets (39%), with both departments engaged in substantial upgrades to their distribution and collection systems during this timeframe. The Public Works Department also saw one of the larger increases in operating budgets (38.3%) which includes funds for snow removal, as did the General Government category (33.2%) and the Miscellaneous category - retirement, insurance, etc. - (28.8%). Worth noting is the School Department’s operating budget increased at a slightly lower rate than the Town’s overall operating budget during the past three years.

The four tables that follow are intended to show how the Town’s annual operating budget affects local homeowners, the taxes they pay and the value of their homes. Data is presented on the following items: local tax rate, average single family home tax bill, average single family home assessed valuation and local tax levies.

**Table TG-2
Year 2006 Local Tax Rates**

<u>Hopedale</u>	<u>Bellingham</u>	<u>Blackstone</u>	<u>Mendon</u>	<u>Milford</u>	<u>Millville</u>	<u>Upton</u>
\$11.20	\$9.89	\$10.76	\$9.65	\$13.22	\$11.73	\$10.65

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue. Tax rate is per \$1,000 of assessed valuation. Please note that Hopedale, Bellingham and Milford have split tax rates (one for residential and one for commercial & industrial); however, for comparative purposes, the tax rates presented in Table TG-2 represent their combined unity tax rates (residential, commercial and industrial).

When compared against neighboring communities, Hopedale had the third highest local tax rate in 2006, with only Millville and Milford having higher tax rates. However, it should be noted that Hopedale's tax rate has declined substantially during the past six years and the current rate is at its lowest rate since 1989, when the residential tax rate was \$11.33 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation and the commercial-industrial tax rate was \$17.65 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation. None of Hopedale's neighbors have experienced such a dramatic decline in their local tax rates.

**Table TG-3
Average Single Family Tax Bill - Year 2006**

<u>Hopedale</u>	<u>Bellingham</u>	<u>Blackstone</u>	<u>Mendon</u>	<u>Milford</u>	<u>Millville</u>	<u>Upton</u>
\$3,668	\$2,783	\$3,052	\$3,963	\$3,574	\$3,199	\$4,379

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue.

Hopedale's 2006 average single-family home tax bill ranked 129th of the 338 communities reporting in 2006 (ranked from highest to lowest), meaning there were 209 communities in Massachusetts that had lower average single-family home tax bills. Hopedale's State ranking has improved considerably during the last twelve years. In 1994, Hopedale ranked 65th out of 340 reporting communities. Dropping in rank from 65 to 129 in a mere twelve years is remarkable and is indicative of strong fiscal management at the local level.

Hopedale fell in the middle when compared against its nearby neighbors, with Bellingham having the lowest average single-family home tax bill (\$2,783 and Upton having the highest (\$4,379). The communities in the Blackstone Valley region all have average single-family home tax bills that are higher than the State median and this is indicative of a region with high home and land values.

Hopedale's average single-family home tax bill has increased by more than 25% over the last six years, a very modest increase when compared against other Massachusetts communities. The year 2000 average tax bill was \$2,919, and this figure has increased to \$3,668 by 2006 (an increase of 25.7%). The average tax bill has more than doubled since 1990, rising from \$1,734 in 1990 to \$3,668 by 2006 (an increase of 112%), but this phenomenon has occurred in most Massachusetts communities. With the exception of Bellingham, all of Hopedale's neighbors also saw their average single-family home tax bills more than double since 1990, with Mendon (increase of 167%) and Upton (increase of 157%) experiencing the largest increases.

**Table TG-4
Average Assessed Valuation Per Single Family Home - Year 2006**

<u>Hopedale</u>	<u>Bellingham</u>	<u>Blackstone</u>	<u>Mendon</u>	<u>Milford</u>	<u>Millville</u>	<u>Upton</u>
\$348,364	\$284,296	\$283,662	\$410,632	\$314,875	\$272,745	\$411,130

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue.

Hopedale has one of the higher average assessed-valuation per single-family home when compared against its neighbors, yet not as high as Mendon or Upton. The Central Massachusetts region and the eastern regions of the State have seen a dramatic rise in the average single-family home valuation during the last five years and Hopedale is no exception.

The Town's average assessed valuation per single-family home has more than doubled in the last six years, rising from \$171,892 in 2000 to \$348,364 in 2006 (an increase of 103%). Again, this phenomenon has occurred in most Massachusetts communities. With the exception of Bellingham, all of Hopedale's neighbors also saw their average assessed valuations per single-family home more than double since 2000, with Mendon experiencing the largest increase (218%). Land values are high throughout the Blackstone Valley region, development is on the rise and existing homes are selling for much more than what they sold for during the 1990s. It remains to be seen how the recent downturn in the housing market will affect home assessed valuations, but homeowners are unlikely to see their tax bills drop anytime soon.

Before going further, it is important to understand from where Hopedale gets its revenue in terms of both local tax levies and State assistance. The next two tables look at where Hopedale gets its tax dollars at the local level and the amount of State aid the Town receives.

**Table TG-5
Local Tax Levies - Year 2006**

<u>Community</u>	<u>Residential</u>	<u>Commercial</u>	<u>Industrial</u>	<u>Personal Property</u>	<u>Res. as % of Total Taxes</u>
Hopedale	\$7,108,716	\$623,199	\$420,802	\$151,479	85.6%
Bellingham	\$15,633,669	\$2,704,734	\$1,119,675	\$5,261,940	63.2%
Blackstone	\$8,239,186	\$257,884	\$447,912	\$2,617,357	71.3%
Mendon	\$7,563,080	\$178,463	\$84,448	\$50,828	96.0%
Milford	\$28,683,568	\$6,401,138	\$3,897,207	\$2,333,637	69.4%
Millville	\$3,134,269	\$42,684	\$21,085	\$96,071	95.2%
Upton	\$10,564,827	\$220,934	\$83,010	\$228,632	95.2%

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue.

The general rule of thumb in municipal finance is that towns are considered to be "bedroom communities" if they derive more than 90% of their total assessed value from residential property taxes. Hopedale falls well short of this description with 85.6% of its tax revenue coming from residential property taxes. Mendon, Millville and Upton are primarily bedroom communities while Bellingham and Milford have strong economic sectors. The economic sector's contribution to Hopedale's tax base has steadily declined during the past sixteen years, dropping from 23% of the total tax base in 1990 to approximately 14% of the total tax base by 2006.

**Table TG-6
Non-Education State Aid - Year 2006**

<u>Hopedale</u>	<u>Bellingham</u>	<u>Blackstone</u>	<u>Mendon</u>	<u>Milford</u>	<u>Millville</u>	<u>Upton</u>
\$724,745	\$1,946,555	\$1,357,901	\$464,419	\$3,556,283	\$376,118	\$653,211

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue. Presented figures DO NOT include State education aid.

The table above indicates that Hopedale falls somewhere in the middle when compared to its neighbors in terms of non-education State aid received, and this is also true when the aid is analyzed on a per capita basis. Blackstone and Millville received the largest amount of State aid per capita (\$150 and \$143 per capita respectively), while Mendon received the smallest amount of State aid per capita (\$97). The State distribution formula is partially based on local median household income figures and other measures of wealth.

The next section of this chapter is a review of the various entities that comprise Hopedale’s municipal government: how they are organized, staffing, budget, facilities, equipment and programs offered along with a list of anticipated capital equipment and staffing needs for the next decade.

Highway Department (Budget Category: Public Works)

Organization: A three-member elected Board of Road Commissioners manages the Highway Department. The Commissioners are elected to three-year terms and meet on a monthly basis. The Commissioners hire the Highway Superintendent who manages the Department’s day-to-day operations.

Duties: The Department is responsible for maintaining roughly 30-miles of Town roads, with an additional 3.5 miles of new subdivision roads slated to come on-line in the near future. The Department maintains State-numbered Route 16, but not Route 140, which the State maintains through its MassHighway District #3 regional office. The Department maintains all town-owned athletic fields and parks, including the Parklands conservation area and its interior road. The Department also clears sidewalks, fixes road signs, mows and trims along roadsides, removes rubbish for town-owned properties and cleans catch basins. The Department oversees the construction of new roads in subdivisions to make sure they meet the Town’s roadway design standards. The Department participates in reviewing subdivision plans in conjunction with the Building Inspector and other municipal department heads. The Department also issues driveway permits.

Staff: The Department consists of six full-time employees, including the Superintendent. Staff from the Water & Sewer Department help with plowing during the winter, as does a private plow operator. The Department offers a stipend to pay for two to three hours of clerical assistance per week. There is also a part-time employee dedicated to parks and athletic fields who works approximately 30 hours per week from April through November.

Budget: For the 2007 Fiscal Year, the Department had a total operating budget of \$466,567 with an additional \$95,000 dedicated to winter snow plowing operations. The Department tries to replace one vehicle per year and requests the necessary funds through a warrant article at the Annual Spring Town Meeting. The Department does not receive any Town funding for road maintenance and repair, but instead uses the entire amount of its State Chapter 90 highway aid for these purposes. Hopedale received \$97,750 in Chapter 90 funds in Fiscal Year 2007 and \$97,305 the previous Fiscal Year.

Facilities: The Department has a highway barn, a storage garage and a sand/salt shed located at the end of Depot Street. The main highway barn was built in 1941 and is in poor condition. It is a single-story brick building consisting of approximately 3,000 square feet. The building is not large enough to house all of the Department's equipment and several vehicles are located in the secondary garage or outside of the building. The bay doors of the main facility are not wide enough to accommodate modern equipment, the wiring is old (of the single-phase variety), the bathrooms are old and the heating system does not work well. The main facility does not have a lunchroom, locker-room or an inside wash-bay for cleaning the Department's various vehicles.

The metal storage building was constructed in 1973 and contains approximately 2,100 square feet. The doors of this structure are also not wide enough to accommodate modern equipment and the roof will need to be replaced within the next five years (currently estimated at \$40,000), although one heavy snow could result in substantial damage to the roof and thus necessitate immediate repairs. The sand/salt storage facility needs to be moved into a secure indoor facility because it is currently located within the municipal water well's Zone II contribution area and poses a contamination threat to the wells. In 2003 the Town appropriated \$65,000 for the purpose of securing a new sand/salt shed location, but the funds have yet to be expended as finding a new location for this facility has proven exceedingly difficult. Unfortunately, the lots that contain the Department's buildings are too small to offer any expansion potential. Currently, some of the Department's equipment is stored on land owned by the Grafton & Upton Railroad. The Town has been in discussions with the Railroad to secure a portion of their land for the Highway Department but no agreement has been reached to-date.

Major Equipment:

- 2006 Ford one-ton dump-truck with 9-ft. plow: excellent condition
- 2005 International dump-truck and sander with 11-ft. plow: excellent condition
- 2004 Ford pickup truck with 9-ft. plow: excellent condition
- 2002 International dump-truck and sander with 11-ft. plow: excellent condition
- 2001 Ford pickup truck with 9-ft. plow: excellent condition
- 2001 Caterpillar backhoe with 10-ft. wing plow: good condition (shared with Water Dept.)
- 1998 Chevy one-ton dump-truck with 9-ft. plow: good condition
- 1998 Caterpillar loader (2.5-yard bucket) with 11-ft. plow: good condition
- 1997 Ford dump-truck/sander/catch-basin cleaner with 11-ft. plow: good condition
- 1997 Leggin street-sweeper: good condition
- 1995 Ford dump-truck and sander with 11-ft. plow: fair condition
- 1994 Ford dump-truck and sander with 11-ft. plow: poor condition
- 1976 Caterpillar front-end loader (2.5-yard bucket) and 11-ft. wing plow: poor condition

Minor Equipment

- 2006 tractor/lawnmower: excellent condition
- 2003 John Deere mower: good condition
- 2003 trailer/leaf-sucker: excellent condition
- 2000 wood-chipper: good condition
- 2000 utility trailer: good condition
- 1996 International farm tractor: fair condition

- 1995 Ford Explorer: fair condition
- 1995 multi-purpose trackless sidewalk cleaner: good condition
- 1988 Ford dump-truck with 9-ft. wing plow: poor condition
- John Deere tractor/mower: fair condition
- 1985 refurbished chassis for trailer/leaf-sucker: good condition
- 1974 White dump-truck: poor condition
- 1970 sidewalk tractor: poor condition
- 1963 sidewalk tractor: poor condition

It should be noted that the Department shares many of its vehicles with other Town departments upon request or as necessitated by emergency.

Upcoming Needs:

Budgetary Needs: As mentioned previously, the Department does not receive any local funding for road maintenance and repair, but instead uses the entire amount of its State Chapter 90 highway aid for these purposes. Hopedale's annual Chapter 90 allotment may not be enough to maintain the Town's roadway system into the future, especially if new subdivision roads continue to be added to the inventory of local roads every year. It is anticipated that Town funds will be needed to supplement the annual Chapter 90 allotments at some point during the next decade.

Facility Needs:

- Ultimately, the Department would like to construct a new modernized highway barn either at its current location (should the Town be able to acquire adjacent land) or at a new location in Town.
- The salt shed needs to be moved from its current location. This major facility need may or may not be addressed within the next ten years, depending upon how circumstances unfold. Because of its location above a Zone II well recharge area, the sand/salt shed needs to be housed in a secure facility on-site (should the necessary land become available) or at a new location.
- The most immediate facility need is a new roof for the metal storage facility (current cost estimated at \$40,000) and this will need to be addressed within the next five years.

Equipment Needs: As mentioned previously, the Department attempts to replace a piece of equipment every year through a warrant article at the Annual Spring Town Meeting. This practice is expected to continue.

Staffing Needs: The Town's population is anticipated to increase during the next 25 years and the Department will need to add staff accordingly.

Water Department (Budget Category: Water & Sewer)

Organization: A three-member elected Board of Commissioners manages both the Water and Sewer Departments. The Commissioners are elected to three-year terms. The Board meets on a monthly basis. The Commissioners hire a Manager who is responsible for the day-to-day administration of both departments.

Staff: The Manager splits his time between the Water and Sewer Departments, as does a full-time administrative assistant and an equipment operator. Other Water Department personnel include a foreman and another equipment operator, both full-time positions.

Budget: For the 2007 Fiscal Year, the Water Department had an operating budget of \$589,000. As an enterprise system, the entirety of the Department's operating budget is derived entirely from user fees. The Department is allowed to keep the interest it earns from user fees. The Department tries to accumulate \$100,000 in excess revenue each year so that it can use this money to pay for capital equipment and large-scale projects; thus, the Department rarely requests capital funds through the Town Meeting warrant article process.

Facilities: The Department does not have a centralized water treatment facility; rather, the water is treated directly at the Town's two wellfields located on Mill Street and Green Street. There is also an 864,000-gallon storage tank located on Steel Road.

Equipment:

- 2007 Ford F-250 pickup truck (on order)
- 2005 Ford F-350 utility box truck – excellent condition
- 2003 Ford F-250 pickup truck – fair condition
- 2002 pickup truck – poor condition
- 2001 Caterpillar backhoe with 10-ft. wing plow: good condition (shared with Highway Dept.)
- Refurbished jet truck for pipe maintenance – fair condition

System Description: Two groundwater wellfields are the supply sources for the water system. The Mill Street wellfield is a tubular system comprised of 32 two-and-a-half-inch wells. The Green Street wellfield consists of one 36-inch gravel-packed well and two eight-inch satellite wells. Water from both wellfields is treated for acidity (pH) and corrosion control (iron). The State has permitted the Mill Street wellfield withdrawal at 400,000 gallons per day and the Green Street Well for 250,000 gallons per day, for a combined water system yield of 650,000 gallons per day. The average amount of water withdrawn from the Mill Street wellfield is 310,000 gallons per day (or 77.5% of the wellfield's permitted capacity), but the demand can be much higher during the summer months. The average amount of water withdrawn from the Green Street wellfield is 50,000 gallons per day (or 20% of the wellfield's permitted capacity). It should be noted that the Green Street wellfield is used sparingly because of iron and manganese problems.

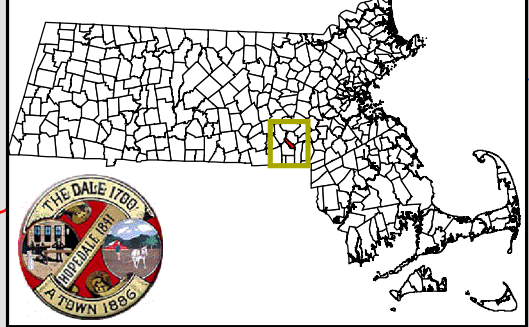
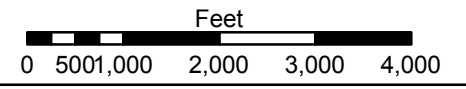
The water distribution system consists of 24-linear miles of pipes that serve 2,100 customers (residential commercial and institutional). Some of the pipes are as old as 120 years, but the majority of pipes are no older than 60 years of age. The system covers 90% of Hopedale with the remaining 10% served by on-site wells. The system has 320 water hydrants scattered throughout town. The Water Department owns all of the land falling within the Zone I wellhead contribution areas for both wellfields, and activities taking place within the Zone II contribution areas are regulated under the standards of the Town's Groundwater Protection District and Board of Health Regulations. A map of the Water Department's service area can be found on the following page.

The Department purchases water from the Milford Water Company during periods of high demand (usually the summer months). Milford serves as the Town's emergency water supply source. On average, the Department purchases between 24-to-32 million gallons of water from Milford annually.

Town of Hopedale Water & Sewer System Map

Legend

-  Town Boundary
-  Sewer Line
-  Water & Sewer Line
-  Water Line
-  Well
-  Pump Station
-  Water Tank
-  Wellhead Protection Areas (Zone II)
-  Water Bodies
-  Streams
-  Wastewater Treatment Facility
-  State Route Roads
-  Local Roads



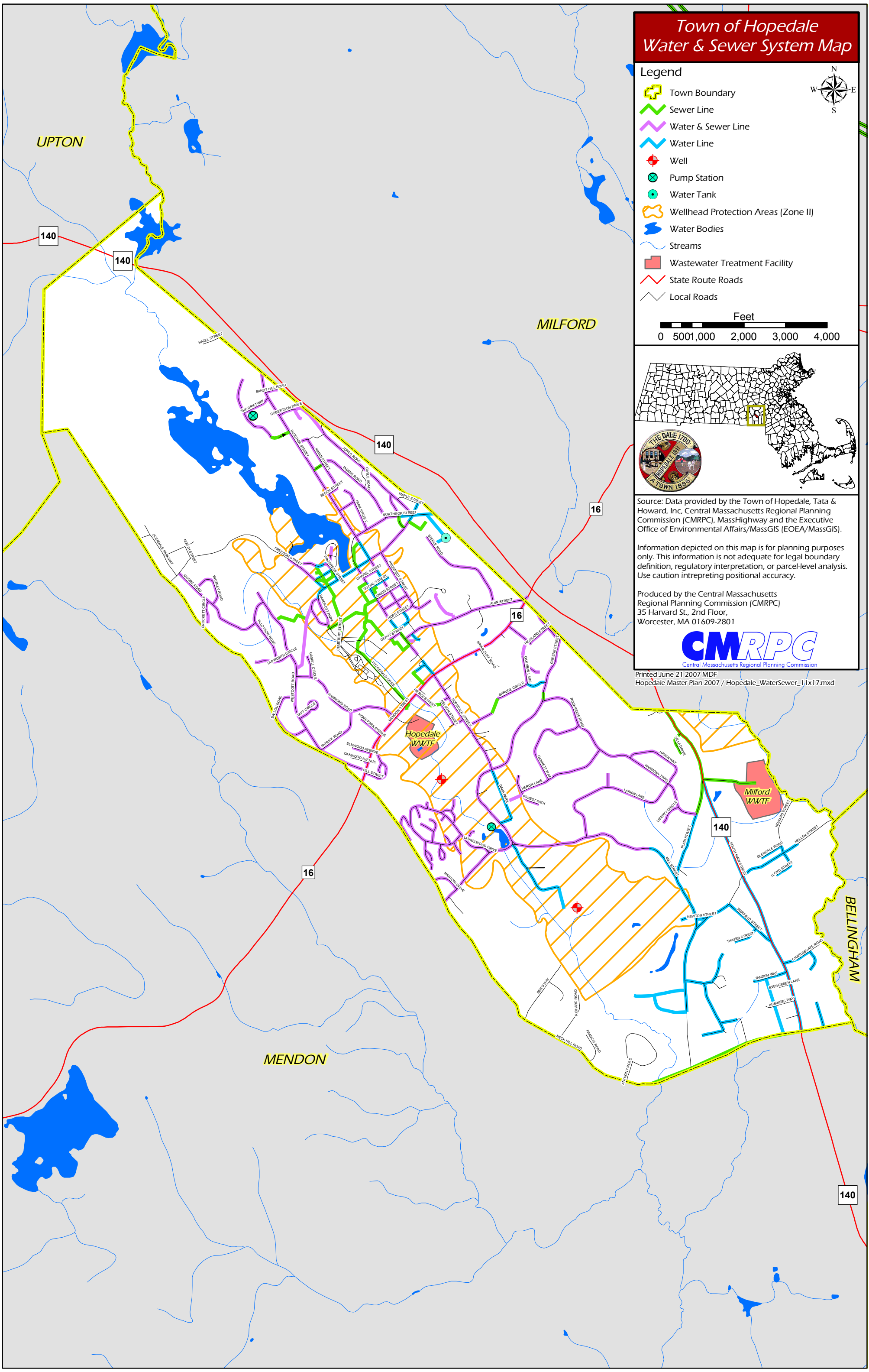
Source: Data provided by the Town of Hopedale, Tata & Howard, Inc, Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC), MassHighway and the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs/MassGIS (EOEA/MassGIS).

Information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only. This information is not adequate for legal boundary definition, regulatory interpretation, or parcel-level analysis. Use caution interpreting positional accuracy.

Produced by the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC)
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The costs of the Milford water purchases are part of the Water Department's annual operating budget. The Town has a 100-year water purchase contract with Milford that will expire in 2048. The Water Department hopes to be self-sufficient in terms of water supply by the time the contract expires. Towards that end, the Department has drilled two bedrock wells in the vicinity of the Green Street wellfield. The Department has conducted a ten-day pump test and is currently awaiting the State Department of Environmental Protection's approval of the test results. If the wells are approved, they will be tied into the Green Street wellfield and will contribute to the wellfield's permitted yield of 400,000 gallons per day. If these two new wells come on-line, a water treatment plant will be needed at the Green Street site and the cost of the plant is currently estimated at \$5.5 million dollars.

The Hopedale water system is 100% metered. The Department conducts an in-house leak detection effort twice a year and hires an outside professional engineering firm to conduct a leak detection audit every two years. The most recent water audit found that the system has a 6% unaccounted for water figure, which is very low. DEP regulations now require municipal water system to have unaccounted for water figures of 15% or below. The system has a per capita water usage figure of 65 gallons per person, per day, which meets the DEP standards for per capita daily water usage.

While the Department fixes leaky pipes as they find them, it is also working on a series of pipe replacement needs that were identified in a 2002 Water Distribution Study prepared by the civil engineering firm of Tata & Howard Inc. The 2002 Water Study identified needed improvements to the distribution system, planned expansions of the system, water audits and leak detection efforts, general maintenance, and set forth a lengthy list of recommended improvements. The Department has been working on the identified improvements as revenues permit and has made approximately \$2.2 million dollars worth of improvements to date, using \$1.2 million dollars from the DEP Revolving Loan Fund for this purpose, with Town funds making up the remainder (approximately \$990,000). As of Spring 2007, the Water Department has completed the following upgrades identified in the 2002 study:

1. 2000: Replaced 4,650 linear feet of pipes along Greene Street, from Oakview Lane to Mill Street (cost: \$297,000).
2. 2002: Replaced 5,350 linear feet of pipes along Hopedale Street, from Freedom Street to Greene Street (cost: \$635,400).
3. 2002: Replaced 1,850 linear feet of pipes along Mendon Street, from Hopedale Street to Hill Street (cost: \$208,200).
4. 2002: Replaced 1,500 linear feet of pipes along Plain Street, from Mellen Street to Airport Road (cost: \$159,400).
5. Replaced 1,700 linear feet of pipes along Airport Road, from Plain Street to Landing Lane (cost: \$180,700).
6. 2004: Install booster station in the vicinity of Moore Road, Whitney Road and Crocket Circle (cost: \$330,000).
7. 2005: Replaced 1,900 linear feet of pipes along Bancroft Parkway, from Freedom Street to Hope Street (cost: \$178,200).
8. 2005: Replaced 350 linear feet of pipes along Hope Street near its intersection with Bancroft Parkway (cost: \$32,900).
9. 2005: Replaced 300 linear feet of pipes along Cemetery Street, from its intersection with Hope Street to its end (cost: \$28,200).
10. 2006: Replaced 1,500 linear feet of pipes along The Driftway, from its intersection with Dutcher Street to its end (cost: \$140,700).

Upcoming Capital Needs:

- A water treatment plant at the Green Street wellfield will be needed in two to three years, with a current estimated cost of \$5.5 million dollars. The Water Department will seek a bond to pay for the project up-front and will recoup the cost through betterment/assessment fees and increased water rates.
- New pickup truck needed in two to three years, current estimated cost: \$32,000.
- In addition to the \$5.5 million dollar water treatment plant listed above, the 2002 Water Distribution Study identified approximately \$2.5 million dollars worth of additional improvements to the water distribution system that have yet to be made. The Department will likely seek a bond to cover the cost of these improvements but may fund some of the smaller items through excess revenue it sets aside annually for such projects (currently \$100,000 per year). The following additional improvements to the water system have yet to be implemented:
 1. Replace 4,000 linear feet of pipes along Freedom Street, from the Steel Road Tank to the Bancroft Parkway (estimated cost: \$300,000).
 2. Replace 8,750 linear feet of pipes along South Main Street (estimated cost: \$884,500).
 3. Replace 900 linear feet of pipes along Cook & Nelson Streets, from Hopedale Street to Fitzgerald Drive (estimated cost: \$78,200).
 4. Replace 1,700 linear feet of pipes along Mellen Street, from South Main Street to Plain Street (estimated cost: \$180,700).
 5. Replace 1,400 linear feet of pipes along Warfield Road, from South Main Street to Mellen Street (estimated cost: \$87,500).
 6. Replace 450 linear feet of pipes along Landing Lane from its intersection with Airport Road to its end (estimated cost: \$28,200).
 7. Replace 3,300 linear feet of pipes along Progress Street (estimated cost: \$131,300).
 8. Replace 5,300 linear feet of pipes along Greene Street (estimated cost: \$497,000).
 9. Replace 700 linear feet of pipes along Glendale Road, from its intersection with Howard Street to its end (estimated cost: \$65,700).
 10. Replace 750 linear feet of pipes along Lloyd Street, from its intersection with Mellen Street to its end (estimated cost: \$70,400).
 11. Replace 750 linear feet of pipes along Thayer Street, from its intersection with Warfield Street to its end (estimated cost: \$70,400).
 12. Replace 1,150 linear feet of pipes along Cutler Street, from its intersection with The Drift Way to its end (estimated cost: \$107,900).
 13. Replace 400 feet of linear pipes along Business Way (estimated cost: \$37,500).

Sewer Department (Budget Category: Water & Sewer)

Organization: A three-member elected Board of Commissioners manages both the Sewer and Water Departments. The Commissioners are elected to three-year terms. The Board meets on a monthly basis. The Commissioners hire a Manager who is responsible for the day-to-day administration of both departments.

Staff: The Manager splits his time between the Sewer and Water Departments, as does a full-time administrative assistant and an equipment operator. Other Sewer Department employees include three full-time treatment plant operators.

Budget: For the 2007 Fiscal Year, the Sewer Department had an operating budget of \$764,000. As an enterprise system, the entirety of the Department's operating budget is derived entirely from user fees. The Department is allowed to keep the interest it earns from user fees. The Department tries to accumulate \$100,000 in excess revenue each year so that it can use this money to pay for capital equipment and large-scale projects; thus, the Department rarely requests capital funds through the Town Meeting warrant article process.

Treatment Plant Details: The treatment plant was initially built in the early 1900s as part of the Draper Mill operation. It was given to the Town in 1982 and substantially upgraded in 1984. Located on Mendon Street, the plant is an activated sludge treatment facility that handles an average of 395,000 gallons of wastewater per day although the peak demand has been known to be as much as one million gallons per day (usually after a heavy rain event). DEP has permitted the treatment plant's treatment capacity at 588,000 gallons per day. Thus, on an average day the plant is operating at 67% of its permitted capacity. The wastewater receives secondary treatment before being discharged into the Mill River. There are two pump stations: one on Cutler Street and one on Green Street near the Town's wellfield.

The sewer system consists of 21-linear miles of pipes that serve 2,195 customers (residential commercial and institutional). Some of the pipes are as old as 100 years, but the majority of pipes are no older than 60 years of age. The system covers 80% of Hopedale with the remaining 10% served either by on-site septic systems or the Milford municipal sewer system, which serves approximately 150 houses in Hopedale – mostly between the upper portion of Route 16 and South Main Street. Conversely, Hopedale's municipal sewer system serves approximately 150 Milford houses in the vicinity of West Street. A map of the Sewer Department's service area can be found on Page 8.

Hopedale's sewer system has serious problems with inflow and infiltration. Inflow is caused by direct connections to the sewer system from roof drains, sump pumps and any other water source directly discharging into a sewer line without the Department's knowledge. Infiltration is essentially groundwater infiltrating into the sewer pipes. As mentioned previously, many of the system's pipes are over 100 years old and are either broken, have tree roots growing through them, or have some other type of flow restriction. Excessive inflow/infiltration eats up the treatment plant's capacity and endangers the system's ability to service new connections. Hopedale's inflow/infiltration problems are extremely serious. During heavy storm events, inflow/infiltration can account for as much as 60% of the wastewater treated at the plant. It is thought that the remaining underground pipes at the Draper Mill are a substantial source of the inflow/infiltration problem, but this has not yet been definitively verified.

The federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the DEP issued an Administrative Consent Order to the treatment plant in 2004 because it had been deficient in addressing two water quality problems in its discharge: ammonia and copper. The order is still in effect as of early 2007. The Sewer Department has completed the copper study and an ammonia study is in progress. The plant's last National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit has expired and the EPA and DEP are currently reviewing the Department's new application that was submitted in the summer of 2006. Above and beyond the requirements that the Department will need to address as part of the plant's next

NPDES permit (whenever it is issued), The Department is planning a substantial upgrade to the plant and sewer system for the next two years at a cost currently estimated at \$1.5 to two million dollars (more on this in the “upcoming capital needs” discussion).

Equipment: See previous Water Department listing.

Upcoming Capital Needs: In August of 2005, the Town engaged the civil engineering firm of Tata & Howard Inc. to prepare a Sewer Rate Study on behalf of the Sewer Department. This study identified deficiencies at the wastewater treatment facility, the sewer lift stations, and concluded with a list of recommended improvements. The 2005 study suggested that treatment plants like the one in Hopedale have a typical lifespan within the range of 20 to 30 years. Thus, for a treatment plant that was last upgraded in 1984, the Hopedale plant will require significant upgrades over the next five years. The report identified several streets that have sewer lines running behind residences through private properties, and suggests relocating these sewer lines into street right-of-ways. The study recommends a set of upgrades to the treatment plant, the two sewer lift stations, storage tanks, and a relocation of sewer lines at Draper Mill and along Hopedale and Dutcher Streets. While the 2005 study estimates the total cost of all identified improvements at \$1,453,750, the Sewer Manager estimates the total cost will be closer to \$2 million dollars by the time the improvements are made.

Board of Health (Budget Category: Human Services)

Organization: Hopedale has a three-member Board of Health. Each member is elected to a three-year term. The Board meets on a monthly basis. The Board appoints the Health Agent, recycling center staff and the Animal Control Officer.

Staff: The Health Agent is considered a full-time position. There are four part-time employees that operate the recycling center, and there is an Animal Control officer on-call.

Budget: For the 2007 Fiscal Year, the Board had an operating budget of \$459,783, with the recycling center and solid waste disposal accounting for the bulk of the budget. The Animal Control Officer position had an operating budget of \$7,000.

Facilities: The Health Agent has an office in the basement of Town Hall. The Board operates a Recycling Center on Thwing Street. The Center is open on Saturday mornings and operates on a pay-as-you-go basis. The Center has thus far been financially self-sufficient. The Center consists of three sheds: one for paint and two for white goods (computers, refrigerators, washing machines, etc.). There are also two 30-yard containers with one dedicated for construction debris.

Solid Waste Disposal & Recycling: The Town contracts with Allied Waste Inc. for curbside pickup of trash and recyclables. Allied transports solid waste to the Wheelabrator resource recovery facility in Millbury, metal goods to Millis Industries in Millis, MA and white goods to CRT Recycling also located in Millis. Hopedale along with thirteen other communities in the region just entered into a 20-year contract with the Millbury Wheelabrator facility for solid waste disposal. Starting in 2008, the Town will pay \$74 per ton for disposal versus the current rate of \$84 per ton. Hopedale also sponsors an annual household hazardous waste collection day. The table on the following page presents Hopedale’s solid waste disposal and recycling figures for the most recent three years.

**Table TG-7
Hopedale Solid Waste and Recycling Figures**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Trash</u>	<u>Recycled Materials</u>	<u>Remaining Trash for Landfill</u>	<u>% of Trash Diverted from Landfill</u>
2005	2,915 tons	869 tons	2,046 tons	30.0%
2004	2,936 tons	872 tons	2,064 tons	30.0%
2003	2,733 tons	757 tons	1,976 tons	28.0%

Source: Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (2003 & 2004), and Hopedale Health Agent (2005).

Programs: The Board of Health’s most recent initiative was the preparation of a Continuity of Operations Plan, funded through a 2005 Homeland Security Grant. The plan calls for using the High School as an emergency dispensing site, and the Board of Health has been training local medical professionals on vaccination and inoculation procedures. The Board of Health also offers these additional programs/services:

- Annual blood pressure (twice a year), flu and pneumonia clinics
- Health regulations briefings for local restaurants
- Health inspections for restaurants and food service establishments
- Title V inspections (including performing soil percolation tests for new building lots, reviewing septic plan revisions and witnessing the installation of all on-site sewage treatment systems)
- Permits and approves all private drinking water wells
- Rental housing complaints
- Licenses for tobacco sales (including compliance checks) and food establishments
- Licenses for water well and septic installers
- Monthly water quality monitoring for Hopedale Pond
- Active participant in the Region II Bio-Terrorism Emergency Preparedness Coalition
- Training for local medical personnel and emergency response professionals for smallpox, anthrax and pandemic training (training and certification for 35 people)
- Mutual Aid agreements with other area local Boards of Health
- Program with Mass Mosquito for West Nile virus control

Upcoming Capital Needs:

- A van dedicated for the Animal Control Officer (currently uses his own vehicle). Needed: immediately.
- Upgrades to the Kennel Facility at the Wastewater Treatment Plant. Needed: within the next few years.

Fire Department (Budget Category: Public Safety)

Organization: The Board of Selectmen appoints the Fire Chief. The Chief is responsible for making recommendations to the Board of Selectmen for hiring all remaining staff and is responsible for the Department’s day-to-day management.

Staff: The Department consists of six full-time firefighters, the full-time Fire Chief, 16 paid on-call firefighters and eight volunteer firefighters. Of the Department's staff, 16 are certified Emergency Management Technicians (EMTs). One of the full-time firefighters serves as the Director of Emergency Medical Services while one of the part-time firefighters conducts quality assurance reviews for the Department's medical reports. The Department does not have any clerical support and handles all paperwork on its own. There is a joint Police/Fire/Ambulance dispatch center that operates out of the Police Station. The Department has had its own ambulance service since 1999. Each firefighter receives at least 48 hours of training per year.

The Department is a full member of the District #14 Fire/Ambulance Mutual Aid Compact, which consists of 23 communities in the southern portion of Middlesex County, and an associate member of the District #7 Fire/Ambulance Mutual Aid Compact, which consists of 26 Worcester County communities. Both of these mutual aid compacts offer training to the Hopedale Fire Department.

Budget: For the 2007 Fiscal Year, the Fire Department had an operating budget of \$473,779, and its ambulance service had an operating budget of \$136,206. Both budgets were paid for through the Town's General Fund. The Department has received or is about to receive the following grants in Fiscal Year 2007:

- Federal Fire Grant from the Department of Homeland Security: \$32,000 to replace self-contained breathing apparatus.
- A \$15,000 grant from Metro-West Community Health Care (non-profit organization comprised of Metro-West hospitals) for a study of the EMS system in conjunction with the Hopedale Council on Aging.
- The Department has applied for a \$2,000 SAFE Grant from the Executive Office of Public Safety (will receive in February 2007).
- The Department has applied for an \$4,000 grant from the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Volunteer Firefighter Assistance Program to cover 50% of the cost for new firefighting equipment.

Equipment:

- 2006 Tanker #2: combination pumper/tanker truck (1,250 gallons per minute pump and 3,000 gallon tank) – excellent condition
- 2003 All Hazards Unit: 17-foot Limberger utility trailer – excellent condition
- 2002 Engine #2: combination pumper/tanker truck (1,500 gallons per minute pump and 1,000 gallon tank) – good condition
- 2002 Brush #1: Ford F350 all-wheel drive pickup truck with pumping engine (175 gallons per minute) used for forest firefighting – excellent condition
- 2002 Boat #1: Zodiac rubber inflatable bottom boat – good condition
- 2001 Ambulance #1: Wheeled Coach Ford E450 Type III modular ambulance – good condition
- 2000 Car #1: Ford Expedition with Odyssey command console and thermal imaging receiver – good condition
- 1993 Engine #3: combination pumper/tanker truck (1,250 gallon per minute pump and 720 gallon tank) – good condition
- 1987 Engine #4: combination pumper/tanker truck (1,000 gallons per minute pump and 700 gallon tank) - good condition

- 1975 Tanker #1: general military surplus all-wheel drive tanker truck (1,200 gallon tank) – fair condition
- 1973 Ladder #1: ladder truck with 85-foot aerial ladder – fair condition

The Department attempts to replace major pieces of equipment every twenty-five years. Large-scale equipment purchases are usually funded through warrant articles at Town Meetings.

Facility: The fire station was originally built in 1914. It is a two-story brick building with a full basement. The building was substantially rehabilitated between 2001 and 2004 to add two additional bays and to make the building handicapped accessible. While the building contains a total of 21,500 square feet, the facility is at full capacity and cannot accommodate additional equipment. In fact, the Department's All Hazards Unit is stored outside of the building by necessity.

Permits Issued: The Department issues permits for the installation/removal of aboveground fuel storage tanks, underground fuel storage tank installation/removal, black powder usage/storage/inspection, blasting, open burning, welding, tank trucks, fire detection/notification systems for a variety of uses, oil fired heating equipment, sprinkler installation, fireworks, flammable materials storage, flammable decorations, fuel dispensing service stations, liquefied petroleum gas storage, lumberyard inspections, nursing/healthcare facility inspections and public health inspections.

Programs: The Department offers fire safety programs to a variety of audiences, particularly school-age children. The Department makes use of the District #7 S.A.F.E. mobile education trailer for Fire Prevention Week classes at the local schools.

Other Responsibilities: The Fire Department is part of the District #3 Hazardous Materials Response Team out of Framingham, MA and this team is the first line of response for hazardous waste spills. The team will call in the State's regional hazardous materials response team if the spill is more than it can handle. The Department also provides rescue services for auto accidents, rapid intervention teams, as well as search and rescue operations.

Upcoming Capital Needs: The Fire Department has identified the following equipment purchases and facility upgrades for the next six years:

- 2007: Repair Fire Station windows (estimated cost: \$45,000).
- 2007: Install an emergency warning system (estimated cost: \$13,000).
- 2007: Replace UHF radio system (estimated cost: \$45,000).
- 2007: Add second ambulance to fleet (estimated cost: \$30,000 from ambulance revenue to lease a new ambulance for four years).
- 2008: Upgrade the Station's hose-dry system (estimated cost: \$10,000).
- 2008: Architectural improvements for the Fire Station and repointing the exterior (estimated cost: \$100,000).
- 2008: Purchase four self-contained breathing apparatuses (estimated cost: \$18,000 from Homeland Security grant).
- 2009: Purchase a Command Car (estimated cost: \$40,000).
- 2010: Satellite fire station in the south part of town potentially merged with the DPW facility upgrade (seeking two apparatus bays – estimated cost: \$250,000 - \$600,000, depending on merge capabilities).
- 2010: Purchase four self-contained breathing apparatuses (estimated cost: \$18,000).

- 2011: Replace 2001 Ambulance #1 (estimated cost: \$30,000 from ambulance revenue to lease a new ambulance for four years).
- 2011: Purchase Rib Boat and associated equipment (estimated cost: \$10,000).
- 2012: Purchase four self-contained breathing apparatuses (estimated cost: \$18,000).

Police Department (Budget Category: Public Safety)

Organization: The Board of Selectmen appoints the Police Chief. The Chief is responsible for hiring all remaining staff and the Department's day-to-day management.

Staff: The Police Department has twelve full-time officers including the Chief of Police, one Lieutenant, one Sergeant and one patrolman who also serves as a detective. The Department also has four reserve officers. The Police Station serves as the Town's emergency response dispatch center and is staffed by four full-time and four part-time dispatchers. The entire Department is certified in First Aid and CPR, even the dispatchers. The Department usually has two to three officers on duty during the day and early evening and two officers on duty during the overnight hours.

Budget: For the 2007 Fiscal Year, the Department had an operating budget of \$835,963. The Department has also secured a Community Policing Grant in the amount of \$11,299.

Equipment:

- 2003 Ford Expedition unmarked cruiser - good condition
- 2005 Ford Crown Victoria marked cruiser - good condition
- 2005 Ford Crown Victoria marked cruiser - good condition
- 2006 Ford Crown Victoria marked cruiser - good condition
- 1998 Harley Davidson Police Motorcycle - good condition
- 2001 Ford Explorer Sport Track D.A.R.E. car - good condition
- 2001 Ford Crown Victoria unmarked detective cruiser - fair condition
- 2002 Pathways Club Car Electric Vehicle - good condition

Facility: The current police station is a rehabilitated office building with the renovations taking place in 1996. The station is a three-story wood building split into two segments with each segment consisting of approximately 2,400 square feet. The station is in good condition and has enough space to accommodate the Department's needs. The building contains the Town's emergency response dispatch center and a State certified lock-up facility. The building is fully compliant with the standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). There are no plans for major building renovations at this time.

Programs:

- Child identification program
- Free gun locks
- An annual bike safety class
- School resource officer for all Schools
- CPR classes for local schools and residents are available upon request
- Car seat checks and installation

- Safety talks to schools and other organizations including Scouts and the elderly
- Tours of the station
- Ride-a-long program
- Halloween parade
- Distribution of free coffee, hot chocolate and cookies at Christmas tree lighting ceremony
- Safe rider award program for children that wear bike helmets
- Mock O.U.I. accident event during prom season
- Officer Phil Program (teaches pedestrian, bicycle and personal safety)
- Annual Police and resident trip to Pawtucket Red Sox game
- Yearly exhibit at the Vehicle Fun Day in the park
- Police bounce house program (offers bounce house to all residents free of charge)
- Annual Police & Firefighter Ball
- Future Annual Police Memorial Day (to be held a newly erected Police Memorial)

Trends and Comparisons: The Massachusetts State Police prepares an annual tabulation of crime statistics that allow for comparisons with other communities. The table below reviews Hopedale’s crime statistics for the year 2004 as matched against its neighboring towns. Please note that the State Police count of total crimes represents the number of actual convictions and not simply the number of arrests. The table indicates that Hopedale’s crime rate is consistent with those of its adjacent neighbors.

**Table TG-8
Community Crime Rate per 1,000 Residents - Year 2004**

<u>Community</u>	<u>Total of Crimes</u>	<u>Rate per 1,000 Residents</u>
Hopedale	69	8.6
Bellingham	268	5.7
Mendon	63	8.4
Milford	313	8.6
Upton	62	9.1

Source: Massachusetts State Police Uniform Crime Report for 2004 (the last available full year).

Upcoming Capital Needs: The Department attempts to replace a cruiser every year, rotating vehicles every three years. The Department seeks funding for vehicle purchases through Town Meeting warrant articles. At present, the Department has identified the following equipment needs:

- 2007: Replacing the 2003 Ford Expedition cruiser.
- 2008: Purchase a new cruiser, retire the 2001 Crown Victoria unmarked cruiser and use one of the 2005 Crown Victoria cruisers as the Detective cruiser.
- 2009 onward: Replace one cruiser per year.

Hopedale Emergency Management Agency (Budget Category: Public Safety)

Organization: The Hopedale Emergency Management Agency (HEMA) consists of the Fire Chief acting as Director (providing one or two hours a week) and an eight-member all-volunteer Citizens Emergency Response Team (CERT). The Board of Selectmen appoints the HEMA Director annually to a one-year term.

Staff: HEMA does not have any paid staff; rather, the Director and CERT members handle all tasks.

Budget: For the 2007 Fiscal Year, HEMA had an operating budget of \$4,600. The Agency has applied for a \$3,500 FEMA Citizen's Corps Grant for emergency management equipment.

Equipment:

- 2006 mobile light tower with 4,000 kilowatts – excellent condition.
- 1994 all-wheel drive rescue truck – fair condition.

HEMA has the following items in its inventory of supplies: radio dispatch system, satellite phone, ten high-band radios, two donated tabletop computers and one laptop computer. HEMA also has 50 cots and blankets (with an ultimate goal of 200 each) and assorted emergency supplies. HEMA has applied for grants to obtain additional high-band radios and radiological detection equipment. HEMA does not have a mobile command center at present but does have access to one belonging to the District #14 Fire/Ambulance Mutual Aid Compact.

Duties: HEMA is responsible for handling the response logistics for large-scale emergencies such as natural disasters and civil emergencies. HEMA spends half of its time undergoing emergency preparedness training and the other half securing equipment and supplies. HEMA completed an update of Hopedale's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) in June 2006.

Upcoming Capital Needs:

- Storage space for equipment (two apparatus bays).
- HEMA does have access to equipment and supplies belonging to the Fire and Police Departments if needed.

Land Use Boards (Budget Category: General Government)

Hopedale has four entities that review, approve and monitor new development: the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Conservation Commission and the Building Inspector/Zoning Enforcement Officer. All of the entities keep their applications and forms on file with the Town Clerk's office and/or the Town Coordinator's office. A general description of Hopedale's land use review boards and their major duties is presented below.

Planning Board: The Board currently consists of five members that are elected to five-year terms. The Board offers a stipend to pay for eight to ten hours of clerical assistance per week. For the 2007 Fiscal Year, the Board's budget was \$6,400. The Board occasionally uses a portion of its funding to pay for training, workshops and classes. The Board reviews and endorses Approval Not Required (ANR) plans, which constitute the majority of newly created lots in Hopedale. The Board is the Special Permit Granting Authority for Adult Retirement Communities (ARC) and Performance Residential Developments (PRD). The Zoning Board of Appeals handles the remainder of uses allowed by Special Permits. The Board also reviews and approves subdivision plans and site plan review applications. The Planning Board has retained a consulting engineer to review large-scale development plans on its behalf. In such cases, the applicant deposits funds to cover the review with the Town's Tax Collector/Treasurer, who in turn sets up a special account for the applicant. Any unused money from

the consultant review account goes back to the developer. One problem created by this situation is that the Board does not collect a review fee from the developer up front. Quite often the Board's engineering consultant reviews a plan and submits his bill to the Board, whereupon the Board has to chase down the developer to collect a review fee after the review has taken place. One of the Board members also serves as the Town's Delegate to the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC).

Zoning Board of Appeals: The Board consists of five members and one alternate member. The Board of Selectmen appoints the Zoning Board members to three-year terms. The Board does not have any administrative support and handles its own paperwork. The Board's budget for the 2007 Fiscal Year was approximately \$4,500, with none of this amount being used for training or education. The Board meets once a month. Its primary duties include hearing petitions for variances to the Zoning Bylaw (both use and dimensional variances), non-conforming uses, special permits and appeals of Planning Board and Building Inspector/Zoning Enforcement Officer decisions.

Conservation Commission: The Commission currently consists of four members, although there are usually five. The Commission members are appointed by the Board of Selectmen and serve three-year terms. The Commission does not have any administrative support and handles its own paperwork. The Commission does not receive any funding from the Town and its operating budget is paid for entirely by the fees it collects. The Commission has yet to utilize any of its funds to pay for training and education. The Commission's primary duty is administration of the State's wetland protection and rivers protection acts, although it does want to enact a stronger wetland protection bylaw at the local level at some point. The Commission does not have any professional staff and its members conduct their own inspections, essentially serving the role as town conservation agent. The Commission is having trouble keeping up with its administrative requirements and would like to have its own conservation agent, if only part-time at first. Having Commission members serve double-duty as conservation agents could potentially create a conflict for the members, as they are being asked to gather data for decisions, render decisions on behalf of property owners and enforce their decisions.

Building Inspector/Enforcement Officer: The Board of Selectmen appoints the Building Inspector on an annual basis. The Inspector's budget for the 2007 Fiscal Year was approximately \$29,000, with \$1,100 devoted to training and State recertification of the Building Inspector position. The Building Inspector does not currently have any clerical support. The Inspector puts in an average of 20-to-25 hours per week depending upon the time of year. The Inspector's primary duties include reviewing plans for compliance with the Town's Zoning Bylaw, issuing building permits, inspecting new construction for compliance with the State building code and issuing certificates of occupancy once construction is complete. The Inspector has a modest amount of space for records and files at the Town Hall. The Inspector is available to meet with the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals to review pending development plans on an as-needed basis.

Bancroft Memorial Library (Budget Category: Culture & Recreation)

Organization: The Library is a department of Town Government and is administered by an elected three-person Board of Library Trustees with each member serving a three-year term. The Board's authority is derived from Chapter 78, Section 10 and 11 of the Massachusetts General Laws. The Trustees meet monthly. The Trustees have delegated the responsibility for the library's personnel management, collection development and provision of library services to the Library Director. The Director is appointed and directly responsible to the Board of Trustees and is an employee of the

Town. The Library is open thirty-six hours a week during the winter months (closed on Sundays) and thirty-two hours a week during the summer months (closed on Saturdays and Sundays).

Staff: The Library Director is the only full-time staff member. There are several part-time staff members including a Children's Librarian (28 hours per week), three Assistants (12-28 hours per week), a maintenance person (6 hours per week), and a High School Page (8 hours per week). There are also three volunteers from the Senior Tax Program that contribute to the Library's workforce. The Library makes great use of volunteers from the community, with volunteers contributing over 450 hours of time to the Library last year.

Budget: The Library's funding derives principally from municipal appropriations at annual Town Meetings. For the 2007 Fiscal Year, the Library has an operating budget of \$215,668. The Library will receive three State grants for FY 2007: a State Library Incentive Grant, a Non-Resident Circulation Grant and a State Municipal Equalization Grant, for a total of \$8,500 in grant funds. The Library maintains an account for donations and also holds several small trust funds.

Facility: The Bancroft Memorial Library was originally constructed in 1898. The lower level was finished in the mid-1950s and an elevator was installed in 1998. The square footage of the Library is unknown but appears to be in the 5,000-7,000 square foot range. The building is almost fully compliant with the standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), with the only exception being the width of the aisles. There are several computers with Internet access that are available to the public. In 1999, the Bancroft Memorial Library was added to the National Register of Historic Places.

Circulation: The Library has an ever-increasing circulation of roughly 26,947 items. The collection is made up of books, volumes of print periodicals and newspapers, audio books, videocassettes and DVD discs. The library is considered a "mini-net" affiliate of the Central-Western Massachusetts Automated Resource Sharing service (C-W MARS), which provides an on-line catalog for all public and academic libraries in the Central and Western regions of Massachusetts. This shared on-line catalog allows patrons access to a combined collection of over 6 million items from participating libraries. Patrons can order items from home or through the library staff. Last year the library staff processed 4,777 inter-library loan requests (2,431 items received and 2,346 items provided). The Library Director estimates that a busy family of four that makes full use of the Library's resources (books, DVDs, videos, programs, museum passes, etc.) can save as much as \$10,000 per year and her research on this matter was the focus of a WBZ News Radio story in September 2006.

Programs:

- Fundraising activities such as: an annual book sale, raffles, art shows
- Children's story hour (one per season)
- Young adult/adult book groups
- Summer reading program
- Holiday programs (Halloween and Christmas)
- Puppet shows, singers, dancers, concerts, crafts, etc.
- School visits on Community Reading Day
- History lessons (with assistance from the Historical Commission)
- Passes to regional and Boston-area cultural events (with assistance from the Cultural Council)

The Hopedale Cultural Council provides funding for cultural programs, as does the Hopedale Charitable Foundation. The Friends of the Library group also raises funds that are used to support the Library's various programs. Most of the programs are offered at the Library, although some are held at the Hopedale Community House.

Upcoming Capital Needs: While the Library does not have any current plans for building expansion, it would like to secure additional parking adjacent to its property. The Library will soon apply for a planning and design grant from the State Board of Library Commissioners in order to conduct a feasibility study for the Library building and its service and space needs (estimated grant request: \$40,000). This study may or may not indicate the need for renovations and/or expansion. The Library would also like to improve its wireless connectivity and estimates it will require \$8,000 to make the necessary improvements.

Council on Aging (Budget Category: Human Services)

Organization: The Council on Aging (COA) currently consists of seven members. Each member is appointed by the Board of Selectmen and serves a three-year term, up to a maximum of two terms.

Staff: The COA has two part-time employees. The Director works 30 hours a week and a staff assistant works 19 hours a week. The COA makes great use of volunteers, with 60 volunteers contributing roughly 4,800 hours of service in 2006 (the latest reporting year). The COA does not have any secretarial support.

Budget: For the 2007 Fiscal Year, the COA has an operating budget of \$56,501. The COA will occasionally receive grants from the Hopedale Cultural Council that are used to host cultural programs and activities at the Senior Center. The COA also gratefully receives donations from the public.

The COA has received \$6,817 in a Formula Grant from the State and these funds will be used to create an emergency preparedness database and associated outreach/education programs. It is hoped that this effort will serve as a model for other Massachusetts communities with populations fewer than 10,000 residents.

Facility: For the last forty years the COA has been using space in the Hopedale Community House on #43 Hopedale Avenue. This three-story brick building was built in the 1920s and is now managed by the non-profit Community House Foundation. For the Senior Center, the COA has use of a room that is approximately 1,000 square feet in size. The COA does not have to pay rent for this space and the Foundation pays for all of the building's utilities and maintenance. The Community House is not fully compliant with the access standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The Foundation must approve of any alterations inside the Senior Center space. Eventually, the COA would like to find a space of its own for an enlarged Senior Center. Towards that end, Hopedale voters approved the creation of a Senior Center Search Committee at the May 2006 Town Meeting. The Committee has not yet been formed, but its charge will be to search out a new location for the Senior Center.

Equipment: The COA does not own any major capital equipment, such as a van for senior transportation. Rather, the Council has a shared agreement with the Milford Council on Aging to provide travel within the region (Hopedale, Milford & Upton) for seniors during the weekdays and approximately \$12,000 of the Council's operating budget is devoted to this purpose. The Council also offers out-of-town travel to Boston and Worcester through a Service Incentive Grant from the

Blackstone Valley Consortium of Councils on Aging. Lastly, the COA also has a collaborative arrangement with the School Department for bussing to WalMart (once a month), Market Basket (twice a month), a monthly trip to the mall, and a monthly trip to Kohl's department store. Lastly, there is a social outing held approximately every other month. The COA covers the cost of a bus driver for these trips.

Programs:

- Clinics for blood pressure, influenza, podiatry and Alzheimer's awareness
- The Hopedale Informer newsletter
- Annual Christmas Party
- Monthly dancing and dining program
- Lending library
- Transportation for medical visits, grocery store and mall shopping
- Recreation activities such as bowling, Bingo and card games.
- Monthly book club
- Monthly brown bag lunch and BUNCO games
- Energy conservation programs
- Knitter's club
- Wellness programs
- Dental Health programs
- Senior Health Insurance Necessities for Elders (known as SHINE)
- Nutrition programs including on-site meals and Meals-on-Wheels out of Upton
- Veteran's Day program
- Health-related programs sponsored by various insurance companies
- Guidance and referral on elder care issues for caretakers (spouse and/or adult children)
- Case management for seniors receiving homecare and VNA services (in conjunction with other area aging and social service agencies)
- Intake site for all Fuel Assistance Applications (both senior and non-senior populations)
- Medical and food assistance for senior and non-senior Hopedale residents (due to the fact that there are no other social service agencies in town)

Upcoming Capital Needs: As mentioned previously, the non-profit Community House Foundation pays for all capital needs associated with the Community House and the space within used by the Senior Center. Eventually, the COA would like to have a facility of its own for an enlarged Senior Center that would allow for an expansion of program offerings. The Town has approved creating a Senior Center Search Committee, but no appointments have been made as of early 2007 and no cost figures for a new Senior Center have been prepared. Hopedale's demographic profile indicates that the Town's senior population (65 and over) and the soon-to-be-senior population (45-64) will continue to grow during the course of the next decade, thus indicating a need for a larger senior center with an expanded offering of programs.

School Department (Budget Category: Schools)

Organization: A five-member School Committee oversees the School Department. Each member is elected to a three-year term and meetings are typically held the first Tuesday of every month.

Staff: The School Department Administrative staff consists of the Superintendent of Schools, two Principals, two Assistant Principals, the Director of Pupil Personnel Services (0.6 Full-Time Equivalent), the Director of Curriculum, Assessment and Technology, and the School Accountant. Teaching staff for the school system consists of 75 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) of regular education teaching staff, and 16.3 FTE of Special Education teaching staff. School nurses for the three locations are employed at 2.5 FTE. School support staff consists of 8.2 FTE secretaries and clerks, eight FTE regular education aides, and 19.5 FTE Special Education aides. In district support roles, schools employ 8.43 FTE cafeteria workers, four FTE custodial staff, 7.6 FTE bus/van drivers, and two technology support staff. Supervisors for Food Services (0.4 FTE – job share with Uxbridge), Building and Grounds, Transportation, and the Technology Manager coordinate school infrastructure needs.

Budget: For the 2007 Fiscal Year, the School Department had an overall operating budget of \$8,819,433 and this total is comprised of the following revenue sources:

- \$3,197,459 from the Town General Fund
- \$5,621,974 in State Aid (Chapter 70)
- \$787,006 in School Choice Receiving Tuition (Chapter 76)

The School budget was further supplemented by \$7,320 in Charter Tuition Reimbursements (Chapter 71) and \$3,888 in School Lunch (Chapter 871). In addition, the School Department is also able to supplement its operating budget through the following revolving accounts: athletic receipts, music receipts and rental receipts. Other revolving accounts, such as Preschool, After School, and School Lunch are self-sustaining and do not subsidize regular school programs.

Additional supplements come from the Town and the State as follows:

1. Capital Budget: The Town Budget supports major repairs and equipment purchases. Capital budget is determined by the availability of certified Free Cash from the prior fiscal year, and is used to fund requests from all Town Departments.
2. Health Benefits: The Town Budget accounts for all employee health benefits. The Town is self-insured as of July 2006.
3. Circuit Breaker Monies: For local special needs students that require placement in education institutions outside of town, the State reimburses up to 75% of prior year per pupil costs above a threshold determined by the Department of Education (DOE). This means that the School Department pays all expenses for out-of-district students up front in any given fiscal year and gets the reimbursement in the next fiscal year. The threshold for Fiscal Year 2007 is \$33,700 and the State is currently covering 72% of the cost above and beyond this threshold. The School Department must spend this much per pupil before it can claim any reimbursement for Fiscal Year 2008. Transportation costs are not reimbursable under this formula. As an example: for a student in a \$50,000 out-of-district placement, with a \$15,000 transportation expense, the School Department could make a claim for 72% of the total cost minus the transportation expense (\$15,000) and minus the State threshold (\$33,700). Thus, the School Department could make a claim for 72% of the allowable \$16,300 in expenses, for a total claim of \$11,736. This \$11,736 would become part of the Circuit Breaker revenue for the following fiscal year.

While some supplemental monies are unpredictable, the progression of the School Choice account is dangerously predictable. For the past five or six years, Hopedale has held down the School Department's budget increases because the School Choice revenues are supplementing schools programs and staffing by adding 10% above and beyond the Town's assigned School Operating Budget. School Choice revenues, however, are dropping as Choice students graduate in large cohorts and the School Department is unable to create new spaces to replace them. The elementary classes are now crowded. Currently, in an effort to maintain the same level of programs, the School Department must overspend its Choice revenues and cover this deficit by digging into a School Choice reserve fund that grew during the first few years of Hopedale's participation in the School Choice Program. This reserve is running out and will be depleted by Fiscal Year 2009. This means that the Town will face increasing deficits, effective FY09, unless more Town dollars are placed in the School Department's operating budget. Failure to shift dollars will result in loss of programs and staff.

Vehicles:

- 2006 – 8 passenger van - excellent condition
- 2005 – mini-van – excellent condition
- 2005 – 3 - 71 passenger school buses – excellent condition
- 2004 – 71 passenger school bus – excellent condition
- 2003 – mini-van – excellent condition
- 2003 – 71 passenger school bus – good condition
- 2001 – 12 passenger van – excellent condition
- 2001 – 71 passenger school bus – good condition
- 1998 – 71 passenger school bus – good condition
- 1995 – 12 passenger van – poor condition
- 1996 – 12 passenger van – fair condition
- 1991 – 4+ wheelchair lift van – poor condition

The table below presents Hopedale's per pupil expenditure figure in comparison with the single-town school districts of nearby neighbors for the 2004-2005 school year (the latest year of available data).

**Table TG-9
Per Pupil Expenditures Year 2005**

	<u>Hopedale</u>	<u>Bellingham</u>	<u>Franklin</u>	<u>Milford</u>	<u>Uxbridge</u>
Regular Student:	\$6,705	\$6,930	\$6,605	\$6,670	\$6,091
Special Education:	\$13,312	\$16,154	\$14,345	\$17,651	\$18,466

Source: Massachusetts Department of Education – 2005 is the latest year for available data.

The previous table indicates that Hopedale's regular student per pupil expenditure figure is consistent with those of its nearby neighbors, but the Town spends the least amount per pupil for special education students of the compared communities.

Facilities: The Hopedale Public Schools operates in three school buildings. The Jr.-Sr. High School building, originally built in 1929 with additions in 1964 and 2000, now consists of 95,084 square feet with 40 classrooms, a state-of-the-art Media Center, cafeteria, auditorium with a capacity seating of 500, and a stage. Hopedale students in grades 6-12 walk to the Draper Gym for the majority of

physical education classes. The Memorial Elementary School, originally built in 1957 and undergoing a major addition and renovation in 1995, consists of 62,575 square feet. It operates with 32 classrooms, a Media Center, a cafeteria and a gymnasium. The Bright Beginnings Center at the Park Street School was built in 1913 and consists of 5 classrooms in 15,020 square feet. The oldest of the school buildings, its systems and surfaces have been maintained to accommodate the Town's growing pre-school population. It is minimally accessible according to ADA guidelines. A brief description of the three school buildings is presented below.

Bright Beginnings Center

Built: 1913, no additions
Size: 15,020 square feet
Capacity: 110 students
of Students: 110 pre-school/
early learning students (two daily sessions)
Building is not compliant w/Americans
With Disabilities Act (ADA)
Facilities: total of five classrooms
Excess Capacity: 0

Memorial Elementary School

Built: 1957, major renovation/
expansion in 1995
Size: 62,575 square feet
Capacity: 675 students
of Students: 675 pre-K through grade 6
Building is fully ADA compliant
Facilities: 32 classrooms, gym, library,
media center and computer lab
Excess Capacity: 0

Draper Junior-Senior High School

Built: 1929, renovated in 1964 and 2000 with major addition
Size: 95,084 square feet
Capacity: 600 students
of Students: 530 students grades 7 through 12
Facility is not fully ADA compliant
Facilities: 40 classrooms, media center, library, cafeteria
and auditorium (uses Draper Gym for fitness activities)
Excess Capacity: 70 students.

The School Department has not pressed the Town for new buildings or additions to its existing buildings since it is aware of the other Town facilities in need of renovation and/or replacement. However, with two of the three schools at full capacity, a discussion of future space needs should be initiated sooner rather than later.

Upcoming Capital Needs: As mentioned above, two of the three school buildings are at capacity. The School Department would like to evaluate its facility needs in concert with the Town's other building needs in the very near future. In addition, the School would like to find some additional land to store its busses, as currently they are stored on land under private ownership. The School Department is in the first phase of a three phase Information and Technology (IT) upgrade project. The Department will need sustained funding assistance to cover the cost of subsequent phases.

Hopedale Housing Authority (Budget Category: None – self-supporting entity)

Organization: The Hopedale Housing Authority's Board of Directors is composed of four elected members and one State appointee, with each member serving a five-year term. The Housing Authority's Director is responsible for the day-to-day management of the facilities.

Staff: The Housing Authority Director is a part-time position (18 hours a week). There are two part-time maintenance technicians who work 20 hours each per week. The Director handles all of the Authority's administrative paperwork.

Budget: The Town does not provide any funding to the Housing Authority; rather, the Authority obtains all of its revenue primarily from tenant rents. It is rare for a local housing authority to be financially self-sufficient. Many local housing authorities depend on financial assistance from the Massachusetts Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD) to supplement their operating budgets and pay for large-scale capital equipment.

Facilities: The Hopedale Housing Authority manages a single property comprised of two apartment complexes, collectively known as the Griffin & Dennett Apartments. The Griffin portion was built in 1961 (DHCD Project #667-1) and consists of five buildings containing a total of 40 units for the elderly population. None of the Griffin units are handicapped accessible. Each unit contains its own kitchen and bath facilities. The Dennett portion was built in 1971 (DHCD Project #667-2) and also consists of five buildings containing a total of 40 units for the elderly and handicapped populations. Four of the Dennett units are handicapped accessible. The Dennett apartments have a small building with laundry facilities while the Griffin apartments make use of the laundry facilities in the community center building, which also has a space for community activities and an office for the Housing Authority Director. There is no formal tenants group, but there is the Griffin-Dennett Association that runs activities for the seniors on site. The Hopedale Council on Aging (COA) provides transportation services to apartment's residents.

Waiting List: A waiting list is not uncommon for local housing authorities and the number of households on the waiting list can change from day to day. Hopedale's Housing Authority currently has a waiting list of roughly 26 households at present (17 elderly and nine handicapped). Two households on the waiting list are from Hopedale and local residents have priority over non-residents.

Upcoming Capital Needs: The Housing Authority inspects each unit every year and makes improvements as needed. The Authority would like to build a garage for its maintenance truck in the near future. As mentioned previously, the Hopedale Housing Authority is the rare example of a local housing authority that is financially self-sufficient and pays for its repairs and capital equipment needs through its collected rents.

Other Upcoming Capital Improvements Not Yet Identified: In addition to the building and equipment needs previously identified in the departmental summaries, Hopedale's current CIP lists the following capital improvements:

- Renovations to the Town Hall: Plans are being developed for a thorough renovation of the Town Hall, including: new wiring for better information technology, new plumbing, heating, and handicapped accessibility. New office space will be created from space that is currently underutilized and the stage/theater on the second floor will be restored. The cost and timing of this effort have not yet been determined.
- Open Space and Recreation: Hopedale's open space and recreation needs are fully described in the Town's soon to be completed Open Space & Recreation Plan. As part of this effort, the following list of upcoming recreation projects has been identified:

1. Add new recreation playing fields: baseball field, smaller baseball/softball fields, outside track (location, cost and timing undetermined).
2. Work with Eastland Developers to level, fill and grade the Harmony Lot for future recreational use (cost and timing undetermined).
3. Acquire the Hopedale portion of the Grafton-Upton Railroad right-of-way for use as a recreational rail trail, potentially working with the other communities that contain a portion of the railroad's right-of-way (cost and timing undetermined).
4. Acquire the Draper Field Parcel (including the old landfill) for the future creation of new playing fields (cost and timing undetermined).

Other Governmental Entities in Hopedale: Town Coordinator, Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee, Capital Program Committee, Town Clerk, Town Collector, Board of Assessors, Town Moderator, Town Accountant, Town Treasurer, Board of Registrars and Personnel Committee (all under General Government), Committee on Disabilities and Veteran's Agent (both under Human Services), Historical Commission, Parks Commission, Red Shop Committee and Cultural Council (all under Culture & Recreation), Cemetery Commission (under Public Works), Animal Inspector, Animal Control Officer and Tree Warden (all under Public Safety).

Town Government - Goal

The citizens of Hopedale desire the following characteristics for its Town Government:

- **Professional Management:** fiscally responsible, proactive and visionary.
- **Quality Services:** integrated and coordinated services for maximum efficiency.
- **High Level of Public Confidence:** government business conducted in an open and transparent manner, excellent two-way communication between citizens and town government, and active citizen participation and volunteerism.

Town Government - Objectives

- Commit itself to following through on the recommendations contained herein and strive to maintain the Master Plan as a living document.
- Develop a long-range capital financing plan for its municipal facilities and capital equipment.
- Increase inter-department communication and coordination. Under the leadership of the Town Coordinator, municipal department heads will work collaboratively to enhance and insure the overall excellence of Town services and their delivery. Specific goals may include, but not be limited to, collaborative grant writing, vehicle, space and/or staff sharing, calendar planning and coordination, and setting capital planning priorities.

- Ensure that Hopedale’s future growth does not outpace its ability to provide quality infrastructure and municipal services.
- Develop a municipal building and infrastructure replacement program to ensure that these resources continue to meet the current and future needs of its citizens. This effort should include a long-term maintenance program and the continual devotion of sufficient resources for implementation.
- Provide adequate resources for technological improvements to ensure that municipal employees can perform their duties as efficiently as possible, while simultaneously providing town residents with greater access to timely information and electronic services.
- Educate citizens about issues, resources and opportunities for service on municipal boards, committees and commissions.
- Keep in mind the costs and affordability of implementing the Master Plan’s recommendations, particularly their impacts on Hopedale taxpayers.

Town Government Issues and Recommended Solutions

1. Capital Improvement Planning (CIP) Process: It is recommended that the Town implement a formal Capital Improvement Planning (CIP) process. While the Town Coordinator annually prepares a spreadsheet of departmental budgets that project municipal expenses five years into the future, the Town does not have a formal CIP process. A CIP is an on-going capital expenditure plan that identifies upcoming capital needs, schedules their purchase, and outlines how they will be purchased. Such plans usually look six-to-ten years down the road in terms of identifying capital needs. A capital need is a tangible item (equipment, building, etc.) that is above and beyond a municipal department’s regular operating budget. A capital improvement plan (CIP) is composed of two parts: the first part is a capital budget for the upcoming year’s spending plan for capital items (tangible assets that cost at least \$10,000 and have a useful life of at least five years), and the second part is a capital program for capital expenditures that extends five years beyond the capital budget. If prepared properly, a CIP can have the following benefits:

- Facilitate the coordination between capital needs and departmental operating budgets.
- Enhance the community’s credit rating, control of its tax rate and avoid sudden fluctuations in its debt service requirements.
- Identify the most economical means of financing capital projects.
- Increase opportunities for obtaining federal and state aid.
- Focus attention on community objectives and the Town’s fiscal capacity.
- Keep the public informed about future community needs and projects.
- Coordinate the activities of municipal departments so as to reduce duplication of services and share equipment where possible.

There are generally ten steps involved with implementing a CIP:

STEP ONE: ADOPT A CIP BYLAW AND APPOINT A CIP COMMITTEE - Hopedale voters would approve the CIP Bylaw at a Town Meeting. The Selectmen could appoint a stand-alone CIP Committee to oversee the plan's formation, or simply charge the Finance Committee with the bylaw's implementation if the Selectmen believe this committee is up to the task.

STEP TWO: PREPARE AN INVENTORY OF EXISTING FACILITIES – This will involve preparing an inventory of all town-owned properties and assets, including all buildings and equipment. The inventory should include documentation on the need for renewal, replacement, expansion or retirement of all physical assets. The inventory should also include information on the year each facility was built or acquired, the date of last improvement, its current condition and scheduled date for rebuilding, replacement or expansion. Often, the Town's insurance carrier has a list of insured assets that can serve as the basis for this inventory.

STEP THREE: DETERMINE THE STATUS OF PREVIOUSLY APPROVED PROJECTS – The next step is to identify projects that are underway or about to get started and determine whether additional funds are needed and the amount of unspent funds available from completed or discontinued projects.

STEP FOUR: ASSESS THE TOWN'S FINANCIAL CAPACITY – The next step is to analyze the Town's ability to afford major expenditures. This analysis should examine recent and anticipated trends in revenues, expenditures, debt and unfunded liabilities such as pension costs.

STEP FIVE: SOLICIT, COMPILE AND EVALUATE PROJECT REQUESTS – The CIP Committee should solicit departmental recommendations for eligible projects. Each department would submit its request that would include a clear statement of need for identified projects, the project costs, their net effect on the department's operating budget and an implementation schedule.

STEP SIX: ESTABLISH A PRIORITY LISTING OF CAPITAL PROJECTS – This step has the CIP Committee rank the priority of each proposed capital project. This is often the most difficult aspect of a CIP effort. Many communities make use of numerical scoring sheets. Whether or not a scoring sheet is used, the CIP Committee should review each project utilizing a consistent set of criteria and evaluate each project in relation to other proposed projects to determine their relative importance.

STEP SEVEN: DEVELOP A CIP FINANCING PLAN – Based on the adopted debt and CIP policies (prepared as part of Step One) and the assessment of the Town's financial capacity (Step Four), the Committee should recommend the method of financing for each project. Such financing can be through long-term methods (bonds, grants and loans, setting money aside in a stabilization fund, debt exclusion, etc.) or short-term methods (appropriation of current revenue, capital outlay expenditure approvals, bond anticipation notes, etc.).

STEP EIGHT: ADOPT A CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM – The CIP Committee's complete report should be presented to the Board of Selectmen annually for review and adoption. The report should include a summary of the CIP Committee's recommendations for the upcoming year's capital budget and the following years' Capital Program, as well as its analysis of the Town fiscal capacity.

STEP NINE: MONITOR APPROVED PROJECTS – The CIP Committee should monitor the efforts of all departments to put in place the capital projects approved in the CIP and periodically report back to the Board of Selectmen. The monitoring reports should include changes in the targeted completion dates, identify serious problems and document the financial status of each project.

STEP TEN: UPDATE CAPITAL PROGRAM – Every year, the CIP Committee repeats Steps #2 through #9 and revise the CIP as necessary. After the first year has been budgeted, one year is added to the Capital Program and the remainder of the plan is updated.

Responsible Municipal Entities for Implementation: The Board of Selectmen, Town Coordinator and Finance Committee.

2. Infrastructure Deficiencies: It is recommended that the Town continue to implement its infrastructure replacement plan for its water and sewer systems. Additionally, the Water and Sewer Departments should determine what impact these infrastructure improvement projects will have on its rate structures and share this information with its customers. While the municipal water and sewer systems are in the midst of substantial upgrades, there is much work yet to be done. The cost of correcting the identified deficiencies of the water distribution system currently stands at approximately \$2.5 million dollars, and correcting the identified deficiencies of the sewer system is currently estimated at roughly \$2 million dollars. It will take Hopedale several years of consistent funding in order to address the needs of its municipal water and sewer systems. Responsible Municipal Entities for Implementation: The Water and Sewer Departments.

3. Facilities Not Fully Compliant With ADA Handicapped Accessibility Standards: It is recommended that the Town prepare an ADA Transition Plan and start securing the funds necessary for its implementation. Additionally, the Town should ensure that ADA compliance is integrated into design plans for new or rehabilitated municipal structures. The basement offices at the Town Hall do not comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility standard. The restrooms at the Town Hall are also noncompliant with the ADA. In addition, the widths of the aisles at the Library are not ADA compliant. While the Town has appointed an ADA Coordinator (the Town Coordinator), it has not prepared an ADA self-evaluation plan for those buildings and facilities identified as non-compliant, nor has it prepared a transition plan for these facilities although this is a federal requirement. It should be noted that the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program lists the removal of architectural barriers as an eligible activity. The Town should investigate the possibility of obtaining CDBG funds for this purpose. Responsible Municipal Entities for Implementation: The Board of Selectmen and the Town Coordinator operating as the Town's ADA Compliance Officer.

4. Prioritize Building Needs: The Town has several buildings in need of replacement or substantial upgrade. The Town Hall is in need of numerous repairs and upgrades, including: new wiring for better information technology, new plumbing, heating, and handicapped accessibility. The second and third floors of the Town Hall are currently suitable for storage only. The highway barn is more than 65 years old, is in a dilapidated state, and is not large enough to house all of the Highway Department's equipment. Lastly, the School Department has two facilities operating at capacity (the Bright Beginnings Center and the Memorial Elementary School) and both will need expansions or additions within the next decade or so. It is therefore recommended that the proposed CIP Committee (see Recommendation #1) prioritize the Town's building needs starting with the Town Hall. In an effort to minimize a duplication of effort, the CIP Committee should establish a standard set of

procedures for a variety of tasks, including but not limited to: procuring consultant services, requests for proposals, bid submissions, bid selections, contract preparation, management and oversight, and investigating potential funding sources including available grant and loan programs. The CIP Committee should seek professional assistance with the above tasks as needed. The Town should start planning to address its deficient municipal facilities sooner rather than later so that they may be integrated into the recommended Capital Improvement Programming (CIP) process. Responsible Municipal Entity for Implementation: The CIP Committee proposed under Recommendation #1.

5. Identify a New Location for the Salt Shed and Improve its Containment Capacity: After several years of effort, the Town has not been successful in finding a suitable new location for its salt shed. The Town needs to redouble its efforts to secure land for a new salt shed facility, either at a new location or on land adjacent to the existing facility. The salt shed is located above a Zone II recharge area for one of the Town's municipal wellfields and there is the potential for contamination should there be a spill or a breach in the facility's containment. Any newly designed facility should be reviewed and approved by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to ensure that its containment capacity is satisfactory, given its location above a Zone II recharge area. Responsible Municipal Entities for Implementation: The Highway Department with assistance from the Board of Selectmen and Town Coordinator.

6. Lack of Local Funding for Road Maintenance and Repair: It is recommended that the Town investigate its options for incrementally supplementing the State funds used for roadway maintenance and repair. As mentioned previously, the Highway Department does not receive any local funding for road maintenance and repair and instead uses the entire amount of its State Chapter 90 highway aid for these purposes. The Town's annual Chapter 90 allotment may not be enough to maintain the Town's roadway system into the future, especially if new subdivision roads continue to get added to the inventory of local roads every year. It is anticipated that Town funds will be needed to supplement the annual Chapter 90 allotments at some point during the next decade. Responsible Municipal Entities for Implementation: The Highway Department with assistance from the Board of Selectmen, Town Coordinator and the Finance Committee.

7. School Choice Situation: It is recommended that the Town incrementally increase its funding of the local school system to make up for the ongoing decline in School Choice revenues. As previously described in the School Department's entry, the local school system's School Choice revenues are declining as its Choice students continue to graduate in large numbers and there are not enough available spaces at Hopedale's schools to replace them (the Elementary School is at full capacity). Currently, in an effort to maintain the same level of programs, the School Department is overspending its School Choice revenue and supplementing this source with a decreasing School Choice revenue fund. Simultaneously, the reserve is running out and new revenues are dropping as graduates leave and space is unavailable. The Town needs to incrementally increase its support of schools toward the eventual demise of this subsidy. Responsible Municipal Entities for Implementation: The School Department with assistance from the Board of Selectmen, Town Coordinator and the Finance Committee.

8. No Formal Revolving Account for Planning Board Review Fees: It is recommended that the Planning Board should work together with the Town Accountant to establish a formal revolving account as authorized under MGL Chapter 44, Section 53G. The Planning Board and Town Accountant have not established a formal mechanism that allows the Board to collect fees from a developer in advance to hire outside independent experts to review development plans (i.e.,

engineering reviews, environmental impact studies, traffic studies, zoning and regulatory compliance, etc.). Often the Board's engineering consultant reviews a plan on the Board's behalf and submits his bill, and the Board has to chase down the developer to pay for the review. Chapter 44, Section 53G of the Massachusetts General Laws allows municipalities to establish a revolving account for Planning Board review fees. Responsible Municipal Entities for Implementation: The Planning Board with assistance from the Town Accountant and Treasurer.

9. Lack of Professional Planning and Conservation Staff: It is recommended that the Town investigate its options for obtaining professional planning and conservation assistance. Currently, Hopedale does not have a Town Planner to assist its various municipal entities, nor does it have a professional Conservation Agent to assist the Conservation Commission. While Hopedale does not currently have the volume of business to support a full-time Town Planner or Conservation Agent, it does have the option of sharing such services with nearby and neighboring communities with the same needs. The Town should work with the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) to investigate the possibility of sharing such services with other nearby communities that also need part-time planning and conservation assistance. Responsible Municipal Entities for Implementation: The Planning Board and Conservation Commission with assistance from the Board of Selectmen, Town Coordinator and Finance Committee.

10. Enhanced Professional Management: It is recommended that the Town investigate its options for enhanced professional management. As the volume of municipal business increases, the Board of Selectmen is forced to spend more and more time dealing with town government issues. While Board members do receive an annual stipend, being a Selectmen is still an essentially volunteer position and all of Hopedale's Selectmen have historically held day jobs while conducting town business in the evenings. While hiring of a Town Coordinator has helped to ease the Board of Selectmen's workload, the day may come when the Town will need to enhance its professional management capabilities even further. Options for professional management include the establishment of a Town Administrator or a Town Manager. The Town Administrator option still vest the Board of Selectmen with ultimate management authority (as is the case with the current Town Coordinator position), while the Town Manager option would vest management authority with the new Manager and have the Board of Selectmen serve more as policy makers. Establishing a Town Manager form of government would require the adoption of a Town's Charter, whereas the Town Administrator option would not. Records of the Massachusetts Municipal Association indicate that more than two thirds of the Massachusetts communities with populations ranging from 2,500 to 7,500 citizens have some manner of professional administrative assistance. As Hopedale's population continues to grow, and with it the volume of government business, the Town may want to investigate its options for enhanced professional municipal management. Responsible Entity for Implementation: The Board of Selectmen.

11. Implementing Master Plan Recommendations: It is recommended that the Town establish a Master Plan Implementation Committee whose job it is to make sure that the Plan's recommendations get implemented. It may be that Hopedale's current Master Plan Committee would be willing to take on this task; however, a master planning process is lengthy and demanding. Many communities have found that the members of their master plan committees are ready to close shop and move onto other ventures. Thus, most communities seriously interested in implementing their plans end up forming implementation committees for this purpose, separate and distinct from the committee that prepared the plan. The Board of Selectmen would appoint the Master Plan Implementation Committee, who in turn would meet with the Town's other municipal entities that have Master Plan implementation responsibilities and work with them to keep the Plan on track. It is suggested that the Committee

periodically brief the Board of Selectmen on the Plan's progress, on a quarterly basis or twice a year. Responsible Entities for Implementation: The Town Coordinator and Board of Selectmen in consultation with the Master Plan Committee.

12. Establish a Local Housing Partnership: Hopedale should establish a municipal entity to deal with affordable housing issues in town, preferably a Local Housing Partnership. It is the Board of Selectmen that appoints such an entity. The Selectmen does not need Town Meeting authority to establish such an entity but can do so if it believes that Town Meeting action will help lend legitimacy to the Partnership. Dealing with affordable housing issues is a fairly broad mandate, but there are specific tasks that a Local Housing Partnership can undertake, such as:

- Inventory all government-owned buildings that may be suitable for affordable housing adaptive reuse, as well as government-owned properties that may have excess land that could be developed for affordable housing.
- Prepare and update the Town's housing strategy and planning documents.
- Serve as the Town's official advocate for affordable housing.
- Evaluate tax title properties that may be suitable for affordable housing.
- Apply for the various State and federal affordable housing grant opportunities.
- Monitor on an annual basis those accessory apartments that agree to affordability use restriction as part of their approval (more on this in the next recommendation).
- Manage the lottery system for those affordable housing units created through the Local Initiative Program (LIP) or through a Chapter 40B Comprehensive Permit.
- Provide outreach and education to the community regarding affordable housing.

There are several entities that could advise Hopedale on how to establish a local housing partnership and get them started, including the Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP) and the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). Responsible Entities for Implementation: The Town Coordinator and the Board of Selectmen.