

COMMUNITY FACILITIES, SERVICES, AND UTILITIES

Community facilities are those either owned or maintained by the Town of Dummerston, and include structures and lands. Community services are those provided either directly by the Town or by others under contract with the Town. Community utilities are those services that are being provided by companies outside of Town such as electric companies, telephone and cable companies. A Transportation and Community Facilities map has been prepared to complement this chapter.

Town Property

The Town of Dummerston owns a 10-acre parcel at the junction of Middle Road and East-West Road. On this land are the town office building, the town garage, the Historical Society building and the town common. The Town Office houses the Town Clerk, Zoning Administrator, Town Treasurer, Listers, Auditors, and Emergency Management Director. It includes a meeting room shared by various Town boards and committees. The Dummerston Historical Society building, originally a one-room schoolhouse, is used for Historical Society meetings and displays.

The Town Garage provides storage for all highway department equipment, including sand and salt for roadwork. The Town currently holds leases on two sand and gravel pits (for more detailed information on sand and gravel pits, see the Mineral Resources section of the Natural Resources chapter). The Town is responsible for maintaining Town cemeteries, Town roads, bridges, and trails.

The town land abuts the fire station and the Congregational Church in Dummerston Center. The basement of the Church serves as the Town Hall. This arrangement dates back to the 1700s when the town reserved a lot of land to be used for town meetings and worship. Though the building is now owned by the Congregational Church, the space is still used for public functions, such as polling, and community meetings.

The Dummerston Community Center, located in West Dummerston, is a handicapped accessible town-owned building leased to a group of volunteers who maintain the building for use by town committees, local groups, area residents, Dummerston Cares, and the Lydia Taft Pratt library. The property also includes a playing field and playground, open to the public.

Thirty-five acres atop Prospect Hill, northwest of Dummerston Center are owned by the town. It is maintained as a town forest by ten trustees of whom five are the Selectboard and the others members of the public. There is a hiking trail to the top, which is accessed from Park Laughton road by a town right-of-way.

The town also owns approximately two acres of land on either side of the west end of the covered bridge. This property includes a parking lot which is a park-and-ride facility and is used for access to the popular swimming area under the bridge. There is also a rain garden designed to absorb the rainwater runoff from the parking lot. Maintenance of this garden has been delegated to the Conservation Commission.

Emergency Services

Fire Protection

The West Dummerston Volunteer Fire Department, formed in 1949, serves the entire Town. There are two fire stations one in West Dummerston and one in Dummerston Center. Volunteer firefighters respond to many different emergencies including house and brush fires, traffic accidents, medical emergencies, and downed power lines. The fire department assists surrounding towns as part of a mutual aid agreement which means that neighboring town fire departments assist the West Dummerston Fire Department when needed. The town supports the fire department with an annual contribution to its operating budget, as well as purchasing new fire trucks. .

In 2016 the town voted to borrow funds to give to the fire department for rebuilding the Center Dummerston Station, which needed upgrading to house the new, larger trucks and address moisture issues.

Ambulance Service

Rescue Inc., a not for profit, advanced life support ambulance service is contracted to provide transportation of the sick and or injured persons in the town of Dummerston. Rescue Inc. provides similar services to other communities in Windham County, Vermont and two communities in the western portion of Cheshire County in New Hampshire. Ambulances may be dispatched from either of their two base stations or from a field posting point and generally arrive on scene in Dummerston in under 10 minutes. First responders from the West Dummerston Volunteer Fire Department augment the ambulance response and reduce the overall time from the call initiation to an Emergency Medical professional on scene.

Rescue Inc. assesses the town an annual fee that is based upon a per capita figure. This assessment is budgeted by the Selectboard and approved by the town as part of the annual budget at Town Meeting. As the annual assessment covers only a fraction of the operating budget the ambulance service also direct bills the patient or the patient's insurance.

Helicopter Emergency Medical Service is provided primarily by the Dartmouth Hitchcock Advanced Response Team (DHART), located at bases in Hanover and Manchester, New Hampshire. The helicopter launch is requested by on scene responders. This response is a fee for service billed directly to the patient or patient's insurance.

Police Protection

Two enforcement services maintain law and order in Dummerston the Vermont State Police and the Windham County Sheriff's Department. The Vermont State Police provide general law enforcement services out of their Westminster barracks. The Selectboard contracts with the Windham County Sheriff's Office for traffic control. There is one Town Constable in Dummerston, but the role has largely been symbolic and they do not participate in law enforcement activities.

There has been recurring concern in Town about speeding occurring on less traveled back roads as well as more frequented corridors such as the East West Road and Middle Road. The Selectboard has been working with the Sheriff's Department to increase enforcement measures and find cost effective ways to reduce speeding on Dummerston's roads, and improve conditions for non-motorized street-users. Concerned citizens will continue to explore how traffic calming techniques can be implemented to help supplement ongoing efforts by law enforcement.

Emergency Management

The purpose of Emergency Management is to provide timely warning and assistance to town residents in the event of emergencies. A volunteer emergency management team with a director appointed by the Selectboard coordinates emergency preparedness and response for the Town. The primary method of emergency notification is through the state-wide VT Alert system, in which users choose to receive emergency messages by phone, cell phone, or email. Residents can sign up at www.vtalert.gov.

An Emergency Operations Center, located in the Town Office and served by a backup generator, is the command center for town officials and emergency operations staff. Backup generators are also available at West Dummerston Fire Department and Dummerston School if there is a need to shelter residents.

Important components of a town's emergency management program are the Local Emergency Operations Plan (LEOP) and the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP). Dummerston maintains a yearly updated LEOP, which serves as a reference guide to be used during an event. The LEOP identifies key emergency personnel contact numbers, locations, tasks, and an evacuation plan.

The town also has a Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) that assesses risk level for various hazards, potential impacts from high risk hazards, vulnerable sites in the town, and mitigation projects that would prevent and/or reduce damages from future hazard events. Dummerston is particularly vulnerable to flooding, invasive species infestation, wildfires, and winter storm/ice storms. Having a FEMA approved and locally adopted LHMP is important for Dummerston because it provides a blueprint for the town to mitigate future impacts of various potential hazards, as well as being required in order to apply for certain FEMA mitigation grants.

Solid Waste Disposal and Hazardous Materials

Dummerston belongs to the Windham Solid Waste Management District (WSWMD), consisting of 19 towns, each with a representative on the district's board of supervisors. The district facility offers full services including trash disposal, recycling, household hazardous waste collection, a swap shed, and commercial organic waste composting. Dummerston does not provide garbage or recycling collection. Residents, businesses, and public facilities may contract with a private waste hauler or bring their refuse and recycling to the WSWMD Convenience Center on Old Ferry Road in Brattleboro. WSWMD also operates the Swap program, in which people can drop off or pick up reusable products (televisions, furniture, lumber, etc.). WSWMD operated a recycling facility and collected recyclable materials from drop-off bins in its member towns, however this was closed in 2017.

The Federal Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Act requires a facility to report to state and local officials when it is storing certain quantities of hazardous materials. According to the 2015 list of Vermont's Tier II sites, there are seven sites in Dummerston. These include the Town Office, the school, a mobile home park, a gas station, a substation, a warehouse, and a telecommunications garage.

Water and Wastewater

The Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation regulates both onsite and centralized water and wastewater systems. The goal of regulating potable water supplies and wastewater disposal systems is to protect groundwater, the environment, and public health.

There are no municipal water or wastewater systems in Dummerston. As discussed in the Natural Resources chapter, there are several public water supply systems. Most residents rely on private wells for water and septic systems for wastewater disposal.

Water supplies in areas of dense development are especially vulnerable to contamination due to the cumulative effects of building on small lots with septic systems and drinking water wells in close proximity to one another, many of which were designed prior to the establishment of State-level standards. Siting systems to meet the state regulations is a particular challenge in West Dummerston Village where small lots make it difficult to meet isolation zones.

Healthcare and Human Services

Most of the health and medical needs of Town citizens are met through the Brattleboro Memorial Hospital, Grace Cottage Hospital, Cheshire Medical Center/Dartmouth-Hitchcock Keene, or private medical professionals.

Certain social service agencies are partially funded by Dummerston voters at the annual Town Meeting. One such local service is Dummerston Cares, Inc., founded in 2005 and reorganized in 2016 as a VT non-profit corporation with IRS 501(c)3 status, a new Board of Directors, and a mission to serve all Dummerston residents by supporting those with health and other wellness needs through services, programs and resources provided directly or in collaboration with related local, regional and state organizations and agencies.

Library Services

The Lydia Taft Pratt Library, the town's public library, is located in the Community Center in West Dummerston. The library is overseen by a part-time paid librarian with support from the Library Trustees and volunteers. All services are free of charge and available to all Dummerston residents. The library provides a variety of services, including public Wi-Fi access, pre-school Story Hour, a Summer Reading Program, Interlibrary Loan Services, and Homebound Delivery Service. The library receives financial support from the town and fundraising. Information about the library and access to the online card catalog can be found on the town website, www.library.dummerston.org. Additionally, more information can be found on the library Facebook page: facebook.com/dummerstonlibrary

Many Dummerston residents also use Brooks Memorial Library in Brattleboro and the Putney Library. Both libraries require an annual fee for non-residents.

Communications

There are numerous ways that information and communication about ongoing issues in Dummerston can be shared. There are several newspapers available to residents such as the regionally read Brattleboro Reformer (daily) and The Commons (weekly) which is the town's newspaper for public notices. The volunteer-run Views of Dummerston (quarterly) provides a way for town committees and organizations to directly reach residents.

The Town of Dummerston maintains its official website (<http://dummerston.org>) for posting information about municipal government, such as meeting agendas and minutes, and board members contact information, as well as forms for licenses, permits, and registrations. Another, unofficial, and privately maintained website (<http://dummerston.com>) has news and information of interest to town residents.

Fairpoint Communications provides landline phone service in Dummerston, as well as high-speed internet in some areas. High-speed internet and voice-over-internet phone service is also offered by cable companies. However, there are still residences in Dummerston that do not have access to high-speed internet service. The town library offers a wireless internet hotspot at the community center. Cell phone coverage fluctuates throughout Dummerston, with some areas getting better reception and some getting none. There is a Telecommunications Ordinance in effect that establishes a process, performance standards, and guidelines for siting and constructing wireless telecommunications facilities.

Utilities

Dummerston lies within the area served by the electric utility Green Mountain Power (GMP). The company maintains two transmission lines running through the town a 69kV line running along the Rt. 5 corridor; and a 46kV line running along the West River corridor. The West River line has a substation in the northwest corner of the town on Route 30. Vermont Electric Power Company maintains a doubled 345kV transmission line running along the western edge of the town. (see the energy chapter for more detail on the electric grid)

Goals, Policies, and Action Steps

Goal 1 — Provide for the public health, safety, and general welfare of the community.

Policy 1.1 Maintain a quality level of police, fire, and ambulance services.

Action Steps

- a. Continue to provide financial support to the fire department so that an effective fire protection and fire prevention system can be maintained. (Selectboard)
- b. Periodically review the police protection available to residents. (Selectboard)
- c. Periodically review and make recommendations regarding the deliverables and cost of the ambulance service provider contracted to the residents. (Selectboard)
- d. Hire an animal control officer. (Selectboard)

Policy 1.2 Maintain a high standard of emergency preparedness.

Action Steps

- a. Maintain and implement effective hazard mitigation programs and response plans including the Local Emergency Operations Plan and the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan. (Emergency Management Director, Selectboard)
- b. Identify hazards facing Dummerston and identify strategies to begin reducing risks from identified hazards. (Emergency Management Director)
- c. Continue to provide training opportunities for paid staff and emergency response volunteers (Selectboard)
- d. Continue to be active participants in emergency preparedness drills and exercises utilizing an all hazards approach. (Emergency Management Director, Emergency Response Volunteers, Town Officials)

Policy 1.3 Provide for efficient and environmentally sound solid waste disposal and maximize opportunities for recycling usable goods.

Action Steps

- a. Increase public awareness of the environmental benefits and risks and potential cost savings of recycling. (Energy Committee, Selectboard)
- b. Continue to investigate cost effective and environmentally sound solid waste disposal, and recycling programs for residents of the Town. (Selectboard)

Policy 1.4 Protect the water supplies in Dummerston so that they remain clean and potable.

Action Steps

- a. Support collaborative wastewater planning efforts. (Planning Commission)
- b. Explore funding for a wastewater capacity study in West Dummerston Village. (Planning Commission, Selectboard)

Policy 1.5 Require that all facilities which store, process or use hazardous materials or generate or treat hazardous wastes in their operations be sited in compliance with state and local laws and employ best management practices for the protection of groundwater, surface waters, and air quality. Require facilities be periodically monitored for compliance with such State and Federal laws and practices.

Goal 2 — Provide an efficient system of community facilities and services.

Policy 2.1 Any construction or expansion of facilities should support development in West Dummerston or Dummerston Center so as to minimize growth in outlying areas and development along Dummerston's roadways.

Policy 2.2 Make the most effective and efficient use of existing services, buildings, utilities and facilities before adding new capacity or initiating new construction.