

Town Government, Community Facilities, and Services & Recreation

Goals: To plan for, finance and provide an efficient system of town government, community facilities and services to meet future needs. To offer diverse recreational opportunities to all residents in the Town.

Municipal Government:

The official business of the Town of Weston is conducted at the annual March town meeting. The legislative body (Selectboard) conducts most of the business of the Town between these annual meetings. Elected or appointed officers with administrative and planning responsibilities are shown in the Municipal Government table below. There is also a Selectboard Administrative Assistant position that is filled by the Selectboard. The current roster of officer and staff positions meet the needs of the community, but should continue to be monitored as the needs and priorities for the community may change over time. include:

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT		
Selectboard	5	Elected
Town Clerk	1	Elected
Town Treasurer	1	Elected
Listers	3	Elected
Auditors	0	
Planning Commission commissioners	7	Appointed
Zoning a Administrator	1	Appointed
Board Of Zoning Adjustment Development Review Board	7	Appointed
School Directors	2	Elected
Justices of Peace	5	Elected
Constables	2	Elected

Town government expense has increased because of inflation and because administration has become more complex in recent years due to mandatory requirements imposed by State and Federal regulations. Further, the administration of the Town highways has been revised by the State with an increase in the number and complexity of the reports required and maintenance and improvement costs. The Town of Weston does not currently provide for public water or sewer systems, or fire or police protection. To provide these services would increase town taxes significantly over present levels. The following table shows the growth in the Town's budget over the last several years:

	Highway Tax Rate	Highway Expenditures	Town General Tax Rate	Town General Expenditures	School Tax Rate
<u>2011</u>	<u>0.2216</u>	<u>\$666,399</u>	<u>0.1393</u>	<u>\$407,038</u>	Homestead: <u>1.5587</u> Non-Homesteadres: <u>1.460</u>
<u>2015</u>	<u>0.3009</u>	<u>\$1,103,487</u>	<u>0.1771</u>	<u>\$483,056</u>	Homestead: <u>1.647</u> Non-Homesteadres: <u>1.6502</u>

<u>2022</u>	<u>0.3464</u>	<u>\$842.702</u>	<u>0.2183</u>	<u>\$546.667</u>	<u>Homestead: 1.5138</u> <u>Non-Homestead: 1.5445</u>
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~~The Town of Weston does not provide water or sewer systems, or fire or police protection. To provide these services would increase town taxes dramatically over present levels.~~

One strategy for the Town to consider to help plan and budget for future expenses is developing a capital improvement program. A capital improvement program is a tool that links a town's development plans and capital expenses with the annual budgeting process and can prevent budget and tax rate fluctuations by scheduling expensive projects over multiple years. Capital expenses include projects such as municipal facility construction or renovations, road paving, large culvert or bridge projects, and equipment and vehicles.

The Town maintains a municipal website that includes information for residents and businesses, agendas and minutes for the Selectboard and other Town boards and commissions, and pages for the different Town Departments. The Town uses the website for community announcements and maintains a Town Calendar on the site. There is also an existing community Facebook page that is managed by Weston residents and provides information on local community events and news, independent from the Town government.

Public Buildings and Land:

The Town owns the Town Hall, the Town Office Annex (~~leased to the Little School~~), the Wilder Memorial Library, the Town Garage, the Weston Firehouse, three cemeteries and several small parcels of land. There are also several buildings and properties that are owned by non-profit organizations and are open for public recreational use, including the Weston Recreation Club, Farrar Park (Village Green), and Cold Spring Park. These properties are discussed in more detail in the Recreation Section below. Other arts and cultural non-profit facilities that play an important role in the life of the community, such as the Weston Playhouse, Old Mill Museum, Weston Priory, and New Thought Vermont, are addressed in the Natural, Scenic, Historical, and Cultural Resources Chapter.

The Weston Town Hall is located on Lawrence Hill Road across from the Village Green. The Town Hall includes office space for the Town Clerk, Treasurer, and Listers and a meeting room for the Selectboard, Development Review Board, Planning Commission, and Conservation Commission. Current space in the building is limited, in particular for holding public meetings for the Town's boards and commissions, and opportunities for additional meeting space should be explored. In addition, the building is located within the West River floodway and is vulnerable to flooding.

The Town Office Annex is located adjacent to the Town Hall and the entire building is currently leased to the Little School, a non-profit preschool. This building is also located within the West River floodway.

The Town Garage is located on Greendale Road and includes a garage for equipment and vehicles and a storage yard for winter salt and materials for road maintenance. The existing facility meets the current needs of the community and significant future improvements are not anticipated at this time.

The Weston Firehouse is located on Route 100 immediately north of the village area. The Town of Weston leases the property and building to the Weston Volunteer Fire Department. The property is located within the West River flood hazard area and has experienced several significant flood events, including most recently during the July 2023 flood. The frequent flooding of the firehouse has resulted in damages to the building, vehicles, and equipment, and diminished the capacity of the Fire Department to respond to emergencies. The Town should consider how to improve the flood resiliency of this facility. Options could include relocating the firehouse, providing better flood proofing for the station in its current location, or by other means. ~~prioritize identifying a new location for the firehouse and constructing a facility to meet modern standards.~~ As part of this effort, the Town could consider evaluating other municipal facility space needs, such as Town Hall, as there may be an opportunity to

co-locate facilities and services for efficiency and cost saving purposes.

The U.S. Forest Service owns approximately 9,300 acres. In addition, several public buildings and parcels of land are owned by non-profit organizations, including the Weston Playhouse, Farrar-Mansur Museum, Old Mill Museum, Craft Building, Farrar Park, Cold Spring Park, Weston Recreation Club, Weston Rod and Gun Club, Old Parish Church, Weston Priory, Weston Firehouse and Church on the Hill.

Public buildings and lands play an important role in the life of the community. For example, the Weston Playhouse and the Rod and Gun Club serve as the location of many Town functions, and community, social and cultural events. The National Forest is used for many recreational activities from hiking to cross country skiing to snowmobiling. The Weston Recreation Club serves as the focal point for summer activities of many Weston residents.

Emergency Services and Law Enforcement:

Weston has an all-volunteer fire department with a firehouse located at the north end of the Village on Route 100. The firehouse building and property are owned by the Town of Weston. The Fire Department owns the apparatus and equipment housed in the firehouse. Duties of the Weston Fire Department range from fire prevention measures to assisting in rescue calls, as well as fire fighting. Weston is a member of the Southwestern New Hampshire Fire Mutual Aid, which may be called upon to assist the Weston Fire Department.

Emergency rescue services are provided to Weston residents by the Londonderry Volunteer Rescue Squad (LVRS) located in the neighboring Town of Londonderry. In addition to Weston, LVRS serves the towns of Londonderry, Peru, Winhall, Windham, and Stratton. LVRS currently has approximately 50 volunteer members, two advanced life support ambulances, and a rescue truck.

Weston has an elected constable and second constable who serve on a part-time, when-needed basis. The nearest State Police barracks is in Westminister Rockingham, approximately 2816 miles from Weston. Current policing services meet the needs of the community, but should continue to be monitored and evaluated based on future community needs.

The Town encourages residents to sign up for the free VT Alert communications tool that provides personalized alerts via phone, text message, or email about local emergencies.

Health and Social Services:

There are no health care facilities or services based in the Town, although services are available in neighboring communities, including the Mountain Valley Medical Clinic in Londonderry and the Ludlow Health Center in Ludlow, both of which offer a full array of health care services. In addition, there are four hospitals all within approximately one-hour drive of Weston: Rutland Regional Medical Center, Southwestern Vermont Medical Center, Brattleboro Memorial Hospital, and Springfield Hospital. An evaluation of the Town's health care needs suggests that the Town could not, in the foreseeable future, support a full-time physician or specialized health services.

In addition to these health care facilities, there are several organizations that provide health and social services, including several that the Town helps support with appropriations: several organizations which the Town helps support: the My Community Nurse Project, Londonderry Volunteer Rescue Squad, Neighborhood Connections, Mountain Valley Medical Clinic, which offers a full array of health care services, the Visiting Nurse Alliance of Vermont and New Hampshire, the Vermont Center for Independent Living, the Ludlow Clinic, and Health Care & Rehabilitation Services the Mental Health Service of Southeast Vermont. Due to staffing constraints, the Visiting Nurse Alliance has suspended its services to numerous mountain towns, including Weston.

As the population ages, there will also be an increasing need for service providers that offer in-home care and assistance to residents who would otherwise be unable to continue to live at home

independently. The My Community Nurse project is one such service provider.

The My Community Nurse Project, which provides in-home nursing care and patient safety checks, will be increasingly critical to support Weston residents as they age and look to remain in the community. The local My Community Nurse Project currently includes one full-time and one part-time registered nurse, is a non-profit organization that was launched in 2020 and serves residents in the towns of Andover, Landgrove, Londonderry, Peru, and Weston. The organization currently include one full-time and one part-time registered nurse. Services are provided at no cost to residents and the organization relies on donations from community members and towns, including Weston. In addition, there are four hospitals within about one hour drive. An evaluation of the Town's health care needs suggests that the Town could not, in the foreseeable future, support a full-time physician or specialized health services.

As the population ages, there will also be an increasing need for dedicated facilities for residents that are not able to continue to live at home independently. This need and potential strategies are discussed further in the Housing Chapter in the Town Plan.

Electricity and

Green Mountain Power (GMP) provides electricity to properties in Weston. Three-phase power is available along the line that runs parallel to Route 100 from Londonderry to the village and along Chester Mountain Road to Andover. Three-phase power is especially important for commercial uses and to support large-scale renewable energy facilities.

Weston properties experienced a moderate number of outages during the years between 2020 – 2023. Data from GMP shows that the majority of Weston properties experienced either between 9 to 15 outages or 15 to 30 outages during this four-year period. Andover and Landgrove had similar rates of outages, while Londonderry, Ludlow, and Mount Holly properties appear to have had fewer total outages.

GMP is working towards creating a more reliable and resilient energy system that can better withstand the increasing severity of storms and recover more quickly in the event of power outages. This will be accomplished through hardening lines, for example by undergrounding lines where feasible, creating community microgrids in targeted areas, and increasing the number of residential electricity storage batteries.

In Weston, GMP is currently working on rebuilding the transmission line that runs between Londonderry and the village just to the east and parallel with Route 100. There may be future opportunities to underground lines within the village area, in consultation with the town and property owners. In remote rural areas where it is more difficult to harden lines, increasing battery storage for customers will likely be a preferred solution. Weston is not currently on a schedule for implementing a microgrid strategy but may be eligible in upcoming years. The town should continue to work with GMP, property owners, and other state agencies to implement strategies for a more reliable and resilient local energy system.

Telecommunications:

Cellular phone services are limited in Weston, but have improved over recent years. There is currently one AT&T cellular tower in the community. According to 2022 data from VTrans, AT&T, FirstNet, and VTel have relatively good coverage along Route 100, Route 155, Chester Mountain Road, and Landgrove Road. Other providers have fair to poor coverage along these roadways. The VTrans data does not include coverage along secondary roads off of these main roads.

Fidium Fiber completed a build out of its broadband fiber network in Weston in 2023. All properties within Weston now have the ability to access Fidium Fiber's network, which provides service speeds up to 2 Gigabytes. Weston is also a member of the Deerfield Valley Communication Union District (DVFiber). DVFiber functions as a municipal entity that serves the region with the purpose of providing high-speed broadband access across 22 towns in southern Vermont. DVFiber has a universal service plan that includes providing service to all unserved and underserved areas in its member towns. Once

completed, Weston residents would have multiple broadband providers to choose from.

~~Satisfactory electric and landline telephone service is available throughout Weston. Cable TV is available along Route 100 and some side roads off of Route 100. Currently, cell service, wireless and broadband is available in only some areas of Town.~~

Telecommunication Towers:

~~There is one existing cell tower in Weston with a second under development. Weston's telecommunication zoning bylaws have been preempted by the State of Vermont.~~

Satisfactory electric and landline telephone service is available throughout Weston. Cable TV is available along Route 100 and some side roads off of Route 100.

Cemeteries:

There are three cemeteries in Weston. An elected board oversees the cemeteries in Town and the Town appropriates funds for a portion of cemetery maintenance.

Library:

The Wilder Memorial Library, which has been operating as a public library for more than 100 years, is located in an historic building in the village center on Lawrence Hill Road. The Library has a seven-member board of trustees elected at Town meeting. The Library, which is open 20-23 hours per week, has a collection of approximately 4,000 books (adult and children's), computers with high-speed Internet access, Wi-Fi available 24/7 and programs for children. Each year the Town appropriates funds to help with the costs of the library. ~~In addition to having no bathroom, it cannot be expanded in its current location.~~

In 2022, the Library Board of Trustees completed a five-year Strategic Plan. One of the goals of the Strategic Plan is to create a transformed and expanded library with facilities and grounds that are inviting, comfortable, and accessible to all. Specific improvements planned for the library include providing a bathroom and running water, creating more space for community gatherings, and addressing ADA accessibility needs into the building and between floors. Recently, the Friends of the Weston Community, a non-profit formed to support projects and programs that benefit the Weston community, purchase the adjacent "Riverside" property and tore down the existing house with the intention of donating the land back to the Town/Library for the purpose of allowing the library to expand multiple times the size of its current building. The Friends of the Weston Community has a plan to build a 1,000 – 2,000 square foot addition, which is targeted to be completed by the end of 2025.

Solid Waste:

The Town of Weston is a member of the Londonderry Solid Waste Group (LSWG), comprised of the towns of Landgrove, Londonderry, Peru, Weston, and Windham. Residents of the five member towns are able to use the Londonderry Transfer and Recycling Station located south of Weston on Route 100. Solid waste, recycling, and food scrap collection is available on the site in compliance with the Vermont Universal Recycling Law. In 2022, the transfer station collected approximately 400 tons of municipal solid waste, 784 tons of construction and demolition and bulky trash items, 533 tons of recyclable materials, and 67 tons of food scraps. The LSWG also offers two hazardous waste collection events annually.

The LSWG completes the required municipal Solid Waste Implementation Plan (SWIP) for the five member towns. The consortium has a SWIP in place in conformance with the most recent 2019 State Materials Management Plan.

~~Solid waste disposal is by contract to the Town of Londonderry for use of its Transfer and Recycling Station located south of Weston on Route 100. Weston is one of five towns utilizing the Londonderry transfer station. Recycling and composting is available at the site, it is currently working to comply with the State's new recycling law.~~

Water Supply and Wastewater Disposal:

The Town of Weston does not have a town water supply or sewage disposal system and instead relies on individual septic tanks with either dry wells or leach fields and individual wells or springs. ~~As of July 2007, all~~ water and wastewater issues are managed and controlled by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources.

Municipal Finance/Capital Expenditure Program:

Weston's town budget has shown consistent growth over the years:

	<u>Highway Tax Rate</u>	<u>Highway Expenditures</u>	<u>Town General Tax Rate</u>	<u>Town General Expenditures</u>	<u>School Tax Rate</u>
<u>2004</u>	<u>.2506</u>	<u>\$492,940</u>	<u>.1065</u>	<u>\$222,535</u>	<u>1.152</u>
<u>2006</u>	<u>.1750</u>	<u>\$449,315</u>	<u>.107</u>	<u>\$361,474</u>	<u>1.11</u>
<u>2011</u>	<u>.2216</u>	<u>\$666,399</u>	<u>.1393</u>	<u>\$407,038</u>	<u>Homestead: 1.5587</u> <u>Non-res: 1.460</u>
<u>2015</u>	<u>.3009</u>	<u>\$1,103,487</u>	<u>.1771</u>	<u>\$483,056</u>	<u>Homestead: 1.647</u> <u>Non-res: 1.6502</u>

Source: Town Clerk, Weston

~~A capital budget and program would provide one way to coordinate planning for major expenses, and require that all town departments, service providers and school representatives identify projected capital needs, both immediate and for several years in the future. Priorities can then be decided upon and financing planned so that future tax requirements can be better projected.~~

Recreation:

Many opportunities for recreation are available in Weston. The Town's rural character is well suited to a wide variety of outdoor activities such as hiking, hunting, cross-country skiing, bicycling, snowmobiling, and fishing, to name just a few. The table below provides an overview of existing recreational resources in the community:

<u>Land or Facility</u>	<u>Ownership</u>	<u>Description of Facilities</u>
<u>Green Mountain National Forest</u>	<u>Federal</u>	<u>9,300 acres of land including a campground and hiking, skiing and snowmobile trails</u>
<u>Okemo State Forest</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>860 acres of land. No facilities currently</u>
<u>Weston Recreation Club</u>	<u>Non-Profit Organization</u>	<u>Swimming pond, tennis courts, playground, basketball court</u>
<u>Cold Spring Park</u>	<u>Non-Profit Organization</u>	<u>Walking trails, benches</u>
<u>Farrar Park (Village Green)</u>	<u>Non-Profit Organization</u>	<u>Gazebo, benches</u>
<u>Weston Island</u>	<u>Private</u>	<u>Soccer fields</u>

<u>Class IV Roads</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Class IV roads provide for recreational opportunities (walking, biking)</u>
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The U.S. Forest Service owns approximately 9,300 acres of land on the western side of town that is part of the larger Green Mountain National Forest. Much of the land in the Green Mountain National Forest is actively managed for recreational use and, all of this land is accessible to the public. There are formal and informal trails, Forest Service roads, the Catamount Cross Country Ski Trail and snowmobiling routes maintained by the Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST) that are used for recreational activities and can be accessed through an extensive network of roads and trails in adjacent towns. The U.S. Forest Service maintains Greendale Campground located at the end of Greendale Road. The facility includes 11 campsites. A portion of the Okemo State Forest is located on the eastern edge of Weston and is a part of the 798-acre Terrible Mountain Natural Area that crosses into Andover. There are not currently any facilities or improvements on this tract of land, but it is open to the public.

The Weston Recreation Club is owned and managed by a non-profit organization and is situated on 13 acres of land adjacent to the Town Garage on Lawrence Hill Road, which includes a large swimming pond, tennis courts, playground and a basketball court, and can be used by Weston residents and their guests. In addition, the Weston Recreation Club also offers swim lessons and community potlucks. The organization is funded through private donations and annual appropriations from the Town of Weston. There are also private fields at Weston Island used for soccer.

In the village area, the Weston Community Association maintains Cold Spring Park and the Farrar Park Association maintains the Village Green. These facilities offer community gathering space and opportunities for passive recreation. The Town makes annual appropriations to each organization to support maintenance and upkeep. Other private facilities include the Weston Rod & Gun Club, which hosts an annual fishing derby and other community events.

In 2023, the towns of Weston, Landgrove, Londonderry, Peru, and Winhall voted to create a new shared Mountain Towns Recreation Director position. The Town of Londonderry is currently managing the hiring process for this position. The Director would be responsible for establishing a recreation program that improves the quality and variety of recreational opportunities for all five towns.

The Town's natural resources have provided important recreational resources and there appears to be little need for "built" facilities for recreation other than the Weston Recreation Club. Such valued resources include wildlife habitats, streams, the unpaved rural road system and the expanses of undeveloped land, all of which is essential to the quality of life in Weston and helps to attract and retain residents. In addition, recreational opportunities attract visitors to town who provide revenue to businesses and support the local economy.

Town Government, Community Facilities, Services and Recreation Policies:

- ~~4.~~ 1. Require that proposals for development must address the impacts of growth on police, fire and emergency service systems and prohibit new development that exceeds the Town's ability to provide community facilities and services. Developments that impact public services should be permitted only if it can be shown that such impacts will not subject taxpayers to any economic hardships.
1. Provide for effective municipal communications to residents and property owners by fully utilizing the town's website.
2. Ensure that municipal staffing and facilities continue to provide for reliable, efficient, and cost-effective governance and services.

2. Encourage ~~and provide support to~~ non-profit organizations to continue to operate and provide services to the community and to maintain their properties in good condition for continued public use.
3. Ensure that adequate health care, police and fire protection and emergency services remain available to the community and that the Town continues to support these critical service organizations through annual appropriations.
3. ~~4.~~ Support efforts to upgrade, and expand, and improve telecommunications systems in the area so that residents can take advantage of the extensive information and services that are available.
4. Support efforts to create a more reliable and resilient energy system for all Weston residents and property owners and opportunities for the Town and Green Mountain Power to discuss future planned projects.
5. Continue to support and appropriate funds to help with the costs of operation of the Wilder Memorial Library and implement the 2022 Strategic Plan, including providing a public restroom in the Library.
6. ~~Support an expanded recycling program that encourages source reduction, recycling, composting efforts and hazardous waste disposal.~~ Continue to participate in the Londonderry Transfer station and use its efforts to ensure that it is an efficient regional solid waste management program that complies with the State's Universal Recycling Law.
7. Encourage the preparation of a Town capital budget and program indicating future needed and desired capital expenditures in order to coordinate the financing of major public expenditures. The budget should be prepared according to State guidelines, so that the Town would be eligible for State and Federal grant monies.
8. Require that any development, which is responsible for unique or large amounts of solid waste disposal, be permitted only if it can be demonstrated that the method of disposal will not adversely affect the environment and that the developer shall pay for such disposal.
9. Require that all development and subdivisions provide necessary means of fire protection, including dry hydrants and fire ponds where feasible.
10. Encourage the review and updating of all emergency plans and works with Windham Regional Planning Commission's ongoing emergency planning efforts.
11. Ensure the preservation of the Town's outstanding natural environment for outdoor ~~sports recreation.~~
12. Encourage that any development of recreational facilities be as informal and economical as possible and not contribute to the deterioration of our natural environment.
13. Require that all developments and capital investments that involve or potentially affect access to an important recreational resource include provisions to ensure protection of that resource and continued public access.
14. Continue to support the Weston Recreation Club through annual appropriations.

Recommendations for Action

1. ~~Ensure that town residents comply with the State's illegal dumping, open burning and~~

~~new recycling laws.~~

- ~~2.1. Monitor staffing needs as future priorities and changing administrative requirements may support additional or expanded town staff roles.~~
- ~~2. Conduct a feasibility study for bike/pedestrian trails through the village center or elsewhere in the town.~~
- ~~3. Create a task force to explore opportunities for a trail or walkway along the West River from the village to points to the north and south.~~
4. Prepare and implement a capital budget program.
3. ~~Encourage~~ Support private efforts to provide broadband internet access and cell phone service for all parts of Weston.
4. Encourage town departments and committees to regularly update their sections of the town's website.
5. Complete a study to evaluate municipality facility space needs and recommended improvements, including addressing accessibility for individuals with disabilities.
- ~~6. Undertake planning efforts to evaluate how to improve the flood resiliency of the Weston Firehouse. Options could include relocating the Firehouse, providing better flood proofing for the station in its current location, or by other means. Complete a study to relocate the fire station including an analysis of space needs and identification of potential sites for a new facility. Provide financial support for the construction of a new station through appropriations, grants, and other funding sources.~~
- ~~7.6. Increase community awareness and participation in the VTAlert program.~~
- ~~8.7. Evaluate increasing~~ Increase appropriations for the Our My Community Nurse project to meet the needs of elderly residents who with assistance may continue to live at home.
- ~~9.8. Support Green Mountain Power's efforts to bury power lines in the village in order to increase resiliency for the electric grid.~~

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