

Rochester Capital Budget and Program Report

ROADS and SIDEWALKS

With respect to roadways and related infrastructure, the town is currently concerned with the state of roadway paving and a number of bridges and culverts (notably North Hollow Road). Further, the town is investigated whether to improve sidewalks in portions of the village center, as well as add streetlights to improve safety and access. There are also concerns related to storm drains along Route 100; however, it is believed that these drains may actually be VTrans's responsibility as opposed to the Town's. Some of the anticipated work for the above measures may be funded through grant opportunities. The existing Highway Equipment Fund does not cover the cost of road infrastructural repairs; rather, the town seeks grant opportunities elsewhere for this work.

The Town spent \$351,000 on regular highway expenses in 2013, and budgeted \$399,000 for FY 15. Additional costs in FY 14 included \$1,828,000 in continuing repairs from TS Irene (these were largely road-related and the town got \$1,787,000 in payment for this), and some discreet projects that had some grant funding, including Flanders Hill Culvert, Bingo Bridge railings, March Brook structure, and a Class 2 Road Grant.

There is an interest in the Town to see what it would take to potentially bury power lines in the village. Such work is often completed in tandem with road repaving; however, the roadways in the village of Rochester are currently classed as being in "good" to "fair" condition. As a consequence, any major state work on roads within the village probably will not occur for another 5 to 10 years. With respect to road repairs that are soon to commence, there is a VTrans district leveling project (a twin coat application) that is going to be done along Route 100 from Stockbridge to Rochester, but this work stops short of the village.

The Town inspects and upgrades its system of culverts on an annual basis. The last extensive culvert inventory was completed by TRORC in 2009 but an update is scheduled for 2015 using CDBG-Disaster Recovery funding. While writing the Town's current Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP), the HMP Committee identified four culverts for upgrades as part of the mitigation action plan. They are as follows:

- Brook Street Brook at Cushman Rd. culvert (medium priority, 2-4 years)
- Brook Street Brook at North Hollow Road culvert (high priority, 1-4 years)
- Wing Brook and Maple Hill Road culvert (high priority, 1-4 years)
- River Brook Drive culvert (low priority, 2-5 years)

The Town currently has sidewalks along much of the village center and maintains these. The existing sidewalks are mostly black top surfaces, but these sidewalks do adjoin to a curb in certain areas, such as in proximity to the Park. The sidewalks located in the south end leading up to the Park are grass on both sides (roughly three feet back from the edge of the roadway). In front of the Park, the existing sidewalks do blend into

a concrete curb. As previously stated, Rochester is considering making upgrades to existing sidewalks in the village center. Funding for repairs is anticipated to come from state Bike/Ped grant monies. A first-phase scoping grant was awarded to begin planning for repairs. Linear foot costs for work on any of the existing sidewalks will be contingent on the type of sidewalk being installed, and could range from \$99 for a bituminous walk with no curb to \$180 for a concrete sidewalk with a concrete curb.ⁱ Based on the results of the scoping grant, the town can apply for a construction grant in later years.

Recommendations:

Prepare a prioritized list of major road improvements, sidewalks and culvert/bridge projects, working with the Vtrans District Tech to estimate rough costs. Such a list should be incorporated into the Hazard Mitigation Plan and Town Plan as appropriate. Then plan these projects such that their annual costs are roughly equal and budget them in the road budget as annual expenses instead of a creating a reserve account.

Using the results of the sidewalk study, apply for construction funds to improve sidewalks in the village.



MUNICIPAL SEWER AND WATER

The town currently operates both a leach field-based sewage system and a water system. To fund capital costs on these the Town maintains both a Sewer Reserve Account and a Water Reserve Account, however these only had respective balances of \$36,961.64 and \$53,337.73 as of June 2013. To pay for major repairs or improvements, the Town bonds and the bonds are paid back by all taxpayers, versus just the roughly 160 service connections. To take advantage of good interest rates, the town rebonded in 2013 through the Vermont Municipal Bond Bank, and combined the two previous bonds for sewer and water into a single bond, lowering two bond payments budgeted at \$43,000 and \$32,000 in 2013 into a single payment budgeted at \$49,500 in 2014.

General operating costs for the sewer and water systems are carried by the system’s users through fees, however these rates had been static for years and they were no longer covering costs. Annual shortfalls were made up by using reserve funds, but that is not sustainable. Rates have just been increased, and this will raise another \$9-10,000 annually and should bring the funds back into balance with outflows. Rates start with a base rate and then have a per gallon charge. However, meters are generally 40 years old and not very accurate. The town is pursuing low interest loan/grant funds from the state through the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) to replace meters. Accurate metering will not only encourage conservation, but also can be used to determine leakages in the system.

Presently, the town has plans to replace manhole covers and the pumps at Site 1, which would cost a total of \$45,000. These plans are not expected to require town resources, and will be funded by grants. As of the Town Plan adoption in 2013, there were no anticipated needs to expand existing sewer and water capacity, however there should be a long-term capital planning process for these systems, if only for maintenance. The “McKinley line replacement” noted in the 2006 capital program and slated for 2010 was done with ARRA funding, noted in the 2014 Town Report as the “ARRA Clay pipe grant”.

Recommendations:

Continue to cost out new meters for the water system and seek funding from the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF).

Continue to identify large cost projects in advance in order to avoid emergency repairs.

VEHICLES

Vehicles are perhaps the most capital intensive area of town expenses. Unlike a road or building which require operations and maintenance costs, and sporadic capital costs, vehicles are predictably replaced, sometimes in as little as every 7 years. The town has a new police cruiser and just traded in a tandem truck for a new one.

The Fire Department’s tanker was slated for replacement next year, however this may wait on the replacement of an engine as the tanker is not the main attack apparatus. The Fire Equipment Reserve Fund could be used for any vehicle purchase, but is currently very underfunded to fully fund a purchase soon.

Equipment noted in the 2014 Town Reports lists:

Highway

- 2012 F550w plow and sander
- 2011 Cat 140M grader
- 2010 International Dump Truck with plow, wing and sander
- 2009 F350 4wd with plow
- 2007 Downeaster trailer
- 2014 Tandem Dump Truck with plow, wing and sander
- 1996 Cat 928 Loader

Fire

2000 F550 Truck
1994 International 4900 Truck
1985 GMC Tanker
Brush truck

Police

2014 Dodge Ram Cruiser

The Town currently maintains the following reserve accounts that could be utilized toward the acquisition of new vehicles (respective balances as of June 2013 listed in parentheses): Highway Equipment Reserve Fund (\$105,011.26), Cruiser Fund (\$28,518.85), and the Fire Department Equipment Reserve Fund (\$150,578.06). The Town votes inputs to the reserve funds at Town Meeting, and voted \$15,000 for the Fire Department Equipment Reserve Fund and \$60,000 for the Highway Equipment Reserve Fund in 2013; and voted again in 2014 to put \$60,000 into the Highway Equipment Reserve Fund. The only current major outlay is the grader lease, which does not come out of the Highway Equipment Reserve Fund, and is roughly \$40,000 per year, which will have its final payment in 2016. This payment is not listed as an expense in the highway budget in the 2014 report, but rather as a general town expense. It would be more accurate to list it in the highway budget.

Very recently, the town purchased a new truck for the highway department, using funds from the Highway Equipment Reserve. After the purchase, and with transfers in and out, the fund should have approximately \$90,000 at the end of 2014.

To maintain current apparatus levels and meet fire suppression needs, the current engine and tanker should be replaced. There are quite decent used models

There are a variety of ways to meet the need to fund the timely replacements of highway, police, and fire vehicles. Funding the entire purchase through an annual appropriation when needed leads to spikes in yearly costs. Financing all purchases spreads out costs, but includes interest costs. A mix of financing, careful staggering of when vehicles are needed, limited appropriations, and funding from capital reserves provides the best option of levelizing annual costs and creating a cash cushion that can be used if an opportunity presents itself or if interest rates climb. Keeping reserves slightly below the levels needed to buy all vehicles with cash keeps pressure on cost containment.

The following recommendations are made with the overall goal of trying to keep funding at or near historical levels (\$130,000/year) while meeting needs. Recently the town has been putting \$60,000 a year into the Highway Equipment Reserve Fund, paying \$40,000 per year for the grader financing, and putting \$30,000 per year into the Fire Department Equipment Reserve Fund.

Recommendations:

Put \$3,000 per year into the police Cruiser Reserve Fund to help offset future replacement costs.

Cruiser Fund		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Inflows											
Starting Balance		\$0	\$3,000	\$6,000	\$9,000	\$12,000	\$15,000	\$18,000	\$21,000	\$24,000	\$27,000
Annual appropriation	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000
	<i>additional funding, if needed</i>	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$30,000
Total Inflows		\$3,000	\$6,000	\$9,000	\$12,000	\$15,000	\$18,000	\$21,000	\$24,000	\$27,000	\$60,000
Outflows											
	<u>Outflow details</u>										
	New cruiser purchase										-\$60,000
Total Outflows		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	-\$60,000
Ending Balance Going Forward		\$3,000	\$6,000	\$9,000	\$12,000	\$15,000	\$18,000	\$21,000	\$24,000	\$27,000	\$0

To more accurately count costs, move the \$40,000 annual grader lease payment to the Highway Expenses in the town report, and fund it out of the Highway Equipment Reserve Fund.

Increase the Highway Equipment Reserve Fund input from \$60,000 per year to \$85,000 per year, a net reduction of \$15,000 per year for this fund (if the above \$40,000 is counted). Other funds will then use this “excess” to capitalize their accounts. Note that in the out years 2012 and 2024 there will need to additional inputs besides reserves to cover all purchases.

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Highway Vehicle Reserve										
Inflows										
Starting Balance	\$90,000	\$135,000	\$120,000	\$30,000	\$80,000	\$40,000	\$90,000	\$0	\$50,000	\$20,000
Annual appropriation \$85,000 <i>(additional funding, if needed)</i>	\$85,000	\$85,000	\$85,000	\$85,000	\$85,000	\$85,000	\$85,000	\$85,000	\$85,000	\$85,000
Total Inflows	\$175,000	\$220,000	\$205,000	\$115,000	\$165,000	\$125,000	\$195,000	\$85,000	\$135,000	\$210,000
Outflows										
<u>Outflow details</u>										
Last years of existing grader loan repayment	-\$40,000	-\$40,000								
F350 purchase to replace 2009 truck		-\$60,000								
New loader annual loan repayment (10 yrs)			-\$35,000	-\$35,000	-\$35,000	-\$35,000	-\$35,000	-\$35,000	-\$35,000	-\$35,000
Plow truck purchase to replace 2010 truck			-\$140,000							
Plow truck purchases to replace 2017 truck										-\$175,000
F550 purchase to replace 2012 truck					-\$90,000					
F350 purchase to replace 2016 truck									-\$80,000	
Plow truck purchase to replace 2014 truck							-\$160,000			
Total Outflows	-\$40,000	-\$100,000	-\$175,000	-\$35,000	-\$125,000	-\$35,000	-\$195,000	-\$35,000	-\$115,000	-\$210,000
Ending Balance Going Forward	\$135,000	\$120,000	\$30,000	\$80,000	\$40,000	\$90,000	\$0	\$50,000	\$20,000	\$0

Due to the need to replace two apparatus at the same time, and the high cost and current amount of reserves, it is not possible to increase reserves fast enough to build up sufficient funds to cover the full purchase costs soon.

Three options are shown below for fire apparatus, all assuming an engine and used tanker purchase in 2017. The first option uses a combination of cash and borrowing, in which reserves are depleted and very slowly rebuild. The second uses full financing with reserves carrying the financing and depleting steadily. The third option assumes a less costly engine (\$250,000 versus \$350,000) and is similar to option 1. It is also possible that the tanker costs could be reduced even further through retrofitting a used vehicle.

All options assume renewing inputs to the Fire Department Equipment Reserve at \$30,000 per year for ten years and then increasing to \$40,000 per year.

Year		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Fire Equipment Reserve													
Inflows													
Starting Balance		\$160,000	\$160,000	\$190,000	\$1,032	\$2,064	\$3,096	\$4,128	\$5,160	\$6,192	\$7,224	\$8,256	\$19,288
Annual appropriation	\$30,000/\$40,000	\$0	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$40,000	\$40,000
<i>additional funding, if needed</i>													
Total Inflows		\$160,000	\$190,000	\$220,000	\$31,032	\$32,064	\$33,096	\$34,128	\$35,160	\$36,192	\$37,224	\$48,256	\$59,288
Outflows													
Outflow details													
New engine purchase downpayment*				-\$100,000									
New engine loan repayment				-\$28,968	-\$28,968	-\$28,968	-\$28,968	-\$28,968	-\$28,968	-\$28,968	-\$28,968	-\$28,968	-\$28,968
Used tanker purchase				-\$90,000									
Used tanker purchase to replace 2017 tanker													
Total Outflows		\$0	\$0	-\$218,968	-\$28,968	-\$28,968	-\$28,968	-\$28,968	-\$28,968	-\$28,968	-\$28,968	-\$28,968	-\$28,968
Ending Balance		\$160,000	\$190,000	\$1,032	\$2,064	\$3,096	\$4,128	\$5,160	\$6,192	\$7,224	\$8,256	\$19,288	\$30,320
*Assumes \$350,000 purchase price for new engine, with \$100,000 paid in cash and \$250,000 financed over 10 years at 3%, and used tanker bought in cash.													

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Year		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Fire Equipment Reserve													
Inflows													
Starting Balance		\$160,000	\$160,000	\$190,000	\$169,012	\$148,024	\$127,036	\$106,048	\$85,060	\$64,072	\$43,084	\$22,096	\$11,108
Annual appropriation	\$30,000/\$40,000	\$0	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$40,000	\$40,000
<i>additional funding, if needed</i>													
Total Inflows		\$160,000	\$190,000	\$220,000	\$199,012	\$178,024	\$157,036	\$136,048	\$115,060	\$94,072	\$73,084	\$62,096	\$51,108
Outflows													
Outflow details													
	New engine loan repayment *			-\$40,560	-\$40,560	-\$40,560	-\$40,560	-\$40,560	-\$40,560	-\$40,560	-\$40,560	-\$40,560	-\$40,560
	Used tanker loan repayment*			-\$10,428	-\$10,428	-\$10,428	-\$10,428	-\$10,428	-\$10,428	-\$10,428	-\$10,428	-\$10,428	-\$10,428
	Used tanker loan repayment*												
Total Outflows		\$0	\$0	-\$50,988	-\$50,988	-\$50,988	-\$50,988	-\$50,988	-\$50,988	-\$50,988	-\$50,988	-\$50,988	-\$50,988
Ending Balance		\$160,000	\$190,000	\$169,012	\$148,024	\$127,036	\$106,048	\$85,060	\$64,072	\$43,084	\$22,096	\$11,108	\$120

*Assumes \$350,000 purchase price for engine in 2017, \$90,00 for used tanker in 2017, all purchases financed over 10 years at 3%

Year		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Fire Equipment Reserve													
Inflows													
Starting Balance		\$160,000	\$160,000	\$190,000	\$12,624	\$25,248	\$37,872	\$50,496	\$63,120	\$75,744	\$88,368	\$100,992	\$123,616
Annual appropriation	\$30,000/\$40,000	\$0	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$40,000	\$40,000
<i>additional funding, if needed</i>													
Total Inflows		\$160,000	\$190,000	\$220,000	\$42,624	\$55,248	\$67,872	\$80,496	\$93,120	\$105,744	\$118,368	\$140,992	\$163,616
Outflows													
Outflow details													
	Used engine purchase downpayment*	\$0	\$0	-\$100,000									
	Used engine loan repayment			-\$17,376	-\$17,376	-\$17,376	-\$17,376	-\$17,376	-\$17,376	-\$17,376	-\$17,376	-\$17,376	-\$17,376
	Used tanker purchase			-\$90,000									
Total Outflows		\$0	\$0	-\$207,376	-\$17,376	-\$17,376	-\$17,376	-\$17,376	-\$17,376	-\$17,376	-\$17,376	-\$17,376	-\$17,376
Ending Balance		\$160,000	\$190,000	\$12,624	\$25,248	\$37,872	\$50,496	\$63,120	\$75,744	\$88,368	\$100,992	\$123,616	\$146,240

*Assumes \$250,000 purchase price for new/used engine, with \$100,000 paid in cash and \$150,000 financed over 10 years at 3%

TOWN OFFICE

There are a number of small items that need to be addressed in the town office, including making bathrooms ADA compliant, which could be completed using CDBG grant funding in the future. Otherwise, though some possibilities were noted in the 2006 Capital Program, there are no major upgrades or improvements anticipated for the town office in the near future, though there will certainly be such costs over time. The Town Office does not currently have its own designated, funded reserve account. There has been talk for a number of years about installing solar PV panels on the roof of the town office, at an anticipated cost of \$40,000. Marvin Harvey, a former Selectboard member, took on the charge of investigating this, as he has personal experience of investing in these panels. While there is widespread support for installing solar PV panels somewhere, as is evidenced by the Town’s voting in favor of borrowing \$40,000 for this project, it was determined that structural work that might cost an additional \$25,000 would need to be done to the Town Office so that the roof could support the panels. Adding those costs may make the project economically untenable at this site, and the town garage is being looked at as a possible alternative.

Recommendation:

Create a Town Buildings Reserve Fund for use on all town buildings and begin to capitalize this fund in 2015 with a \$10,000 amount.

Year		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
New Town Buildings Reserve											
Inflows											
Starting Balance		\$0	\$10,000	\$20,000	\$30,000	\$40,000	\$50,000	\$60,000	\$70,000	\$80,000	\$90,000
Annual appropriation	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
	<i>additional funding, if needed</i>	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Inflows		\$10,000	\$20,000	\$30,000	\$40,000	\$50,000	\$60,000	\$70,000	\$80,000	\$90,000	\$100,000
Outflows											
	Outflow details										
	none at this time										
Total Outflows		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Ending Balance		\$10,000	\$20,000	\$30,000	\$40,000	\$50,000	\$60,000	\$70,000	\$80,000	\$90,000	\$100,000

FIRE STATION/EQUIPMENT



The Fire Department only recently moved into its new station, and the Town is still determining what the best future use may be for the old station (or whether it is in the town’s interest to sell the property altogether). The total cost for the new building was roughly \$395,000. To pay for this building, the town set aside a fire building reserve fund for a number of years, ultimately amassing \$100,000. Additional funding was also raised (\$50,000), and any excess that was required was financed. In total, the new fire department building required a \$250,000 mortgage with a 20-year term at 3.95%, financed by the Town. Annual repayments on this loan are approximately \$18,000. As of June 30, 2013 the Fire Department Building Fund had \$8,815 in it. It is not clear why the fire station debt is not included in the Fire Department budget in the Town Report, but rather in Finance Expenses, although this is a town building.

In purchasing the lot for the new fire station, the town also acquired the “creamery building” on the back side of the lot near the river. It is not clear what the eventual fate of this building may be, although it is used for storage at the moment. This building has considerable flood risk. The entire rear area behind and below the new fire house has become a sort of a de facto parking area, but it has not really been developed. This part of the lot may be used in conjunction with the adjoining Lillard property that town has bought out, as that site will need some public parking. Such parking could be utilized by the fire department in certain circumstances. Plans for both behind the station and the Lillard property are being developed.

There are many smaller items of equipment that the fire department possesses that do not rise to the level of needing capital budgeting, but air packs are expensive enough (several thousand dollars each) that they should be considered in capital planning. The town has 14 Scott Air Packs as of the 2014 Town Report. The Fire Department’s annual budget request now includes funds to replace one pack per year.

Recommendations:

The station will eventually need repairs, but these could be paid through one-time appropriations and should not be needed in the next ten years as the station is new. However, the station should be included in the purview of the recommended Town Buildings Reserve Fund.

The fate of the old fire station/lot and the creamery building should be decided through an open process in 2016, possibly funded through a small municipal planning grant.

TOWN GARAGE

There is a possibility that the town will need to investigate options for repairs to the town garage, including a roof replacement or even a complete change of location. The garage was inundated by flood waters during TS Irene, and, while most repairs to the building and tools were covered by FEMA grants, concerns remain over the future of the existing site. There are no reserve funds to cover this building and no recent estimates for either a new building or floodproofing activities for this building. The 2006 Capital Budget and Program estimate a new building cost of \$212,000, but this is no doubt low now.



Recommendations:

Create a Town Buildings Reserve Fund for future use on the Town Garage and begin to capitalize this.

Investigate ways and funding to minimize flood damage to the garage in the case of future large floods.

TOWN LIBRARY



With respect to the library, a number of upgrades to make the facility ADA compliant are being completed, largely funded by grant money and private donations. The remaining work on this nearly \$450,000 project will be completed in phases as funding becomes available from grants, town funding, and the library’s capital campaign fund, the latter of which has received very generous, often sizeable private donations toward such improvements. There is a Library Building Reserve, and it had \$16,019 in it as of June 30, 2013.

Recommendation:

Following the Library renovations, future needs should be covered by the Town Buildings reserve fund.

TOWN CEMETERIES

The town maintains two reserve funds related to the continued maintenance and use of its many cemeteries: a Cemetery Lot Sales Fund and a Cemetery Reserve with June 30, 2013 respective balances of \$792 and \$20,910. The town may need to consider new sites for cemeteries and a columbarium for cremated remains.

During Tropical Storm Irene, many of the cemetery plots in the Town's largest cemetery were disinterred. FEMA does not have a fund for bodies that are dislodged, but they did finally pay for putting the land back together at a great expense. All recovered remains have since been reinterred in allocated lots. Those that were not recovered have been dedicated on a monument in the cemetery. It is not anticipated that such a tragic event will impact the cemetery in the future, as numerous improvements have been made to the waterways that border the cemetery to improve flow and avoid the back up of gravel that had caused extensive flooding and erosion.

Rochester currently has some cemetery space left that has not been surveyed and laid out for sellable lot purposes. In order to pay for a survey for the lot that is not in use, \$8,000-10,000 may be needed. That land is now open, well-maintained grass land is ripe for survey, but, for those who want to buy a lot from this land, the town will not be able to sell it because there is not a plot plan in place. There are not many lots left for sale amongst the seven cemeteries in town, but the largest one is the one where most burials are concentrated, and, therefore, requires surveying. There is no way to expand any further at that location because of the brook, highway, and mountains, which further increases the need for a survey and plot plan. The Town would likely have a warrant article at Town Meeting to raise money for this endeavor, as is already done for the maintenance and upkeep of the cemetery. This has not been embarked upon yet because it was not as pressing a need as reintering the bodies dislodged during TS Irene.

In the 2006 Capital Budget and Program, expanding the North Hollow Cemetery was priced at \$35,000, but no expansion was done. With respect to a columbarium, the town is considering acquiring one at the Woodlawn Cemetery, but it is a big expense up-front (estimated in the 2006 study as \$45,000, and now perhaps \$60,000-75,000). Cremation is becoming a much more popular means of remains interment, and will be worth considering going forward.

Recommendation:

Current needs are not clear enough to begin budgeting, but they do need to be further defined as they are real needs. The Cemetery Commissioners should determine space needs and the feasibility of the columbarium, including construction quotes. This may require a professional study that can be funded from an annual appropriation.

RECREATION/GREEN SPACE

The Town’s primary green space is the Park, which is the large grassed square to the east of Route 100. There is also the “Mini Park,” which runs along the north end of town on the right en route to Hancock. It is currently an empty, small, rectangular piece of land, and there is no knowledge as to how it was historically acquired. There is another strip of land adjacent to the town office (between the parking lot and the stream) that is a pocket park of sorts. Further, the Lion’s Club maintains a park as a volunteer park north of the village on the way to Hancock. It is a small grass area with parking and public river access. Lastly, the Town acquired the Lillard Property to the north of the new fire station as part of the buy-out process, and will be turning that into a park with river access.



Rochester does budget some monies year-to-year to trim and upkeep the Park’s trees, which could range from tree surgery to complete removal and/or replacement. However, no new trees have been planted in about 4 to 5 years. The money utilized for this is built into the park budget as an on-going cost. With respect to the Park’s bandstand, the Town let out a small contract to do minor carpentry repairs, scraping, and re-painting this year. That is already being done this summer at a cost of roughly \$2,300, and is being paid out of the park budget.

Rochester currently maintains a ball field, a recreational field, and tennis courts on land south of the town garage along the river. The tennis courts were slated for resurfacing, but were destroyed during TS Irene, and subsequently rebuilt by FEMA. They do not require any resurfacing or additional repairs at this time.

The Town has debated whether or not to install a roof at Skatespace, the local skate park, to enable year-round use of the facility, but this is estimated to cost roughly \$40,000, and this is a low priority compared to other needs.

Recommendation:

Continue to maintain the Park, bandstand and recreational areas with sufficient funding to avoid major repairs as there are no capital funds for those.

INTERNET & CELLULAR CONNECTIVITY

Internet service is largely provided by FairPoint Communications, which has a pretty good concentration of DSL coverage that has been expanded in recent years. There are a few pockets of the Town that do not have such access, but FairPoint is expanding their range fairly regularly. There is also Comcast in the village, extending to all other areas other than north of town. With respect to municipal wi-fi services, Rochester did take advantage of the grant funding that grew out of TS Irene, which allowed the town to set up free wi-fi out of Pierce Hall, extending across the park to Huntington House. Wi-fi may also be eventually expanded to the Town Office yard.

As of late 2013 when the most recent iteration of the Town Plan was adopted, the general belief was that as many as two-thirds of the town's residents may be accessing internet via only satellite or landline modems. The town may, therefore, push for more wireless service providers in the town, owing to the difficulty posed by convincing cable and DSL providers into the region. Further, the town is also a part of the East Central Vermont Community Fiber (EC Fiber) Network, which will ultimately extend fiber optic cable to the town and dramatically improve internet connection speed capability. The current EC Fiber representative for Rochester is inactive, and the Town has not had any direct involvement with the project for some time. According to news reports, there is a potential plan to move an EC Fiber line up Rte. 100 to Granville and out along Rte. 73. This would be contingent on getting funding from the VT Telecommunications Authority.

With cellular coverage in the town deemed to be poor by many, most residents are supportive of expanding service options. AT&T currently has a cell tower in the church steeple, with access extending roughly one to two miles outside of the village. The people that live nearer to Granville may also get some connectivity from a tower based there. Additionally, some residents who live in higher regions in the Town are able to get Verizon service that comes out of Killington; however, there are many dead zones. Concerns exist over whether additional cell towers should be placed within town confines, and, if so, where. Presently, the town is investigating cellular hot spot opportunities to improve cell phone coverage for residents, while ensuring that the rural character of the town is not compromised by any new construction.

Recommendations:

Cellular coverage and broadband service is a growing need, but is provided mainly by private companies. The Selectboard should ensure that the Town has an active representative to ECFiber.

The Town should pay attention to 248 proceedings that can affect provision of new services.

OTHER FUNDS

While not a capital item, the Town maintains an Emergency Management Fund. As of June 2013, the account had a balance of \$3,185.43. Rochester currently has a mobile 10 kW generator that is not fixed to any building. There is no pressing need for an upgrade for this generator, rather, there is a need to upgrade the hookup connection at the town office in the event of an outage. Related to emergency management needs, the Town also has a repeater that is located on a telephone pole on Terry Severy's property. Terry leases this portion of the land to the Town. The actual electronic unit is in his garage, and the antenna is on the telephone pole.

The Town also maintains a Reappraisal Fund, which had a balance of \$45,307.40 as of June 2013. As noted by the town listers in the latest Town Report, there is a possibility that a whole town appraisal will be necessary if the town's Coefficient of Dispersion (COD) rate rises above 20 (it was sitting at 18.89 as of 2013, according to the Vermont State Property Evaluation and Review's Equalization study). An appraisal, though costly, is not technically a capital project.

The Town has a few other funds (2013 amounts): Revolving Loan Fund - \$40,012.59, Record Preservation - \$23,386.55, and Planning and Zoning Reserve - \$3,018.61.

This project was undertaken by the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission, with assistance from local officials and volunteers, and paid for with a Municipal Planning Grant from the Agency of Commerce and Community Development.