

Here is the Planning Commission's **PROPOSED DRAFT REVISION** of the '**Public Utilities & Facilities**' section of the **Bethel Town Plan**. By State Statute, the Town Plan is revised every five years. The Planning Commission will hold a duly warned public hearing in mid-June on this and, depending on comments received then, will transmit it to the Select Board, which will hold a hearing at the end of July. Public comments are appreciated. Formal adoption by the Select Board is anticipated by August 13, 2006.

## **VI. PUBLIC UTILITIES AND FACILITIES**

### **A. BACKGROUND**

One of the primary goals of this Plan is to avoid the ill effects of scattered development and to preserve the rural landscape. Another is to promote Bethel village as the town center with a densely settled area for residential, civic, service, and commercial uses. The availability, timing, and location of public investments throughout the Town directly affect future land use patterns. An area with a full complement of public services, such as water supply, sewage disposal, roads, electric service, and similar utilities or services will attract private investment benefiting the entire community. Conversely, inadequate or poorly planned capital investments will lead to a land use pattern that is contrary to the goals of this Plan and at levels uneconomic to the long-term well being of the Town.

The following sections consist of an inventory and analysis of the principal utilities and facilities serving the Town.

### **B. HIGHWAYS**

The Town of Bethel Highway Department presently has the necessary equipment to adequately maintain town highways and bridges: .892 miles of Class I road, 11.15 of Class II, and 56.98 miles of Class III, for a total of 69.022 miles. Major equipment includes three 7-yard dump trucks with plows, one 1-ton truck, two road graders, one Case backhoe, and one front-end loader. All equipment is presently in good condition. The Town annually appropriates monies to an Equipment Replacement Fund which is used to replace older equipment. Currently, \$60,000 is placed into this fund annually. The Town Garage, located just outside of the village on Sand Hill Road, houses the equipment and is adequate for current needs. A separate salt storage shed is located on this site as well. In recent years, the Town has replaced its fuel storage tanks so as to be in compliance with State underground tank storage tank laws. While these facilities are adequate for the present level of service, an increase in town highway maintenance duties would more than likely require additional equipment and workers.

### **C. EMERGENCY SERVICES**

**1. Fire Protection** - The Town is served by a single volunteer fire department that responds to fires and other emergencies in Bethel and neighboring towns. Neighboring communities' departments are called in on large fires requiring outside resources. The Bethel Fire Department is located in a new station house on Pleasant Street (VT 12) near the school. This space should be sufficient for the foreseeable future. Water pressure and the location of hydrants throughout town are adequate.

The Fire Department is adequately staffed by volunteers. Its emergency vehicles consist of a 2001 E-1 Pumper, a 1981 Dodge van for equipment, a 1976 Tanker, a 1973 Maxim Pumper, and a 1954 General Pumper. They have a mini-pumper that is jointly used with the Barnard Fire Department. The Department has developed a five-year capital budget that addresses the need to up-grade equipment.

**2. Law Enforcement** -The Town of Bethel does not need a full time police force, and none is contemplated for the next five years. Currently, appointed constables provide limited police security and traffic control services when needed. All other police functions are performed by the Windsor County Sheriff or Vermont State Police, Troop "E" which is located off Route 107 immediately south of the Bethel/Royalton Town Line in Royalton.

**3. Emergency Medical Services** - Medical emergencies are handled well by the White River Valley Ambulance, Inc. located in Bethel. They have three ambulances and a rescue truck with extraction equipment, a snowmobile and rescue sled, and an ATV. The closest hospital is Gifford Medical Center, located in Randolph. Medivac services are available by the DHART helicopter.

**4. Disaster Prevention, Preparedness and Response** - The Town has just completed a Rapid Response Plan (RRP) that covers the procedures for Bethel's response to a disaster. In brief, the Select Board will formally declare a state of emergency in the event of a disaster that the Select Board feels is beyond the ability of town forces to cope with. This declaration will be faxed to Vermont Emergency Management and a local emergency operation center will be set up in the Town Office. The Town Office is equipped with backup power so that it can function during an emergency. Delbert Cloud, the Town Manager, is the Town's Emergency Management Coordinator and would be assisted by several people who have been identified in the RRP in coordinating the Town's response to a disaster.

In the event that emergency shelters are needed, the Town has identified the High School, and the St. Anthony's Parish Catholic Church for such use. Neither of these currently have backup power and this is needed for these sites to properly function during an emergency. There is also a need for a shelter on the easterly side of town and should be identified a.s.a.p. In order to avoid disasters as much as possible, the Town should continue to develop an all-hazards plan which will also address mitigation and education needs.

#### **D. MUNICIPAL OFFICES**

The Town Offices are located in the former Creamery Building on South Main Street in the village. Space in the building is used for the Town Clerk, Town Manager, and other town officers. A small conference room is available for meetings. This facility is inadequate for present needs. The building is too small to house all town governmental functions. Off-street parking and meeting space are both very limited. The building is not in compliance with the requirements of the American Disabilities Act and other public building requirements. The Town has initiated engineering studies to determine whether the Creamery can be brought into ADA compliance as well as have its mechanical and electrical systems upgraded so that the building could be used on an interim basis until funding is found for a permanent solution.

#### **E. PUBLIC LIBRARY**

The Bethel Public Library (1892), located on Main Street, is owned and operated by the Bethel Library Association. The Association is administered by a Board of Trustees.

The Association is a non-profit corporation and receives funding from private foundations and individuals. In addition, the Town appropriates funds in order for the Library to be a public library and to enable the Association to receive grants and other benefits. The Library employs a librarian and offers several programs for the community. The Library presently serves the immediate needs of the community. It, however, does not meet the Principles and Minimum Standards for VT Public Library Service.

## **F. RECREATIONAL FACILITIES AND PUBLIC LANDS**

**1. Pleasant Street Recreation Park** - The Town of Bethel owns and maintains a community recreational facility on Pleasant Street with the village. This facility is situated on an eleven-acre parcel acquired by the Town in 1972. The facility consisted of an asphalt-lined swimming pool, approximately 350 feet in circumference, one tennis court, and restrooms. In 1974, the pool was improved with the addition of a bathhouse and a modern filtration system.

Further improvements were made in 1978. The old tennis courts were removed and replaced with two new courts. The parking area was expanded with space for approximately thirty cars, improvements made to the access road, and new grass provided for a recreational area. Approximately four acres of the parcel are dedicated for the facility and improvements. The remainder or approximately seven acres are located on a heavily wooded slope to the rear of the parcel. These lands are open for hiking and picnicking.

**2. Church Street Common** - The Town owns a small park on the south side of Church Street in the village. This one-and-one-quarter acre lot serves as a "town common". Improvements consist of benches, a water fountain, night lighting, and a band shell erected in 1986. This "Common" is used for summer concerts organized by the Bethel Council on the Arts and for other open-air gatherings.

**3. Peavine Park** - This 3.5 acre Park is located at the confluence of the Third Branch and Main Branch of the White River. Facilities include a riverside picnic area, a small gazebo, and parking. Peavine Park is open to the public and is frequently used by civic organizations for events. Water and electricity are available on site. Direct access to the river is provided at two locations. The Bethel Business Association has been active in developing and maintaining the Park. A well building for the Town's water supply is also located at the Park.

**4. River Street Bridge Access** - Directly opposite Peavine Park and across the River is a 1.8 acre parcel owned by the Town of Bethel. Access to this parcel is from River Street on the westerly end of the Bridge. This site fronts on the River and is used as a place for fishing and canoe access.

**5. Municipal Forests:** In addition to the above recreational facilities, the Town owns three municipal forests. These are a 230-acre tract in the Camp Brook area, a 160-acre parcel near Lilliesville, and a 70-acre tract east of Bethel Village. These forests are frequently used by the public for hiking, hunting, and similar uses. The Town periodically conducts timber harvesting in consultation with the Windsor County Forester.

## **G. SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT**

The Towns of Bethel and Royalton have jointly owned and operated a solid waste facility off Waterman Road in Royalton since 1970. Situated on a 22-acre parcel, it served as a

landfill until closed in 1993 and capped in accordance with State closure and monitoring standards.

In 1993, the two towns designed and constructed a new facility for this site which is in operation today. This consists of a recycling building and a sheltered transfer station for receiving and loading residual wastes. In conjunction with neighboring towns comprising the White River Solid Waste Alliance, Bethel/Royalton hosts a household hazardous waste program twice yearly and other special collection events as necessary. The Town of Bethel does not provide curbside pickup. Collection services are handled by the private sector.

Biosolids generated at the wastewater treatment facility are land applied for reuse as an agricultural soil supplement. Land owned by the VT Department of Fish and Wildlife is presently utilized by contract, and there is considerable site life remaining for future years. Septage is handled by private waste haulers, and also is land applied in state-certified locations within the towns and nearby.

Current solid waste management facilities are adequate for the immediate needs of the community.

## **H. WASTEWATER TREATMENT**

The Town owns and operates a wastewater treatment plant with a collection system. This system became operational in 1988 and is overseen by a certified plant operator employed by the Town. The system consists of a secondary level treatment plant employing oxidation canals and ultra-violet disinfection systems. The plant is complemented by four pumping stations located along the collection system. The service area for the system is within the built-up area of the village and immediately adjoining residential areas except the westerly side of the main branch of the White River (River Street).

Design capacity of the plant is 115,000 gallons per day. As of August, 2005 reserve capacity of the plant was approximately 50,410 gallons per day. Bethel's wastewater treatment facilities are managed by the Board of Sewer Commissioners (Select Board) who have the responsibility of allocating sewer reserves on a case-by case basis. Reserve capacity allocation priorities and principals are set forth in the Wastewater Reserve Capacity Allocation Ordinance adopted by the Commissioners in November, 1990. The Town of Bethel wastewater treatment facilities are adequate for the current and planned needs of the community. No major capital expansions or extensions of the system are planned.

Bio-solids resulting from the facility are managed according to the Town's permit issued by the State. It is the practice of the Select Board to manage the treatment and disposal of bio-solids using the best available technology.

In addition to the municipal sewage system noted above which serves primarily the village area of the Town, privately owned on-site, underground septic systems cover the remaining areas. Bethel has a Town Health Regulation which regulates the design and location of these systems and requires a permit prior to construction of any disposal facility. All facilities must be designed and approved by a certified Site Technician or Professional Engineer. In addition, State Subdivision Regulations require that new lots demonstrate compliance with these regulations and that permits be granted

prior to construction or creation of a lot.

## **I. WATER SUPPLY**

The Bethel village area is served by a municipally owned water supply system. This system was privately operated until 1948 when it was acquired by the Town. Groundwater serves as the source of supply for the community from two gravel packed wells. They have a combined yield of 420 gallons per minute and 604,000 gallons per day. Water is stored in two 250,000 gallon reservoirs. One is located east of the village and was constructed in 1957; this was mostly recently rehabilitated in 1999, with a new structural dome installed. Another, constructed in 1988, is a two-celled unit and is located on a hill near Valley Motors and G-W Plastics. This construction project included installation of new water mains connecting the reservoir to the well located across the road from the school.

In 1982, water recharge areas surrounding the two gravel packed wells were mapped by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources. These are referred to as Aquifer Protection Areas or underground regions determined to encompass water recharge or primary sources of groundwater to the wells. The Bethel Planning Commission and Town officials have developed a Source Protection Plan for the water supply system. Such a plan is required by the State Water Supply Rules and consists of an inventory and assessment of potential sources or threatening activities in the recharge area and a plan for minimizing existing or future sources of contamination. This Plan has been submitted to the State and adopted by the Town as its official protection plan. It was most recently up-dated in 2005. Land use activities within the Protection Areas are carefully evaluated and controlled to minimize the potential threat to our water supply. A map delineating the aquifers is included as part of this Plan.

The water distribution system serves the village center and areas adjoining the village. Portions of the distribution system are old and inadequate for the current and prospective water supply requirements within the service area. In 1999, the Town upgraded approximately 3600 feet of distribution line to an eight-inch diameter ductile iron pipe along Church Street and north along Route 12 to the Fire Station. Other sections of the distribution system do need replacement, the most urgent need being the mechanically jointed cast iron main serving the immediate downtown area. Many of the historic downtown structures have not had sprinkler systems installed, and future rehabilitation efforts will need appropriately sized and accessible mains.

Total average daily use is estimated at 285,000 gallons per day. Approximately 315 Households are connected to the system and use 175,000 gallons per day or 62% of the total flow. The remainder is industrial or commercial users. A meter was installed for well #2 in year 2000, and a meter was installed in well #1 in 2005, thus making it possible for the usage to be monitored much more accurately.

Water supply in areas not served by the municipal water system is from individual wells or springs.

## **J. EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES**

Providing quality education to Bethel's children is a fundamental community goal. A successful school system depends on up-to-date facilities, dynamic administrators and

teachers, involved parents and a challenging curriculum.. Planning considerations on the type and extent of future growth have implications on the current and future ability of Bethel's schools to provide quality services.

The Bethel School District covers Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grades. The schools are situated on a 38 acre parcel, one half mile northwest of the village center. One building houses both the elementary school and the high school. The elementary school and the high school are physically separated within the building, but share the use of common facilities, including the gymnasium, cafeteria, and music room.

Whitcomb High School was constructed in 1958. In 1972, two science rooms and library/media center were added, increasing the total floor area of the high school to 30,000 square feet. The high school houses fifteen classrooms, including an art room and computer labs. The portion of the school building used for the Bethel Elementary School (grades K-6) was constructed in 1971. This brick structure is 25,000 square feet in area, houses ten classrooms, and a large resources area which includes a library and a music room.

In 1995 due to significant deterioration to the physical structure of the school, the town approved funding for a facilities study by an architectural firm. This study identified numerous deficiencies in the school facilities and made numerous recommendations. The school board used this facility study to prioritize projects designed to improve the school's physical facilities. These projects included:

- Putting a new roof on all school buildings,
- Replacing the underground fuel storage tank,
- Replacing the air-exchange systems,
- Replacing floor tiles, ceiling tiles, and carpeting,
- Installing a new communication system,
- Replacing the electrical system in the high school,
- Building a storage building behind the school,
- Increasing energy efficiency with new doors and windows,
- Making fire and safety improvements per instructions from the Vermont Department of Labor and Industry,
- Repainting the interior and exterior of the school, and
- Renovating the gymnasium with a wooden floor and new bleachers.

Presently, the school facilities are meeting the needs of the community. The challenge facing the school district is declining enrollments in the elementary school and the high school. These declines are documented on the following charts and graphs. These declines have also caused Bethel to engage Royalton and other neighboring communities to discuss the possibility of consolidating part or all of some school districts.

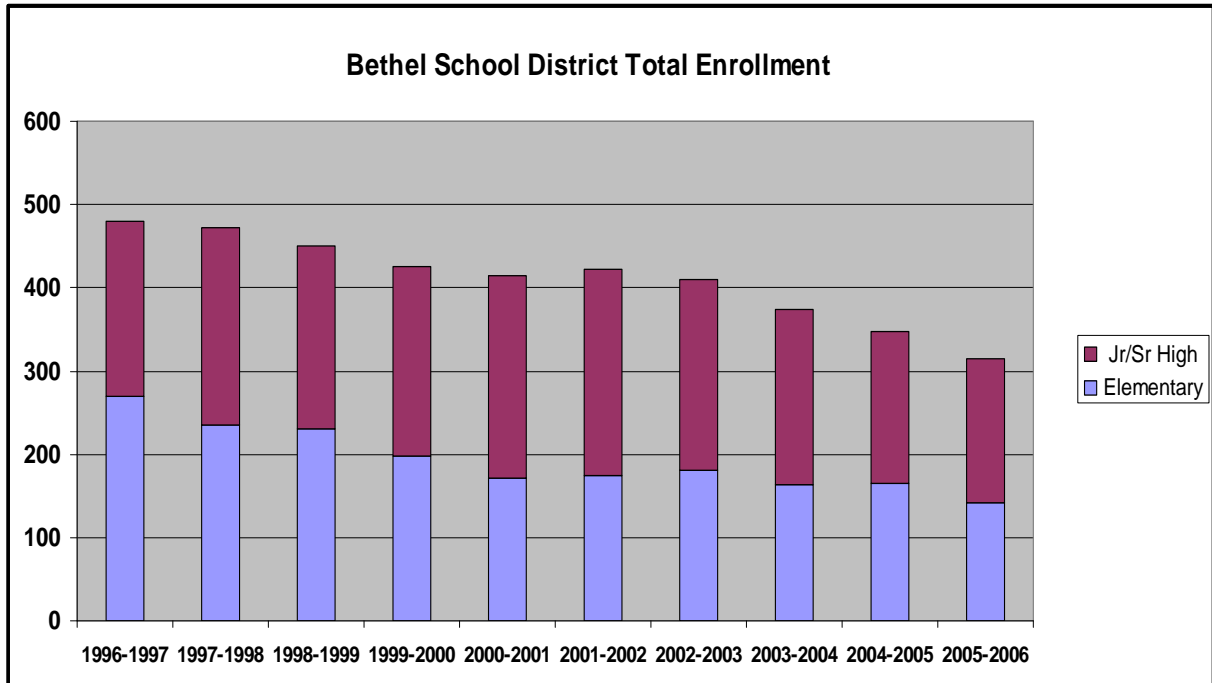
**Bethel School District Total Enrollment:**

<b>School Year</b>	<b>Bethel Elementary</b>	<b>Whitcomb Jr/Sr High</b>	<b>Total School</b>
<b>1996-1997</b>	269	211	480
<b>1997-1998</b>	235	237	472
<b>1998-1999</b>	231	220	451

<b>1999-2000</b>	198	227	425
<b>2000-2001</b>	171	243	414
<b>2001-2002</b>	175	248	423
<b>2002-2003</b>	180	230	410
<b>2003-2004</b>	164	210	374
<b>2004-2005</b>	165	183	348
<b>2005-2006</b>	142	173	315
<b>Difference '96-'06</b>	-127	-38	-165
<b>% Change '96-'06</b>	-47%	-18%	-34%

### Projections

<b>2006-2007</b>	155	140	295
<b>Difference '96-'07</b>	-114	-71	-185
<b>% Change '96-'07</b>	-42%	-34%	-39%



### K. CEMETERIES

The Town owns and maintains five public cemeteries. These are the Cherry Hill Cemetery on Christian Hill, the East Bethel Cemetery on Route 14, Fairview Cemetery off Route 12, Gilead Cemetery, and Lympus Cemetery. Lots are available in the Cherry Hill and Fairview Cemeteries. Expansion of the other cemeteries is limited. The Town annually appropriates funds for maintenance, including mowing and trimming. The cemeteries are overseen by the Select Board. There are no immediate plans for major improvements to these cemeteries. To make certain information is not held only in the minds of a very few individuals, a better record-keeping/management system needs to be developed. The Select Board is discussing potential acquisition of land for additional cemetery space, and this effort must be followed through to completion.

## **L. OTHER FACILITIES**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service operates the White River National Fish Hatchery on the White River westerly of the village area off Route 107. This facility has been located here since the 1970's and is open to the public at various times during the year. Additionally, the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources owns and maintains Ansel Pond, located at the intersection of Christian Hill Road and Sanders Road. There are no immediate plans for expansion of either of these facilities.

**[See Appendices A, B & C for 'Goals,' 'Planning Principles,' and 'Recommendations for Action,' respectively, specific to Public Utilities & Facilities and other sections of this Town Plan.]**