

TOWN GOVERNMENT: FACILITIES AND SERVICES

This chapter of the Master Plan presents a general description of Dudley's town government, municipal facilities and services. The map on the following page (Town-Owned Properties and Community Facilities) shows the locations of Dudley's various community facilities and town-owned properties, and a numerical index of Dudley's town-owned properties can be found in Appendix A.

A detailed analysis of how Dudley compares to neighboring communities in terms of municipal expenditures per department is beyond the scope of this study. However, a recent study of per capita municipal expenditures, prepared by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue, indicates that Dudley town government spent \$644 per person during fiscal year 1998 (including school expenditures). This was the third lowest per capita municipal expenditure rate in the entire State. It should be noted that water and sewer expenditures were not included in the figures for Dudley, as these services are provided under the enterprise system. Here is how Dudley compares with its immediate neighbors in regard to per capita municipal spending:

Table TG-1

1998 Per Capita Municipal Spending: A Comparison

| <u>Community</u> | <u>General Fund Expenditures</u> | <u>Municipal Spending Per Capita</u> | <u>State Rank</u> |
|------------------|--------------------------------------|--|-----------------------|
| Dudley | \$6,315,000 | \$644 | 349 |
| Charlton | \$8,634,000 | \$835 | 342 |
| Oxford | \$17,651,000 | \$1,325 | 265 |
| Southbridge | \$14,958,000 | \$1,410 | 240 |
| Webster | \$20,124,000 | \$1,249 | 279 |

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue.

The State average for municipal expenditures per person was \$1,769 for fiscal year 1998. What this means is that Dudley is at the bottom of municipal expenditures per person when compared to its neighbors and the State as a whole. In fact, there are only two Massachusetts communities (Royalston and Templeton) that spend less on per capita municipal expenditures. This is not surprising when one considers Dudley's low tax rate (\$11.13 for fiscal year 1998).

As will be demonstrated in the ensuing discussion, Dudley has quite a few capital equipment needs and new building needs that will need to be addressed in the upcoming decade. With the recent cut in State highway aid (Chapter 90 funds), it will be next to impossible for Dudley to address its capital equipment and building needs without an increase in the local tax rate. The descriptions presented below are for selected municipal services. The descriptions will discuss,

where appropriate, the following items: departmental organization; responsibilities; staffing; budget; equipment; programs; facilities; and anticipated capital needs. Please note that the Town's various recreation facilities will be described in the Conservation and Recreation chapter.

Highway Department:

Organization: The Highway Department is managed by the Board of Selectmen, operating under their capacity as Highway Commissioners. The Highway Superintendent, who is appointed by the Selectmen, is responsible for the actual day-to-day management of the Department.

Responsibilities: The Department is responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of roughly 80 miles of Town roads. In addition, the Department provides general maintenance and plowing for Route 31, a State road. The Department also handles roadside drainage problems.

Staffing: Other than the Superintendent position, the Department consists of a foreman, a mechanic, and seven laborers. The Clerk for the Board of Selectmen provides four hours a week of secretarial support for the Department.

Budget: For the fiscal year ending June 30, 1999, the Department received an operating budget appropriation of \$383,867 at the annual Town Meeting (May 1998). This was further supplemented by an additional appropriation of \$71,500 at a Special Town Meeting (October of 1998). Dudley will receive \$326,474 in State highway funds for the 98/99 fiscal year, just slightly more than what was received the previous fiscal year.

Equipment: The Department's equipment is bought as needed and purchase is usually handled through a Town Meeting warrant article. There is no long-range plan for equipment replacement or other anticipated capital needs. The Department's equipment currently consists of the following items:

- Six dump trucks in fair-to-excellent condition (one is brand new).
- Road grader, two years old, in excellent condition.
- Two loaders, both over 20 years old, both in fair condition.
- One catch basin cleaner, 15 years old, in fair condition.
- One paver, undetermined age, in good condition.
- Six sanders, all around 15 years old, all in fair condition.
- A brush mower, 13 years old, in good condition.
- One backhoe, 23 years old, in fair condition.
- One 10-ton roller, bought used, in fair condition.
- One street sweeper, 23 years old, in fair condition.

Facilities: The Town Garage facility is located a quarter of a mile down Indian Road and sits on

a 9.5 acre site. The site is shared with the dog pound, solid waste transfer station and recycling center. The garage building itself consists of roughly 12,600 square feet.

Upcoming Capital Needs: As mentioned previously, there is no long-range plan for equipment replacement or other anticipated capital needs. The Department hopes to replace one piece of equipment every year.

Solid Waste, Recycling, and Hazardous Waste:

Responsibilities: The transfer station and recycling center handles the waste disposal needs of participating Dudley citizens who pay an annual dump permit fee of \$70 per family. The facility currently serves roughly 25% of the community. The majority of Dudley citizens, especially in the rural north and west, handle their own waste disposal needs through private contractors. The recycling center currently accepts the following items: newspaper, office paper, magazines, phone books, glass, cans, #2 plastics, corrugated cardboard and scrap metal. The facility also accepts yard waste which is composted and then given away to Dudley residents. The facility also accepts old car batteries (sold to a dealer) and regular batteries (recycled off-site). The transfer station also holds household hazardous waste collection days on a periodic basis, the most recent being the spring of 1999. The last such effort was held over six years ago.

Staffing: There is only one full-time employee at the transfer station/recycling center, however, part-time help is usually hired for busy weekends (after holidays).

Budget: For the fiscal year ending on June 30, 1999, the transfer station/recycling center received an operating budget appropriation of \$101,018 at the annual Town Meeting (May 1998). This was further supplemented by an additional appropriation of \$8,600 at a Special Town Meeting (October of 1998). The Town has a contract with Pratt Trucking, a private waste hauler, to dispose of solid waste collected at the transfer center. The Town's contract with Pratt Trucking expires in June of 2000. The current charge per ton is \$68.00. Pratt currently disposes of Dudley's solid waste at the Southbridge landfill. It should be noted that a recent fee increase at the Southbridge landfill has resulted in Pratt paying more to dispose of Dudley's waste than what it charges the Town under the current contract.

Equipment: The Department's equipment is bought as needed, however, most of the equipment on-site is rented. Purchase of large capital items is usually handled through a Town Meeting warrant article. All of the site's equipment is in good shape and no deficiencies were noted.

Facilities: The transfer station/recycling center is located a quarter of a mile down Indian Road and sits on a 9.5 acre site. The site is shared with the highway garage and the dog pound.

Upcoming Capital Needs: None identified. The station is about to purchase a new baler (funds appropriated at the October 1998 Special Town Meeting). The cost of the baler will be paid for by selling recyclables, and the purchase cost is expected to be fully recovered over an 18-month period.

Sewer Department:

Organization: The Dudley Sewer Department is managed by a three-person elected Board of Sewer Commissioners. The Sewer Superintendent, who is appointed by the Commissioners, is responsible for the actual day-to-day management of the Department.

Staffing: The Department has a full-time staff of three (including the Superintendent) and a clerical support person for 33 hours a week.

Budget: For the fiscal year ending on June 30, 1998, the Department had an operating budget of \$835,140. As an enterprise system, the entirety of the Department's operating budget is derived from user fees. Sewer customers pay a sewer rate of \$2.70 per 100 cubic feet (750 gallons), and an annual maintenance fee of \$192.81. Non-metered customers pay an annual sewer charge of \$800. For newly extended sewer lines, a homeowner has a year to connect to the system without paying a connection fee. After a year, a connection costs \$1,200 plus a betterment fee. If a developer wants to extend a sewer line, he bears the cost of extending the line and is charged \$200 per household connection. The Department's debt service currently comprises roughly 16.5% of its operating budget.

System Description: The sewer system currently consists of numerous sewer lines having a total length of roughly 20 miles. The size of the sewer lines range from 8" to 18". There are 517 manholes in use and nine pumping stations. A map of the municipal sewer system service area can be found on the next page (Municipal Sewer System Map). There are 1,611 connections to the system, primarily residential, however several businesses, industries, institutions and municipal buildings are connected as well.

Dudley's sewage is treated at the Dudley/Webster sewage treatment plant, located off of Hill Street in Webster. The treatment plant has a capacity of six million gallons per day and is currently operating at 50-60% capacity. The plant was originally built in the mid-1960's, however, it was significantly upgraded in 1988. The system discharges an average of three million gallons of treated wastewater per day into the French River. Of this discharge, Dudley sewer customers generate 12% while Webster generates the remainder.

The Dudley/Webster sewer system is sewage only, and is not a combined sewer/stormwater system, although stormwater infiltration has been a chronic problem, especially for the older clay pipes. Sludge from the treatment plant is taken to an incinerator in Woonsocket, Rhode Island. Webster charges Dudley for the amount of sewage sent to its treatment plant, and this charge currently represents roughly 52% of the Department's budget. There is a small sewage treatment plant in Dudley, located off of Carol Way. Dudley's plant consists of five tanks that equalize the sewage flow to the Webster treatment plant. No treatment or discharge occurs at the Dudley plant, however, the plant can be used as a backup if problems occur at the Webster plant.

Dudley is in the middle of a multi-phase sewer line expansion plan. 1998 saw completion of the first phase, which connected several streets including a significant portion of the area surrounding Merino Pond. Several houses on Flax Field Road could not be connected due to ledge problems. The second phase is currently underway and will include parts of Sawmill Road, all of Konkell Drive and Lakeview Avenue Extension. The third and last phase will include Dudley Hill Road, Paglione Drive, Lynn Lane, Greenwood Avenue and Lawrence Road. Several upgrades to the system's various pump stations are also in the works. A flow-monitoring program was instituted in the spring of 1999. Such monitoring is required by the Massachusetts

Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) before large-scale private developments (a threshold of 15,000 gallons per day) can tie into the system.

Upcoming Capital Needs: The Department wants to continue upgrading its pump stations as funds permit. Large capital expenses are paid for through Town Meeting warrant articles.

Water Department:

Organization: The Dudley Water Department is managed by a three-person elected Board of Water Commissioners. The Water Superintendent, who is appointed by the Commissioners, is responsible for the actual day-to-day management of the Department.

Staffing: The Department has a full-time staff of four people (including the Superintendent), plus a full-time clerk for secretarial support.

Budget: For the fiscal year ending June 30, 1998, the Department had an operating budget of \$764,559. As an enterprise system, the entirety of the Department's operating budget is derived from user fees. A water permit, giving permission to tie into the system, costs \$250 and is good for one year. Connecting to a water line from a street curb costs \$500, while establishing a connection from a residence to a water line costs \$1,500. The Department charges \$3 per 100 cubic feet of water (750 gallons). The Department utilizes grant opportunities when available. The Department has recently received a \$664,000 no-interest loan from the DEP to institute a corrosion control plan that must be in place by the year 2000. The Department's debt service currently comprises roughly 38.6% of its operating budget.

System Description: Dudley's municipal water system currently provides roughly 650,000 gallons per day to approximately 2,100 customers (residential, commercial, industrial, municipal and institutional). The water system can presently provide roughly one million gallons of water per day, but only when the supply wells are pumping continuously over a 24-hour period. During the summer, water demand can peak at one million gallons per day, which pushes the system to its limit. The distribution system consists of roughly 35 miles of water pipes. The amount of water used by the system is much less than it used to be, due to an aggressive leak detection system as well as the golf course going off-line. A map of the municipal water system service area can be found on the previous page (Municipal Water System Service Area Map).

Water for the system comes from three well fields. The first well field (Station #1) is located at the southern most point of Merino Pond, near the corner of West Main Street and Mason Road. This is a tubular system, that is, 54 shallow wells (up to 30 feet deep) which produce small amounts of water (each well producing 6-10 gallons per minute). The Station #1 well field has a 250-foot protective radius, and the Department owns all of the land within the radius.

The other two well fields (Stations #3 & #6) are located off of Schofield Avenue, south of West Main Street. These two well fields consist of gravel-packed wells that can pump 300 gallons per minute each. Both wells have a 400-foot protective radius with the land owned by the Town. The Water Department has delineated the contribution zones for both well fields. Although the Department doesn't own much of this land, they do have an arrangement with the Town whereby the Department can veto a proposed land use within the zones of contribution if they feel the use would constitute a potential threat to water quality.

The Water System Service Area Map depicts the protective radii for all three well fields and the zones of contribution for the Station #3 & #6 well fields. Merino Pond falls within the zone of contribution for the West Main Street well field, and the French River falls within the zones of contribution for the Schofield Avenue well fields.

Upcoming Capital Needs: Large capital expenses are paid for through a warrant article at Town Meeting. Although not considered capital equipment needs, there are several system deficiencies the Department would like to correct:

- Most of the water mains (85%) are quite old, some going back to the time when the water system was first established (1909). The older water mains are made of transit which is composed of asbestos, cement and old papers. These pipes break quite easily and are subject to corrosion. The Department replaces the old pipes with ductile pipes when they can, usually when a break in one of the mains is detected. Ductile pipes are much more durable and don't corrode as easily.
- Many of the water lines are simply too small to meet existing service demands (especially during peak demand periods). Some of the water mains are as small as 6" in diameter. The result has been water pressure problems throughout the system. The Department would like to rectify this situation in the near future.
- The Department will eventually (5-10 years) have to replace the water tower at Bates Hill Reservoir because it has outlived its service life. This will be an expensive proposition. The Department recently replaced the Dresser Hill Road water tower at a cost of \$750,000 (this is why the Department's debt service is so high).
- Lastly, the Department needs to find a new water supply source to accommodate future demand. The system is currently at capacity and a water moratorium has been in effect since 1985. An aggressive leak detection program has reduced the amount of water used, and this enabled the Department to allow 30 new connections in 1999. However, future expansion of the water system is not possible until a new water source can be found. Searching for a new water source has been an on-going endeavor for the Department.

Police Department:

Staffing: The Department has 14 full-time police officers, including the Chief of Police. There are also 15 reserve officers and a dispatch team consisting of four full-time civilians. A part-time clerk provides secretarial support. Dudley can also utilize the Webster police force through a mutual aid agreement.

Budget: For the fiscal year 1998, the Department received an operating budget appropriation of \$826,379 at the annual Town Meeting (May 1998). This was further supplemented by an additional appropriation of \$21,500 at a Special Town Meeting (October of 1998). Federal grants have enabled the Department to expand its efforts and purchase new equipment. In 1998, the Department received a \$100,000 federal grant to install computers in their patrol cars.

Programs Offered: The Town's civil defense program is run from the Police Department and is closely coordinated with the regional Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) in Westborough. Dudley's civil defense program is currently staffed by two volunteers from the

Police staff. The Department also conducts an annual citizen's policy academy. This is the program where reserve officers are trained.

One of the more successful programs offered by the Department is their annual youth police academy. This is a ten-week program offering classes on Saturdays. The program is run by officers who are kind enough to volunteer their time for this effort. The youth program currently serves roughly 30 students of junior and high school age, however, the demand for program expansion is strong. Federal grant money is used to cover the program's expenses (equipment, supplies and travel). The youth academy program has been very successful in getting youths at risk to participate in community affairs, improve their behavior, boost their self-esteem and, in many cases, their grades. The Department hopes to be able to expand this program at some point.

Crime Trends: A review of the Department's crime statistics for the past ten years indicates that Dudley is far from a hotbed of crime. There has been only one homicide and only six armed robberies during the past decade. Distinctive trends are hard to identify as the numbers for a particular crime category fluctuate from year to year. However, there are two trends of note: the number of service calls has steadily increased over the past decade, from roughly 8,000 in 1990 to 9,917 in 1998. Also, domestic abuse calls have steadily increased over the past decade, from a low of 14 calls in 1992, to a high of 108 calls in 1998.

The Massachusetts State Police keep crime statistics that allow for a comparison with other communities. The 1995 Uniform Crime Report provides statistics regarding the crime rate per 1,000 residents. The table below takes a look at how Dudley compares to its abutting Massachusetts neighbors:

Table TG-2
Community Crime Rate per 1,000 Residents (1995)

| <u>Municipality</u> | <u>Estimated 1995</u> | | <u>Rate per</u> <u>1,000 Residents</u> |
|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|---|
| | <u>for Population</u> | <u>Total Crimes</u> | |
| Dudley | 9,612 | 131 | 13.6 |
| Charlton | 10,646 | 146 | 13.7 |
| Oxford | 13,092 | 283 | 21.6 |
| Southbridge | 17,994 | 675 | 37.5 |
| Webster | 16,709 | 693 | 41.5 |

Source: Massachusetts State Police Uniform Crime Report for 1995 (the last available year). State Police use population estimates provided by the Massachusetts Institute for Social and Economic Research (MISER).

The previous table indicates that for 1995, Dudley had the lowest crime rate of its immediate

region. In fact, only five communities in Worcester County had lower crime rates during this period: Boylston (population: 3,816; crime rate per 1,000 residents: 7.9); Princeton (pop: 3,248; per 1,000 crime rate: 7.7); Rutland (pop: 5,046; per 1,000 crime rate: 6.5); Shrewsbury (pop: 26,718; per 1,000 crime rate: 8.3); and Sutton (pop: 7,338; per 1,000 crime rate: 3.3). The Massachusetts State Police also have statistics for the total number of crimes reported for communities having populations of 10,000 and over. Comparing Dudley to communities fitting this description reveals Dudley had the fifth lowest crime total for the entire State in 1997 (the last year that statistics were available). Only Harvard, Holliston, Medfield and Weston had fewer reported crimes for 1997.

Equipment: The Department's equipment is bought as needed and purchase is usually handled through a Town Meeting warrant article. The Department's equipment currently consists of the following items:

- Two 1998 police cruisers in good condition, and two 1995 police cruisers in poor condition.
- Two utility vehicles (96 & 97), both in good condition.
- The Department recently received a free jet ski from Action Marine that will be used for pond patrols during the summer months.

Facilities: The Department's headquarters is located at the Dudley Town Hall. The current Town Hall site does not have a lock-up facility. Instead Dudley Police make use of the jail in Webster and gets charged for the service.

Upcoming Capital Needs:

- The Department would like to replace the two 1995 cruisers in the near future.
- The Department needs a new headquarters, something large enough to have its own lock-up facility. A special Town Meeting was held in the fall of 1999 where the citizens rejected a proposal to build a new headquarters at the site of the West Main Street School. Thus, it appears the Police Department will have to evaluate other alternatives for a new headquarters.

Fire Department:

Organization: The Dudley Fire Department is managed by a three-person Board of Fire Engineers (appointed by the Selectmen), with the Fire Chief acting as head administrator. The Fire Chief also serves as the Forest Fire Warden. The Assistant Fire Chief is responsible for the actual day-to-day management of the Department.

Staffing: The Department has a full-time staff of five fire fighters, all of whom are trained emergency medical technicians (EMTs). The Department's staff is further supplemented by 45 volunteers, almost exclusively Dudley residents. The Department does not have any secretarial support. The Department is part of the District #7 fire/ambulance mutual aid compact, which consists of 26 Worcester County communities.

Budget: For the fiscal year ending June 30, 1999, the Department received an operating budget appropriation of \$314,420 at the May 1998 Town Meeting. This was further supplemented by an additional appropriation of \$20,000 at the October 1998 Special Town Meeting.

Responsibilities: Dudley’s Fire Department does a lot more than just fight fires. The Department provides inspections for smoke detectors, wood-stoves and fireboxes. The Department is also responsible for issuing the following types of permits: open burning permits; blasting permits; gas permits; flammable/combustible storage permits; permits to install/remove/abandon underground storage tanks; storage facility maintenance permits; permits for underground storage tank tightness testing; permits to install underground storage tank vapor recovery systems; permits to install underground storage tank spill containment systems; permits to install automatic fire suppression systems; permits for automatic sprinkler systems; permits to purchase and store black and smokeless powder; and permits to transport combustible liquids in transfer/cargo tanks.

The Department is licensed through the State’s Department of Public Health to operate two advanced life support ambulances, public fire education, in-house training of EMTs and firefighters, as well as hazardous materials response. The Department is the first line of response for hazardous waste spills. For such spills, the Department usually calls in the District #7 Hazardous Materials Response Team for clean up assistance.

Programs Offered: The Department offers fire safety programs to a variety of audiences, including: school-aged children, cub scouts & brownies, civic groups and adult groups. All told, 1,156 people participated in these programs during 1998.

Trends and Comparisons: In addition to records kept by the Dudley Fire Department, the Office of the Fire Marshall maintains an inventory of fire statistics for Massachusetts communities, the last available inventory year being 1997. The table below presents a listing of the total fires for Dudley and its Massachusetts neighbors for 1997.

Table TG-3

Total Fires by Community (1997)

| | <u># of Fires</u> | <u>Per 1,000 Residents</u> | <u>Estimated Dollar Loss</u> |
|---------------|-------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Dudley | 13 | 1.34 | \$150,300 |
| Charlton | 100 | 9.94 | \$265,605 |
| Oxford | 31 | 2.38 | \$145,125 |
| Southbridge | 33 | 1.89 | \$259,600 |
| Webster | 106 | 6.60 | \$563,710 |

Source: 1997 Annual Report of the Massachusetts State Fire Marshal.

For the past ten years (1989-1998), Dudley's Fire Department has averaged roughly 404 response calls a year, with a high of 571 calls in 1989, and a low of 254 in 1997. There has been a declining trend in the number of response calls per year, yet this is also true for the State as a whole during the past ten years. Although a thorough analysis has not been prepared, the State Fire Marshal believes that much of the drop can be attributed to the installation of sprinkler systems in newly constructed buildings. As tracked over the past decade, the table below shows the number of service calls responded to by Dudley's Fire Department and Ambulance Service.

Table TG-4

Fire/Emergency Responses (1989-1998)

| | <u>1989</u> | <u>1990</u> | <u>1991</u> | <u>1992</u> | <u>1993</u> | <u>1994</u> | <u>1995</u> | <u>1996</u> | <u>1997</u> | <u>1998</u> |
|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Fire | 571 | 508 | 504 | 490 | 352 | 386 | 328 | 356 | 254 | 290 |
| Ambulance | 532 | 442 | 498 | 466 | 550 | 633 | 633 | 683 | 660 | 641 |

Source: Dudley Annual Town Reports (1989-1998).

Dudley's fire and ambulance service calls cannot be directly compared to all of the five abutting communities because several of them have combined fire/ambulance services and keep a single tally of responses for both services. However, several other Worcester County communities do keep separate response statistics and this will allow for a direct comparison. The table below presents the fire and ambulance response rates (per 1,000 residents) for Dudley and several other Worcester County communities.

Table TG-5

Fire/Emergency Response Rates for Dudley and Selected Communities (1997)

| | Fire Dept. | # Per 1,000 | Ambulance | # Per 1,000 |
|---------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| | <u># of Calls</u> | <u>Residents</u> | <u># of Calls</u> | <u>Residents</u> |
| Dudley | 254 | 26.2 | 660 | 68.3 |
| Milville | 110 | 45.3 | 175 | 72.1 |
| Oxford | 305 | 23.4 | 1,280 | 98.4 |
| Uxbridge | 382 | 33.7 | 943 | 83.3 |
| Warren | 200 | 44.4 | 302 | 67.0 |

Source: 1997 Annual Town Reports for Dudley, Milville, Oxford, Uxbridge and Warren.

The current staffing of the call/career firefighters and EMTs is presently on target with existing community needs. There is no standard method to predict when staffing levels will need to be increased in the future. However, the Town should be observant and responsive to its growth trends as well as the ability of existing personnel to meet the community's fire and safety needs, both now and in the future.

Equipment: The Department's equipment is bought as needed and purchase is usually handled through a Town Meeting warrant article. The Department's equipment currently consists of the following items:

- Two customized pumper trucks (1996 & 1997), both in excellent condition with a projected 25-year service life; and a 1985 medium weight commercial pumper truck in fair condition. (all told, the three pumper trucks can deliver 2,400 gallons of water)
- A 1981 ladder truck in excellent condition.
- A 1994 ambulance in good condition, and a 1998 ambulance in excellent condition.
- A recently refurbished 1979 4-wheel drive forestry truck in good condition.
- A 1959 1 ¼ ton forestry truck in good condition.
- A 1999 4-wheel drive utility pick-up truck in excellent condition.

Facilities: The current fire station building is forty years old and is located at the corner of Mason Road and West Main Street. The building consists of two floors (the second being mostly unfinished) and has a total floor area of 7,000 square feet.

Upcoming Capital Needs: The Fire Department has quite a few capital needs for the near and not too distant future, these include:

- The Department wants to purchase the phase II portion of pagers for the firefighters (\$11,000) during the next fiscal year.
- Fire station improvements: new roof (\$16,000); grade, install drainage and pave in front of the station (\$35,000); and a new, larger water main leading to the station (\$4,000-\$6,000).
- The Department would like to extend the fire alarm system to the courthouse on West Main Street (\$5,000). As many as 25 businesses could tie into the alarm system if this happens.
- By 2002, the Department wants to install a master fire alarm box inside the Town Hall and tie it into the fire alarm system (\$2,000). This should be done before the Police Department relocates.
- By 2003, the Department wants to install fire alarm systems in the Library, the various Water Department buildings, and the Sewer Plant, and connect them via a master box to the fire alarm system (\$20,000).

- By 2001, the Department would like to purchase a new base radio and relocate it to the new Dresser Hill water tower on Route 31. The projected cost is \$30,000-\$40,000, however, much of the cost will be for installation. Once the fixed radio masts and utility sheds are in place, other town departments could also move their equipment to this site (at minimal cost) and derive the transmission benefits from this location.
- By 2002/2003, the Department wants to conduct a study to determine the cost of expanding and upgrading the existing fire station, compared to the cost of building a new station. The estimated cost of this study is \$20,000.
- By 2003, the Department wants to start installing underground fiberglass tanks (pods) in selected rural areas that do not have fire hydrant protection. The pods would range in size from 7-10 thousand gallons a piece. They would be used for water storage so that pumper trucks could draw from them in the event of a fire. The Department would like to purchase six or seven of these pods (\$8,000-\$10,000 a piece) and install them over a period of three-to-five years.
- By 2004, the Department wants to re-mount the body of the 1985 pumper truck onto a custom-designed chassis. This will cost roughly \$180,000 and will add 25 years to the vehicle's service life.
- The Department will need a new ambulance (\$130,000) by the year 2005.
- By the year 2010, the Department will need to replace one of its ladder trucks (today's cost: \$600,000).

Other Issues: Although not capital expenses, there are several issues the Department would like to address in the next few years:

- The Department would like to repair all broken fire hydrants and get them back in service.
- The Department would like to work with the Water Department to reduce the known water pressure problem along West Main Street, from Airport Road to the Courthouse.
- The Department wants to work with the Water Department to install 12" water mains along Mason Road, Mill Street, Pine Street, Oxford Avenue; loop Airport Road to Mason Road via Dudley-Oxford Road; and loop Charlton Road to Mason Road via Dudley-Oxford Road.
- The Department would like to work with the Planning Board to adopt a regulation which would allow the Town to require underground water pods to be installed by developers for new subdivisions in rural areas not served by the hydrant system.

Board of Health:

Organization: The Dudley Board of Health consists of three elected members who meet on a monthly basis. They maintain an office at the Town Hall.

Staff: There is a part-time health inspector (10 hours a week) and an office clerk (12 hours a week). There is a soil evaluator, operating under a consulting contract with the Board, who witnesses percolation tests for new and replaced septic systems. The Board also has a consulting contract with an engineer who provides Title V assistance by looking over septic system design plans and conducting installation inspections. In addition there is also an animal inspection consultant who handles rabies cases, livestock and horse inspections.

Budget: For the fiscal year ending on June 30, 1999, the Board received an operating budget appropriation of \$20,950 at the annual Town Meeting (May 1998).

Programs:

- The Health Inspector conducts bi-annual inspections of food services and investigates food-related complaints.
- The Animal Inspector offers an annual rabies clinic.
- The Board contracts with a private health care firm to conduct annual flu immunization clinics at the Town Hall and at Joshua Place.
- Through a grant from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, the Dudley Board of Health administers the Massachusetts Tobacco Control Program for the towns of Dudley, Southbridge, Sturbridge and Webster.
- The Board makes available radon testing kits to interested residents.
- Through a grant from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, the Board offers a loan program to residents in need of new or upgraded septic systems. This program, known as the Community Septic System Management Program, was instituted in 1997. Administrative assistance is provided by the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission. The Program currently has \$202,000 in loans available to residents with failed septic systems.

Building Inspections and Code Enforcement: There are four part-time construction-related inspectors working for Dudley: a building inspector, plumbing inspector, gas inspector and wire (electrical) inspector. All four inspectors are appointed by the Selectmen. The Building Inspector shares a part-time clerk (34 hours a week) with the Zoning Board of Appeals. This clerk works part-time out of the Building Department's Office at the Town Hall, and is available to hand out building permit applications, collect fees, and schedule appointments upon request. The plumbing and gas permit applications are now processed through the Building Department and fees are collected and turned over to the Town Treasurer. Gas and plumbing records are now kept in the Building Department's office at the Town Hall.

The electrical inspector does not have clerical assistance or office space at the Town Hall. Instead, he works independently out of his private residence, issues permits and collects fees on his own, and maintains a separate filing system at his residence. The Building Inspector puts in 20 hours a week for Dudley and reviews new building plans to ensure compliance with the Zoning By-Law's dimensional table and development standards (access, parking, etc.), as well as the State's building code. The other inspectors put in around 5-10 hours a week and only review

new and substantially remodeled buildings.

Cemetery Commission: The Commission consists of three elected members and they are charged with maintaining seven cemeteries in Dudley (see the Town-Owned Properties and Community Facilities Map for cemetery locations). Several of Dudley's cemeteries have historical significance, particularly Corbin Cemetery which dates back to 1735. Waldron Cemetery was recently expanded to allow for 200-300 new burial plots. This expansion should enable the Town to meet its interment needs for the next decade.

The Commission has no office space other than a file drawer at the Town Hall. None of the Commission's records are computerized, although they hope to rectify this situation in the near future. The Commission does have some clerical assistance on a very limited basis. The Commission has a contract with the Southern Worcester County Rehabilitation Center for cemetery maintenance. The Commission's \$12,197 budget for the 1998 fiscal year only allowed for "holiday" maintenance, meaning the cemeteries were mowed prior to a holiday and received no other maintenance during the year. However, the maintenance budget has been increased to \$43,661 for the 1999 fiscal year. This will allow for more landscaping and upkeep. Additional cemetery maintenance has been provided by the newly formed Cemetery Restoration Committee, a non-profit organization formed by local concerned citizens. This group recently restored the gates and repaired the stone walls for the Village Cemetery.

Pearle L. Crawford Memorial Library: Located on Village Street, the Library was built in 1901 and is only 2,900 square feet in size (approximately). Additional space has been a long-standing concern. Parking is limited and there are no sidewalks leading to the site. The Library recently received Town Meeting approval to form a committee to look at the Town's options for a new library, and their work should be completed prior to the May 2000 Town Meeting.

The Library staff consists of two full-time librarians and three part-time assistants. The Library has an ever-increasing circulation of 58,767 items. The Library staff is always willing to work with other lending libraries to obtain special order books on behalf of Dudley citizens. The Library's operating budget for fiscal year 1998 was \$111,646, although this was supplemented by grant money and funds raised by the Dudley Friends of the Library group. The Friends helped purchase two computers for the Library.

The Library offers a variety of programs, all at no charge. A children's story hour is offered six times a year and every Wednesday crafts classes are offered. The Junior Girl Scouts use the Library for a program every Thursday morning. Additionally, the Library offers a smoking education program in the summer.

Town-Sponsored Cultural Groups and Programs :

1. *Dudley Historical Commission:* The Commission consists of as many as seven members appointed by the Selectmen. The Commission operates on a budget of \$100 a year and meets periodically at the Town Hall. The Commission does not have any clerical support and their office space consists of a file cabinet at the Town Hall. Although dormant for many years, a reinvigorated Commission is now fully engaged. The Commission obtained \$5,000 at the October 1998 Special Town Meeting for the purpose of updating the Town's Historical Survey, originally prepared in the early 1970's. This money will be used as the Town's match when they

apply for a grant from the Massachusetts Historical Society. Once the grant is successful, the Commission will update the survey with the Society's assistance. The Commission's previous achievements include successfully nominating the Black Tavern (at Nichols College) for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. The Tavern, located at Nichols College, has its own historical society that is fairly active. There are numerous sites and structures in Dudley that are eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places, particularly in the old Dudley Center area (in and around Nichols College), Perryville and the area surrounding the Stevens Linen Mill.

2. *Cultural Council*: The Council currently consists of five members appointed by the Board of Selectmen and has been in existence since the early 1980's. The Council operates on an annual budget of roughly \$7,000, all of which is provided by the Massachusetts Cultural Council through a portion of the Megabucks proceeds. The Council sponsors a number of cultural events that change from year to year, such as trips to Boston and New York to see plays and tour the museums. They also use some of their funds to pay for performers at local events like the annual Strawberry Festival. They also offer some of their funding to local artists in the form of grants. They have an annual grant selection process that takes place every fall. Artists outside of Dudley are eligible to apply as long as their project will benefit the Town.

3. *Council on Aging*: The Council consists of nine people appointed by the Selectmen as well as a director and assistant director. The Council offers a number of programs for Dudley's senior citizens including: a meals program at Shepherd Hill; a blood pressure clinic at Hubbard Hospital; a quarterly newsletter; a weekly card game at the Town Hall; a swimming/exercise class twice a week; a weekly coffee and activities program; a needlework program; day trips and holiday parties. The Council also sponsored a "Three Little Kittens" program at the Mason Road School, where seniors made cookies and mittens, and read stories to the children. The Council would like to see a Senior Center established in Dudley and would also like to acquire a small van or bus for senior day trips.

4. *Youth Council*: Established at the October 1998 Special Town Meeting, this is a new entity consisting entirely of volunteers. The goals and objectives of the Youth Commission are to plan programs and special events for the youths of Dudley. To date, two events have taken place: an Easter Egg Hunt and a Luau at the Town's beach on Merino Pond. Planning is underway for additional events.

Public School System:

Dudley is part of the Dudley-Charlton Regional School District. A seven-person school committee sets school policies and manages the district's operations. The committee is elected and consists of three people from Charlton, three people from Dudley, and one person from the community having a larger school population at the start of the school year (this has been Charlton for the past several years). The school system currently consists of six schools, four in Dudley and two in Charlton. A brief description of the four schools that Dudley students attend is presented below.

Shepherd Hill Regional High School

Location: #68 Dudley-Oxford Road

Mason Road School

Location: Mason Road

Built in 1973, no additions
Currently complies with ADA code
(Americans with Disabilities Act)
Design capacity: 1,302 students
Student population (1998): 1,499
847-Charlton, 652-Dudley
Grades: 7-12, Classrooms: 76
Building square feet: 196,580
Size of school site: 96 acres
Facilities: auditorium, library, main gym,
practice gym, and cafeteria
Student-teacher ratio: 18-1

Dudley Elementary School

Location: West Main Street
Built in 1926, one addition (1930)
Building not ADA compliant
Design capacity: 275 students
Student population (1998): 269
Grades: second and third
Building square feet: 34,500
Size of school site: 4.35 acres
Facilities: 15 classrooms, library,
cafeteria/gym
Student-teacher ratio: 23-1

Built in 1963, no additions
Building not ADA compliant
Design capacity: 120 students
Student population (1998): 240
Grades: kindergarten and first
Building square feet: 19,700
Size of school site: 28 acres
Facilities: 8 classrooms and a
cafeteria
Student-teacher ratio: 23-1

Dudley Intermediate School

Location: #16 School Street
Built in 1957, no additions
Building not ADA compliant
Design capacity: 295 students
Student population (1998): 372
Grades: four, five and six
Building square feet: 43,360
Size of school site: 15 acres
Facilities: 18 classrooms, gym
and cafeteria
Student-teacher ratio: 23-1

Source: Dudley-Charlton Regional School District, Superintendent's Office, May 14, 1999.

The School District is in the midst of a four-part school expansion/construction project that will eventually result in a re-alignment of the grades attending each school. There is a new middle

school under construction near the High School that will serve roughly 600 Dudley students. A new middle school is also under construction in Charlton. Once completed, both schools will serve grades 5 through 8. Taking the seventh and eighth grades out of the High School will reduce the number of students at this site by more than 600.

An expansion of the Mason Road School is in progress. This expansion will add nine new classrooms and a library. The Mason school will continue to serve kindergarten and the first grade, but will also serve the pre-k population. An addition is also under construction for the Dudley Intermediate School that will add six new classrooms, a library and additional office space. Once completed, this school will serve grades 2, 3 & 4. Selected details for the three Dudley school construction/expansion projects are presented below.

| <u>Mason Road School (w/ addition)</u> | <u>Dudley Intermediate School (w/addition)</u> |
|--|--|
| Current grades served: k & 1 | Current grades served: 4, 5 & 6 |
| Grades served after addition: pre-k, k & 1 | Grades served after addition: 2, 3 & 4 |
| Current building capacity: 120 students | Current building capacity: 295 students |
| Capacity to be added: 159 students | Capacity to be added: 94 students |
| Total new capacity: 279 students | Total new capacity: 389 students |
| Building square feet: 19,768 | Building square feet: 43,363 |
| Square feet of new addition: 19,285 | Square feet of new addition: 10,810 |
| Total facility sq. ft.: 39,053 (post addition) | Total facility sq. ft.: 54,673 (post addition) |
| Will be ADA compliant | Will be ADA compliant |

New Dudley Middle School

Grades to be served: 5, 6, 7 & 8
 New building capacity: 600 students
 New building square feet: 83,800
 Will be ADA compliant

Source: School Facilities Study: Dudley-Charlton Regional School District, prepared by Alderman & Mac Neish - Architects and Engineers, May 25, 1995.

The four-part school construction/addition program (including the Charlton project) has a current estimated cost of 53.6 million dollars, of which the State will pay 76.3%. This represents the third largest school construction/addition project currently underway in all of Massachusetts. All four school construction/addition projects have broken ground.

In terms of evaluating whether the school construction/addition projects discussed above will be adequate to meet Dudley's needs for the next ten years, this exercise will use the school-age

population projections developed by the Massachusetts Institute for Social and Economic Research (MISER). Operating out of the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, MISER has been preparing population projections since 1983. MISER uses a complex projection formula, using such factors as historical birth/death trends, in and out population migration, aging and survival rates. The MISER projection methodology was last updated for Dudley in early 1999. The MISER projections can be broken down by specific age groups (school-aged children for this particular exercise).

When using the MISER methodology, it is important to remember that not all Dudley children will attend public schools. According to the Massachusetts Department of Education, 91% of Dudley children attended public schools during the 1996/97 school year (the last year that statistics are available), while 94% of Charlton children attended public schools. These percentages have been fairly stable over the last decade, and will be used with the MISER population projections for this exercise.

Another factor to account for is that MISER projects population in five-year intervals. These five year intervals will work fine when projecting the school-aged population for the Mason and Intermediate Schools because, when combined, these schools serve five grades (k, 1, 2, 3 & 4). However, the MISER five-year interval projections will overstate the population attending the New Middle School because the school will only serve four grades (5, 6, 7 & 8), while the MISER projection for this age group is expressed as a five-year interval (ages 10-14). The same holds true for the High School which also serves only four grades (9, 10, 11 & 12). Thus, in order to match the age-group projection to the grades served by the New Middle School and High School, their age-group projections should be reduced by one fifth. In an effort to account for the five-year-projection/four-grades-served discrepancy, the age-group projections for the New Middle School and High School will be reduced by 20%. This 20% reduction factor will be applied first, and then the percent-in-private-school reduction factor (described above) will be applied (9% for Dudley and 6% for Charlton).

There is yet another factor to account for when evaluating the High School's projected capacity. High school-aged children in Dudley and Charlton have the option of attending Bay Path Regional Vocational Technical High School, a vocational training school located in Charlton. For the current school year, roughly 12% of Dudley's high school-aged children attend Bay Path while roughly 22% of Charlton's high school-aged children are Bay Path students. The percentages of Dudley and Charlton students attending Bay Path have been fairly stable over the past decade. Thus, these respective percentages will be added to the percent-in-private-school reduction factor for the high school projection/capacity analysis.

Table TG-6

School-Aged Projections (MISER) vs. School Capacity

| Age Group | Year 2000 Projection | Reduction Factors | # of Children in School System | School Capacity | Number Below (-)/ Above (+) Capacity |
|-----------|----------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 5 to 9 | 697 | (9%) | 634 | 668 - Mason & Intermediate | - 34 |

In terms of funding per student, the Dudley/Charlton School Regional District (DCRSD) has, on average, spent less money per student over the past decade than the State average. For the 1997/98 school year (the last available year for state-wide statistics), the DCRSD spent \$5,073 per student while the state-wide average was \$6,356 per student. This trend has held steady throughout the decade. Although a state-wide cost per student average is not yet available for the 99/00 school year, it is a safe assumption that the state-wide average will be at least \$1,000 higher than the DCRSD average cost per pupil figure. For the 1997/98 school year, roughly 68% of the DCRSD's education budget was funded through State Aid, while the remaining 32% was raised through local taxes. For the 1998/99 school year, roughly 70% of DCRSD's education budget was funded through State Aid, with the remaining 30% being raised through local taxes.

Higher funding does not necessarily result in higher academic achievement; and this is the case for the DCRSD. Records from the Department of Education show that DCRSD students fared slightly better than the State average on the national Scholastic Aptitude Tests (better known as the SATs). The SATs are a two-part test designed to measure a student's verbal and math skills. For the 96/97 school year (the last year statistics are available), DCRSD students had an average verbal score of 518 (out of a possible 800 points), while the state-wide average was 502. For the math portion, DCRSD students had an average score of 505 (again, out of a possible 800 points), while the state-wide average was 502. The DCRSD student SAT participation rate (78%) was also higher than the State average (67%) for the 96/97 school year.

The spring of 1998 saw the first state-wide administration of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests. Developed by the Massachusetts Department of Education, these tests were administered to all students in grades 4, 8 and 10 across the State. At each grade level involved, pupils spent up to 17 hours being rigorously tested in English/Language Arts, Science/Technology and Mathematics. When the scores from all three subject matters were combined, the DCRSD came in 95th out of 208 school districts state-wide. The MCAS tests were administered for the second time in the spring of 1999, however, the state-wide results are not yet available.

The Department of Education also reports on drop-out rates. From the five-year period between 1993 and 1997, Shepherd Hill Regional High School had an average drop-out rate of 4.7% which is slightly higher than the Worcester County average (4.3%) and the state-wide average (3.7%) for the same time period. The Department's statistics regarding the future plans of graduating seniors indicates that from 1993 through 1997, roughly 75% of the Shepherd Hill graduating classes went on to college or some other form of post-secondary education. The state-wide average for this time frame is about the same, with roughly 74% of the State's graduating seniors going on to some form of post-secondary education.

Nichols College:

Located on picturesque Dudley Hill, Nichols College exists as a non-sectarian college of business administration. The history of Nichols College dates back to 1815 with the founding of Nichols Academy by Amasa Nichols. Intended as a boarding school for Universalist teenagers, the school served the region in this capacity until 1823, when it became a non-sectarian educational institution. The school underwent a significant expansion in the late 1880's when a former student and benefactor, Hezekiah Conant (a successful textile manufacturer) paid for the construction of several new buildings. The most significant structure built for the campus during

this time was the Conant Memorial Church (built in 1890 as the third church to occupy this prominent Dudley Hill site). Nichols Academy served the region until 1931, when the school was reorganized into a junior college of business.

Since the end of World War II, Nichols College has expanded both its curriculum and its physical plant. In 1958, the College was granted the authority to change from a junior to a senior college, and began issuing bachelor's degrees in business administration. The natural resource management program (initially forestry) became a four-year degree program in the early 1960's, but has since been discontinued. Nichols College has a current enrollment of 650 full-time day students and 1,000 part-time and night students.

The holdings of Nichols College extend over 200 acres in the Dudley Hill area and include numerous administration, academic, student services, recreation, residence halls, faculty homes and other buildings. College buildings of historical significance include: Academy Hall (built in 1884); Conant Library and Observatory (1884); the previously mentioned Conant Memorial Church (built in 1890); and Conant Hall (1888). Next to the College is the Black Tavern (1804) which was once part of Nichols' holdings. This is the Town's only building listed on the National and State Historic Registers. The College put in its own sewer system in the early 1960's, which immediately tied into a municipal sewer expansion.

Nichols College has long served as a valuable resource for the Town of Dudley. Significant numbers of Dudley and Webster students have attended Nichols, many on scholarship. Many of the College's 163 employees live in Dudley and are long-time residents. The College allows their athletic fields to be used by local sports organizations, and numerous cultural events open to the general public are held on campus.

The College and its students have worked with Dudley's town government on a number of projects including assisting the Police Department with the design of their internet "web" page, and setting up studio space in Davis Hall for the local cable television station. Nichols College students are currently collecting water quality data for the French River as part of the French-Quinebaug Watershed Management Plan. This plan is currently being prepared as a multi-agency effort, under the sponsorship of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA). Interns from the College are available to work on municipal projects initiated by the Town.

The College has recently completed a "master plan" for the campus. The plan is not a document, rather, it is a map of the campus showing future building sites and existing buildings. There are two building projects currently underway: the construction of a new residence hall (replacing three small dormitory buildings), and an addition to the athletic center. The College will pursue other elements of its master plan as funds permit.

There is one issue in particular that the College would like to address with the Town's help. Currently, parking is provided along the main street going through campus (Center Road). The College believes the current parking arrangement compromises pedestrian safety and takes away from the visual beauty of the commons and the campus grounds in general. The College would like to remedy this situation by taking parking off the street, installing curbing along Dudley Center Road, and planting shade trees all along the roadway. The College believes there is enough room on the side and rear of its buildings to make up for the parking lost on the main

road. Planning for this endeavor is just getting underway.

Town Government Issues in Dudley

1. Highway Issues: A more in-depth analysis of Dudley's transportation network can be found in the Transportation chapter of this document. However, it is clear from the results of the Master Plan Citizen Survey that Dudley citizens are not happy with the conditions of the local roads. In fact, the Town's maintenance of its roadways received the poorest rating out of all of Dudley's municipal services.

By the Highway Superintendent's own admission, the Department does not start the fiscal year with a definitive roadway improvement program; rather, road improvements are determined on an as-needed basis. There are some resources available that could help the Department develop a prioritized roadway improvement program. In December of 1997, the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) prepared a Local Pavement Management Study for Dudley. This study evaluated the pavement conditions of every Town road, noted needed improvements, and provided rough cost estimates for improvements. This document would be a good starting point for developing a town-wide roadway improvement plan. Other factors to take into account when developing such a plan are drainage issues (these were not addressed as part of the 1997 study), and safety considerations such as visibility and intersection safety.

Another factor complicating the Highway Department's efforts to maintain Dudley's road network is the lack of an "official town map" as defined in Section 81-E, Chapter 41 of the Massachusetts General Laws. Briefly stated, an official town map shows all of the town accepted and town maintained roadways (public ways), as well as all private ways used by more than two property owners. The lack of such a map has resulted in the Highway Department spending time and money to maintain several private ways, simply because they are not sure exactly where a town road ends and a private way begins.

The lack of an official town map could also be a potential liability issue for the Town. The Town should not be setting itself up to be liable for what happens on roads that are not Town-accepted roads (public ways). Having an official town map also helps when developing a street numbering system, which in turn helps in emergency response situations. Also, part of the State's formula for distributing highway monies to local municipalities is the amount of road miles each town is responsible for maintaining. Thus, from a funding standpoint, it is important for the Town to know the full extent of its public roadway network and share this information with Mass Highways.

The full extent of Dudley's public and private ways was determined as part of the 1997 Pavement Management Study completed by the CMRPC, although this information was not available in graphic form until recently. In the summer of 1999, Mass Highways amended Dudley's roadway network coverage to reflect the results of the 1997 study, and the amended coverage is now available to the Town. Dudley needs only to add those new town roads accepted since 1997 to have an accurate depiction of its transportation network. This information could be used to prepare an "official town map", as defined by Massachusetts General Law.

2. Inspection Services: Dudley's Building Department needs better coordination among its four inspectors, as well as better coordination with other municipal

boards/departments; especially the Health Department. Currently, someone wanting to build a home in Dudley may need to make several phone calls and arrange several inspection appointments. The potential exists to streamline the inspection process.

Better coordination with the Health Department is needed when additions/renovations are proposed to existing homes. Currently, someone wanting to add a bedroom may or may not have the septic system's capacity reviewed to see if it can accommodate the new bedroom. There should be a formalized mechanism in place to make sure that this review takes place.

Lastly, the housing of inspection records needs to be improved. As mentioned previously, the Electrical Inspector works out of his private residence and maintains his own filing system there. Under Massachusetts General Laws, these records are considered public, and thus should be maintained and available for review at a public building (normally the town hall). The space limitations of the existing Building Department's office in the Town Hall presents a problem in this respect.

3. Information Management Technology: The Town's plan for information management is moving along in several respects. The Town has just installed new computer software for the billing of property taxes, excise taxes, as well as water and sewer bills. New software has been installed in the Assessor's Office that allows for in-house information updates, including: parcel identification; new names, owners and addresses; tax collection status; and building permit status. The next step for the Assessor's Office will be the installation of a computer that will enable the general public to look up property information. Currently, such information needs to be obtained directly from the Assessor. The Town is investigating other software applications.

The installation of cable is almost complete for the Town Hall. Once this is done, an NT server (the main computer) will be installed and all offices within the Town Hall will be connected to this main server. This will allow for inter-departmental e-mail. The general public will also be able to e-mail departments in the Town Hall. This should be a marked improvement over the current method of inter-departmental communication which relies on phone tag and paper notes. The Town also hopes to establish a "web" page for the general public. Such a web page could contain information regarding public meetings, municipal services, and other items of town-wide interest.

The Town is also currently reviewing its options for a Geographic Information System (GIS), which is essentially a computerized method of graphically displaying data (computer generated maps). GIS technology allows for an infinite number of applications including: display of tax parcel boundaries; zoning districts, road network; water and sewer pipe locations; natural feature displays (including wetlands and floodplains); emergency response call box locations; and so many other applications that it is impossible to list them all. The Town's goal is to eventually make this technology available to all municipal departments. The purchase of a GIS computer and associated software will represent an up-front capital expense for the Town. Annual GIS system maintenance and user training will be ongoing expenses for the Town.

4. Water Needs: Dudley's municipal water system is currently operating at full capacity and the moratorium on new water service connections remains in effect. Lack of municipal water is the primary limiting factor for growth in a number of sectors, including: industrial and commercial development, affordable housing, and multi-family housing. The Town's options for

growing its non-residential tax base will be quite limited until a new water source is found and the water system's capacity is expanded. Establishing a new water source will represent a large-scale capital expense for the Water Department and its customers, and outside funding assistance will most definitely be needed. A suitable well site will have to be found; a well will have to be drilled; the water will have to be tested; and, if the water is clean and can be pumped in sufficient quantities, land will have to be bought around the well. The Water Department cannot afford to develop a new water source on its own and may have to obtain funding assistance from the Town at large and/or through State grant assistance.

5. Long Range Capital Planning: Dudley does not have a long-range capital improvements plan (CIP) in place at this time. A CIP is an on-going municipal plan that identifies upcoming capital needs, schedules their purchase, and outlines how they will be purchased. Such plans usually look five-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 the regular municipal operating budget. Dudley currently plans their large-scale capital improvements on a year-to-year basis. If a department head wants to replace a piece of equipment or purchase a new piece of equipment, he makes his case to the Finance Appropriations and Advisory Committee (FAAC), and if they approve, the capital need request is put in the form of a ballot question and appears as such at the autumn Town Meeting. Capital needs are usually paid through borrowing.

Dudley has a number of long-term financial matters (mostly large-scale capital needs) that will need to be attended to during the next decade. The following is a brief description of the Town's upcoming capital needs and financial concerns:

- New building needs - The Town is already planning for a new police station, and will soon begin planning for a new library. On the horizon for the next decade will be a new fire station and possibly some sort of expansion project for the high school. In addition, space at the existing Town Hall is at a premium for all departments. The Master Plan citizen survey also showed support for establishing a senior center and a youth center for the Town. Dudley now owns the vacant West Main Street School and perhaps this building could be utilized to address some of the above mentioned building needs.
- New vehicles and equipment - It is clear from reading the departmental overviews that Dudley will need to replace quite a few vehicles and purchase a number of new capital items over the next decade. Departments needing new capital equipment include: the Town Hall; Highway Department; and the Fire and Police Departments.
- New water source - As previously described above, the Town will need to find a new water source if wants to grow its non-residential tax base. Establishing a new water source will be a large-scale capital expense for the Town.
- New solid waste disposal contract - The Town's contract with its current solid waste hauler (Pratt Trucking) is set to expire in June of 2000. Pratt has been bringing waste from the Town's transfer station to the landfill in Southbridge. However, a recent fee increase at the Southbridge landfill has resulted in Pratt paying more to dispose of Dudley's waste than what it charge the Town under the current contract. Due to this situation, it is quite likely that Dudley's waste disposal costs will increase when the new contract is signed next summer.

The financial issues and capital needs described above should be planned for in a long-range and comprehensive manner. The Town should investigate its options for implementing a long-range capital needs planning process, including the possibility of preparing a Capital Improvements Program.

6. Municipal Government Organization: Dudley's current form of government has resulted in a situation where the various municipal departments operate independently of each other, and there is no single entity responsible for ensuring inter-departmental coordination or accountability. The Board of Assessors, Board of Health, Planning Board, Water Commissioners, Sewer Commissioners and Cemetery Commissioners are all directly elected by the voters and are not accountable to any single municipal entity. Ultimately, these boards and commissions are responsible only to the voters who put them in office. The creation of the Town Administrator position a few years ago has resulted in improved coordination among municipal departments, however, this position has no formal authority over any of the municipal departments. The Town should consider establishing a Charter Commission to investigate options for re-organizing town government with an eye towards improving accountability, improving inter-departmental coordination, eliminating duplications of service, and streamlining the local bureaucracy in general.

Town Government - Goal

Provide high quality municipal and educational services, facilities and infrastructure that are consistent with the fiscal health and environmental quality of the Town and that meet the current and future needs of Dudley's residents, businesses, industries and institutions.

Town Government - Recommendations

1. The Town should develop a prioritized, multi-year, town-wide roadway improvement program. Currently, local road improvements are determined on an as-needed basis by the Highway Superintendent. The Local Pavement Management Study prepared for Dudley in 1997 by CMRPC could be used as a starting point for prioritizing roads for a multi-year road improvement program. Responsible Municipal Entity: The Highway Superintendent and the Board of Selectmen acting under their capacity as Highway Commissioners. The Board and Superintendent may want to seek the advice of the Police Department when preparing said plan.

2. The Town should prepare an "official town map" as defined in Section 81-E, Chapter 41 of the Massachusetts General Laws. The full extent of Dudley's public and private ways was determined as part of the CMRPC 1997 Pavement Management Study for Dudley. In the summer of 1999, Mass Highways amended Dudley's roadway network coverage to reflect the results of the 1997 Study, and the amended coverage is now available to the Town. Dudley needs only to add those new town roads accepted since 1997 to have an accurate depiction of its transportation network. This information could be used to prepare an "official town map". Responsible Municipal Entity: The Highway Superintendent and the Board of Selectmen acting under their capacity as Highway Commissioners.

3. The Town should establish a centralized permitting/inspection/code enforcement department. The Town's various inspectors (building, plumbing, electrical and gas) would operate out of this department. The inspectors could share a clerk, and have all of their permit

applications and records on file at this office. A centralized inspection office would allow the Town to streamline its inspection process, which in turn benefits citizens who want to build in Dudley. Having all of the Town's inspection records in a centralized location would put the Town in compliance with the State's public records/right-to-know laws. Responsible Municipal Entity: The Board of Selectmen and the inspectors.

4. The Town should ensure that home addition/renovation plans are reviewed by the Health Department *prior* to issuing a building permit for said expansion. Currently, someone wanting to add a bedroom to an existing home may or may not have the septic system's capacity reviewed to see if it can accommodate the new bedroom. There should be a formalized mechanism in place to make sure that this review takes place. Building permit applications for new bedrooms should be reviewed by the Health Department (prior to the issuance of the permit) in order to ensure that the septic system's capacity can handle the additional loading and is still in compliance with the State's Title V septic system regulations. Additionally, building permit applications for home additions/ renovations should be reviewed by the Health Department (prior to the issuance of the permit) in order to make sure that the new foundation and/or footings will not encroach on a leachfield. Responsible Municipal Entity: the Building Inspector in conjunction with the Health Department.

5. The Town should continue implementing its information management plan. The next step for the Assessor's Office should be the installation of a computer that will enable the general public to look up property information. Perhaps as the technology improves, some of the Assessor's database can be made available on-line. Once the Town Hall has the cable network in place, an NT server (the main computer) should be installed and all municipal offices connected to this main server. This will allow for inter-departmental e-mail.

The Town should also set the parameters for establishing a municipal Geographic Information System (GIS). Such parameters should include: what departments would use GIS, how would they use GIS, what types of data to store, who would manage the data, what hardware/software to purchase, where to store the equipment and how to secure it, and training municipal personnel on how to use GIS. Lastly, as funds permit, The Town could also create its own community "web" page for the general public. Such a web page could contain information regarding public meetings, municipal services, and other items of town-wide interest. It is quite likely that the design and maintenance of the web page could be handled by an interested student from Shepherd Hill High School or perhaps a Nichols College student. Responsible Municipal Entity: the Town Administrator in conjunction with the Information Technology Committee (ITC).

6. The Water Department should investigate its options for finding a new water supply source, whether this means looking for a new well site within Dudley, or working with a neighboring community on a shared water resource. The Town's options for growing its non-residential tax base will be quite limited until a new water source is found and the water system's capacity is expanded. As mentioned previously, finding a new water source and getting it up and running is a very expensive proposition, one that the Water Department cannot afford to handle on its own. Since the whole Town benefits from an expanded non-residential tax base, and the growth of this tax base cannot occur without an expanded municipal water system, it would be appropriate for the Water Department to seek funds at Town Meeting for the identification and development of a new water source. The Town may also want to pursue State grant opportunities for such a project. Responsible Municipal Entity: Dudley Water Commissioners in consultation

with the Board of Selectmen.

7. The Town should investigate its long-term options for managing the municipal water system. The current situation has led to a state of affairs where the Water Department cannot afford to locate and develop a new water source, yet the Town's future development is dependent on the water system's expansion. Essentially, there are four options for managing the water system, and cost-benefit analysis should be conducted for each option as part of a larger, overall options study:

- Keep the existing enterprise system in place.
 - Do away with the existing enterprise system and have the Water Department funded by all of the tax payers as a regular municipal department.
- Privatize the water system.
 - Create some sort of hybrid system whereby the customers of the Water Department pay for the system's regular maintenance, and the Town as a whole pays for water line expansion and water source development.

Responsible Municipal Entity: Dudley Water Commissioners in consultation with the Board of Selectmen.

8. The Town should establish a long-range capital planning committee and charge them with the responsibility of preparing a long-range Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for the Town. Dudley's municipal departments have numerous large-scale capital needs coming up very soon. The Town needs to plan for its capital needs in a comprehensive manner with an eye towards the long-term, rather than the current piece-by-piece, year-to-year method of evaluating capital requests. Responsible Municipal Entity: this should be a joint effort between the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Appropriations and Advisory Committee (FAAC).

9. The Town should establish a building needs committee to comprehensively review the building and space needs of Dudley's various municipal departments. The Town is already planning for a new police station, and will soon begin planning for a new library. On the horizon for the next decade will be a new fire station and possibly some sort of expansion project for the high school. In addition, space at the existing Town Hall is at a premium for all departments. As the Town has a number of new building needs, these needs should be planned for in a comprehensive manner, rather than establishing one committee to plan for a new police station, another committee to plan for a new library, etc.. Perhaps the West Main Street School building could be utilized to address some of the Town's municipal building needs. Responsible Municipal Entity: this should be a joint effort between the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Appropriations and Advisory Committee (FAAC). This could also be a responsibility of the long-range capital planning committee recommended in #7.

10. The Town should consider establishing a Town Government Charter Commission to investigate options for re-organizing town government with an eye towards improving accountability, improving inter-departmental coordination, eliminating duplications of service, and streamlining the local bureaucracy in general. Responsible Municipal Entity: the Board of Selectmen and the Town Administrator.

11. The Town should establish a local economic development committee to coordinate all of the various elements of an economic development strategy for Dudley. Currently, there is no municipal entity who's sole role is to plan for, and act as an advocate of new economic development in Town. Finding volunteers for an economic development committee will be a challenge, as it usually is for local boards. The committee would need to begin by reviewing the Town's zoning scheme, tax policies, road improvement plans, and water/sewer expansion plans as they relate to the Town's ability to attract new businesses. This committee would then work with the various municipal boards and departments to develop an economic development strategy for Dudley. As part of an economic development strategy, the Town should designate a staff person in Town Hall to handle economic development issues. Once contact person is essential, as businesses want straight answers fast. Responsible Municipal Entity: The Board of Selectmen would need to establish the economic development committee, and appoint its membership. The committee should be charged with developing an economic development strategy for Dudley and be prepared to work with the various municipal boards/departments to implement the strategy.

12. The Town should change its Town Meeting date to a Saturday in order to increase public participation, especially among seniors. Many interested citizens cannot participate (or participate as fully) during weekdays due to work and family schedules. Responsible Municipal Entity: the Board of Selectmen in consultation with the Town Clerk and Town Moderator.

13. The Town should institute a secret ballot approach to warrant articles at the Town Meetings, as opposed to the current show of hands during the meeting method. Moving to a secret ballot would ensure that a person's vote on a particular warrant article would be private, thus, there could be no recriminations from other parties regarding how someone voted. The secret ballot method would also ensure that people wouldn't leave the Town Meeting after their pet warrant article had been voted on. Responsible Municipal Entity: the Board of Selectmen in consultation with the Town Clerk and Town Moderator.

14. The Town should investigate its options for increasing its recycling program and solid waste disposal services, including holding the household hazardous waste disposal days on a more frequent basis. Responsible Municipal Entity: the Board of Selectmen in consultation with the transfer station personnel.