



Spring 2021 Town Meeting Report

Town Manager Lisa Wong

Assistant Town Manager Mark Twogood

Amanda Brenes, Jennifer Cafarella, Patricia Mihelich & Pat Tassi

PROJECT COMPLETED

Main at Highland Traffic-Calming Improvements
McCall School Calming-Improvements
Waterfield Rd Bridge-Reconstruction & Railing-Repairs
Tri-Community Bikeway-Crossings on Mount Vernon & Waterfield Road
West Side Field/Wildwood St-Draining Improvements
McCall Addition
Main Fire Station Security

CURRENT PROJECTS

DPW Roads & Sidewalks
Town Hall Lower Level Floor-Replacement
Westside Fire Station HVAC-Immediate Repairs
Town Hall/Main Fire Station-HVAC Study
Muraco Culvert

COMING SOON

Lake Street Bridge
Swanton Street Bridge Flood-Mitigation Project
North Reservoir Dam-Rehabilitation
Saw Mill Brook Spillway-Reconstruction
Church St at Waterfield Rd-Reconstruction (design underway)
Woodside Rd & Wildwood St-improvements (design underway)
Vinson Owen Safe Routes to-School (SRTS) Improvements

PROJECTS

The Town of Winchester has been busy implementing projects, including many that are part of the Town's ongoing Capital Plan. Thanks to a hardworking team of professionals, including members of the Engineering and Public Works Departments led by **Beth Rudolph** and **Jay Gill**, and project coordination by **Meg White**. Detour plans are being developed and will be posted publicly for the upcoming summer/fall projects.

Schools: Superintendent **Judy Evans** and the schools are completing the procurement process to hire an Owner's Project Manager for the Lynch Elementary Feasibility Study. The District and its team work with the state to document their educational program, generate an initial space summary, document existing conditions, establish design parameters, develop and evaluate alternatives, and recommend the most cost effective and educationally appropriate preferred solution

Planning: The Town has been involved with a number of projects. With assistance from *Town Planner Brian Szekely* the Town is the first community during the pandemic to complete their master plan. We received an award for the best comprehensive master plan in Massachusetts through the American Planning association. The grants that we applied for and received are shared streets grant, micro enterprise grant, local rapid recovery grant, the Massachusetts Historical Commission survey and planning grant, and the resilience community of practice grant.

Housing: Two affordable housing units at Winning Farm have been approved. With Town Meeting approval, the Town will move forward with a ground lease for about 60 housing units at the Waterfield Lot. Private projects are also moving forward, such as the 40B projects on River Street and Cambridge Street. The Town is in safe harbor until March 2022. These four projects contribute 305 units towards the Town's Subsidized Housing Inventory.

Conservation: *Conservation Administrator Elaine Vreeland* continued with the Aberjona Initiative, a landscaping plan targeting the town center along Mill Pond, Judkins Pond, and the Aberjona River from Main Street to Waterfield Road. The Commission also helped to negotiated with the owners of The Vale project in Woburn to add 16 acres of open space and wildlife habitat along the Aberjona River at Washington Street.



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OPERATIONS

Winchester COVID-19 Stats

- As of April 13th, 30% of Winchester residents are fully vaccinated and 50% are partially vaccinated.
- 2% positivity rate increase in positive cases in the month of March.
- 252 Cumulative in-person student/staff confirmed cases**
- 1183 cumulative resident cases**
- 98% of positive COVID-19 cases have recovered*
- Age groups 10-19 years of age show the highest positivity rate*
- Gender breakdown positivity rate: 48% male and 52% females*
- Race breakdown of positive cases: 80% White, 1% African American, <1% American Indian/Alaska Native, 6% Asian, 6% Other, 5% Hispanic White, <1% Hispanic African American, & 2% Hispanic Other*
- Nursing Homes have had an 87% recovery rate & 13% death rate & Assisted Living has had 100% recovery rate*

** Information as of March 31st, 2021

*Information as of January 31st, 2021

Health Director Jennifer Murphy and her team at the Health Department have been working on COVID-19 testing and vaccinations, contact tracing, and numerous coalition activities.

Fire Chief Rick Tustin has obtained a Grant for the purchase of wildland firefighting equipment and equipment to upgrade the emergency operations center.

IT Director Matt Griffin continues to upgrade equipment, communications and other software for the town.

Assessor Dan McGurl's department oversees various tax relief programs for residents, including a new matching program for seniors recently approved by the State Legislature.

Comptroller Stacie Ward manages the accounting and reporting for the CARES Act. Her office will oversee this work for the new federal stimulus, including about \$6.6 million in American Rescue Plan Act and \$215k in a Community Development Block Grant. Local revenues remain stable, including tax collection overseen by *Treasurer/Collector Sheila Tracy*. Her office welcomed a new Assistant T/C.

Building Commissioner Al Wile, whose office is still busy with strong construction market, is also overseeing the implementation of a new e-permitting system with the help of a state grant.

Human Resources Director Michelle Vibert has been working with departments to maintain staffing and hiring needs for vacant positions throughout the town.

Police Chief Dan O'Connell is adding a Community Resource Officer (formerly School Resource Officer) and a Mental Health Clinician.

Recreation Director Nick Cacciolfi has creatively maintained some programming for kids and the community during the pandemic. The department is at 33% of a normal year in terms of revenue but was able to add new programs such as Remote Learning Wednesdays and repurposing the gym space, raising an additional \$82,000 in revenue.

Town Clerk MaryEllen Lannon and the department have been administering permits, birth certificates, coordinating voting and elections both in-person and by mail. The Town Clerks also continues to administer and coordinate the remote town meetings.



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The Climate Action Committee is working to reduce carbon pollution and enhance community resilience by implementing a climate action plan.



“Shared Streetscape” is a part of the Shared Street Grant program. These artworks are painted/printed on canvas and can be attached to barriers around town.



The new All Seasons Barn at Wright-Locke Farm

COMMUNITY

7 restaurants received approval for outdoor dining spaces including A Tavola, Black Horse Tavern, China Sky, First House Pub, Lucia’s, Swanton Street Diner and The Spot. The town was able to use grant funds to help beautify the downtown with plantings. The town is also working on a larger downtown beautification planning process to improve streetscapes and be more pedestrian friendly.

En Ka Society has made it easy for you to make your donation to the En Ka Pantry without leaving your home by selecting items to donate from En Ka Pantry’s online registry.

Council on Aging Director Phillip Beltz with the help of the Council on Aging department has been able help the Jenks Center adapt and develop virtual programs and drive-by events.

Eversource: The town reached an agreement with Eversource for up to \$200,000 in payments to the town for mitigation from their 345kv line project. Eversource is completing their 115kv project.

Library: Under the direction of *Director Ann Wirtanen*, curbside pickup has been available since last May and continues to be available along with by appointment services. Renovations of the children’s room is currently underway.

MBTA: The MBTA renovation project is back on track. The MBTA closed the station due to poor condition earlier this year and is finishing demolition of some of the ramps, canopies and platforms by the end of May. The MBTA anticipates bidding the 2.5 year renovation project later this year.

Sustainability: The town has applied for a grant to install more Electric Vehicle chargers in the downtown. The town has also recently adopted a Heat Statement to bring attention to climate impacts on town resources and residents.

Cultural District: “The Fence 2021 Festival” will open in unison with Porchfest and the Farmers Market on June 12th & close Labor Day.

Archives Fun Facts from Archivist Ellen Knight: A century ago in 1921, Lorence M. Woodside became the first woman to put herself forward as a candidate for the Winchester Board of Selectmen. Endorsed unanimously by the executive board of the League of Women Voters, she came in sixth among the eight candidates.