

CHAPTER 6: COMMUNITY FACILITIES



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6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter of the Master Plan examines existing community facilities, which are an important element in protecting the health, safety and general welfare of the Ashland community. Because Ashland’s municipal facilities provide the platform from which essential services are delivered, community facility planning is of prime importance in future development of Ashland. Furthermore, an inventory of current facilities and analysis of future needs provides the basis for preparation of a capital improvement plan and budget.

For a town of Ashland’s size to maintain the level of public service and protection that residents have come to expect, efficient management of each department is vital. Well-maintained, up-to-date buildings, offices and equipment, as well as adequate personnel are instrumental to operational efficiency. Thus, an analysis of the current conditions and operations of Ashland’s Community Facilities represents an important element of consideration within the comprehensive master plan for the Town of Ashland.

In 2010, the Town received a grant for an Energy Audit of seven municipal buildings including the Booster Club, the Fire Station, the Public Works Garage, the Town Office, the Library, the Transfer Station and Whipple House. The audit has been completed and the results and recommendations should facilitate the pursuit of grant opportunities to move forward with much needed energy efficiency improvements to Ashland’s community facilities. Audit findings are discussed within this chapter.

The material for this chapter was obtained primarily from a survey that was sent out to town department heads who supplied information that outlined the current conditions of their respective facilities, their future needs, and the scope of services they provide to residents. The information compiled through these department-head recommendations provided insight for the future needs and recommendations listed in this chapter.

6.2 ASHLAND COMMUNITY FACILITIES SUMMARY

Figure 6-1 contains a summary of the services administered to the Ashland community along with their associated facilities.

Figure 6-1: Ashland Municipal Services by Department

Department	Function	Associated Facilities
Municipal Governance and Administration	-Assessing	-Tax Collector
	-Permitting/Code Enforcement	-Town Clerk
	-Select Board	-Town Treasurer
	-Planning Board	-Health Officer
	-Finance	-Welfare Officer
	-Town Administrator	-Vehicle Registration

Department	Function	Associated Facilities
Public Works	-Construction and maintenance of roads and other infrastructure -Maintenance of equipment and other town property -Maintenance of Stormwater infrastructure -Municipal Trash Removal	-Public Works Building -Transfer/Recycling Facility
Library	-Offers books, movies, music and public internet	Scribner Memorial Building
Parks and Recreation	-Oversees all activities at the town beach, band concerts and other recreational activities	-Campground/Bath house -Booster Club -Edward N. Doggett Town Beach/Beach House
Police	-Patrols the community to maintain safety, law and order -Responds to emergency situations, including but not limited to: criminal activities, domestic disturbances, motor vehicle accidents, and other personal emergencies -Testifies in court cases	-Town Office
Fire	-Fire Protection -Burn Permits -Safety Inspections	-Fire Station
Schools	-Public education	-Ashland Elementary (K-8) -Plymouth Regional High School (9-12)
Electric	-Town wide electric service	-Utilities Building
Water/Sewer	-Potable water delivery and sewage disposal for downtown area	-Waste Water Treatment Facility -Town Wells

6.3 EXISTING CONDITIONS AND FUTURE NEEDS - ASHLAND COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Municipal Building - Town Office

The Ashland Town Hall is centrally located at 20 Highland Street within walking distance of the downtown area. The brick structure was built in 1871 as a traditional New England Town Hall, with a primary function of serving as a meeting place and as a public building. Originally, the structure contained two floors, each with a large hall. A new floor, now serving as a second floor, was built at the balcony level during the late 1950s to serve as classrooms when the building was transferred to the local school district for needed additional classroom space.

Accessibility to the first floor for elderly and disabled persons has been addressed by utilizing the side door of the building (for access to both the town office and police department). This door is locked for security; thus, a doorbell to announce customers has been installed. This is

not ideal as, upon entering, the customer is directly within the staff working area as opposed to being behind the counter where most visitors are received.

There is no disabled access to the second floor; therefore Planning, Zoning and Selectmen's meetings have been moved to the Ashland Elementary School. Work sessions for the planning and selectmen are generally held in the conference room on the first floor. Energy efficiency of the building and the heating and air conditioning systems are also of concern. The systems are dated and the windows are not able to be opened.

Future Needs: Although a new town office building might best address current and future needs, in the absence of a new building, the planning board clerk recognized that the installation of energy efficient windows that could open would save energy and would allow for cross ventilation. Additional energy efficiency improvements could include installation of an energy efficient front door, an energy efficient lighting retrofit and replacement of current heating and air conditioning systems. Finally, general facility maintenance, including repainting the front of the building, was identified as something that needs to be addressed.

The 2010 energy audit recommended the following energy conservation measures:

- Replace interior lighting
- Add occupancy sensors
- Replace exterior lighting
- Replace entrance doors
- Replace door weather seals and weather stripping
- Replace windows
- Add foundation and bulkhead insulation
- Add pipe insulation
- Add attic insulation
- Replace CRT computer monitors
- Replace plumbing fixtures with fixtures that conserve water

The 2010 estimated cost of implementing the bolded measures was \$6,690. With an estimated annual savings of \$2,667, the payback would be 2.5 years. For the other measures, savings estimates were not provided, but the cost of all measures was estimated to be \$32,590.

Police Department

The Ashland Police Department is located in the rear of the Town Hall building with a side door entrance from Cottage Place. The department utilizes two floors for offices, an evidence room, a locker room, bathroom facilities, a reception area, communications, administrative work, and a booking area. The Department possesses three vehicles: two Ford Crown Victoria sedans (2007, 2011) and one Ford Expedition SUV (2011).

Police service demands have fluctuated over recent years, but have not exhibited an upward or downward trend. In 2010, the department responded to 3,788 calls (not including calls initiated by an officer), some of which resulted in arrests or crime reporting, while others were requests for services (e.g., aid to other organizations, school crossings, alarm responses/door checks, etc.). 106 calls resulted in adult arrest.

Ashland does not maintain jail facilities. Persons arrested are taken to the Grafton County Jail in Haverhill which is about one hour travel time from Ashland. Currently, the police department consists of one police chief; one lieutenant; one sergeant, two patrolmen, one part-time administrative clerk and two part-time officers.

Future Needs: The current police facility has been categorized by the police chief as “above capacity.” A need has been identified for a new police facility that includes the following improvements:

- Sally port
- Garage to protect vehicles from the weather
- Office space for each officer
- Adequately secured evidence room
- Holding room
- Interrogation room
- Adequately secured entrance

Fire Department

The Ashland Fire Department, located at 9 Main Street, is easily accessible, centrally located and highly visible. Running time is within four minutes to all but the most outlying rural sections of the town. The fire house, built in 1976, features two-story concrete and brick construction with seven bays (four on Main Street and three off Mill Street). Additionally, the building includes an office, a large meeting room, a full kitchen, lavatories and storage rooms.

In 2010, the Department responded to 420 calls. Of those calls, 106 were for fire suppression, 243 were for medical assistance, 60 were for motor vehicle accidents and 11 were for other services. While these figures show an increase over 2009, longer-term analysis does not reveal an upward trend in service demand.

Besides a part-time, appointed Fire Chief and a part-time Deputy Fire Chief, the Department consists of on-call Firemen. The department does not provide ambulance service, which is instead provided through a contract agreement with the Town of Plymouth. The department is a member of Lakes Region Mutual Aid Association.

In addition to providing day to day emergency fire response and non-emergency services, the Fire Station serves as the Emergency Operations Center (EOC). As an EOC, the fire station is the center for coordinating response to disasters or emergency situations and ensuring continuity of town operations; and also serves the same purpose on a regional scale.

Future Needs: The fire station has been categorized by the fire chief as “near capacity.” The chief has recommended following improvements to the existing facility:

- Water supply has been recognized as a potential issue in some sections of town that lie outside of the hydrant district.
- The addition of a networked computer system was identified as an improvement that would facilitate more efficient operation and allow the department to keep up with any population growth.
- Additional storage space has been identified as a potential near-term need.
- Also, if the department were to staff the department around the clock, sleeping quarters would need to be built.

The 2010 energy audit recommended the following energy conservation measures:

- Replace interior lighting
- Add interior occupancy sensors
- Replace electric hot water heater
- Replace entrance door on lower level
- Replace door weather seals and weather stripping
- Insulate pipes
- Add vending miser (allows vending machine to cool its contents during most commonly used hours and turns the machine off when not likely to be in use)
- Replace appliances with Energy Star appliances
- Replace CRT computer monitors
- Replace plumbing fixtures with fixtures that conserve water

The 2010 estimated cost of implementing the bolded measures was \$10,058. With an estimated annual savings of \$3,164, the payback would be 3 years. For the other measures, savings estimates were not provided, but the cost of all measures was estimated to be \$14,978.

Public Works Department

The Public Works Department maintains town roads and sidewalks, mows the lawns of all municipal properties, manages the Transfer/Recycling Facility, provides municipal trash pick up (for municipally owned, public trash receptacles) and maintains Ashland’s stormwater infrastructure. The department’s facilities include the Public Works Building and the Transfer/Recycling Facility.

The public works building (78 Depot Street), which serves as the department’s headquarters, is an ADA compliant, 3,900 square-foot facility where most of the department’s equipment is stored and maintained. In addition to the Public Works Director, who serves as the department head, the Public Works Building accommodates four full-time employees including a foreman, two equipment operators and one mechanic. Within the Public Works Building, the mechanic repairs and maintains the vehicles and equipment of not only the Public Works Department, but also other municipal departments.

The Ashland Transfer/Recycling Center building is located at 96 Collins Street with an area of 28.4 acres, of which there are 2-3 acres of usable space; the rest of the area is capped landfill and unusable land. The transfer/recycling buildings, which consist of a four-bay recycling building, a storage building, and a compactor building, are built adjacent to the capped landfill, thus limiting expansion.

The Transfer/Recycling Center currently employs a staff of two part-time employees. The hours of operation are Monday 12-4, Wednesday 12-4, Friday 12-4 and Saturday 8-4.

Future Needs: Because of the volume of repair and maintenance work, it has been recommended that one of the garage bays at the public works building be designated for the mechanics use and be retrofitted with a lift and other necessary maintenance and repair equipment.

The 2010 energy audit recommended the following energy conservation measures for the Public Works Building:

- Replace interior lighting
- Add interior occupancy sensors
- Replace exterior lighting
- Replace entrance door
- Replace door weather seals and weather stripping
- Add duct insulation
- Separate electrical service from other building occupants (Electric Department)
- Replace plumbing fixtures with fixtures that conserve water
- Install ceiling fans
- Replace appliances with Energy Star appliances
- Add domestic hot water timer

The 2010 estimated cost of implementing all of these measures was \$18,185. With an estimated annual savings of \$5,477, the payback would be 3 years.

The 2010 energy audit recommended the following energy conservation measures for the Transfer Station:

- Replace interior lighting
- Add interior occupancy sensors
- Replace exterior lighting
- Replace entrance door
- Replace overhead door weather seals and weather stripping
- Add insulation to exterior walls and ceiling
- Install ceiling fans
- Replace bailer motors with high efficiency units.

The 2010 estimated cost of implementing the bolded measures was \$6,260. With an estimated annual savings of \$1,354, the simple payback would be 4.5 years. For the other

measures, savings estimates were not provided, but the cost of all measures was estimated to be \$27,210.

Electric Department

In 1917, Ashland started its own Electric Department. With \$50,000 of start-up money, the Department purchased a small hydro-electric generating plant plus the poles and wires feeding a few homes in the area. Through the years, the Department has grown into a reliable distribution system, serving nearly 100% of the Town of Ashland with over 1550 customers.

Currently, the Electric Department is not producing power, but instead securing favorable power purchase agreements. In 2010, the Electric Department completed negotiations on a new power contract, which, beginning in 2012, should stabilize rates through 2017. Although the Department maintains the capacity to produce hydroelectric power, it has not found it to be cost-effective in over 5 years and the Superintendent feels it is unlikely for production to resume in the near future. He said that the possibility of solar power production has also been explored, but until it can be done without raising rates, the Department will not proceed in that direction.

In addition to a superintendent, an executive secretary and a clerk, the Department employs other full-time staff as needed. Linesmen work with the Superintendent to install, maintain and improve the poles, lines and other infrastructure that comprise the Town's distribution matrix. Tree trimming to keep lines clear is also a major element of the Department's work.

According to the Superintendent, the Electric Department is entirely self-sufficient, operating within its own budget, which is completely separate from Ashland's general fund. The Superintendent reports that Ashland Electric is able to charge lower rates than the larger utilities that provide power to most surrounding communities, adding that, because the utility operates entirely within the town boundaries, Ashland customers avoid a consumption tax that would have cost the town an additional \$13,000 in 2010.

With a capacity of 10 megawatts, the Electric Department is operating at considerably below its capacity; current peaks reach approximately 4.5 megawatts.

Future Needs: The Electric Department Superintendent indicated that the Department is operating well within its capacity and identified no immediate facility needs.

Water and Sewer Department

The water and sewer department, a town-owned entity which is operated by a private firm, Utility Partners, consists of a wastewater treatment facility, a wellhead area and the infrastructure that delivers water to customers and transports waste to the treatment facility. Generally, the treatment facility receives only sewage—municipal stormwater is captured and channeled separately and falls within the purview of the public works department. The wastewater treatment facility is located at 96 Collins Street. Currently, the facility receives septage from approximately 500 customers.

The wellhead area, where groundwater is drawn and minimally treated before conveyance as potable water to customers, is located at 72 Cedar Lane. Currently, the facility delivers water to approximately 500 customers.

In addition to a project manager who oversees the facility operations, the department consists of two other part-time laborers. All three individuals are employed by Utility Partners.

Future Needs: Ashland's wastewater treatment facility is significantly underutilized, operating at just over 10% of its capacity. While the facility does currently generate some revenue through receipt of waste from private entities, there exists potential to take on much more septage by investing in a receiving area for septic dumping. Additionally, it has been discussed that the construction of a pipeline extending to the Holderness border would allow the facility to generate revenue by taking on sewage from Holderness. Replacement of older water and sewer lines will need to be considered.

Parks and Recreation

The Town of Ashland offers a large range of recreation opportunities to year-round and seasonal residents. A Parks and Recreation Director, appointed by the Town Selectmen makes policy-level decisions which are carried out by part-time and seasonal recreation personnel. Seasonal employees, who may include lifeguards, swim instructors and summer camp counselors are hired primarily during the summer months to carry out the town's recreation program. Throughout the academic year, an After School Program Assistant works with the Parks and Recreation Director to manage and maintain the After School Program.

Along with the After School Program, the other major program provided by the Parks and Recreation Department is the Ashland Summer Camp Program. The After School Program meets Monday through Friday for the entire length of the school year. As part of this program, a Vacation Day Camp is offered during school vacations. The summer camp program is offered from early July through August and has a high level of participation at both the Town Beach and L.W. Packard Ball field. In addition to these programs, events are planned throughout the year for the Ashland community.

Figure 6-2: Ashland Parks and Recreation Facilities

Facility	Location	Size	Description
<u>L.W. Packard Field and Beach-Booster Recreation Facility</u>	99 Main Street	7 acres	Principal recreational complex in town. Facilities include the recreational building; 2 tennis courts; 1 basketball court; 2 ball fields; playground equipment; a picnic area; a bandstand and a skating rink.
<u>Edward N. Doggett Beach and Campground</u>	Leavitt Hill Road	3.5 acres	Facilities include a beach with about 350 feet of lake frontage, a small play area and picnic facilities, a bathhouse with toilet and change facilities and a parking area for about 25 cars. The campground facility offers 23 seasonal mobile trailer sites with access to the beach in a wooded area with water, electric, and sewer hookups.
<u>Memorial Park</u>	Ashland's downtown area with frontage on Squam River	1 acre	A well-landscaped, passive pedestrian park with benches and litter receptacles. This park is governed by the Memorial Parks Trusties. Seasonally, visitors can park along Riverside Drive (US Route 3) where space is provided for about seven cars.

Future Needs: The Parks and Recreation Director recommends the following improvements:

L.W. Packard Field and Beach-Booster Recreation Facility

- An improved community center (Booster Club)
- A new playground, multi-use system
- Installation of shade canopies over the playground
- Installation of permanent picnic tables
- Addition of more parking space for events

Edward N. Doggett Beach and Campground

- Larger storage facility for equipment at both beach and campground
- Roof repair at the campground bathhouse
- Repave roadway and address roadway runoff by adding swales to the roadside.

Additionally, the Parks and Recreation Director recommends reviewing existing recreation standards for communities within the Lakes Region. He says that the standards represent a good place to begin discussion of the provision of municipal recreation services; however, he warns that such standards should be utilized with caution as they may not necessarily be reflective of the particular recreational needs of an individual municipality.

Library

Ashland's Town Library is located within the Scribner Memorial Building on 41 Main Street. In addition to lending items and providing public computer and internet access, the library holds various programs, events and holiday celebrations.

A decline in tourism and summer visitors has resulted in a decrease in the overall number of visits to the library and computer use. Year round use of the library and its computers by residents has been consistent. The library now has five computers for public use. Frequently all computers are in use by Ashland residents. Library records indicate the computers are used an average of 11 times in a six-hour day. In addition to lending items the library also offers Wi-Fi, downloadable audio and eBooks, museum passes, access to several databases and in 2012 a searchable online catalog was added. The library would like to offer first floor meeting space to accommodate tutors and their students, community groups and library programs. A library director, an assistant director, and two library aides comprise the current staff. All of the library employees serve part-time.

Future Needs: At just over 2,500 square feet of building space, the small facility has reached its capacity, not only in the number of volumes that it can hold, but also in its functionality as a resource for the community. Future expansion of shelf space, community services and technology demands would likely need to be accompanied by expansion of facilities.

The 2010 energy audit recommended the following energy conservation measures:

- Replace interior lighting
- Add occupancy sensors
- Replace exterior lighting
- Replace entrance door to children's area
- Replace door weather seals and weather stripping
- Replace windows
- Replace window seals and weather stripping
- Add insulation to foundation and children's room floor
- Insulate pipes
- Add insulation to attic and knee wall area
- Replace boiler
- Replace plumbing fixtures with fixtures that conserve water

The 2010 estimated cost of implementing the bolded measures was \$7,835. With an estimated annual savings of \$1,305, the payback would be 6 years. For the other measures, savings estimates were not provided, but the cost of all measures was estimated to be \$16,135.

Schools

Ashland utilizes two school districts. Prior to reaching ninth grade, Ashland students attend Ashland Elementary School (16 Education Drive, Ashland), which is affiliated with SAU #2. Ashland’s high school students (grades 9-12) attend Plymouth Regional High School (86 Old Ward Bridge Road, Plymouth), which is part of the Pemi-Baker Regional School District (SAU #48). In addition to Ashland Elementary School and Plymouth Regional High School, each of these SAUs includes several other schools (Figure 6-3). Although Ashland Elementary School has experienced a slight increase in enrollment in recent years, it is still well below capacity (Figure 6-4). Plymouth Regional High School has experienced a slight decrease in enrollment annually since 2005. Even if High School enrollment were to begin increasing, the facility’s capacity of 1,000 students would not be reached for many years (Figure 6-5).

Situated on 22 acres, the elementary school houses the equivalent of approximately 20 full-time staff in ten offices and 22 classrooms. The more than 44,000 square foot Ashland Elementary School is handicap accessible and was recently designated as a shelter in the event of a local or regional emergency or disaster. A shelter mobilization drill was performed at the elementary school in June 2012 in cooperation with the Greater Franklin/Bristol and Plymouth Public Health Networks. The exercise was designed to evaluate the activation, implementation and staffing of the Ashland shelter. The town maintains a shelter plan.

Figure 6-3: Ashland Public Schools

SAU	Communities Served	Schools
2	Ashland (K-8), Center Harbor, Meredith, Sandwich	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ashland Elementary ▪ Sandwich Elementary ▪ Inter-Lakes Elementary (Meredith) ▪ Inter-Lakes Middle Tier (Meredith) ▪ Inter-Lakes High School (Meredith)
48	Ashland (9-12), Campton, Holderness, Plymouth, Rumney, Thornton, Waterville Valley, Wentworth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Plymouth Regional High School ▪ Campton Elementary ▪ Holderness Central ▪ Plymouth Elementary ▪ Russell Elementary (Rumney) ▪ Thornton Central ▪ Waterville Valley Elementary ▪ Wentworth Elementary

Figure 6-4: Ashland Elementary School Enrollment

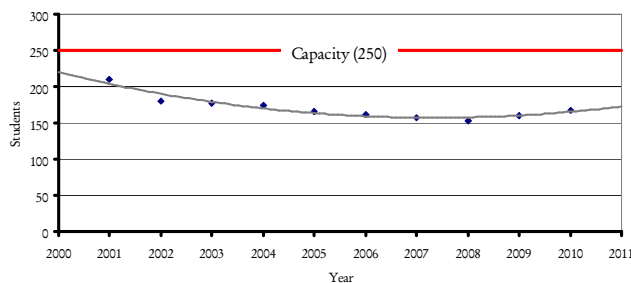
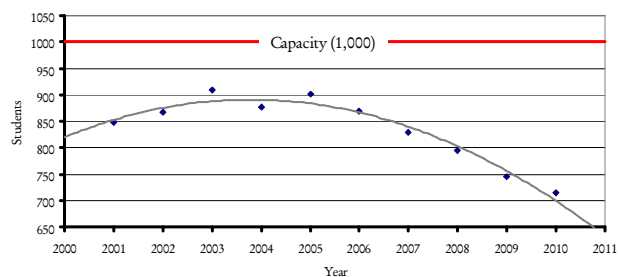


Figure 6-5: Plymouth Regional HS



6.3 COMMUNITY FACILITIES CAPACITY SUMMARY

Town department heads were asked to assess the available capacity of their facilities. Their responses are captured in Figure 6-6

Figure 6-6: Ashland Community Facilities Capacity Summary

Community Facility	Available Capacity	Near Capacity	Above Capacity
Town Office		•	
Police Department			•
Fire Department		•	
Public Works Department	•		
Transfer/Recycling Facility		•	
Waste Water Treatment Facility	•		
Municipal Drinking Water Wells	•		
L.W. Packard Field			•
Beach-Booster Recreation Facility	•		
Edward N. Doggett Beach and Campground		•	
Library (Scribner Memorial Building)			•
Electric Department	•		
Ashland Elementary School	•		
Plymouth Regional High School	•		

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Develop and Fund a Capital Improvement Plan – Maintaining, improving, and expanding Ashland’s community facilities involves investment that must be integrated with other community needs and operating budgets. Ashland, like all communities, relies heavily upon highly efficient use of capital resources and is faced with difficult choices every year. There are always more needs than there is readily-available funding, and investment decisions shape the Ashland’s direction into the future.
2. A Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) would provide a roadmap for the acquisition or replacement of Ashland’s capital assets. It would not only identify purchases and/or projects for the current fiscal year, but also include a list of purchases/projects into the future (commonly, CIPs encompass a five-year period).
3. Form a Space Needs Committee – Building upon the capacity assessment provided in this chapter, a Space Needs Committee could identify and begin to prioritize the Ashland’s capital needs. The Committee could potentially deem it necessary to conduct further assessment of space needs.
4. Improve the Energy Efficiency of Ashland’s Community Facilities – In 2010, Ashland secured federal funding to conduct energy audits of several town facilities. The findings of the audit reports should be considered by Town government and department heads

and recommendations should be integrated into short- and long-term physical plant planning. Despite the up-front costs of improvements, many of the energy conservation measures have payback terms of just a few years, after which, Ashland will experience actual savings that free up general funds for additional energy savings measures or other investments.

5. In addition to taking action on the recommendations of the 2010 audit, Ashland should make energy-efficiency considerations a component of all decision making processes. Energy-efficiency professionals commonly say, “You can’t manage what you can’t measure.” Therefore, maintaining an ongoing inventory of energy use is a vital tool when periodically reevaluating and reprioritizing efforts. Starting with an ongoing energy inventory, Ashland should periodically set priorities for further action (e.g., future audits, performance contracts, etc.) and then continue to use the inventory process as a measure of effectiveness and a tool for discovering the next opportunity for improved efficiency.
6. Require fire and safety compliance for all municipal facilities.