

## **7 COMMUNITY SERVICES**

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Public services have a direct and significant impact on the future development of the community and therefore are an important consideration in the Master Plan. This section briefly discusses the status of the main public services and utilities in Kensington and the anticipated impact of future development on the ability to provide services to Kensington residents.

### **7.1 Police**

The Kensington Police Department provides services directly and indirectly to nearly all town citizens. The department is responsible for providing for the security of the Town, protection of life and property of residents, and the enforcement of State and Local laws and ordinances. The department is staffed by three full-time officers, four part-time officers, one part-time ACO, and one part-time administrative assistant. Equipment includes two patrol cars and a truck used for animal control.

As the town grows and the demographics of town residents change, the demand for services from the department increases steadily. Current challenges facing the department include facilities, staffing, and equipment. The department has reached the limit of its space in the basement of the Town Hall, and would need additional space to expand services. It is estimated that a minimum of six full-time officers would be needed to provide full 7x24 coverage for the Town, and equipment demands would increase accordingly.

### **7.2 Fire & Rescue**

The Kensington Volunteer Fire Department and Rescue Squad provides emergency services to the Town through a team of 40 part-time volunteer personnel. These services include fire protection, prevention, and education, fire permit issuance and inspections, as well as emergency medical services at an Advanced Life-Support level. Additionally, the department offers CPR training and certification to interested town residents. In 1999, the department directly served more than 200 residents, and provided indirect service to nearly all others.

The development of the Town places an increased demand on the department. The largest increase is in the area of emergency medical services. Improvements in building construction and fire reporting systems have lowered the proportion of fire calls in comparison to EMS calls, which tend to rise rapidly with population growth. The greatest challenge faced is staffing – the combination of increasing call levels, higher certification and training demands, and ever-increasing personal demands on the volunteer staff means that, at some point, full-time personnel would need to be hired, especially for coverage during daytime hours.

### **7.3 Schools**

The Kensington school system is part of the larger Exeter Area district (School Administrative Unit 16); junior high and high school students attend school in the respective Exeter schools, while elementary school students attend classes in the Kensington Elementary School.

The Elementary School provides free public education to students in grades K-5. In 1999, the school served approximately 170 students. Facilities and staff are both critical issues for the Elementary School as the Town continues to develop and grow. The school currently uses modular (external) classrooms to accommodate enrollment growth. Two bond issues for facilities expansion have been turned down in recent years reflecting the Town's divided opinion on the severity of the issue. A statewide shortage in teachers and administrators makes filling additional positions increasingly difficult, however current staffing is adequate and our teachers are talented and qualified.

Although some growth planning services are provided by the Exeter Administrative Unit, closer coordination between the Town government (especially the Planning Board) and the Elementary School Board is needed, as this town service currently faces the tightest facilities constraints and is highly affected by increases in the local resident population.

### **7.4 Library**

The Kensington Social Library Trust and its service arm, the Kensington Public Library, provide services to the entire community as a part-time municipal lending library. Given its purpose of meeting the educational and informational needs of Kensington citizens, the library maintains a collection of approximately 13,500 books and other materials, as well as a public computer for Internet access. In 1999, almost 1200 town residents had library cards, and over 9400 books were circulated. Various reading, educational, and cultural programs are also offered to children and adults on a regular basis, and special programs are designed for students at the neighboring Kensington Elementary School.

The current building in the center of Town was constructed as a gift in 1895 (see Chapter 4), and has been expanded and renovated several times in the past twenty-five years. Although space is not currently considered a constraint for the Library as the Town grows, there is an immediate and ongoing need for additional staffing to enable the Library to provide service beyond the current 25 hours per week. Parking space for patrons is also a need as usage increases.

### **7.5 Town Government**

The Town of Kensington provides local government services to all residents. In addition to the services described above, the Town provides administrative, planning, zoning, public health and recreation, and tax collection services. The Town government owns and operates all public buildings and maintains town roads.

The Town is governed by an elected Board of Selectmen with three rotating positions. The Town employs both full-time and part-time employees. The center for Town Government

activities is the Town Hall in the center of Town, which provides both public meeting space upstairs and administrative offices in the basement.

Growth and development in Kensington lead to an increased demand for government services. Road maintenance and servicing is directly effected by the addition of new residential subdivisions. Administrative space and staffing are currently seen as constraints in the light of future growth. Developing and implementing a Capital Improvements Plan (ref. Chapter 8) is one of the ways that the Town can prepare for the demands of further development.

## **7.6 Conservation Commission**

The Kensington Conservation Commission is a voluntary group of citizens appointed by the Board of Selectmen. The Commission is responsible for managing the Town forest and conservation land, advising Town boards on conservation options and on the impact of development proposals on local natural resources, and reviewing applications for wetland and excavation permits. Additionally, the Commission develops long-range conservation plans and maintains the local natural resources inventory.

The Commission is increasingly involved in development decisions as the quantity of open space decreases in Kensington and new developments impinge on wetlands and other natural resources with increasing frequency. Given local residents' stated desire to preserve the rural nature of the town, and in light of the increasing demands for services as the Town continues to develop, it is anticipated that staffing will be a constraint in the near future. In particular, on-going professional planning assistance is needed, and a code enforcement position is suggested.

## **7.7 Trails Association**

The Kensington Trails Association is comprised of a seven-member board and additional volunteers, who preserve and maintain the trail system in the Town. These trails are used by many residents for hiking, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, and other outdoor activities. Additional services that the Association provides include promoting the responsible use of the land and trails, representing the Town in regional issues regarding trails, and offering public hiking and biking sessions for residents and school students.

As growth continues in the Town, existing trails are being lost to development, and the level of use (and associated wear) on remaining trails increases. Funding and staffing are constraints in the face of growth; increasingly, expertise and skilled manpower is needed to manage erosion control projects. Of major concern to the Association is the preservation of existing trails in the Town, including the current trail corridors that link parts of the Town together and link Kensington's trails to the trail systems of neighboring towns.

## **7.8 Historical Society**

The Historical Society of Kensington is a volunteer organization whose purpose is to preserve the historical records of the Town, to preserve and maintain its antiquities, and to encourage the Town's youth in continuing the traditions of the town. The Society has its headquarters at the

old Brick School House on the corner of the Amesbury Road and Moulton Ridge Road. The group helps to maintain that historic structure, assists Selectmen in the care of the Old Cemetery, assists with town Memorial Day services, prepares and preserves scrapbooks of Kensington pictures and stories, and works on other preservation tasks for the historical sites and documents of the Town.

## **7.9 Churches**

There are two churches in Town – the Kensington Congregational Church, which provides weekly worship services throughout the year, and the Kensington Unitarian Church, which offers three worship services during the month of August. Both have a long history in the Town (see Chapter 4).

The Congregational Church, given its year-round operation, serves a special role as a place of worship, meeting and service for residents. In addition to weekly Sunday services, the Congregational Church offers religious education, wedding and funeral services, and mission services such as meals and Christmas items for the needy. The Church provides space for a number of community activities and groups, including the local Boy Scout troop, occasional concerts, and the semi-monthly Ham and Bean supper. The Church publishes the monthly “Community News” newsletter to all Town residents, which serves as a town-wide vehicle for news, shared items of community interest, and historical notes.

With membership voluntary, residential development in the Town has an indirect impact on the ability of the Church to provide services. Facilities constrain the Sunday School program to some fifty or sixty children, while the sanctuary seats about 200 and the vestry seats about 100 for meals. Funding -- for ongoing operations, staffing, and facilities maintenance -- is the major challenge faced by the Church, while increasing personal demands on town citizens limits the ability of church members to volunteer time and efforts to serve the Church and the community.

## **7.10 Recreation**

Located in the heart of the Seacoast region, Kensington residents have access to a variety of outstanding recreational activities. Numerous ocean beaches, Lake Winnepausauke, the Great Bay estuary, Pawtuckaway State Park, several local rivers and the White Mountain National forest provide opportunities for hiking, boating, swimming, fishing, down hill and cross country skiing and numerous other outdoor activities. While the Kensington Recreation committee does sponsor several outings annually to these facilities, most residents who use these facilities do so on their own. There are no suitable waterways in Town for boating or swimming, thus Kensington residents must look outside of Town for their boating, swimming, canoeing and fishing activities.

The Kensington Recreation Committee oversees the use of the town owned fields and the Town Park. The Kensington Youth Athletic Association (KYAA) provides youth sports for elementary and some middle school aged children. The Kensington Trails committee maintains and provides a network of hiking trails for use by Kensington Residents.

Given Kensington's population and natural features, many programs and facilities are simply not able to be hosted and organized in Town at this time. Kensington is fortunate that many of its neighboring towns do possess the natural resources or the population density to provide such programs. Many Kensington residents turn to the towns of Exeter, Kingston and Hampton to fill out their recreational needs. For example, Exeter allows Kensington residents in their recreational programs for basketball, volleyball, and swimming in the Exeter town pool.

Kensington adults are included in Exeter's wide array of adult recreational programs including museum and cultural trips to Boston as well as a variety of adult sport programs. As Kensington's population increases, Kensington should not assume that outside communities would continue to open their programs to its residents. Over time Kensington's own resources must be applied to providing more programs for its own citizens so that it may decrease its dependency on the support of outside towns.

#### ***7.10.1 Recreational Facilities***

The Kensington Town Park, Sawyer Field and Hodges Hill are the only town-owned public property dedicated to recreational use by town residents. Additional facilities are located on the Kensington Elementary School property and are generally available to town residents.

##### ***Kensington Town Park***

The Town park on Trundle Bed Lane was donated on May 20, 1965 by the Esther B. Warner Estate. The park has a swing set, slide and some additional playground equipment suitable for small children. A paved basketball court is located near the gravel parking area adjacent to Trundle Bed Lane. A softball field exists on the upper section of the park. This field hosts both practices and games for the KYAA sponsored softball league. During the Fall, the outfield and remainder of the upper park field are converted to one junior-sized (80yards x 40 yards) and one child-sized (40 yards x 25 yards) soccer field. The KYAA sponsored soccer teams use this field for practices and occasional games.

The pavilion, an open-air structure with a concrete floor was constructed in 19xx. It provides shelter and a base for parties and organizations utilizing the park. Electricity is provided at the pavilion as well. The recreation committee provides porta-potties during the spring, summer and fall.

During the year 2000, the recreation committee constructed a storage shed for storing soccer, softball and summer camp equipment at the park.

The park is available for use by all Kensington residents. It is utilized by the KYAA and also by the recreational committee summer camp program. Residents are requested to contact the recreation committee prior to scheduling events to avoid conflicts. Park usage is allocated on a first come first served basis.

### ***Sawyer Field***

Sawyer Field, also on Trundle Bed lane, was donated to the town in 1995 by Alan Lewis, a Kensington resident. Sawyer Field consists of a Little-League-sized baseball diamond. The KYAA baseball programs utilize Sawyer field for practices and games.

During the year 2000, KYAA built a shed for storage of baseball equipment. The recreation committee provides Porta-potties and coordinates access to Sawyer field.

### ***School Fields***

The school fields and playground equipment are owned by the Kensington School district. A Little-League-sized baseball diamond and a softball diamond exist on opposite ends of the field. Two play structures exist on the school property. A wooden structure was built in 1992 and the modern steel and plastic play yard was created in 1997. Both play areas were built through community volunteer labor. School and PTO fundraising and financial contribution from local residents and businesses covered the costs of the materials. The fields and playgrounds are intended for use by the school during school hours. Town residents frequently use the facilities during non- school hours.

During the years 2000 and 2001, the community has voted down proposals for a school addition. It is anticipated that eventually a school addition and new parking area will be constructed on the school grounds. This construction is likely to eliminate a significant amount of the school fields and perhaps one play structure. Any future recreational planning should consider this situation.

### ***Hodges Hill***

Located on Stumpfield road, Hodges hill was donated to the town and is available for recreation and general enjoyment of town residents. Many residents use the area for winter sliding and tubing. There are currently no facilities, parking area or town maintenance.

### ***Indoor Facilities***

The Town does not possess any indoor recreational facilities at this time. During inclement weather, the church basement is made available to the summer campers. No other facilities in Town are considered for recreational usage. The school does not possess an indoor gymnasium facility for either physical education or general town use.

Several private indoor recreational facilities are located nearby. Indoor fields, typically used for soccer exist in Hampton, Epping and Kingston. Indoor soccer leagues exist in all three facilities. Ice-skating facilities are available at Phillip Exeter academy as well as the Rinks at Exeter. Private hockey leagues utilize both facilities and both facilities are frequently open for public skating and skating lessons.

### ***Other facilities***

There are no bike paths, jogging paths or skate park within the town. Bikers, joggers and pedestrians must compete with auto traffic for use of roadways. With increases in automobile traffic and inadequate shoulder width and maintenance on many of the roads in Town, this situation is likely to remain dangerous unless addressed.

#### ***7.10.2 Recreation Committee***

The recreation committee is a volunteer organization. It possesses no formal rules governing membership, term limits or appointments. Currently there exists a chairperson with four additional members. Meetings are held monthly on the second Wednesday of each month at the town hall beginning at 7:00 PM.

The recreation committee provides the following services to the Town:

- Upkeep and maintenance of Town Park, which is open to all residents and is also utilized by KYAA for Soccer programs in the fall and Softball programs in the spring.
- Upkeep and maintenance of Sawyer Field, which is open to all town residents and utilized by KYAA extensively during baseball season. During baseball season approximately 5 or 6 games and practices are scheduled each week.
- Summer Camp - three one-week sessions at Town Park open to children entering first grade through entering 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Approximately 30 children attend each session.
- Winter Ski Trips
- Organization of the Halloween party in conjunction with KYAA

The Committee is funded from the town budget. The FY 2001 budget is approximately \$14,000. Day camp and Ski trips are self-funded through fees charged to the participants. It is not possible to accurately estimate the number of residents who benefit from the use of the Town Park and other publicly-available recreational facilities. KYAA usage is estimated at approximately 150 children. Summer day camp is enjoyed by approximately 60 children.

#### ***7.10.3 Kensington Youth Athletic Association (KYAA)***

The KYAA is an independent volunteer organization. They receive no town funding and are highly dependent on the recreation committee for field coordination and maintenance. Currently KYAA provides a fall soccer program and spring baseball and softball programs to town children aged 4 – 13.

Due to Kensington's small population, KYAA is dependent on other towns and leagues to create a competitive schedule. KYAA's approach is to create as many teams at each age and competition level as is practical. Those teams either enter leagues in surrounding towns or coordinate individual games against other towns. The following summarizes the team categories and the leagues in which they play:

- Soccer – Children aged 4-13. Separated in 4 age categories. Enter approximately 8 teams into Sanborn (Kingston based) league. Games played on Sunday afternoons in fall on Kingston Fields.
- Baseball – Children aged 4-13. Separated into 4 age categories. T-ball games for youngest children. 7-12 year olds play in Southern NH Diamond League program with teams from Kingston, Newton and Newfields. Two age categories. Kensington enters one competitive team into the Exeter Bambino league for 10-12 year olds.
- Softball – Children aged 4-13. Separated into 4 age groups. Coaches typically coordinate games with other teams within the greater Seacoast area.

Due to Kensington's size, often there exists teams with either too few or too many players at each level. Both situations create frustration on the parts of coaches, players and parents. This situation will likely remain unchanged for the foreseeable future.

#### *Hockey, Basketball, Volleyball, Swimming*

Kensington has no organized programs in any of the above sports. Neighboring towns such as Exeter, Hampton and Kingston as well as private organizations do provide these programs. Kensington residents currently are allowed into these programs, typically paying a non-resident fee. KYAA does not have any involvement in these programs. There are no guarantees that these programs will continue to accept out-of-town enrollment, particularly as these programs begin to approach capacity within their own towns.

### **7.11 Utilities & Public Services**

Utilities and public services can have a direct and significant impact on the future development of a community and therefore are an important consideration in the Master Plan. This section briefly discusses the status of water, sewer, electric, gas, telecommunication and waste disposal services in Kensington at present and the land use implications of their future development.

#### *7.11.1 Water Service*

Kensington residents and businesses receive their water entirely from groundwater sources; nearly all are served by on-site domestic water wells. As of the 1990 Census, 96% of the housing units in the community were served by individual wells (see below).

<b>SOURCE OF WATER</b>	<b>Housing Units</b>	<b>% Total</b>
Public system or private company	<b>10</b>	<b>2%</b>
Individual well Drilled	<b>443</b>	<b>76%</b>
Individual well Dug	<b>115</b>	<b>20%</b>
Other Source	<b>13</b>	<b>2%</b>

*Source: US Census Bureau, 1990.*

In the past the Town has maintained a strategy for land development that avoids the necessity of developing a municipal water system. This is achieved primarily by requiring all development to provide adequate on-site water supply on relatively large lots. Although the Town intends to continue this policy, there is concern about protecting the existing groundwater from depletion and contamination. This concern is heightened by the location of the Seabrook municipal



wellhead near the southeastern border of Town, as well as by the high correlation between the location of prime excavation sites (see Building Materials) and the underlying aquifer. Given the residential development envisioned over the next 10 years, and the fact that Seabrook has stated a need to start supplementing its pumped water supplies with surface water from adjacent areas, plans may need to be made to ensure an adequate groundwater supply to meet Kensington's future demands.

### ***7.11.2 Electrical Service***

Electricity in Kensington is supplied by the Exeter & Hampton Electric Company, a subsidiary of Unitil, Inc, which operates a maintenance facility on the northeast edge of Town. It is expected that the firm will be able to provide an adequate supply of electricity to meet local demand for the near future.

### ***7.11.3 Natural Gas***

Most residential heating is provided by the delivery of heating oil, propane, or kerosene to on-site storage. Unlike electric and telephone utilities, gas companies have some flexibility in deciding whether or not to expand services to a given area, based on market conditions. Currently, the Route 107 corridor is the only area in Town with access to natural gas. As the availability of natural gas can be a locational factor in site selection for commercial development, it would be to the Town's advantage to have local gas service extended from the natural gas pipeline running through Kensington into the area around the commercial zone on the southern edge of Town.

### ***7.11.4 Telecommunications***

Kensington residents and commercial establishments receive local telephone service from Verizon (formerly Bell Atlantic). The Town does not have its own telephone exchange, but is served primarily by the Exeter regional exchange, with some parts of the southern edge of Town served by the Seabrook exchange. Given the deregulation of the telephone industry, the choice of both interstate and intrastate long-distance service providers is up to the individual customer.

The growing demand for wireless telecommunications is creating a surge in demand for the installation of wireless transmission towers and antennae all across southern New Hampshire. Although the need for these facilities is fully recognized by the Town, the towers themselves can be unsightly and a nuisance to surrounding property owners. The unregulated nature of the industry which provides these services means that multiple towers serving the same area can and probably will be sited near each other, exacerbating the impact of the towers. This problem has become more acute with the advent of digital PCS systems, which require a denser network of antennae (cells) to function than do conventional analog cellular phone systems. Kensington implemented a Telecommunications Facilities ordinance in 2001 to control the location of towers in the Town.

### ***7.11.5 Sewage Disposal***

Kensington does not currently have a municipal sewer system or wastewater treatment facility. The Town is served almost entirely by on-site septic systems (see 1990 Census data, below).

<b>SEWAGE DISPOSAL</b>	<b>Housing Units</b>	<b>% Total</b>
Public sewer	<b>5</b>	<b>1%</b>
Septic tank or cesspool	<b>573</b>	<b>98%</b>
Other means	<b>3</b>	<b>1%</b>

*Source: US Census Bureau, 1990.*

As with the water supply, the Town has maintained a strategy for land development that avoids the necessity of installing a municipal sewer system by requiring all developments to provide adequate on-site sewer disposal provisions and relatively large lots, with appropriate set-backs from groundwater sources.

In general, the Town plans to continue this policy by basing lot size and development approval decisions on the capacity of natural soil conditions to receive and treat sewage effluent. At the same time, however, future commercial and industrial development can be negatively impacted by the requirement for on-lot septic systems and the loss of large areas set aside for leaching fields. This is especially problematic given the limited amount of such land available for development.

Although the Town does not plan to install a municipal sewer system or wastewater treatment facility within the planning horizon of this Master Plan, several alternatives could be applied to future developments including permitting the use of “packaged” or other non-conventional treatment systems.

None of the surrounding towns have public water supplies or sewer systems, with the exception of Exeter and Seabrook. It may be possible to negotiate the expansion of the Exeter or Seabrook water or sewer systems to serve abutting portions of Kensington (although this possibility is offset by the location of the Exeter River and the large Great Meadows wetlands between Exeter and much of the Town).

### ***7.11.6 Waste Disposal and Recycling***

Kensington produces about 572 tons of solid waste per year from residential dwellings. Commercial establishments are responsible for their own arrangements for waste disposal.

The Town contracts with a private hauler for residential curbside pickup. The firm also collects recycled material at the curbside. The Town’s recycling program has been in operation for 11 years and, at the current time, about 75 tons or 13 % of the annual total waste tonnage is recycled. This voluntary recycling program collects materials including newsprint, glass, aluminum and steel cans, and some plastics. Greater than 90% participation by households is reported.

The Town provides a monthly collection of cardboard waste materials for recycling on the first Saturday of each month by the town ball field. 29 tons of cardboard were disposed of by the Town in the prior year. Hazardous waste disposal and bulk metal pickup is provided on an annual or semi-annual basis by the Town.

Septage disposal from residential and commercial septic systems is handled by private arrangements between property owners and septage waste haulers.

Waste disposal and recycling services grow in need in proportion to the increase in the number of households in the Town. While it is expected that the current arrangements will be able to provide adequate solid waste disposal services for the Town for the near future, challenges foreseen include the need for space and staffing for increased recycling operations.

#### ***7.11.7 Sludge Disposal***

The disposal of sewage sludge and other semi-liquid waste materials is a growing concern to many New Hampshire communities. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has reclassified certain liquid forms of waste sludge as 'biosolids' that may be spread on farmlands and other open spaces, yet the agency has also indicated that various classes of sludge may contain toxic metals, pesticides, hazardous industrial wastes, infectious hospital wastes and disease-causing bacteria and viruses. Over 30,000 wet tons of sludge were spread on New Hampshire farmlands in 1997, and more than 23,000 additional tons were imported from neighboring states to reclaim spent gravel pits. Nearly fifty New Hampshire towns have already adopted ordinances to ban or restrict sludge spreading to protect the health of town residents and the quality of natural resources. Given the presence of active gravel pits and agricultural operations in the Town, this currently unregulated aspect of waste disposal merits management and control to maintain the quality of life for residents and for livestock in Kensington.

## 7.12 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Planning Board should clarify and enforce article 4.8 of the zoning ordinances which allow for recreation and conservation committee review of subdivisions as to whether land should be set aside for parks, playgrounds and other recreational usage.
2. The Planning Board should encourage open space subdivisions, which mandate that a percentage of subdivided lands be set aside for recreational usage by the Town.
3. Currently all Town athletic fields are at maximum usage during peak sports seasons. Loss of school fields coupled with anticipated community growth would make this situation significantly worse. The Town should continue to work with landowners in town to explore ways in which parcels might be donated or reasonably purchased by the Town for use as public parks and athletic fields.
4. Creation of an indoor community center is highly recommended. A multi-purpose room on the school allows costs to be shared as a single structure can be used as a gymnasium, cafeteria and auditorium and is one possible solution.
5. The Town should consider widening and maintenance of road shoulders or construction of a bike path in some of the dangerous traffic areas to increase the safety of bikers, joggers and pedestrians.
6. As population increases the need to provide services to citizens other than the elementary school-aged children will increase. This could require facilities, budget and staff to provide programs appropriate for all residents including Senior Citizens and Teens.
7. The Town should consider establishing an aquifer protection district and include provisions to limit large-scale extraction of groundwater supplies.
8. The Town may consider working with Seabrook to provide extensions to the Seabrook water and sewer systems along the abutting parts of the Town, particularly in the commercially zoned district to increase commercial development potential.
9. The Town should aggressively promote recycling by residents and businesses as a means of controlling waste disposal costs.
10. The Town should investigate the possibility of permitting subdivision-level shared systems for water supply and sewage/septic disposal, particularly to augment elderly housing provisions or in cases where it would encourage open-space development plans.
11. The Town should encourage the expansion of regional natural gas facilities to serve residential and commercial customers.
12. Under the authority provided by NH RSA 31:39, RSA 674:16, and RSA 41:11, the Town should implement restrictions on the disposal of out-of-town yard waste and the surface or sub-surface spreading of any class of sewage sludge within Kensington.

## NOTES

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