

## CHAPTER 7 COMMUNITY SERVICES & FACILITIES

Municipal services are local government services that residents and businesses receive as taxpayers, rate payers, or fee-paying participants in a town program or activity. Like most towns in Massachusetts, Harvard offers more services than the state actually requires. Over time, the duties of local governments everywhere have changed due to new federal and state laws, expectations tied to state aid and discretionary grants, changing social needs, and changing ideas about the responsibilities of government.

In some communities, local governments and non-profit organizations work as partners to provide services or carry out special projects. In Harvard, a good example is the relationship between the Harvard Conservation Trust and the Conservation Commission. Harvard also receives some municipal services through regional organizations, e.g., the Nashoba Valley Boards of Health. In 2013, Harvard joined the Nashoba Valley Regional Dispatch District located in Devens, which serves Lunenburg, Lancaster, and Devens; such regional collaboration offers lower costs and operational efficiencies beyond what a single community can provide.

### 1. MUNICIPAL SERVICES

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Harvard's town government is a highly decentralized \$24 million organization led by a five-member Board of Selectmen. Decision-making is distributed across nine elected boards, four elected officers, and approximately twenty-five appointed boards and committees. Some town departments have full- or part-time professional staff and support personnel to carry out the duties and directives of the elected or appointed officials they serve. Harvard has a small population and low-density development pattern. Many departments rely upon part-time staff while others may have just one or two people handling a large volume of work. Harvard lacks the economies of scale that sometimes present advantages to larger towns. However, Harvard's trade-off for efficiency is a size that works for spirited debate – a style of governance that townspeople have valued for decades.

Should Harvard resume jurisdiction of Devens, the current governmental structure will require additional capacity and resources. Throughout Devens' redevelopment, support services comparable to typical municipal services have been provided by MassDevelopment, either directly or through a contract-based arrangement. A comprehensive study of the governmental structures of towns similar to a combined Harvard and Devens should be performed to assess the extent of resources that would be needed, along with any potential structural changes in governmental operations.

Additionally, a detailed department-based analysis is needed to fully assess current staffing levels and the staffing that would be required to adequately provide services. Regionalization efforts, with the recent shared emergency dispatch center as a model, could significantly assist with maintaining Harvard's current structure and reduce associated costs.

#### *General Government*

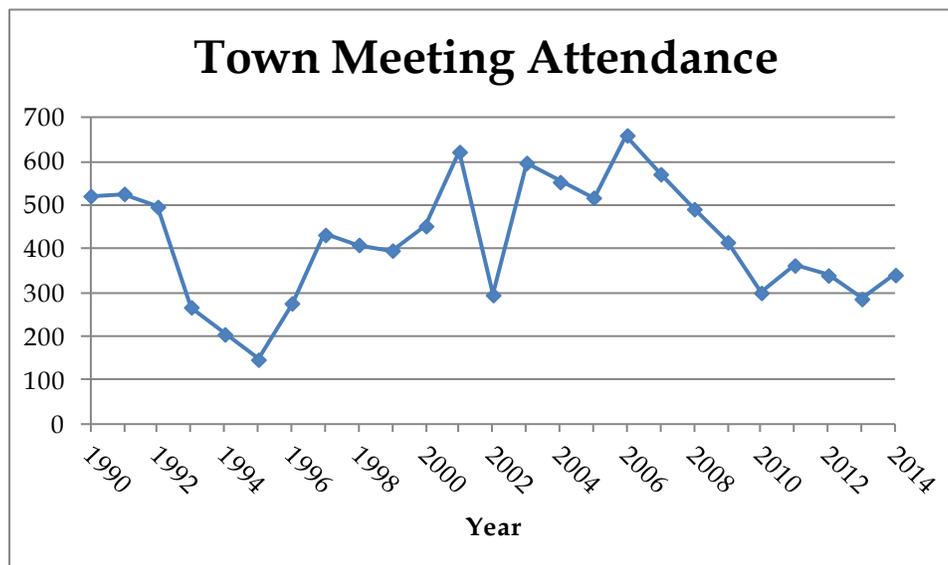
In the standard classification system used in government finance, "general government" consists of the central administrative services that a community needs in order to carry out its statutory obligations. For Harvard, this includes the Board of Selectmen and Town Administrator, financial

operations (Accounting and Finance Department, Treasurer/Collector, and Assessors), the Town Clerk, land use and permitting (Planning, Conservation, and Zoning Board of Appeals), and the legislative arm of government, Town Meeting. Harvard presently spends a combined total of \$1.2 million on general government functions.

- **Administration & Finance:** Harvard's chief administrative officer, the Town Administrator, directs the day-to-day work of town government, carries out policies of the Board of Selectmen, and coordinates with departments not directly under the selectmen's purview. The Board of Selectmen/Town Administrator office has two full-time staff, including the Town Administrator and an administrative assistant, and a part-time Assistant Town Administrator/Human Resources Director. Harvard also has a Finance Director whose time is shared by the Town and Harvard Public Schools. The Finance Department is comprehensive in that it includes the accounting, treasurer-collector, and assessing functions. The Town receives assessing and appraisal support services under a vendor contract with Regional Resource Group, Inc.
- **Town Clerk:** In any city or town, the Clerk is the official keeper of records. Harvard residents probably come into more contact with the Town Clerk than with any other elected or appointed official. Many town officials have frequent contact with the Town Clerk's office, too, because of the types of records held there. The Town Clerk is responsible not only for maintaining and certifying documents, but also for conducting local, state, and federal elections, issuing a variety of licenses and certificates, administering the annual town census, maintaining records of permitting and licensing decisions by town boards, and serving as sales agent for cemetery lots.
- **Land Use & Permitting:** The Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, and Conservation Commission have development review and permitting responsibilities prescribed by state law and local bylaws. The decisions they make have far-reaching consequences for the Town.
  - The Planning Board has statutory responsibility for preparing a master plan, reviewing proposed zoning changes and reporting on them to Town Meeting, reviewing and approving subdivisions of land, and endorsing plans for lots not subject to the Subdivision Control Law. Harvard's Planning Board is also responsible for reviewing and acting upon site plan applications, alterations to scenic roads, and some special permits. In 2013, Harvard funded the position of town planner for the first time, although as a contracted service rather than as a town administrative employee. Creating a town planner position was among the recommendations of the 2002 Master Plan. The planning office is currently staffed by the contracted part-time town planner and a part-time Land Use Administrator.
  - The Zoning Board of Appeals has statutory authority to grant zoning exceptions and relief, to hear appeals of actions taken by the Building Commissioner, and to act on comprehensive permits filed under M.G.L. c. 40B. Harvard (like most towns) assigns a majority of the special permits to the Zoning Board of Appeals.
  - The Conservation Commission administers both the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act (M.G.L. c. 131, s. 40) and the Harvard Wetlands Bylaw. It also has management responsibility for the Town's open space, for which the Land Stewardship subcommittee takes the lead. The Commission works with the non-profit

Harvard Conservation Trust to acquire, protect, and care for conservation land. The Conservation Department manages the Town's conservation land and oversees periodic updates of the Open Space and Recreation Plan. The Commission receives staff support from a part-time Conservation Agent (who also serves as part-time Land Use Administrator).

- **Town Meeting:** Harvard typically holds its annual town meeting in early spring (March or April), when residents vote on the Town budget, capital projects and land acquisitions, local bylaws, and other matters requiring approval by the local legislative body. Harvard's is an open town meeting, which means that any registered voter can vote on matters requiring town meeting approval. There is no requirement for a quorum to open the Town meeting. Town Elections are held the Tuesday following annual town meeting. As the Legislative body of the Town, it is important that citizens fully participate in decision making to insure items such as budgets, bylaws, and capital expenses reflect the will of the majority of residents. However, as the chart below shows, attendance has declined in recent years. For example, attendance for the five-year period from 2010 to 2014 averaged 326 voters compared to the five-year average of 518 from 2001 to 2005. With numerous demands placed upon families today, interest in local government has waned. Using outlets such as televised board meetings, the Harvard Press, public forums, and social media, Town officials should strive to raise awareness of the benefits of widespread participation in Town Meeting decisions.



### *Public Safety*

The Police Department, Fire Department, Ambulance Squad, and Building Commissioner form the backbone of public safety services in Harvard. The Town presently spends \$1.6 million on these public safety operations.

- The **Police Department** is a small organization with a full-time chief, two sergeants, a detective, four patrol officers, and several reserve officers. According to local records, the

Police Department responds to approximately 12,000 calls per year.

- In 2013, the **Nashoba Valley Regional Dispatch District** opened at Devens. It provides dispatch service for police, fire, and emergency medical calls from within Devens and in Harvard, Lancaster, and Lunenburg.
- The **Fire Department** includes a full-time fire chief and thirty-six on-call personnel, including a deputy chief, three lieutenants, and twenty-six firefighters, several of whom are also EMT-certified. In 2013, Harvard's call firefighters responded to 255 emergency calls ranging from car accidents to fire alarms, and issued approximately 250 permits. Though it is a call department, Harvard's firefighters provided mutual aid for emergencies in other towns on nineteen occasions and also sought mutual aid for emergencies in Harvard ten times in 2013. In addition, the Fire Department has statutory responsibility for certain types of safety inspections. The annual demand is about 300 inspections and 250 permits and licenses.
- The **Harvard Ambulance Squad** is an all-volunteer organization with approximately sixty members, all EMT certified. Under a special provision from the state, Harvard sponsors a "cadet" program for Bromfield School students to respond to calls with an adult EMT member of the Ambulance Squad. The annual demand for service is about 300 calls, the majority occurring during daytime hours.
- The **Inspectional Services Department** includes a part-time building inspector, part-time administrative assistant, and part-time plumbing and wiring inspectors. The Building Commissioner also serves as Harvard's zoning enforcement officer, authorized to withhold building permits for structures that fail to comply with zoning, respond to zoning violations, and issue cease-and-desist orders for zoning violations.

### **Public Works**

Harvard has a Department of Public Works (DPW) that manages most traditional public works functions. The DPW takes care of sixty-five miles of public roads, including paving and pavement repairs, cleaning drainage systems, trimming roadside vegetation, installing and replacing signs, and plowing, sanding, and street sweeping. In addition, the DPW oversees solid waste disposal and recycling services at the Transfer Station, maintains the Town's parks and playing fields (which are managed by an elected Park and Recreation Commission), maintains the school fields for the School Department, mows some fields on conservation lands, provides support to the Bare Hill Pond Committee, and maintains the cemeteries (which are overseen and regulated by an elected Cemetery Commission). The Town spends approximately \$1.3 million per year on public works-related functions.

**Water and Sewer Services:** The Water Department, which is under the auspices of the DPW, provides drinking water to a small service area of about eighty properties within the Town Center. Water is pumped from two bedrock wells located east of Bare Hill Pond, both drilled to a depth of approximately 500 feet, and delivered to customers through a 13-mile network of recently upgraded water mains. A third well on Bolton Road is available for emergency backup, but it is rarely used, and activating it requires Mass. Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) approval. Since the actual aquifer recharge area for these wells has not been identified, MassDEP has assigned an Interim Wellhead Protection Area (IWPA) to each well, which varies with the well's pumping rate. The Town pumps approximately 7 million gallons per year from

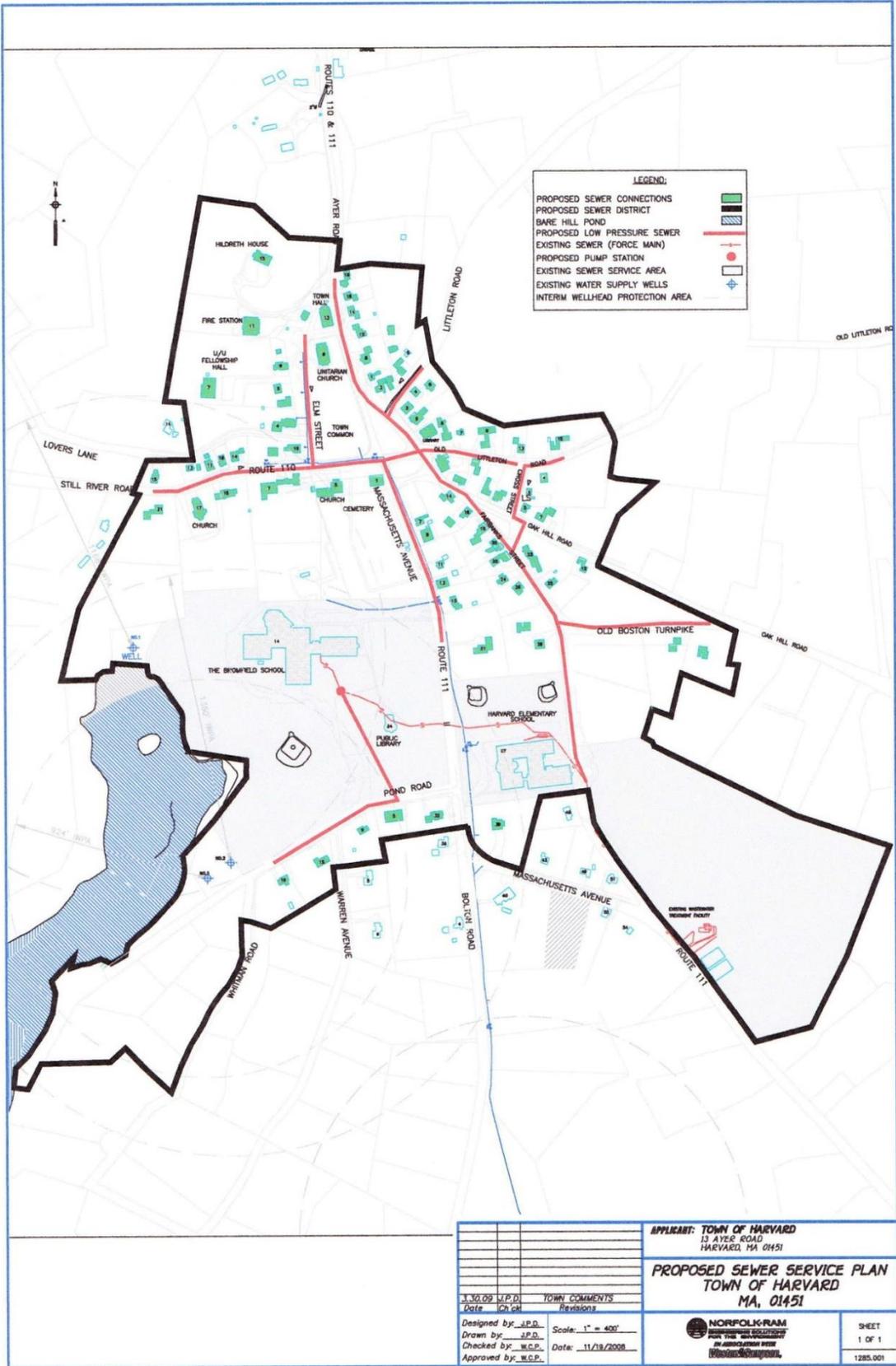
the two wells combined. MassDEP considers both water supplies to be at moderate or high risk of contamination due to their proximity to underground fuel tanks, storage of hazardous materials, lawns, and septic systems. Though operated by the DPW, the public drinking water system is regulated by an appointed Water and Sewer Commissions, which has authority to set water rates for customers in the Town Center.

In 2015 Harvard began to investigate options for developing an additional water supply in the Town Center. The intent is to identify a new well site that will be less susceptible to contamination than the existing wells because of the Center's concentrated development, including recreation fields, school sites, and residences. Previous searches revealed high levels of radon in the groundwater that would require expensive treatment to meet acceptable drinking water limits. The Town Center does not have an underlying sand and gravel aquifer, and most likely a new source would drill into bedrock. The Water Study Committee intends to issue its report in 2016. The Committee's charge is restricted to the Town Center, and does not include an analysis of developing water sources in other parts of Town.

The **Water and Sewer Commissions** also oversees a new sewer district that Harvard established with approval from the state Legislature (Chapter 37, Acts of 2010. The district closely mirrors the water district and includes portions of Ayer Road, Massachusetts Avenue, Elm Street, Pond Street, Still River Road, and Fairbank Street in the Town Center. Its service area is limited to 12 nonresidential properties, 43 multifamily dwelling units, 38 single-family homes, and 8 public buildings. (Map 6.1 displays the sewer district boundaries in the Town Center.)

The sewer system has an excess capacity of approximately 3,000 gallons per day. Its intent was primarily to provide existing uses in the Town Center with reliable treatment and to remove failing septic systems that posed a threat to the municipal wells. Chapter 37 specifically restricts connections of a new use, a use that has been reconstructed resulting in a greater flow, or a facility that has undergone a change in use to the wastewater system, and prohibits an increase in the design flow of an existing facility unless it could have met Title 5 standards for a new septic system. However the Commission may make exceptions if a connection is necessary for the public health and safety or creates a demonstrable benefit to the Town. Practically speaking, the system will not allow a significant increase in residential density or promote new commercial growth. One possible use of the remaining capacity is to provide treatment for a proposed senior housing project at the site of the Senior Center; this would of course provide a "demonstrable benefit" to the Town.

Regardless of Devens' disposition, additional consideration should be given to a tie-in of water and sewer systems between Devens and Residential Harvard. Tie-in of one or both systems could provide Harvard with significantly more "freeboard" in future development options and with sustainability of the Town's current development patterns.



## *Human Services*

In local government, “human services” typically includes the Board of Health, Council on Aging, and Veterans Agent. In Harvard, these are very small organizations. Total spending on human services functions in FY 2015 is approximately \$170,000.

- The **Board of Health** is an elected, three-member board responsible for regulating wastewater disposal and private water supplies, identifying and reporting communicable diseases and public health hazards, and enforcing the State Sanitary Code. Septic system and food service inspections are handled by the Nashoba Associated Boards of Health, an organization serving fifteen towns in the north-central section of the state. The Board of Health has a part-time administrative assistant at Town Hall.
- The **Council on Aging** offers information services, transportation assistance, and social, recreational, educational, and health programs to people with disabilities and to Harvard’s 60 and over population, which in 2014 represented 20% of the Harvard plus Devens population.<sup>61</sup> The Council’s offices and program space are located at the Hildreth House, a historic building situated on a hill overlooking the Town Hall. Nearly 700 seniors use services sponsored by the Council on Aging, with wellness, educational, and cultural programs attracting the largest number of participants. The Council on Aging is supported by a combination of local revenue, fees, and state grants, as well as fundraising by the Friends of the Council on Aging. Current staffing includes a full-time Director, part-time outreach and program coordinators, and a receptionist/dispatcher. Currently, no paid COA social work or outreach services are provided to Devens residents. The Town could consider providing such services under a contract, in a similar fashion to the way MassDevelopment contracts for school services for Devens students.
- The **Veterans Agent** is a part-time official appointed by the Board of Selectmen. In Massachusetts, communities are required to provide medical and burial assistance to local veterans, but the state reimburses seventy-five percent of claims paid by the Town.

## *Culture And Recreation*

Harvard has several boards, commissions, and departments with responsibility for cultural programs and recreation activities. The Town spends approximately \$595,000 per year on these services.

- The **Harvard Public Library** is governed by a Board of Library Trustees with six elected members. Its collection includes books, periodicals, compact discs, audio books, videos, and databases, and a wealth of online resources. The library also provides lectures, book discussion groups, fine arts displays, musical performances, film screenings, museum passes, computers with internet access, and full-service programs for children. It also offers access to the C/W MARS Network, a consortium of public and academic libraries in Worcester County and Western Massachusetts. The Library is supported by a combination of local revenue, state library funds, and contributions from the Friends of the Library, Inc. It has a full-time library director and eleven full- and part-time library staff.

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<sup>61</sup> 2010-2014 ACS, Table S0101

- Harvard does not have a staffed recreation department. Its five-member **Park and Recreation Commission** oversees the recreation programs offered to Harvard residents, manages and regulates the use of the public beach at Bare Hill Pond and the Town's playing fields, hires and oversees lifeguards, and manages the Town Common. A volunteer organization, Harvard Athletic Association, offers a variety of youth sports programs throughout the year. School sports teams also use the fields, and students play on the fields during the school day for recess, intra-murals and physical education classes.
- The **Harvard Historical Commission** has planning, advocacy, and permitting responsibilities. It identifies properties and areas that are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, prepares National Register nominations, conducts planning studies to establish local historic districts, and generally oversees historic preservation survey and planning work. In addition, the Harvard Historical Commission functions as a local historic district commission, which means it has authority to review and decide on proposed building alterations in two local districts: the Shaker Village and the Harvard Common Historic Districts. The Commission operates without a budget or dedicated staff support. The Commission receives substantial support from the non-profit Harvard Historical Society, which holds a vast collection of historical materials in a museum in Still River.
- Harvard is one of 158 communities that have adopted the **Community Preservation Act (CPA)**, a law that went into effect in September 2000. CPA helps cities and towns pay for projects that provide open space, recreation, historic preservation, and affordable housing. Toward these ends, the law allows communities that adopt CPA (M.G.L. c. 44B) to impose a surcharge on property tax bills and dedicate the funds to projects that are eligible by law. Harvard's surcharge of 1.1 percent is well below the maximum 3 percent allowed by state law, which limits the state matching funds the Town receives. Of the 158 communities that have adopted CPA, 122 have opted for a higher percentage than Harvard's 1.1%. Harvard's Community Preservation Committee (CPC) includes both elected and appointed members. The CPC has adopted broad community preservation goals and considers requests for CPA funds prior to each annual town meeting. Based on Department of Revenue data, Harvard's surcharge netted \$105,154 in FY 2002, which increased to \$204,723 in FY 2016. The state match has steadily declined over the years, and in FY 2016 amounted to 29.7%, or \$60,746. Harvard should consider increasing its surcharge percentage in order to restore a level of funding that would accomplish more worthwhile community projects.
- The **Center on the Common** was a community-based arts and cultural non-profit organization that operated in the Hapgood Library when the space became available. It offered a variety of educational programs for youth and adults and provided a central venue for exhibitions and performances. Unfortunately, the organization was unable to sustain operations and shut down in 2015. Its demise left a gap in arts and cultural offerings in the Town. Another non-profit arts organization, the **Harvard Cultural Collaborative**, is seeking to lease the space when municipal offices move back to the renovated Town Hall.
- Harvard's Community Education program offers a wide variety of courses for residents to expand their educational horizons and explore new interests. Operated through the

Harvard School Department, adults may learn new skills, explore creative arts, learn a musical instrument, or expand career proficiencies. Children also benefit from a dynamic summer program, which includes a variety of recreational and artistic activities.

- The **Warner Free Lecture Trustees** sponsor educational forums several times a year on a wide variety of cultural topics. The series honors the wishes of Henry Warner, who established a fund in 1890 to offer stipends to renowned speakers to offer free lectures and programs in the community.

## 2. MUNICIPAL FACILITIES

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Harvard is responsible for twelve town-owned buildings and structures with a combined assessed value of over \$7 million.<sup>62</sup> Several of Harvard's public facilities are historically significant, which create challenges for balancing modern uses and code requirements with the constraints of these local landmarks. Harvard provides most government services in buildings situated within the Town center, a residential and institutional enclave that is the heart of the Town. In addition to traditional government office buildings, Harvard's public facilities include three cemeteries, a pumping station for the Town center water supply, waste water treatment facility, and several parks and playgrounds.

- **Town Hall:** The Town Hall is a two-and-one-half story building with 8,000 sq. ft. of floor space.<sup>63</sup> It houses administrative offices and small meeting rooms on the first and second floors, although the second floor was originally used for community events and social gatherings. Approximately twelve people work in the building on any given day. A 2012 town buildings study promoted a comprehensive upgrade of the Town Hall, restoration of the second floor for community space, and an addition to accommodate offices relocated from the second floor. Though Town Meeting approved funds for the project, it did not move forward due to construction cost increases. The Selectmen decided to use the appropriated funds to make needed structural and exterior repairs to the existing building, as well as provide handicap access improvements to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), but to forego the proposed addition. Hence, there is a lack of office space to accommodate new staff without incurring additional expense for further renovations. Construction began in the spring of 2015 and the building will re-open in the spring of 2016.
- **Public Safety Building:** Construction of the Public Safety Building at 40 Ayer Road had just begun when the Planning Board adopted the last Master Plan in November 2002. (The police were previously housed in space at the rear of Town Hall.) The new building consists of approximately 9,400 sq. ft. and houses the Harvard Police Department<sup>64</sup> and Harvard Ambulance Squad.
- **Fire Stations:** Harvard has two fire stations: Station 1 in the Town Center, a four-bay building with 5,700 sq. ft. of floor area, and Station 2, a two-bay facility in Still River Village (about 1,800 sq. ft. of floor area). Station 1 is the newer of the two buildings,

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<sup>62</sup> 60 Harvard Assessor's Property Database, FY 2013.

<sup>63</sup> 61 Municipal Buildings Committee Final Report (February 2011), 16.

<sup>64</sup> Galeota Associates, "Building Inspection Report: Police Station, 40 Ayer Road" (December 2011), and Assessor's Property Database FY 2013.

constructed ca. 1974. According to data from the assessor's office, Station 2 was built in 1948. In a recent assessment of town building conditions, deficiencies were found in both structures ranging from water damage to deferred maintenance. The 40-year old Station 1 will require modernization and expansion in order to accommodate the recent acquisition of new fire vehicles, The old ambulance building adjacent to the Town Hall currently houses the Town Clerk's vault and rescue boat for water emergencies on Bare Hill Pond and other water bodies; no plans are proposed for this property.

- **Old Library (Hapgood Library):** The old Hapgood Library at 7 Fairbank Street consists of approximately 8,800 sq. ft. of floor space. Built in the late 1880s, it was the Town Library until the Old Bromfield School was renovated and enlarged for a new public library in 2007. The non-profit Center on the Common operated a community arts and cultural center in the Old Library for several years, but was unable to sustain its operations. Municipal offices moved there temporarily in 2015 until completion of the Town Hall renovation project. The building does not meet ADA requirements.<sup>65</sup> Future plans for the use of the building have not been finalized, although another non-profit, the Harvard Cultural Collaborative, has presented the Selectmen with a proposal to use the building as a community arts center. That decision is pending meeting ADA requirements.
- **Bromfield House:** This two-story house with 2,800 sq. ft. of floor space is located at 39 Massachusetts Avenue. It was built in 1914 as the residence of the principal of The Bromfield School. Several years ago, the Bromfield Trustees deeded it to the Town for "educational" use. The Bromfield House currently holds administrative offices of the schools and the superintendent. In 2014, the School Committee (overseers of the property on behalf of the Town) voted to relinquish use of the Bromfield House pending the allocation of suitable alternative space, citing the cost of approximately \$800,000 to upgrade the building and make it ADA compliant. As of February 2015, the future site of the administrative offices remains undecided and the School Committee is exploring less costly options to renovate the building while still addressing accessibility issues.
- **Harvard Public Library:** The Harvard Public Library moved to the Old Bromfield School building, which was expanded in an award-winning renovation project that Harvard completed in 2007. It contains approximately 22,000 sq. ft. of floor area and includes both full-service library facilities and community meeting space. In 2014, circulation exceeded 127,000 items borrowed, nearly doubling the 65,000 items in 2001.
- **Hildreth House:** The Hildreth House is home to the Council on Aging's senior center. Acquired by the Town in 1979, the 8,700 sq. ft. Hildreth House is a former summer residence located on the edge of the Harvard Center National Register Historic District. In 2015 Town Meeting appropriated funds for a Phase 1 renovation project for handicapped accessibility improvements, parking improvement, and some interior building upgrades. Work will begin in 2016. In phase 2, The COA hopes to complete restoration of the historic building and construct a 2-story addition for a growing senior population .

- **Public Works:** The DPW's facilities are located at 47 Depot Road, including office and storage space for public works functions and the Town's solid waste transfer station. The garage is deteriorating and will soon require a significant renovation.

The 10-acre lot contains the site of the former landfill, and Town Meeting re-zoned the parcel in 2010 to place it in the Large-Scale Ground-Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Facilities Overlay District. It may be possible to develop the former landfill with a ground-mounted solar farm, with the energy generated used either to meet the needs of the adjacent DPW facility, or to provide net metering credits for the Town to reduce its energy purchases. MassDEP encourages communities to consider solar energy projects on former landfills, and a number of communities have done so.

The Water Department also operates a pumping station at 59 Massachusetts Avenue.

- **Cemeteries:** The Town maintains three cemeteries: the historic cemetery in the Town Center (established ca. 1734), the Bellevue Cemetery in Still River Village, and the Shaker burial ground off South Shaker Road in North Harvard.

### 3. HARVARD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Harvard operates its own K-12 school district, which is unusual for a small town. In FY 2015, the district's operating budget was \$12.1 million, by far the largest single cost center in town government (as is the case in all towns). The district operates in two school facilities: the Bromfield School, which houses grades 6-12, and the Hildreth Elementary School, grades PreK-5.<sup>66</sup> The school facilities occupy a campus-style setting on both sides of Massachusetts Avenue on the south side of the Town center. The 68,732 sq. ft. Hildreth Elementary School contains thirty-five classrooms and core facilities (library, art and music rooms, auditorium/cafeteria, and so forth). Bromfield School is a 180,921-sq. ft. facility with separate middle school and high school wings, an auditorium, gymnasium, cafeteria, computer labs, library, and fifty-two classrooms, including the science laboratories. In January 2016 Harvard was accepted into the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MBSA) grant approval process for renovation of the Hildreth Elementary School. The kindergarten wing, built in the 1950's, has lacked basic upgrades due to the mandated containment of a mold hazard identified in 2002 and is now in need of a major redevelopment. Additional upgrades to the main building, built in the 1980's will also be considered to bring the entire building up to code and ADA compliance.

**K-12 Enrollment Projections:** Harvard's school population peaked in 2006 when total enrollment reached 1,307 students (549 at the Elementary School and 758 at the Bromfield School). This population exceeded recommended size limits, which are 488 at the Elementary School and up to 740 at Bromfield. With smaller household size and graying of the population, K-12 enrollments declined. Between 2006 and 2015, school population decreased by 174 students.

Over the summer of 2015 the schools experienced a sharp upswing in the number of families moving into Harvard with school-aged children (perhaps filling the homes of seniors who had been waiting for an improved real-estate market). New housing development on Grant Road in Devens is also expected to bring in an additional 60-80 students over the next 3 years, prompting some to believe that the decline in enrollment may be reversing.

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<sup>66</sup> Harvard also belongs to the Montachusett Regional Vocational School District.

**Devens:** Under Chapter 498, MassDevelopment is responsible for the education of school-age children living at Devens. Students have switched schools several times in the intervening years. At the time of the 2002 Master Plan, Harvard had decided not to accept Devens students because of concerns of already crowded classroom space. Harvard's enrollments were still growing at the time, including students from other towns who attended school in Harvard under the "School Choice" program. From 2006 to 2008, Shirley accepted students in grades K-5 and Harvard taught students in grades 6-12. When it was time for MassDevelopment to re-bid the school contract again, Harvard's enrollments had begun to fall. Harvard submitted the winning bid, so the 140 Devens students transferred to the Harvard Public Schools. Their continued attendance (including students anticipated under a full 282-unit residential buildout at Devens) would lessen the impact of declining enrollments. But even with all of the children from Devens plus School Choice students, Harvard should still have sufficient classroom space in both schools. The per-student payments under the terms of the contract have been a welcome supplement to the schools' operating budget, and MassDevelopment pays an additional flat fee annually to defray capital expenses.

Harvard's contract with MassDevelopment expires in 2020 unless it automatically renews for another year. If the education contract is awarded to any other district in the future, Devens students already attending school in Harvard would be able to finish in Harvard, but other students would be subject to the new contract. The Devens families that live in Harvard do not have a say about where their children attend school. MassDevelopment determines how the district's students will be educated. Devens residents have consistently expressed in surveys a high level of satisfaction with the educational experience provided to their students. The decision of where the Devens children will ultimately attend school upon resolution of the jurisdiction question is a matter of great concern to families in Devens.

If Harvard resumes jurisdiction, Devens' school-aged children will most likely attend Harvard Public Schools. Based on financial analyses done to date, the anticipated additional tax base is expected to cover these additional education costs.

The potential need for additional classrooms may require future study if Harvard schools should again approach maximum capacity.

#### **4. PARKS AND PLAYING FIELDS**

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Harvard's public land holdings include about 230 acres that have been developed for active recreational use. The Park and Recreation Commission manages the use of these facilities.

- **Ann Lees Road Playing Field:** The Town owns and maintains a 3.1-acre park with soccer and softball fields at Ann Lees Road. The field has parking and a backstop.
- **Bare Hill Pond** is a year-round recreation resource, though summer (Memorial Day to Labor Day) is its peak season. Swimming, boating (including motor boats), skating, ice fishing, and ice hockey are the primary recreational uses of Bare Hill Pond, but passive activities such as bird watching are common, too. It is challenging for Harvard to meet recreational needs at Bare Hill Pond while also protecting water quality.
- **The Bare Hill Pond Town Beach** consists of 19.5 acres of land along Pond Road, extending from Warren Avenue to the end of Pond Road. It includes a boat ramp, canoe racks, boat moorings, a recreational area, a swimming area with rafts, a bathhouse, and equipment

storage. There is a bicycle path connection from the School Fields to the Town Beach. The Pond is home to the non-profit Bare Hill Rowing Association, which promotes participation in rowing programs for students and adults. Students from the Acton-Boxborough district have joined with Harvard students in the Bromfield/Acton - Boxborough (BAB) rowing program to offer competitive rowing at various skill levels for grades 8 - 12.

- **The Charlie Waite Field**, located on Lancaster County Road behind the Post Office, is a five-acre field used for youth soccer.
- **Depot Road Fields:** Upper and Lower Depot Field are used for multiple sporting activities including soccer and lacrosse. The field has also been used for cross country skiing, snow shoeing and snowmobiling in the winter time.
- **Harvard Park/McCurdy Field:** The Harvard Park/McCurdy Field site contains 34 acres and is a full-service recreation area with a track, playground, trails, playing fields, and restrooms. Fundraising to develop this facility was underway when the 2002 Master Plan was completed in 2002.
- **Ryan Land:** The Ryan Land consists of 30 acres next to the Depot Road Fields and the DPW. This facility has two soccer fields and two baseball diamonds.
- **School Grounds:** The playing fields at the schools total about eleven acres and include two softball fields, a baseball field, three soccer fields, four tennis courts, a basketball court, and a fitness course. Some of this land belongs to the Bromfield Trust, which allows the schools and the Town the use of it in exchange for its upkeep. This property abuts the Bare Hill Pond, the Town well, the Town cemetery, and reserve space for future school expansion.
- **Town Commons:** The Town Commons is a four-acre collection of three commons: the two-acre Main Common, the half-acre Civil War Common, and the 1.5-acre Little Common. The actual boundary of the Main Common includes the front yard of many of the houses around it. The Commons are used for town-wide events and informally by residents seeking passive recreation opportunities.

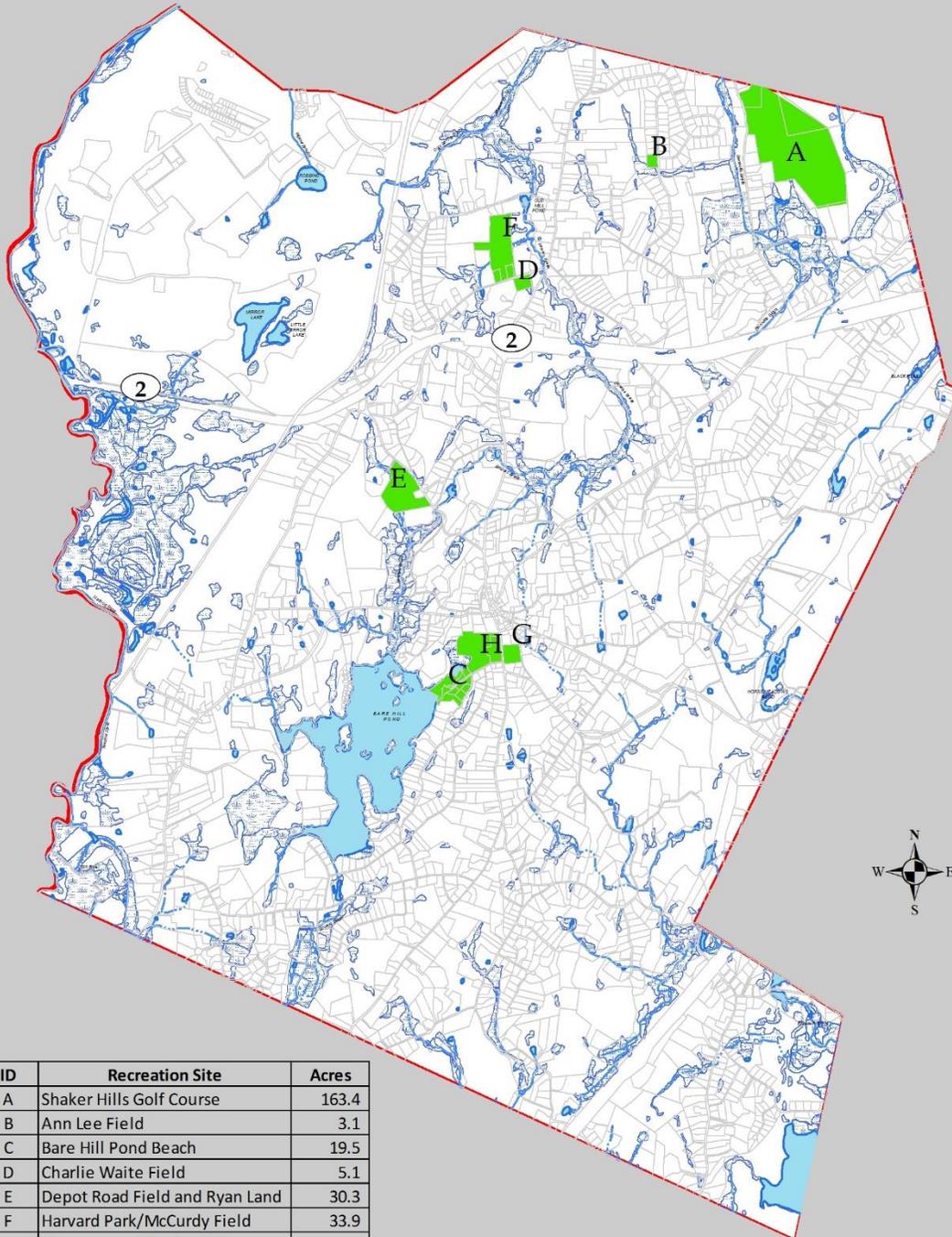
Two active recreational areas within Devens are of special note, and would require oversight in the event Harvard resumes jurisdiction: Rogers Field and Mirror Lake.

- **Rogers Field** is a large multi-use field complex within Devens that receives frequent use for athletic events such as lacrosse and soccer tournaments and instructional camps. Future development around the Field (e.g. Grant Road, Willard Heights, and Vicksburg Square) could limit some active recreational uses as competition for parking develops.
- **Mirror Lake** is a water recreation area somewhat similar to Bare Hill Pond, although its water use is under the control (as of 2015) of Mirror Lake Management, Inc. Such 3<sup>rd</sup>-Party management is an option for both ponds under a combined Harvard and Devens scenario. With Devens jurisdiction, Mirror Lake could increase recreational opportunities directly available to residents as well as provide recreational-based revenue for the Town. Devens Annual Reports estimate that 250,000 people visited Devens for active or passive recreation in FY 2010, and 300,000 in FY 2011.



# Harvard, Massachusetts Recreation Sites

Map 6.2



ID	Recreation Site	Acres
A	Shaker Hills Golf Course	163.4
B	Ann Lee Field	3.1
C	Bare Hill Pond Beach	19.5
D	Charlie Waite Field	5.1
E	Depot Road Field and Ryan Land	30.3
F	Harvard Park/McCurdy Field	33.9
G	Elementary School Field	2.8
H	Bromfield School Fields	8.0



Data Sources: Roads, Hydrology - MassGIS  
 Parcels, Recreation Sites - Harvard Assessors  
 Prepared by Harvard Planning Dept: March, 2016

## 5. MUNICIPAL BUILDING NEEDS

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During the 10-year planning horizon of this document, the Town will face decisions for allocating tax dollars to make improvements to several of its municipal buildings. Table 7.1 below lists these projects, their relative cost, and expected timeline. (Transportation and public works-related projects are included in Chapter 8.) In the past, Harvard has not maintained its facilities as well as it should, but the recent decision to engage the services of a facilities manager should help to create a climate for better care of important assets. The project list below is in addition to normal maintenance activities, and once completed, the Town should keep on top of building needs to forestall major renovation expenses sooner than would otherwise be necessary.

**Table 7.1 – Capital Facility Projects**

Facility	Relative Cost	Time Frame
Hildreth House: Senior Center, Phase 1	\$\$\$	2016
Hildreth House: Senior Center, Phase 2	\$\$\$	2-4 years
Hapgood Library renovations	\$	1-3 years
Bromfield House renovation (unless sold)	\$\$	5-7 years
Hildreth Elementary School Study & Design	\$\$	1-2 years
Hildreth Elementary School Construction	\$\$\$	3-6 years
Develop New Water Source	\$\$\$	8 – 10 years
Develop Solar Farm at landfill in partnership with a private developer	\$	3-5 years
Prepare inventory of municipal infrastructure, including assessment of condition, life expectancy, and needed improvements	\$	2-3 years
Fire Station 1 expansion and upgrade	\$\$	5-7 years
DPW Yard renovations	\$\$\$	5-7 years
Key: \$: < \$250,000;    \$\$: \$250,000 - \$1,000,000;    \$\$\$: > \$1,000,000		

## 6. TECHNOLOGY NEEDS

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The pace at which communication systems are evolving is truly remarkable. Citizens today have immediate access to high-speed networks for phones and internet. Innovation produces new devices at a rapid clip and expands the range of capabilities available to citizens. Social

networking did not exist when the previous Master Plan was underway, but today people with common interest can connect instantaneously and keep abreast of the latest developments. These changes have transformed the ability of local government to provide services to the public as well as for individuals to keep informed on the activities of Harvard's committees and departments.

It is imperative that Harvard's town government keep pace with advances in technology. The School Department is in the forefront of using technology to enhance learning both within and beyond classroom settings. The general government side of the Town, however, is lagging behind. It is true that municipal departments place information on the Town's web site that is of value to residents, and placing agendas and minutes on-line helps citizens stay abreast of town happenings. But more interactive platforms can enable citizens to conduct business with the Town without the need to come to Town Hall. Departments should continue to deliver services with greater efficiency by incorporating technological advances into their operating procedures. By the same token, however, decision makers for technology adoption and enablement need to be diligent in minimizing the risks of marginalizing those Harvard citizens who - whether by choice or by other circumstance - do not have access to these technologies.

The School Department has a Technology Director who manages and troubleshoots the myriad, and often discontinuous, computers and other Information Technology (IT) systems in the schools. The Director also doubles-up to work on the general government system on an as-needed basis. Under this arrangement, municipal services and departments are given short shrift when it comes to implementing new technology. The Town should consider hiring an Information Technology specialist as an employee or as a contractual service and allocate reasonable funding for computer-related improvements, for example, upgrading town hall software so all employees are on a common platform. The Town is moving in the direction of providing forms on-line and allowing digital applications for some permits. Adding on-line payments and other customer improvements will enhance the public's ability to interface with the Town for many services and minimize direct staff assistance. Developers should be able to submit plans digitally to reduce paper and printing costs, and local officials should be able to review and comment on permit applications over a network to better coordinate local approvals.

Most homes and businesses in Harvard rely upon the cable company, Charter Communications, for internet access. Having fast and dependable service is necessary for the many residents who operate businesses from their home. Complaints of poor service are common, and the Town's Community Cable Access Committee should negotiate for system upgrades to improve reliability. Fiber-optic lines now offer even greater speed and broadband capacity, and while expensive to install, offer promise to overcome existing limitations.

Similarly, cell service reception is spotty throughout Town. Cell towers provide excellent service along Route 2 and I-495, and near-by areas benefit. More remote locations, however, are not so fortunate. The ubiquity of cell phones and the amazing capabilities one holds in the palm of a hand requires that reliable service be available throughout Harvard. Wireless communications is critical for local emergency responders too, who may lose contact with headquarters, placing first responders in jeopardy. To the extent feasible, Town departments should work with cell tower owners to place or upgrade municipal equipment. (The Zoning Bylaw allows this.) Areas lacking coverage should be mapped and owners of possible locations for stealth antennas (in barns, steeples, etc.) should be identified for a willingness to house necessary equipment.

Municipal departments hold a vast amount of data that is vital to running local government. Such data should be backed-up on a regular basis and stored in a secure off-site location. Harvard should have an Information Technology Disaster Recovery Plan that specifies the actions to prepare for a disaster in case systems go down and contains procedures to restore service to get town government back on its feet as quickly as possible. Computer room environment, hardware (networks, servers, and computers), connectivity (cable, wireless), software, and data form a complex system and restoring service must be carefully planned in advance to minimize downtime and avoid loss of data. The Town should also prepare and implement a cyber security plan, especially as more public monetary transactions are handled on-line.

Coordinated Planning is paramount. Because technologies tend to overlap in functionality and maintenance requirements, coordination of multiple needs and programs is essential to making the most of our investments and keeping costs under control. While it often seems most expedient for individual organizations to plan for and fund their own immediate needs – e.g., smartboards, monitors, iPads, and phone system in the schools; Internet and catalog terminals in the Library; Town Hall systems; NextDoor Harvard; emergency communication systems; committee agendas, meeting minutes, and streaming of proceedings; digital archiving of town records; surveys; and arguably the inevitable online voting – the creation of digital silos ultimately drives up cost and inefficiency, and may constrain digital community-building.

The state and federal governments have a role to play in setting standards and offering technical assistance. For example, the Lieutenant Governor instituted the Community Compact Cabinet in 2015 to engage communities in a supportive dialogue with the state. Each participating community selects 1-3 Best Practices and works on implementation over the course of two years. The state offers technical assistance to help implement the practice. There are a wide range of subjects which fall under the following general categories: Education, Energy and Environment, Financial Management, Housing and Economic Development, Information Technology, Regionalization/Shared Services, and Transportation/Safety. Harvard may benefit from technical assistance in the area of information technology and security to improve its efficiency in providing services and managing its data.

## 7. GOVERNANCE

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### *Town Government*

The desire for improvements in local government services and the need for more professional capacity collide at the budget table. The services residents want are often not what the Town can afford. There are many competing demands upon the tax levy, from the capital building needs discussed in a previous section to increases in staff to manage the ever-increasing workload of municipal departments. Administrative requirements have multiplied enormously in a vastly more complex world, and it has become difficult for volunteer boards and part-time staff to manage this complexity. Harvard has a proud history of volunteerism to provide the strategic direction to manage growth pressures while seeking to preserve Harvard's small-town look and feel. However, the evolution to more professional management need not occur at the expense of local citizens ceding control.

Valid arguments can be made to consolidate committee functions into departments managed by professional staff. For example, many communities have a Community and Economic Development Department managed by a town planner and supported by additional staff as

needed. Land use boards (Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, Board of Health) can be folded under the umbrella of such an entity, thereby improving communication among the boards and providing better service to the public in land use permitting. The Town Planner would also help implement this Master Plan and manage the Town's growth. A Conservation Agent could serve in this department to assist the Conservation Commission in its role of preserving wetlands and managing stewardship responsibilities of over 1,600 acres of conservation land. The Board of Health's agent from the Nashoba Associated Boards of Health could also be part of the staff of such a department. The Department of Public Works would benefit from a Town Engineer to design infrastructure upgrades and oversee construction, and in addition, assume the responsibility for building maintenance by hiring a Building Facility Manager to keep the town's expensive building assets in top condition. In addition, many departments that already have professional staff need more assistants to keep up with administrative routines.

The increased professionalization and reorganization of town staff and administrative functions leads to a broader discussion of the overall organization of town government. Clear reporting structures that strengthen accountability and transparency are important. Harvard should consider the administrative changes along with an examination of *how* it is organized. Adding certain positions helps to accomplish new goals and deliver better services, but it does not necessarily address the fragmented nature of government services and ease communication difficulties. Going forward, the Town should evaluate its overall organizational structure, decide how it should be reorganized, and codify the resulting reorganization. Adopting a Town Charter, as recommended in the 2002 Master Plan, would provide a vehicle for formalizing the process.

Regardless of the final disposition of Devens, to continue to function effectively and efficiently, Harvard must consider departmentalizing its boards and adding more professional staff. This would allow citizens serving on boards to spend more time on important matters such as setting policy, addressing larger issues beyond day to day management, and developing strategic, long term plans. As demands on citizens' time become more onerous, paid staff can help to relieve the burden of day-to-day coordination and administration. Setting priorities on staff hires will play out on the basis of cost and benefits to the Town and available resources to pay for the added expense. This does not mean that volunteers will lose control over governing the Town, but reflects the necessity for more professional management to provide volunteer board members with the analysis they need to make important decisions. Harvard has about 35 boards and committees and should evaluate options for consolidating functions in order to lessen communication challenges.

### ***Governance of Devens***

Resuming jurisdiction of Devens will most likely require additional changes to local governance, including opportunities to regionalize some services. Nearly every department may require additional staff. These could include police officers, fire fighters, DPW crew, financial and human resources professionals, economic development staff, building services inspectors, senior center workers, recreational programmers, and others. With an enormous tax base, the property taxes from Devens will be adequate to cover these costs. (See DEAT Report in Appendix 4.) Removing the question of how to pay for the increased staff will allow the Town to make hiring decisions based on need. Harvard is capable of assuming management of Devens within the framework of its existing structure provided it is willing to build up its capacity for governing a large and complex community.

While the final decision ultimately rests with the State Legislature, there is no time like the present to begin transition planning. Under §23 of Chapter 498, by July 1, 2033 Ayer, Shirley, Harvard, and MassDevelopment must submit a report to the Governor and Legislature with a recommendation for a permanent government structure for the operation and administration of Devens. Thus, it is imperative that a disposition planning process be set in motion that involves the four entities. There are a vast array of questions that require attention by each town. These questions will be more readily resolved, and the parties will be able to reach acceptable outcomes through good faith negotiation if each party comes to the table with a clear understanding of its preferred outcome. If the communities cannot reach agreement, the Legislature will decide the disposition question. It is fortuitous that the three towns are all in the process of completing Master Plans. These documents provide an excellent beginning since they express the vision for their community and the Devens piece within each Town. Knowing what a community wants to accomplish in the planning horizon will help to shape discussions around mutually understood values.

During this planning process, it should be possible to transition services for Devens residents to their respective communities. For example, seniors residing at Devens are not able to participate in social services offered by Harvard's COA since local tax dollars fund the activities there, and Devens residents do not pay taxes to Harvard. However, it should be possible to negotiate with MassDevelopment a method of reimbursement for expenses that would allow Devens residents to be able participate alongside Harvard residents. The school contract is one model of how this might occur. Other areas of interest include recreation programs, historic preservation, land stewardship, inter-community trail planning, etc. As these areas become integrated into Harvard life, obstacles to reunification will slowly disappear.

An important matter to consider is the permitting of development at Devens. Chapter 498 set up a one-stop, expedited permitting process through the Devens Enterprise Commission (DEC). Many state economic development officials believe that the rapid build-out of Devens with high value companies is due to the professional approach and certain outcome of going through such a process. At the time of disposition, Devens may or may not be fully developed. If a substantial amount of development potential remains, it may make sense to allow the DEC to continue as Harvard's development arm or as a Devens-specific regional permitting entity. Large corporations may feel more comfortable working with DEC's professionals than local officials. Alternatively, the Town could incorporate the one-stop permitting approach into its permitting structure. In any case, it would be wise not to drastically change an approach that has successfully transformed a worn-out military base into an economic engine for the Commonwealth.

## **8. SUSTAINABILITY**

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The concept of Sustainability is an important theme of this Master Plan. The Vision Statement developed in Phase 1 (see also chapter 1 of this document), specifically states that Harvard will employ best practices for achieving long-term sustainability. As defined by the American Planning Association<sup>67</sup>:

“Sustainability is the capability to equitably meet the vital human needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs by preserving and protecting the area's ecosystems and natural resources. The concept of sustainability

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<sup>67</sup> Policy Guide on Planning for Sustainability, APA, 2000, page 4.

describes a condition in which human use of natural resources, required for the continuation of life, is in balance with Nature's ability to replenish them.”

The Harvard Master Plan calls for the entire community to work together to research and implement practices that minimize loss of vital natural resources and encourage development techniques that preserve Harvard’s essential character for future residents. Sustainability is a process, not an end-state. The recommendations in this Plan will require a participatory dialogue to modify existing policies and provide funding to enable the Town to grow in a responsible manner. While this Plan deals primarily with public policies, it is equally important for citizens to make lifestyle changes in concert with the growing world-wide realization that planet Earth is a fragile, inter-connected ecosystem.

The Town of Harvard will work to promote sustainability in the following areas:

- Energy Independence
  - Continue the work of the Energy Advisory Committee by implementing energy conservation measures and reducing use of fossil fuels in municipal buildings, facilities, and vehicles.
  - Promote the use of solar, ground-source heat pumps and other renewable/alternative sources of energy on municipal and school properties.
  - Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and strive for zero net energy for municipal operations.
- Food Production
  - Preserve prime farmland from development and support purchase of Agricultural Preservation Restrictions to help farmers keep their land in active production.
  - Buy local produce and encourage area markets to carry locally grown and raised products to reduce energy use in long-distance transportation.
  - Participate in state and regional agricultural promotion initiatives.
- Community Facilities
  - Hire a Facilities Manager and provide the resources to properly maintain capital equipment to extend the useful life of expensive town assets.
  - Reuse existing buildings rather than opting for new construction to reduce the amount of raw materials.
  - For new buildings, implement LEED principles.
  - Make accessibility improvement in municipal buildings, facilities, and parks to provide equal access to services for disabled individuals.
  - Promote greater recycling activity by residents.
- Transportation
  - Improve/construct accessible sidewalks in high pedestrian locations to stimulate walking to schools, shopping areas, churches, recreation areas, etc.
  - Enhance street shoulders and construct off-road paths for bicycle safety to encourage

- more trips by bicycle.
- Implement road improvements to reduce congestion and vehicle idling.
- Consider car-pooling to employment centers and shuttle services to rail stations to reduce single-occupancy vehicle travel.
- Purchase energy efficiency vehicles and vehicles powered by renewable fuel sources when viable alternatives exist.
- Land Use
  - Promote more widespread use of open space development concepts to cluster buildings closer together and preserve resources on a site.
  - Encourage village-style development in the Commercial district that promotes a compact building arrangement, greater connectivity between adjacent lots, mixed uses, and high quality commercial development.
  - Diversify the Town's economic base to provide more goods and services in-town to reduce the number of trips out-of-town.
  - Allow infill development in areas of existing services and infrastructure.
- Open Space and Natural Resources
  - Continue open space preservation efforts and preserve lands with high ecological values.
  - Continue efforts to eradicate invasive species, restore lands with natural species, and create a diversity of habitats.
  - Reduce erosion and abate pollution from stormwater runoff through best management practices.
  - Where resources cross town lines or are regional in scope, work with other affected communities on preservation.
  - Manage conservation properties to restore degraded wetlands, maintain a diversity of habitats for wildlife, and minimize danger of wildfires.
  - Preserve ground and surface water quality through proper septic system maintenance and reduction of lawn chemicals.
- Housing
  - Diversify the housing stock to provide alternatives for households of all incomes and abilities.
  - Offer incentives to encourage the provision of affordable housing.
  - Consider higher density housing in areas with available infrastructure capacity and commercial services.
  - Create green spaces within new development to promote greater social interaction and inter-generational activities.