

# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TOWN OF WEST BRIDGEWATER, MASSACHUSETTS



December, 2001

## *Town Center/Greenbelt Plan*

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Acknowledgements

October, 2001

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<b>Assessor</b>	<b>Historical Commission</b>
<b>Board of Health</b>	<b>Fire Department</b>
<b>Building Department</b>	<b>Parks and Forestry Superintendent</b>
<b>Buildings &amp; Grounds</b>	<b>Police Department</b>
<b>Treasurer</b>	<b>School Committee</b>
<b>Conservation Commission</b>	<b>Town Clerk</b>
<b>Computer Advisory Committee</b>	<b>Highway Department</b>
<b>Council On Aging</b>	<b>Library Director</b>
	<b>Water Commission</b>

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# TOWN OF WEST BRIDGEWATER MASTER PLAN 2001

Protecting Our Town Character While Responding to the Challenge of Growth

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## **PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Town of West Bridgewater has managed over the years to build facilities and infrastructure and provide the staff to support the public service needs of a rural community. Continued growth, in particular of commercial and industrial land uses, and the challenges of living in a more complex, suburban environment, have led to greater demands for staff and facilities to support local government. New accounting standards required by the State, stormwater protection mandated by the Federal Government, maintenance of schools and roads all require a larger allocation of public resources and greater participation by the citizens in order to support local government. Building support for change in order to maintain the Town's character is a challenge which will require thoughtful and persuasive public leadership.

### **Inventory**

For a Town the size of West Bridgewater, one finds a number of well funded departments in addition to a variety of regional agencies which provide support. The Town has its own high school, unusual for a community of this size, and a well staffed police and fire department as well as public library. The Water Department has been wisely acquiring land and a site for a potential future public water source. There are adequate fields for public recreation. Sports are an important activity in town.

### **Needs/Issues**

In stark contrast to the adequately funded status of the primary municipal departments, is the lack of staff and facilities to address a range of growth management issues. There is no town planner to address economic development and planning issues, the Conservation Commission and Board of Health have limited staff, there is no town engineer, and the Highway and Parks Department have long term deferred staff and infrastructure maintenance needs. Five priority issues have been identified concerning (1) funding short-fall, (2) capital facility impacts of population growth, (3) resource protection, in particular public water, (4) the adoption of fees, staffing, and organizational strategies to manage growth, and (5) the need to identify new sources of revenue to fund facility, infrastructure, and staffing needs.

### **Vision/Goals**

The Town's vision is to respond to the growth management challenges by addressing over time the current facility and staffing needs. The current town character and quality of life is not to be sacrificed. Identifying new revenue sources and building consensus around new staffing and organizational changes will take continued leadership by the elected and volunteer citizens who work on the town's behalf.

### **Recommendations:**

Four broad strategies have been proposed:

1. Undertake fiscal planning and adopt new funding strategies  
The rate of growth will need to be increased, fee structures increased to be in line with costs.
2. Initiate infrastructure/growth management planning activities  
A Comprehensive Water Resources Management Plan must be undertaken to address water supply, stormwater, and wastewater issues.
3. Improve Interdepartmental coordination on growth management issues including project development review and initiate public education of natural resource protection
4. Fund and undertake networking information systems improvements

## 6.1 INVENTORY OF EXISTING PUBLIC FACILITIES

### Government Structure

The Town of West Bridgewater operates on a decentralized basis under the direction of a three-member Board of Selectmen.

- Elected positions include School, Water, Health, Planning, Library, Assessing, Housing, and Town Clerk.
- Appointed boards and administrative positions under the direction of the Board of Selectmen include the areas of Public Safety: Police, Fire, Building, Conservation, Public Works (Highway, Forestry, Vehicle Maintenance), Board of Appeals, Finances (including Treasurer/Collector, Town Accountant, Information Systems; Human Services (including Elder Services and Veterans' Services) and the Legal Department.
- The three-member Board of Selectmen have managed to operate with a consensus. Many towns operate under a five-member Board of Selectmen in order to reduce the work load for the individual selectmen and facilitate Town operations by not requiring the presence of all three Selectmen in order to guarantee a majority vote.
- The Town's government and fiscal operation, like about half of the towns in the Commonwealth, operate their local governments without a Town Charter utilizing MGL and by-laws adopted at Town Meetings.



Table 6-1 Government Structure

Board, Commission, Authority	Number Of Members	Term	Vacancy	Elected (E) or Appointed (A)	Appointing Authority
Executive- Board of Selectmen	3	3 Yrs		E	
Legislative Body	No quorum				
Open Town Meeting					
Town Clerk	1	3 Yrs		E	
Town Moderator	1	3 Yrs		E	
Treasurer/Collector	1			A	Selectmen
Town Accountant	1			A	Selectmen
Assessors	3	3 Yrs		E	
Finance Committee	9	3 Yrs	2	A	Mod./Com
<b>Public Health and Safety</b>					
Board of Health	3	3 Yrs		E	
Health Agent	1		1	A	BOH
Police Chief	1			A	Selectmen
Fire Chief	1			A	Selectmen
Brockton Area Mental Health Representative	1		1	A	Selectmen
Brockton Area Retardation Representative	1		1	A	Selectmen
Recycling Committee	2		1	A	Selectmen
<b>Inspectional Services</b>					
Building Inspector	1			A	Selectmen
Plumbing/gas	1			A	Selectmen
Electrical	1			A	Selectmen
<b>Commission/Boards</b>					
Planning Board	5	5 Yrs		E	
Water Commissioners	3	3 Yrs		E	
Board of Appeals	7	5 Yrs		A	Selectmen
Conservation Commission	5	3 Yrs	1	A	Selectmen
Housing Authority	5	5 Yrs		4 (E) 1 (A)	Governor
Industrial Development Commission	5	5 Yrs	3	A	Selectmen
Council on Aging	9	3 Yrs	None	A	Selectmen
Recreation Commission			Inactive	A	Selectmen
Veterans Agent	1		None	A	Selectmen
Trustees of Public Library	6	3 Yrs	2	E	
School Committee	6	3 Yrs		E	
Tree Warden	1	3 Yrs		E	
Constables	2	3 Yrs		E	
Street Lighting Committee	5		3	A	Selectmen
Board of Registrars	4	3 Yrs		A	Selectmen

**Short-fall in staff to manage growth and change:**

- West Bridgewater has relied upon its volunteer boards, committees and professional staff to produce an annual budget, put forward capital warrant articles and pass a balanced budget.
- A part -time replacement was recently retained to replace the Town's Board of Health Agent who recently retired.
- The Conservation Agent is part time (8 hours a month).
- There is no staff to carry out planning and economic development activities and coordinate the review of development projects presented to the town. (Site Plan is coordinated by a public hearing in front of the Planning Board.)
- The Asack Farm sub-division at West and West Center Streets is an example of piecemeal development providing neither optimum open space or economic development.
- Two open space parcels near the Brockton Country Club could, with proper staff support, represent open space and economic development opportunities for the town.
- Volunteers are also in short supply to staff many of the committees needed to operate a town. The Industrial Development Commission is supposed to have five members and two advisory members but had only two regular members in 1999. A number of positions on regional boards are also vacant. Tables 6-1 and 6-2 show some of the vacant positions.

**Table 6-2 Growth Management Department Staff in Neighboring Towns**

	West Bridgewater	East Bridgewater	Bridgewater	Easton	Raynham
<b>Planning/ Community Development</b>	None	None	Director, 1 Asst. Director, 1 Secretary	1 Secretary, 1 Planner	Director
<b>Conservation</b>	Agent: 8 Hrs/Month Secretary: 8 Hrs/Wk	1 Staff, PT	1 Secretary, PT	1 Secretary, 1 Agent (In DPW)	1 Agent
<b>Board of Health</b>	Health Agent (Pt) 2 Pt Sec.		1 Agent, 2 Secretary	Director, 2 Secretary, 1 Asst. Inspector,	1 Agent
<b>Forestry &amp; Parks</b>	Superintendent, Foreman, 2 Laborers	1 Tree Warden	(Part of Highway Dept. Staff)	3, Including Tree Warden (In DPW)	Director, 1 Secretary, PT, 2 Maintenance
<b>Engineering</b>	None			2	
<b>Highway</b>	Superintendent, Foreman, 5 Laborers		23 Staff, Plus Superintendent, Asst. Super, Foreman.	11 (Including Superintendent, Foremen, Laborers) (in DPW)	11 (Including Superintendent, Office Mgr., Foreman, Mechanic, 5 Maint, 2 Solid Waste Employees



Table 6-3 Public Facilities

Town Facilities	Location	Services
<b>Town Hall</b>	North Main Street	Contains 5,800sq. ft. (office space not counting hallways, bathrooms, etc.), offices for 22-32 government staff (FT/pt), 1 large room, 4 small meeting rooms.
<b>Police Department</b>	West Center Street	22 full-time officers, 9 part-time officers, 3 part-time dispatchers, 1 clerical, 4 part-time crossing guards, 5 cruisers and 3 unmarked cars, 2 animal control officers and their vehicle.
<b>Fire Department/EMS</b>	West Center Street	13 firefighters and 12 on-call staff, with 3 engines, 1 ladder, 2 breakers, and 2 ambulances.
<b>Education</b> West Bridgewater School District	Howard School Spring Street Early Learning Center PK-5 Rose L. MacDonald School 1-3 Middle/Junior High School (1989) 6-12	4 schools (PK-12).
<b>Highway Department</b> (Highway, Forestry, Vehicle Maintenance)	North Main Street	Maintenance of @ 80 miles of Town roads; Maintenance of Town vehicles and equipment; transfer station
<b>Water Department</b>	The Town has four locations for public water:  Manley Street Wells (2) 12.9 acres Cyr Street Wells (4) 195 acres  Norman Avenue Well (1) (proposed) Robery Farm well (proposed)	Department 100% Enterprise; 4 laborers, 1 manager, 1 office manager  665,000 av. gpd consumed; pumping capacity of 2.3 mgpd.  Proposed wells will provide 1.15 mgpd additional capacity
<b>Library</b>	Howard Street	53,000 volumes (1/4 children's)
<b>Forestry and Parks Department</b>	North Main Street	105 acres, including War Memorial Park (including the Town River with a Dam), school playfields, playground, skating rink; 6 cemeteries, traffic islands and squares not included in acreage.
<b>Housing Authority</b>	Matfield Street	48 Elderly/Disabled Units on Matfield Street
<b>Council on Aging</b>	2 Spring St.	Offices, social and educational activities, nutritional services

- As with most towns, there are no clear records on facility ownership and maintenance.
- The State is now requiring beginning in 2003 that Towns identify all their fixed assets and set up depreciation accounts by the year 2007. This will be a major undertaking.
- The Municipal Building Needs Repair Account overseen by a 9-member board appointed annually by the Selectmen reviews major and unforeseen maintenance projects. Each Department is responsible for maintaining their facility within their yearly budget.

Regional organizations provide key services and supplement the work of Town Boards in the areas of transportation, solid waste disposal, public safety, mosquito control, joint purchasing, vocational education, and planning. Important services on a regional basis are noted below.

Table 6-4 Regional Service Groups

Name	Services	Members
<b>Southeast Regional Services Group (SRSB)</b>	Joint purchasing, training, problem solving by municipal administrators, highway superintendents, others	16 cities and towns Abington, Avon, Bridgewater, Canton, Carver, East Bridgewater, Easton, Foxborough, Mansfield, Norfolk, Plainville, Sharon, Stoughton, Taunton, West Bridgewater, Wrentham
<b>Tobacco Control Program</b>	Education, enforcement of regulations for boards of health	8 members and towns Carver, Halifax, Hanson, Middleboro, Pembroke, Plympton, West Bridgewater, Whitman
<b>Mutual Aid Agreements</b>	Fire/public safety	All towns adjacent to West Bridgewater, as well as agreement with all towns in Plymouth County
<b>Southeastern Regional School</b>	Vocational education	8 cities and towns Brockton, East Bridgewater, Easton, Foxboro, Mansfield, Norton, Sharon, West Bridgewater
<b>SEMASS</b>	Solid waste disposal, Rochester Ma.	51 Communities
<b>South Shore Community Action Council</b>	Fuel assistance, weatherization, consumer mediation	Avon
<b>Women's Place Crisis Center</b>	Battered Women's Services	Brockton
<b>Old Colony Elderly Services, Inc.</b>	In-home assistance, homemakers/ personal care, Meals on Wheels, transport	30 towns and cities in Southeastern Massachusetts
<b>Department of Social Services, Transitional Assistance, Employment and Training, Welfare</b>	Regional Office in Brockton	14 Cities and towns including the Bridgewaters, Easton, Brockton
<b>Old Colony Planning Council</b>	Land use, transportation, economic development, open space planning, environmental protection, business retention and expansion, grant application, regional information systems	15 cities and towns Stoughton on the North, Kingston on the East, Plympton on the South, Easton on the West
<b>BAT</b>	Regional transportation agency operates Handicap Van/Dial-A-Ride	Regional transit authority serves Greater Brockton area
<b>Plymouth County Mosquito Control Project</b>	Management of a range of mosquito control programs	Plymouth County
<b>U Mass Extension/ Plymouth County</b>	Provides research-based agricultural and nutritional information	Serves all towns in the county from office in Hanson and satellite office in Brockton
<b>Bridgewater Land Trust</b>	Assists CC with land acquisition	Bridgewater



Public and non-profit service organizations are located in West Bridgewater as well as Plymouth, Brockton, Taunton, and Quincy. These agencies provide a broad range of social, welfare, employment, and health care services for the region's low income and disabled population as noted in Tables 6-5 and 6-6 below. While a needs assessment of the local population has not been carried out, the data below indicates that West Bridgewater has the lowest number of residents on Public Assistance of the neighboring communities.

**Table 6-5 Residents on Public and Transitional Assistance, December 2000**

	SSI Aged	TAFDC	SSI Disabled	EAEDC *	Food Stamps	Total
<b>West Bridgewater</b>	8	18	67	5	58	<b>156</b>
<b>East Bridgewater</b>	19	27	105	15	93	<b>259</b>
<b>Bridgewater</b>	29	48	189	24	166	<b>456</b>
<b>Easton</b>	36	22	141	7	134	<b>340</b>

\* Emergency Assistance to elderly, disabled, and children  
Source: Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

**Table 6-6 Town and Regional Planning/Service Organizations**

Name	Service	Type Public Or Non Profit
Council on Aging	Develop, implement, and coordinate programs and services to meet the needs of West Bridgewater Elders, age 60 yrs and over	Public
Veterans Services	Provision of veterans services	Public
Self-Help, Inc., Avon	Provision of information and referral to low income individuals and families	Non-profit
Old Colony United Way Brockton	Provide funding to over 30 social service agencies in area	Non-profit
Cultural Council	Review/recommend grant applications for M.C.C. funding	Public
Industrial Development Commission	Promote business in West Bridgewater	Public
Recycling Committee	Promote Recycling in Town	Public
Handicapped Access Committee	Advise town on upgrading accessibility of municipal facilities	Public
Moderators Committee for School Restoration	School Public Facility Planning	Public



*While the Town is well managed, there is little room for aggressively tackling any significant long-term capital projects to address maintenance of aging buildings and infrastructure.*

- In FY93, the Selectmen established a Capital Budget Committee. Based upon annual department reviews and 5 year projections, the Committee has seen more than \$4.5 million dollars worth of its recommended projects subsequently funded by Town Meeting.
- In FY93, the Selectmen established a Capital Budget Committee. Based upon annual department reviews and 5 year projections, the Committee has seen more than \$4.5 million dollars worth of its recommended projects subsequently funded by Town Meeting.
- Prudently, the Town has ended every fiscal year since FY94 with a surplus (or positive Free Cash balance), spending this on capital purchases or the maintenance of a Town Stabilization fund which now maintains a balance of \$550,000.

### **Expenditures**

In FY 1999, total operating expenditures were approximately \$12,900,384.

- Education accounted for 53% of the total budget. Of 4 adjacent communities, Bridgewater (which has a regional high school) and Easton allocate a smaller proportion of their budget for education, but Brockton and East Bridgewater allocate more.
- Other services, on the other hand, such as Fire, Recreation, Public Works, receive substantially less funding. As growth takes place in the town, these are services that will need additional funding.

**Table 6-7 FY 1999 Budgets in West Bridgewater and Neighboring Towns**

	West Bridgewater	Easton	Bridgewater	East Bridgewater	Brockton	Raynham
Education	52.8%	52.4%	47.4%	58.9%	53.5%	47.9%
Public Safety						
<i>Police</i>	10.2	7.0	9.3	6.2	7.0	14.4
<i>Fire</i>	3.9	6.1	7.7	3.6	7.2	8.4
<i>Other Public Safety</i>	3.7	1.4	3.2	1.2	0.3	1.1
Public Safety Subtotal	17.8	14.5	20.2	11.0	14.5	23.9
Debt Service	7.7	7.7	6.7	8.0	2.5	2.4
Fixed Costs	6.5	10.2	8.2	10.5	17.2	8.0
General Expenditures	6.1	7.8	5.7	5.0	4.4	5.4
Public Works						
<i>Public Works/Highway</i>	3.2	3.6	4.4	2.8	2.2	4.4
<i>Other Public Works</i>	1.1	0.4	0.0	0.2	2.7	3.6
Public Works Subtotal	4.3	4.0	4.4	3.0	4.9	8.0
Inter-governmental	2.0	0.8	0.8	0.4	1.2	1.1
Culture/Recreation	1.7	1.2	4.4	2.0	1.0	2.0
Health/Welfare	1.1	1.0	1.8	1.0	0.6	1.1
Other	0.0	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

- The Town's debt service costs are just under 8%, which is more than the median of adjacent communities but in line with what is considered a reasonable percentage of municipal expenditures.

**Table 6-8 FY 99 Debt Service as % of FY 99 Expenditure**

Municipality	Debt Service %
East Bridgewater	8.0%
West Bridgewater	7.7
Easton	7.7
Middleboro	6.8
Bridgewater	6.7
Taunton	4.4
Brockton	2.5
Raynham	2.4

- During the last bond review, done in 1999, the Town maintained its excellent A-2 bond rating. Under the old rating system that is equivalent to an "A" rating which the Town has held for several decades. Only Easton had a higher bond rating among neighboring Towns, with a rating of "A-1."



**Revenues**

Total revenues in FY 1999 were \$14,257,588, providing the Town a slight operating surplus.

- Total valuations in West Bridgewater are relatively high given neighboring towns but over-all below the state-wide average. Equalized valuation per capita (EVPC), a measure of the amount of valuation available to finance local property taxes, was the highest of six towns in the surrounding area in fiscal year 1998, but somewhat less than the average EVPC for the state (\$74,220 vs. \$90,618).
- Residential tax rates are average for adjacent towns

**Table 6-9 Equalized Valuation Per Capita in FY 1998: Six Town Comparison**

West Bridgewater	\$74,220
Raynham	\$70,360
Easton	\$64,046
East Bridgewater	\$51,535
Bridgewater	\$43,837
Brockton	\$31,068

**Table 6-10 Residential Tax Rates in West Bridgewater Area**

Brockton	18.06
East Bridgewater	17.98
Easton	16.24
West Bridgewater	15.43
Raynham	14.35
Bridgewater	14.03

- The Town benefits from a large commercial base and a split tax rate; 43% of the taxes are paid by commercial property owners.

**Table 6-11 West Bridgewater Tax Revenue (FY 99)**

Tax Classification	Tax Rate	Tax Levy	Percentage of Total Tax Levy
Residential	15.43	4,922,519	57%
Commercial	20.61	1,856,287	21%
Industrial	20.61	1,492,830	17%
Personal Property	20.61	419,956	5%

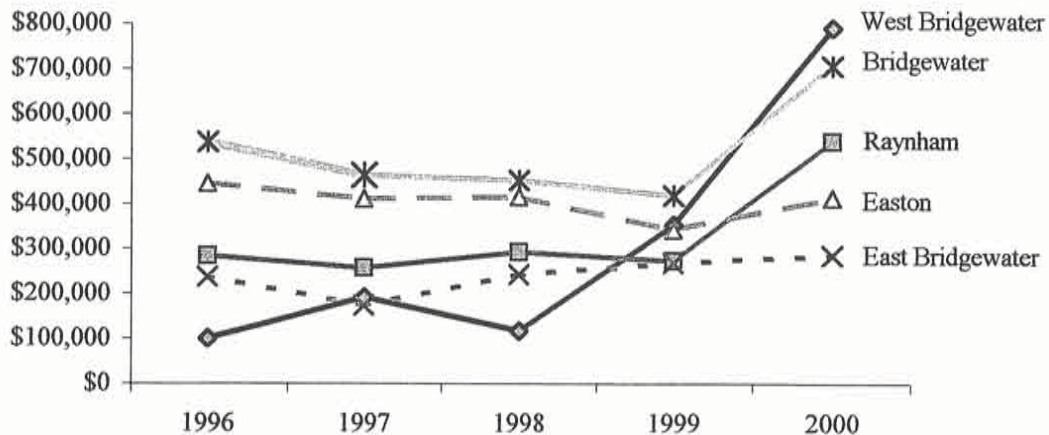
- The availability of State Aid is average for the state. Generally State Aid represents less than one quarter of a municipality's revenue; it made up 19% of West Bridgewater's revenue in FY 1999.
- In the past two years, new growth has increased sharply in West Bridgewater as a direct result of bringing the Assessment function in house and hiring a professional to implement and manage a computer assisted mass appraisal system. This brings to the Town the skills necessary to focus on the discovery of taxable property, defend the values, and be more accountable to taxpayers. The position was created and filled in early 1998, the results of which, in part, can be measured on the growth revenue chart.



Still, another factor contributing to growth in revenues may be the continuing hot housing market, as other towns have experienced recent growth as well.

- This recent rate of growth is not expected to continue; in fact it might decrease due to changes in the organizational structure and taxable values of particular industrial properties.

Figure 6-1 New Growth, 1996-2000



## 6.2 Public Facilities Needs/Issues

The following is a summary of general needs and issues concerning public facilities and growth management.

### Issues Summary

Table 6-12 highlights the concerns of individual town departments. Many of these issues have been identified by prior reports and will be further stressed by the demands of projected additional development. They are organized into five major areas of concern:

1. Funding short-fall to address current town department needs
2. Projected residential growth impacts on Town's fiscal balance, staffing, and facility needs
3. Protecting public water
4. Insufficient growth to address current service and capital needs
5. Possible strategies to address growth management and staffing needs

### 1. **Funding short-fall to address current computer, facility, and staffing deficiencies.**

While the town's budget has been balanced, there are substantial needs that should be addressed:

- **Computerization:** While the town departments are being networked, additional funding will be needed to equip and train the staff to facilitate data storage and sharing of information. These upgrades will lead to substantial long term savings and service efficiencies.
- **Staff:** A number of existing departments lack sufficient staff:
  - Conservation Commission Agent has been retained for only 8 hours/month
  - Health Department has no agent
  - The Public Works Department has half the staff it had during the 1980's
  - The Assessing Department is in need of qualified support staff and/or adequate training. A new position is needed to assist Town Appraiser with routine management, maintenance, and appraisal functions so as to carry out interim year updates.
- **Salaries:** Other Departments are unable to retain key staff due to low salary schedules at both the management and field levels.
  - The Town has lost the following key staff recently because of low salaries: Council on Aging, Building Inspector, Town Accountant/Information Technology
  - There is substantial turnover in the labor staff because of low salary levels
- **Capital Projects:** A number of Capital projects need to be undertaken including a standpipe for Walnut Street to provide water pressure for the Manley Street area, an addition to the Fire Department, the renovation of the Middle-High School, and accessibility and building renovation improvements to Town Hall. These projects are estimated to cost between \$4-\$6.8 m.

- **Maintenance:** Additional funding for deferred maintenance is needed in a number of other areas
  - Public Roads. The State has cut Chapter 90 monies for roadway maintenance by 40%
  - Cemetery and Memorial Park maintenance
  - Traffic congestion and building deterioration at Central Square



Table 6-12 Information, Facility, and Capital Needs Planning Concerns of Town Departments

Town Departments	Departmental Concerns			
	Information <sup>(1)</sup> Systems/Coordination	Growth Management/ Organization/staffing <sup>(2)</sup>	Facilities and Equipment <sup>(3/4)</sup>	
			Need More Space, Larger Facility	Facility/Vehicle Maintenance
Town Hall	Information Technology specialist	Full-time engineer; building inspector; H.R. director (or Wage & Personnel Board)	Elevator, conference rooms, storage, offices	
Police Department				
Fire Department	Need GIS and training		2 <sup>nd</sup> Station, or Enlarge existing station	No
School Committee	Need to update computers, network 2 schools	Staffing and facilities will be needed if additional population growth	Middle/High School	
Highway Department	Need training on GIS	Need engineer for roadway and stormwater planning; Need more maintenance staff; Issue of laborer wage rates; Roadway standards for cluster  Need to study curb-side pick-up, higher fees	Need parcel to rear of barn to facilitate future building expansion	Need to begin aggressive \$200K/yr road rebuilding program
Water Commissioners	Need training on GIS	Laborer wage rates	Build Standpipe at Manley/Walnut; Purchase land around wellheads; Long term new wellfield	Design and construct an 4 iron removal plant for Manley St. well (underway)
Library		More staff hours needed, plan for growth beyond 2010		
Forestry and Parks Department	Need training on GIS	Need additional laborer	Cemeteries,	Improve maintenance for Memorial Park
Housing Authority			New housing sites	
Treasurer/ Tax Collector				
Assessing Department	Need GIS coordination with assessing functions	Need increased P.T. staff and qualified position to replace current full time staff	Additional space, equipment, and ADA compliance	Need additional software and hardware
Town Accountant/ Information Systems	Additional assistance to meet GASB-34	Additional Software to integrate GASB-34 for all departments		
Conservation Commission	Need training on GIS	Full time Conservation Agent		
Council on Aging			Elderly Center to be built in 2001 w/ CDBG grant	
Planning Board	Need training on GIS	Planner/Economic Development staff		
Board of Appeals	Need training on GIS			
Building Department	Need training and upgrades to GIS	FT Building Inspector		
Board of Health	Need training on GIS	Health Agent		



## 2. Projected Residential Growth will further impact the Town's fiscal balance, staffing, and facility needs

The following table shows the projected need for various municipal facilities by 2020 and at full buildout. The population, as estimated by Old Colony, is expected by the year 2020 to increase by close to 800 persons, to a total of 7,400 residents. As shown in Section 1, Land Use, the population at full buildout is expected to increase by 3,166 persons to a total of 9,780 residents including an estimated 758 additional school children (K-12). Over the next twenty years, the number of households is expected to increase from 2430 to 2,750 households. At full buildout the total number of households is expected to be 3,580 households assuming there are no public sewers or Title V systems available to permit development on currently constrained soils. There is no projected timetable as to when this full build out could occur. Furthermore, these facilities will not need to be constructed all at once, but rather in a planned, orderly fashion.

**Table 6-13 Projected Growth Impacts<sup>(1)</sup>**

	Existing Level of Service (2000)	Projected Total Demand		Existing Capacity	New Facilities Needed?	
		(2020) 7,400 res.	Full Buildout 9,780 res.		(2020)	Full Buildout
Water	0.664 mgd	0.723 mgd	0.96 mgpd	2.3 <sup>(2)</sup>	Yes Stand-pipe	New well site if growth exceeds projections
Police <sup>(3)</sup>	22 full-time officers (3.6 off./1,000 pop)	24 officers	35 officers	22 officers	Yes	Yes
Fire	13 firefighters, 12 on call (6/1,000 homes)	14 firemen	21 firemen	13 firemen	Station renovation \$1M	New station @\$1M
Library	8 books/person <sup>(4)</sup>	59,200 books	76,800 books	53,000 books	renovation	expansion
School	1,012 students	1,000 students	1,490 students	1,012 students	\$1M Middle/High	1 new school
Recreation	104.7 acres <sup>(5)</sup>	77 acres	101 acres	10,500 residents	No	No
Roads	Major arterials heavily congested	Rte 106	Intersections, road widening		Yes	Yes

**Notes:**

<sup>(1)</sup> Existing population (2000) =6,641, Existing households (2000) = 2,430

<sup>(2)</sup> New Robery Farms and Norman Avenue well sites will add 1.1 mgpd capacity; a total of 3.45 capacity at full buildout. This should be sufficient water to accommodate projected build-out. Pumping capacity on peak day must be 2.5 times peak day usage.

<sup>(3)</sup> Minimum standard police officers per population (federal government standard) = 1.8 officers/1,000 pop.

<sup>(4)</sup> The state average of library holdings is 5 volumes per capita.

<sup>(5)</sup> The total park/recreation standard set for towns by the National Recreation and Park Association is 6.25 to 10.5 acres of developed "close-to-home" open space per 1,000 population. By this measure, West Bridgewater has sufficient recreation land, given it has over 15 acres of open space per 1,000 residents.

\$4-\$6.8 million in capital expenditures, given the projected build-out, will be required by 2020, excluding Town Center and roadway improvements. Full buildout would require substantial additional funding to cover the costs of possibly one new school, an additional well, roads, and staffing.



- Recommending various bylaw and sub-division amendments to manage new roadway designs and minimize the impacts of numerous curb-cuts on resource areas and traffic flow
- Identifying additional revenue sources for road maintenance and construction

Although some of the long term actions can be divided into separate phases, the whole plan is expected to be implemented within the long term (20 years). Costs were estimated as *Low* (less than \$10,000), *Medium* (\$10,000 to \$50,000), and *High* (greater than \$50,000). Costs for local and regional transit plans are difficult to estimate, yet these items may be fundable through a local Transportation Management Association (TMA), the MBTA, and other private employer programs.

**Table 7-1 Summary Of Recommended Plan**

Recommended Action	Implementation Time Frame	Cost Estimate	First Step Towards Implementation
<b>TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT</b>			
<b>Concentrated Development</b> Promote open space cluster zoning Promote mixed-use developments	Short Term Long Term	Low Low	Zoning By-law Change Zoning By-law Change
<b>Local and Regional Transit Plan</b> Proposed local circulator bus Proposed shuttles to rail stations Improved Dial-a-BAT service for the elderly and physically-challenged	Long Term Long Term Short Term	Varies	Feasibility Study, Local Coordination
<b>Network of Bikeways/Walkways Throughout Town</b>			
Recreational/Commuter Network in Agreement with Local Plans	Long Term	Medium	Local Approvals, Preliminary Engineering
<b>TRANSPORTATION SAFETY MANAGEMENT</b>			
<b>Isolated Intersections</b> Upgrade safety Improve traffic flow	Short Term Short Term	Med. – High Med. – High	Coordination of Agencies Preliminary Engineering
<b>Access Management</b> Curb-cut guidelines Subdivision roadway standards revision	Short Term Short Term	Low Low	Zoning By-law Change Sub-Division regulations
<b>MAJOR NETWORK IMPROVEMENTS</b>			
<b>Route 106 Corridor</b> Three-four lanes with shoulders Traffic circulation and control improvements at Central Square	Long Term Short Term	High High	MHD Preliminary Engineering Preliminary Engineering
<b>Route 28 Corridor</b> From Brockton Town line to Route 106: Traffic circulation and control	Short Term	High	MHD
<b>Manley Street</b>	Short Term	High	MHD
<b>Local Network</b> Widening of local roads, acquisition of additional right of way	Mid Term	High	Local Approvals, Preliminary Engineering
<b>Bridge Repairs</b> : Scotland, South, Belmont, West	Short-mid	Varies	Local/MHD



Table 6-14 Projected Capital Improvements Needs

Department	2020		Full build-out	
Town Hall	Elevator, offices, storage, <i>public hearing and meeting rooms</i>	\$0.5-\$0.8M		
Water	Standpipe	\$1.5-\$2M	New well area	
Police			Addition	
Fire	Expanded and new station for Manley St.	\$1-\$2M		
Library	Renovations		Addition	
School	High School and 3 elementary school renovations	\$1-\$2.5M	One new elementary school	
Recreation			Playfields	
Roads	Route 106 Widening and Central Square acquisition/Improvements	Estimate not available		
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$4-\$6.8M plus road improvements</b>		<b>Cost estimates not available</b>

Staffing salaries and deficiencies will be exacerbated by additional growth requiring some \$300,000 in salaries for the following staffing priorities:

- Planner/grant-writer and secretary
- Full-time Management Information Systems/Information Technology Director (shared by the Town and the School)
- Full-time Town Engineer
- Half-time Conservation Agent
- Human Resource Director (or Wage and Personnel Board) to regulate all management positions so that salaries among various elected boards bear relationship to other department head salaries.
- Staff support for Assessing to undertake interim year updates

### **3. Protecting Public Water will require coordination among Water, Highway, and Health Departments, the Conservation Commission, and Planning Board**

The Water Department is currently addressing a major short-term water quality issue. Following the recommendations of their consultant, Dufrane Henry, the Water Department received Town Meeting approval to design and construct an iron removal and corrosion control plant for the Manley Street well. This well is now off-line and final plans are being completed in anticipation of undertaking the construction of this \$1.8 million facility.

Longer term water quality issues are more complex as identified below.

- The quality of the town's groundwater is threatened by stormwater run-off and failed septic systems, inappropriate development, and lack of inspection and enforcement.
- West Bridgewater residents continue under Title V regulations to develop and maintain their own septic systems<sup>1</sup>.
- The Department of Environmental Protection is urging the town to undertake a Comprehensive Water Resources Management Plan. The purpose of this plan is to look at the current problems and develop localized solutions to these problems.

A 1999 study carried out by an outside consultant for the Town found that 27% of the 753 residential respondents had problems with their septic system, 63% were interested in exploring alternative systems.

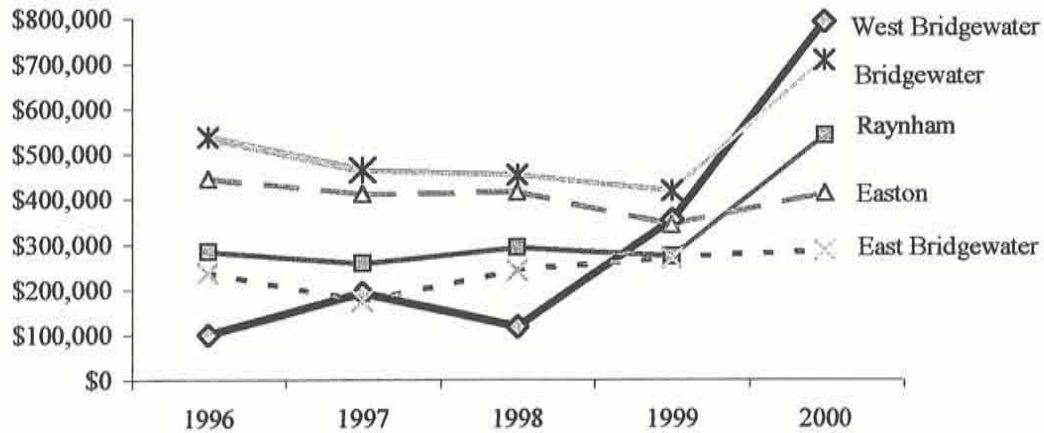
The Highway Department will need to work with the Water and Health Departments, the Conservation Commission and Planning Board and the Board of Selectmen on developing a stormwater protection plan as required by the EPA for West Bridgewater by 2003. Stormwater runoff is one of the major sources of groundwater contamination.

### **4. Insufficient growth to address current critical municipal service and capital needs without adopting a range of new strategies.**

- Between 1996 and the Year 2000, total annual tax increase fluctuated from less than 1% to as much as 14% and remained until 1999 below the revenue increase of neighboring communities.
- In the past two years, growth in valuation has increased sharply in West Bridgewater. Revenue growth has been more steady in neighboring towns.
- While FY 2000 saw a significant rise in new growth revenue, over \$790,000, this was due in large part to new growth as well as to a specific corporation which is now in the process of restructuring itself to reduce its valuation and resulting tax burden.
- No major projects are on the horizon in West Bridgewater which will continue to positively impact the tax rate.

<sup>1</sup> The majority of houses have septic tanks, except for the town's two manufactured home parks and a few businesses near the Brockton city line. In 1990, some 87% of homes had septic tanks while about 13% were tied to a public sewer system. Just 2.4% of homes have private wells; in 1990 about 96% of homes obtained water from a public source or a private company.

Figure 6-2 New Growth, 1996-2000



- In FY 2000, the Town's budget was set very close to the maximum it could tax without necessitating an override. The town had an excess capacity of just over \$237,543. By contrast, Bridgewater has over \$300,000 in excess capacity; Brockton has over \$2 million.
- The tax bill for the average homeowner in 2001 went up about 8.7% with the residential tax rate set at \$14.70 per \$1,000 of valuation. The median single-family tax bill was \$2,146.97 in FY 2000, with a residential tax rate of \$13.52 per \$1,000 of valuation. In FY2001, that median went to \$2,363.76. The median house value was \$158,800 in FY2000 and \$160,800 in FY 2001. The tax rate for 2002 is estimated to increase only 6.4% for the average homeowner.
- Given the relatively moderate income of the average household, West Bridgewater tax payers have limited means to increase their taxes. There is little support for an override of Proposition 2½.



5. Possible strategies to provide additional growth management funding and staffing

- A. Increase the fees for various services,
- B. Pursue additional grants,
- C. Promote appropriate new development
- D. Obtain the support of regional planning agencies to provide needed town revenue and professional staff support. Regionalize some town services to reduce costs and eliminate redundancy
- E. Coordinate Town departments concerned with water resource protection
- F. Establish growth management Stabilization Fund
- G. Bring sewers to industrially zoned areas to attract high quality industries

A. Increase Fees:

A comprehensive study could be undertaken to assess how the Town might bring its fee structure in line with current and projected costs. The examples below indicate the current deficiencies.

- **Water:** The Town has the lowest water rates in the region. Could higher rates support needed improvements and possibly the use of an engineer to carry out stormwater planning?
- **Waste disposal:** The Town generates some \$80,000 in revenue for a transfer station that costs some \$200,000 annually. While home-owners are paying \$35 annually for a sticker, adjacent towns charge substantially more for this service. Furthermore, when the Town's contract with SEMASS ends in 2015, tipping fees could increase from \$40 to \$150/ton.
- **Conservation Commission:** The commission should establish a new fee structure so that it can support all of its staffing needs. At present Conservation Fund fees support about \$4,200 worth of each annual budget but more professional services are needed as the Town begins to see proposals that include more complicated wetland issues. It is estimated that some \$10,000 could be raised annually if the commission had a better fee structure and enforcement capabilities.

Table 6-15 Average Water Consumption Per Household

Town	Average Consumption
Easton	\$237/year/household
East Bridgewater	\$226/year/household
Bridgewater	\$208/year/household
<b>West Bridgewater</b>	<b>\$180/year/household</b>
Raynham	\$280/year/household

Based on 90,000 gallons per year in West Bridgewater  
 \*Including annual water tax assessed on all property

Table 6-16 Solid Waste Disposal Fees

Town	Fee
Easton	\$324 /household/yr ( average cost private disposal)
East Bridgewater	\$1.25/bag
Bridgewater	\$1.00/bag
<b>West Bridgewater</b>	<b>\$35/year/household</b>
Raynham	\$1.00/bag

*B. Pursue additional grants*

Grants and low interest loans are available to address certain issues. The Town needs to fund a grant writer to take advantage of these opportunities.

*C. Promote appropriate new development*

The Town Appraiser has indicated that a warehouse building is valued at about one half the value of a new office building and therefore in tax payments pays per square foot about one half the rate of a new office building or hotel. In addition, a hotel generates a local room tax. In some communities some of this funding is dedicated to the local Chamber of Commerce to promote economic development.

**Table 6-17 Valuation/square feet of alternative development types**

Use	Valuation/Sq. Ft. (\$)
Warehouse	50
R& D	65
Class A Office	90
Restaurant/Fast Food	200
Hotel	\$90,000/rm

The addition of two or three research and development buildings totaling some 500,000 square feet would generate, based upon the current commercial tax rate of \$19.79, some \$500,000 in new tax revenue, more than enough to pay for the additional salaries needed to improve growth management planning in town.

The town should be encouraging revenue positive alternative land uses as indicated in Table 6-18 below.

**Table 6-18 Fiscal Impacts of Development**

Type of Development	Revenue/General Govt.	Revenue/Education
<b>Positive Revenue Benefits</b>		
Research Office Parks	+	+
Office Parks	+	+
Industrial Development	+	+
High-Rise Garden Apartments (Studio/1BR)	+	+
Age-restricted Housing	+	+
Garden Condominiums (One/Two BR)	+	+
Open Space	+	+
<b>Neutral Revenue Benefits</b>		
Retail Facilities	-	+
Townhouses (2/3 Bedrooms)	-	+
Expensive Single-Family Homes (3-4 BR)	-	+
<b>Negative Revenue Benefits</b>		
Townhouses (3-4 BR)	-	-
Inexpensive Single-Family (3-4 BR)	-	-
Garden Apartments (3+ BR)	-	-
Mobile Homes (Unrestricted Occupancy)	-	-

Source: The Growth Impact Handbook, DHCD, p.10



*D. Obtaining the support of regional planning agencies and Bridgewater State College will provide needed professional staff support.*

The Old Colony Planning Council, the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs Watershed Initiative, Bridgewater State College are three regional Agencies which can support the Town's staffing needs.

- Regionalization of some town services
- The town currently shares a sealer of weights and measures with four other towns. The same arrangement might enable the town to create a number of positions which cannot be funded within West Bridgewater's budget alone.
- Activities which should be considered for regionalization include:
  - **High School:** The senior class only has 35 students. Should the Town consider working with other neighbors on a regional educational plan? A recent study by Bridgewater/Raynham concluded that the regional high school was currently saving the towns some \$2.9 million annually as well as providing students with substantial curricular offerings which would not be available under separate high schools.<sup>2</sup>
  - **Growth Management Services:** The staffing needs of a Planner, Conservation Agent, Board of Health Agent, Grant writer might best be met by sharing these services with an adjacent town.
  - **Fire Station:** Could the town work with Easton and Brockton on fire protection for Manley Street?

*E. Coordinate Town departments concerned with water resource protection*

The Town needs to undertake the development of a comprehensive water resources management program in order to address stormwater, septic, and resource protection issues. The planning for this initiative should include a broad range of departments including Water, Highway, Public Health, Conservation and Planning.

- Funding might come from a variety of sources including the Water Department, the Town, and the Department of Environmental Protection State Revolving Fund.
- Establish stabilization fund to support new infrastructure and programs.

*F. Establish a Stabilization Fund for growth management services*

The town needs to identify a set of capital and staffing activities which will require local funding. Provision must be made to budget for these expenditures.

An alternative strategy which would provide some State grant support would be to utilize the Community Preservation Act as a vehicle for dedicating up to 3% of local funds for housing, economic development, and open space purposes. Under the provisions of this act, a Community Preservation Committee approved by Town Meeting would be established made up of representatives of various Town boards and commissions, including the Conservation Commission, Historical Commission, Planning Board, Housing Authority, and Recreation. This Committee would study the needs of the Town relating to historic resources, open space, recreation, and affordable housing. A surcharge of up to 3% of the real estate tax levy may be collected each year and placed in a fund to support the needs identified by the Community

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<sup>2</sup> Report, The NESCED Team for Bridgewater-Raynham Regional School District, January 2001



Preservation Committee. A minimum of 10% of the fund must be allocated to each of the four issues.

*G. Sewer service to industrial areas*

Additional analysis such as the Coweaset Brook study are needed to address this need.

## 6.3 Vision and Goals

### VISION

A vision and set of goals will be established for the town's public facilities based upon a review of the inventory and needs sections of this report. A draft vision follows along with a set of goals for discussion purposes.

*The Town of West Bridgewater envisions itself in the year 2020 as having:*

- *Upgraded its Town Hall to meet the staffing and public meeting needs of contemporary municipal government*
- *Created a campus setting for municipal facilities bounded by a re-vitalized New England Town Center and an improved Route 106*
- *Maintained quality schools and public safety*
- *Expanded local government in order to avoid being overwhelmed by new growth which would negatively impact town by providing the diverse management, regulatory, economic development and environmental protection needs its citizens and businesses requested.*
- *Enhanced the quality of its municipal facilities and services through the adoption of improved management and technical efficiencies, improved coordination between boards and Departments, additional staffing, regional relationships, and increased citizen involvement while minimizing the costs to local citizens*
- *Fostered the growth of a historic town spirit to increase the involvement of students in local affairs and of its citizens in managing local government*

### GOALS / POLICIES

The following goals and policies have been suggested in order to achieve this vision,

- 1. Ensure that town government is able to address growth management issues**
  - a. Identify recommended department staffing levels
  - b. Provide required funding/fee structure to support staff
  - c. Pursue State and regional agency grants, funding, and technical assistance
- 2. Increase the level of citizen participation in Town government**
  - a. Utilize volunteers to support various growth management initiatives
  - b. Undertake public education initiatives regarding stormwater, resource protection, Title V, government organization
- 3. Improve the efficiency of town government**
  - a. Provided needed staffing which will have most impact on improving cost/efficiency of Town government

- b. Provide needed computers and staff training
- c. Prepare capital plan for upgrading facilities, equipment, and maintenance
- d. Consider various strategies to regionalize specific Town services
- e. Adopt cost based policy with respect to fee structure of Town services
- f. Institute department organizational changes and coordinated development review

**4. *Protect the public water supply***

- a. Undertake comprehensive water resources planning initiatives
- b. Adopt organizational, staffing, and funding reforms to facilitate planning and implementation
- c. Protect surface and ground water quality through appropriate regulation and enforcement

**5. *Increase fiscal rate of growth***

- a. Establish priorities for residential/commercial growth
- b. Maintain favorable 40/60 split between commercial/residential tax base
- c. Provide more opportunities for fiscal positive residential and commercial growth
- d. Consider sewer extensions to industrial areas



## 6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

How can the Town of West Bridgewater best manage its growth to achieve its vision for the future? The following recommendations have been proposed as strategies for consideration by the town. They are organized under four key headings concerned with 1) fiscal planning, 2) growth management 3) interdepartmental coordination, and 4) networking information systems improvements.

### **1. Undertake fiscal planning and adopt new funding strategies:**

The Selectmen, working with the Finance, Building Needs, and Master Plan Committees need to review and adopt a set of goals and policies leading to additional funding as has been suggested to address the Town's fiscal, growth management, and capital budgeting needs. Specific concerns include:

*Ensure that town government is able to address growth management issues*

- a. Identify recommended department staffing levels
- b. Provide required funding/fee structure to support staff
- c. Pursue State and regional agency grants and technical assistance

*Improve the efficiency of town government*

- a. Provide needed staffing which will have most impact on improving cost/efficiency of town government
- b. Provide needed computers and staff training
- c. Consider various strategies to regionalize specific town services
- d. Adopt cost-based policy with respect to fee structure of town services

*Review present Capital Budget process to ensure that it considers upgrading facilities and equipment as outlined in this Master Plan review*

- a. Fund maintenance
- b. Establish an open space fund and/or utilize Community Preservation Act to fund needed improvements

*Increase rate of growth*

- a. Establish priorities for residential/commercial growth;
- b. Maintain favorable 43/57 % split between commercial/residential tax revenue
- c. Provide more opportunities for appropriate residential and commercial growth

### **2. Initiate Infrastructure/Growth Management Planning Activities**

The protection of future water supplies should be part of the Town's land use planning program. As the Town is contemplating adjustments in their zoning to accommodate future growth, the Town should be careful to protect those areas that will serve as current or future sources of water supply.

*Undertake preparation of a Comprehensive Water Resources Management Plan*

This study could analyze and recommend strategies to address the town's need for town-wide strategies to address Title V as well as stormwater issues. A range of options need to be developed based upon an understanding of the priority threats to the town's water supply and alternative funding strategies.

*Update mapping of water resource zones*

Identify locations with high nitrogen loading. (See Natural, Open Space and Recreation Resources section.)

*Adopt an enforcement and conservation program*

Potentially hazardous land uses near water resource areas should be monitored for conformance to the Zoning By-law. This program should be undertaken by the Board of Health as the Town currently does not have staff for such a monitoring program.

- a. Hazardous land use: The Town must craft a plan with a zoning enforcement officer, including the Board of Health, to regulate floor drains and hazardous land use.
- b. Regulation of private wells: The Town should adopt regulations to monitor septic systems and water wells and a Board of Health monitoring program.
- c. Water conservation: Homeowners should be encouraged to conserve water.
- d. Septic management plan: The Town should consider adopting a program similar to the Town of Yarmouth. Locations of high nitrogen in the ground water would be monitored. Septic systems would be pumped and treated on a regular basis. The remainder of town would be monitored on a less frequent basis. Septic system replacement, if needed, would be carried out by the Town with the homeowner charged a betterment fee requiring a payback over a period of 10-20 years.

*Water Districts to purchase critical water resource areas*

The Water Districts should make land purchases to develop future water supplies.

- a. Review Coweaset Brook Study
- b. Undertake additional studies with support of commercial property owners

**3. Improve Interdepartmental Coordination on Growth Management Issues**

*Establish an inter-departmental scoping process for development projects including representatives of the Planning, Conservation Commission, Water, Highway, Health, Building, and Fire Departments.*

*Establish an inter-departmental Task Force to work on the Comprehensive Water Resource Management Plan*

Representatives of the Water, Highway, Conservation Commission, Health, and Planning should be established to brainstorm solutions to development of a *Comprehensive Water Resources Management Plan*

*Adopt a public education program to promote resource protection and growth management*

(See Natural, Open Space and Recreation Resources section.)

*Establish a committee on organization to explore issues of charter reform*

Should some positions that are elected be changed to appointed? Should there be fewer elected boards? Should the Town consolidate its finance department, creating a Finance Director and encompass the operations of Town Accountant, Treasurer/Collector and Town Appraiser under the auspices of the Selectmen and do away with the elected Board of Assessors? Should the Town move towards a Town Manager/Administrator type of government?



**4. Fund and Undertake Networking Information Systems Improvements**

- a. Prepare a plan which will guide information technology development.
- b. Expand on the current well funded and installed networking computer system to include badly needed training and program enhancements so all employees will be able to fully utilize the current capabilities of the networked system.
- c. Set up a community web site.