

Town of Dummer

Master Plan

Amended 5-8-2019

FOREWORD

Comprehensive planning is not a new concept. It has been an ongoing process in one form or another and has been utilized in New Hampshire for a number of years. An example of an early comprehensive planning project in our region is the “Coos County Overall Economic Development Committee.”

Basically, comprehensive planning is concerned with three factors: (1) what was, (2) what is, and (3) what will be. Development of a master plan for a community is a form of comprehensive planning.

The master plan is the fundamental development plan and land use policy of a community. Normally consisting of maps and appropriate explanatory texts, it is an assessment of existing resources and an estimate of future growth. It should be emphasized that the master plan is not a regulatory document. According to New Hampshire Revised Statutes Annotated (RSA) 674:2, the master plan’s “sole purpose and effect (is to) aid the planning board in the performance of its duties”. Zoning ordinances and other land use regulations, which are based on the master plan, are the enforceable rules implementing the policies of the plan.

A master plan is important and necessary to a community because effective planning and drafting of regulations cannot occur without sufficient knowledge of existing conditions and future trends. Local land use boards, including the planning board, can utilize the plan to properly assess proposals and support decisions.

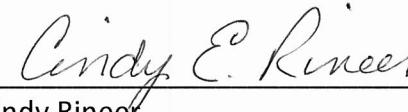
Planning should be proactive rather than reactive. This master plan will help our community look at its future. The master plan is not a static document. It requires an ongoing process, providing ample opportunity for amending the plan as well as implementing its policies.

We, the members of Dummer's Planning Board, have amended and adopted this Master Plan in accordance with RSA 675:6 on May 8, 2019.

Signed,



Jill Dubey, Chairperson



Cindy Rineer



Christopher Holt, Select Board Representative

CHAPTER ONE

HISTORICAL SETTING

Early Organization

It was on March 8, 1773 that "John Wentworth, Governor and Commander in Chief (sic) of the Province of New Hampshire" granted an area in the northeastern part of the Province, containing thirty-six square miles (23,040 acres), to sixty-eight prominent New Hampshire and Massachusetts citizens. The name appearing on the granting document was Dummer.

The town was named for Governor William Dummer of Massachusetts. Fort Dummer, one of New England's earliest and most famous "Indian forts", and the equally famous Governor Dummer Academy in Massachusetts, were also named for Governor Dummer. Of additional historical interest, the town shares the origin of its name with Dummerston, Vermont, which was once a New Hampshire town.

Dummer's first town meeting was held on February 20, 1849. William Lovejoy, John Hodgdon and Jonathan Leavitt were elected as the first Board of Selectmen. On that date there were 148 residents in the town.

Dummer was duly incorporated by an Act of the State of New Hampshire Legislature of February 19, 1848. Within the township there are several sections: Dummer (sometimes referred to as East Dummer), West Dummer, Pontook, and Bay View.

As an introduction to the Town's early history, it is interesting to explore some of the techniques utilized by the early settlers in carving an existence out of the wilderness. The first settlers were confronted with the difficult tasks of clearing the wilderness for farmland; constructing homes, barns, schools, roads, sawmills and grist mills; and eking out a meager living.

Dummer was surveyed in 1806 by Artimus Baker. It was laid out in nearly a square form with each borderline measuring 2100 rods and running nearly north and south and east and west. Following completion of the survey, the original proprietors, appointed by Governor Wentworth, decided to establish a settlement in the Town. They employed Beltaire Daniel and some laborers from the Portsmouth, New Hampshire area to proceed with this task. They began operations by clearing twenty acres at the height of land, halfway between the Ammonoosuc and Androscoggin rivers. Here they built a house and barn. Later, a sawmill and a grist mill were built on the Androscoggin, but due to a previously undiscovered ledge below the mill which prevented the water from running away from the water wheel, Daniel and his men abandoned the entire project and returned to Portsmouth.

On June 19, 1868 a small portion of the Town of Stark was annexed to Dummer. The reason for this annexation was that all roads leading to Thompson's Mills were in the Town of Stark. Therefore, Stark was responsible for the road maintenance while Dummer, where Thompson's Mills was located, paid nothing. This change made in the original survey, increased Dummer's size by approximately one hundred acres.

How the Settlers Lived

Farmlands were cleared with axes. Later, two-man crosscut saws were used. Several years after the crosscut's debut, the bucksaw was introduced as a timber-harvesting tool. The timber was used to make log homes with the corners mitered and notched to secure them together. Log floors were made smooth by the use of an adz, which like the axe and saws, was hand operated.

A hand froe was used to make shakes or shingles as they are called today, to be used on the roof. Shakes were made from cedar blocks, which were split by the froe operator. Furniture was constructed from small logs and held together with wooden pegs.

Water pipes were made from straight and sound "pump logs" and bored out in the center by a large auger with a long shaft. These were known as "pump log augers".

Large fireplaces were used to heat the early log cabins and houses. The larger houses often contained several fireplaces. The fireplaces were also utilized for cooking by using built-in side ovens and iron kettles hanging over the fire. Wood was the sole fuel source in those early days.

Oxen and horses were used for tilling the soil. Homemade wooden plows were a popular tilling tool. Oxen and horses were also used in logging operations and were the only means of transportation unless one lived near the river and could travel by boat in the summer months.

Homemade tallow candles lighted the cabins in the early years and were later replaced by kerosene lamps and lanterns.

Families were quite self-sufficient at this time. Food was produced on each farm and was supplemented by an abundance of fish and wild game such as moose, deer, bear, rabbits and partridge. Cattle, sheep, hogs and poultry were found on nearly every homestead.

Spinning wheels and hand looms were kept busy making clothes for the entire family. Men made and sold moccasins, snowshoes and other types of apparel to their neighbors.

Blacksmiths were necessary for the construction and repair of wagons and sleds. They also made chains and various tools used around the farm. The blacksmith's forge was used extensively in keeping shoes on horses and oxen.

The early settlers devoted long hours to clearing land, building homes, and providing for their families. They had little time available for other activities. However, they did find time to participate in a few forms of recreation including tobogganing, snowshoeing, skating, and sliding on wooden hand sleds and wooden "scooters" made from a barrel stave, a block of wood, and a board seat. People gathered at homes or the schoolhouse for "sings" and everyone enjoyed picnics. Barn raisings, husking bees, and quilting parties were other popular get-togethers. Fishing, trapping, and hunting were forms of recreation that also served to supplement the family income.

The Early Inhabitants

The census of 1810 shows seven inhabitants in Dummer. During the winter of 1811-1812, William Leighton decided to settle in Dummer. He and his wife, Mary (an Indian woman), two daughters, and three sons arrived in 1812. They lived on Dummer Hill. During the next three years, several other families moved to the area. Captain Charles Bickford and his family settled on Dummer Hill. William Lovejoy cleared land near the Androscoggin River and the Bickford farm. Another settler arriving at that time was Hezekiah Cloutman of Rochester. Other settlers during that period were Dr. Cummins, George Cook, Curtis Cove, and a Mr. Parker. Peter Leavitt and his wife, who arrived in 1816, were the first settlers on the Ammonoosuc. Daniel Furbush (later changed to Forbush) and his brothers George and Henry arrived at about the same time as the Leavitts and settled on the Androscoggin and in West Dummer, respectively. In 1820 there were twenty-seven inhabitants in Dummer, all living on the west side of town.

Abner Sanborn, Nelson Nicholas, Tyler Sawyer and Sullivan Leavitt also settled in Dummer in the 1820's. During this period, a sawmill and grist mill were constructed on Phillips Brook.

In 1843 John Briggs moved from Milan to Dummer and served in the State Legislature. William Sessions, the veteran pioneer," also settled in Dummer in 1843. He cleared two farms, one at Newell Bay and the other on Bay View Hill.

At this time, people were beginning to settle on the east side of the Androscoggin in Dummer. Jonathan Lary, better known as Sewall Lary, was one of the first settlers in that area.

In 1844, Aaron Wight moved from Milan to Dummer and cleared a sizable tract of land adjacent to Sewall Lary's farm and built a log house. Later, his son Isaac bought the land and stocked the farm. Isaac Wight later purchased the Sewall Lary property.

William Willis was another early settler. He built a log house on the presently called "Willis Place." He donated land for the resent Dummer Cemetery and, being much interested in education, donated the land and contributed funds for the construction of the first school which was located across the road from the cemetery. The school was appropriately named the Willis School.

Education

The first school in Dummer was organized approximately twenty years after the first settlement. The first "session" was held in Daniel Forbush's barn, located just above the site of the present West Dummer School. It is of interest to note that the first teacher, Miss Sophy Bickford, received thirty-seven and a half cents per week plus board.

The first schoolhouse was built in West Dummer at a cost of \$130. West Dummer's second schoolhouse was called the "Little Red Schoolhouse in the Pines."

In the early 1850's two schoolhouses were built on the east side of town; one log and the other a frame building. At the 1882 Town Meeting it was voted to raise \$500 to build a new schoolhouse in East Dummer and dispose of the old ones. Five schools were built during the late 1880's; the Willis School, previously mentioned, being the first. The other schools constructed were the Wight School, located north of the Robert Glover home; the Wiser School, located where Paul Wentworth now resides; the Pontook School, located near the present junction of Routes 16 and 110; and the Howard School, located on the land adjoining the old Charles Howard place where "Julie's Cabins" was first established. These schools were all built using the same plan as the Willis School.

By 1928, three schools were operating in Dummer; Willis, Pontook, and West Dummer. In 1938, the original Willis School burned and was replaced with the present building which now serves as the Town Hall, housing the Town Offices.

The Pontook School was closed in 1933 and the West Dummer School was closed in 1960. The Willis School was closed in 1964.

Church

Before regular church services were held in Dummer "advent meetings" were conducted in the Pontook and Willis schoolhouses. Mrs. Sarah Wight Wiser started a Sunday School in 1880 with seventy to one-hundred children in attendance. Her brother, Isaac Wight, was the first Sunday School Superintendent.

For many years, church services were held in the Willis School. People living in West Dummer generally attended church in West Milan. In 1951, the Dummer Methodist Church, formerly part of the Milan Methodist Church was formed. In 2000, the church building was donated to the town and converted to a library. In 2002, the Dummer Community Church was constructed at the corner of East Side River Road and Hill Road, on land donated by Henry Holt and Rachel Holt Jewett. The church was later renamed the Word of God Christian Church.

Industry

As the early pioneers cleared land and built their homes, they stocked their farms with cattle. Every family kept poultry and, although oxen were the standard "beasts of burden," a few families owned horses.

In addition to farming, logging was a very important enterprise engaged in by the early settlers. They cut the trees, cleared the land and built their homes and other buildings from some of the better softwood that was harvested. Additional important uses for the timber were to provide fuel for home-heating and to use logs for the construction of fence posts, roads, culverts, bridges and wooden water pipe lines.

During the early years Frank Lang built a grist mill and Joseph Leighton built a sawmill on Phillips Brook where the settlers in West Dummer could have their grain ground and their logs sawed. The Timothy

Twitchell sawmill was located at Pontook as was a grist mill that supplied the needs in that locality. In later years, Perley Forbush and his brother Willie built a sawmill on the east side of Dummer Hill. The mill was powered by a steam engine which was later used by O.S. Holt and Son in their mill in East Dummer.

Orrin S. Holt had a carriage and blacksmith shop when he lived in Pontook. He made much of the "iron ware" for the original Pontook Dam. In later years he operated a large blacksmith shop in East Dummer with his son, Henry.

In the late 1890's Orrin Holt and his brother John built a shingle mill. Later, Orrin and Henry Holt built a sawmill adjacent to the blacksmith shop. The mill operated continuously from 1924 through 1945. In 1909 the Paris Manufacturing company of South Paris, Maine built a large sawmill on Phillips Brook. This mill was one of the largest and most efficient in the State and had a capacity of 30,000 board feet in a nine-hour shift. The company was one of the first in the northeast to use a Lombard steam log hauler in their logging operation. This machine was known as "Old Nina" and was used to haul the "log trains" from the woods to the mill from 1912 to 1927. Unfortunately for Dummer, Paris Manufacturing phased out its operation in the Phillips Brook area in 1954. This was indeed a blow to the Town's economy.

The telephone first came to Dummer in 1907 and the Twin State Power and Light Company first ran electric lines into the Town in 1927.

* Contributed by Dwight Stiles

CHAPTER TWO

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTIC

Land Ownership Patterns

The total area of Dummer is 30,580 acres. Approximately 13% of this total is owned by residents of the town. Approximately 71% of the land is owned by management companies that are currently using the land primarily for timber growth and harvesting. There are 480 individual parcels of land; an increase from 308 parcels in 1990. The town owns parcels totaling 287 acres.

Over 90% of the land in Dummer (27,597 acres) is listed in current use. This designation allows land parcels of 10 acres and larger that are actively devoted to agricultural, horticultural, or silviculture use to be taxed at a predetermined rate set by the state which is lower than the normal municipal rate. A penalty fee of 10% of the land's market value must be paid to the municipality if the parcel is taken out of current use. The purpose of granting current use status is to encourage landowners to allow large parcels of land to remain as open space.

There are two levels of current use designation. One allows the property owner a lower tax rate but requires that the property be accessible for minimal impact recreational uses, such as hiking or fishing. The other designation allows the owner to restrict access to a greater extent but requires a higher tax rate.

Existing Land Use Patterns

Dummer has historically consisted of three separate and well-defined areas; West Dummer, East Dummer, and Pontook. In past years each of these areas existed as a sort of village, and each had their own school and cemetery. Today, the area of East Dummer on Hill Road is recognized as the town "center". The town hall, library, and garage are located in this area.

The existing land use pattern in Dummer consists primarily of small residential areas scattered throughout predominantly forested land and reflects the past settlement and historical influences noted in Chapter 1. Developed areas occupy slightly more than 1% of Dummer's total land base. The Existing Land Use Map shows the locations and types of use of the developed land in town.

Social & Economic Statistics

The following information was obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau and the NH Office of Energy and Planning.

Population Trends

<u>Year</u>	<u>Population</u>
1820	42
1840	57
1860	289
1880	464
1900	349
1920	266
1940	274
1960	202
1980	390
1990	327
2000	309
2010	319
2015	307

Population Comparisons

<u>Area</u>	<u>1970</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2010</u>
Dummer	225	390	327	309	319
Berlin	15,213	13,084	11,824	10,331	9,363
Errol	199	313	292	298	279
Gorham	3,020	3,322	3,113	2,895	2,766
Milan	713	1,013	1,295	1,331	1,295
Stark	343	470	518	516	474
Coos County	34,327	35,147	34,828	33,111	31,487
New Hampshire	742,319	920,475	1,109,252	1,235,786	1,324,575

The following is copied from the 2010 U.S. Census website:

Social Characteristics - show more >>	Estimate	Percent	U.S.	Margin of Error
Average household size	2.32	(X)	2.60	+/-0.24
Average family size	2.54	(X)	3.19	+/-0.24
Population 25 years and over	278			+/-93
High school graduate or higher	(X)	91.7	84.6%	(X)
Bachelor's degree or higher	(X)	7.2	27.5%	(X)
Civilian veterans (civilian population 18 years and over)	69	23.9	10.1%	+/-45
With a Disability	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)
Foreign born	5	1.4	12.4%	+/-6
Male, Now married, except separated (population 15 years and over)	114	80.9	52.3%	+/-47
Female, Now married, except separated (population 15 years and over)	119	75.3	48.4%	+/-50
Speak a language other than English at home (population 5 years and over)	25	7.2	19.6%	+/-12
Household population	351			+/-127
Group quarters population	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)

Economic Characteristics - show more >>	Estimate	Percent	U.S.	Margin of Error
In labor force (population 16 years and over)	203	68.4	65.0%	+/-91
Mean travel time to work in minutes (workers 16 years and over)	21.4	(X)	25.2	+/-7.9
Median household income (in 2009 inflation-adjusted dollars)	53,090	(X)	51,425	+/-10,457
Median family income (in 2009 inflation-adjusted dollars)	53,681	(X)	62,363	+/-2,569
Per capita income (in 2009 inflation-adjusted dollars)	21,174	(X)	27,041	+/-2,719
Families below poverty level	(X)	2.4	9.9%	+/-4.0
Individuals below poverty level	(X)	2.8	13.5%	+/-3.6

Housing Characteristics - show more >>	Estimate	Percent	U.S.	Margin of Error
Total housing units	253			+/-53
Occupied housing units	151	59.7	88.2%	+/-49
Owner-occupied housing units	140	92.7	66.9%	+/-49
Renter-occupied housing units	11	7.3	33.1%	+/-11
Vacant housing units	102	40.3	11.8%	+/-23
Owner-occupied homes	140			+/-49
Median value (dollars)	160,100	(X)	185,400	+/-8,387
Median of selected monthly owner costs				
With a mortgage (dollars)	1,352	(X)	1,486	+/-67
Not mortgaged (dollars)	417	(X)	419	+/-71

ACS Demographic Estimates - show more >>	Estimate	Percent	U.S.	Margin of Error
Total population	351			+/-127
Male	153	43.6	49.3%	+/-46
Female	198	56.4	50.7%	+/-83
Median age (years)	49.1	(X)	36.5	+/-4.2
Under 5 years	5	1.4	6.9%	+/-5
18 years and over	289	82.3	75.4%	+/-92
65 years and over	76	21.7	12.6%	+/-23
One race	349	99.4	97.8%	+/-127
White	349	99.4	74.5%	+/-127
Black or African American	0	0.0	12.4%	+/-114
American Indian and Alaska Native	0	0.0	0.8%	+/-114
Asian	0	0.0	4.4%	+/-114
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0	0.0	0.1%	+/-114
Some other race	0	0.0	5.6%	+/-114
Two or more races	2	0.6	2.2%	+/-2
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	0	0.0	15.1%	+/-114

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2009 American Community Survey

U S C E N S U S B U R E A U
Helping You Make Informed Decisions

Other Social & Economic Data

The developed land in Dummer is predominantly in residential use. As shown on the Existing Land Use Map, most residential development is located along the major town roads in the historically settled acres of Dummer. According to the 2010 census, there are 284 housing units in Dummer, including 232 single-family homes and 46 mobile homes or trailers.

It should be noted that some of the homes listed in the census are used as seasonal residences. By definition, seasonal residences are not occupied on a year-round basis and probably not owned by residents of Dummer. Approximately 66% of the 284 listed housing units are considered to be seasonal residences.

CHAPTER THREE

LAND USE

Commercial and Industrial Development

The Pontook Hydroelectric Facility on the Androscoggin River is the most unique developed land use in Dummer. The project was developed by Robert Shaw, of Colebrook, and constructed by Combustion Engineering, Inc., at a cost of \$27 million. The facility components include a 780 foot long timber crib dam, a concrete canal headwork's, a 6,000 foot long unlined power canal, a concrete penstock intake, three steel penstocks, and a powerhouse containing three 3,800 KVA turbine generator units. The plant's estimated annual electrical production is 63 million kilowatt hours.

Granite Reliable Power, LLC constructed windmills in some of the unincorporated townships to the north of Dummer. The company placed a maintenance building, a collection station and a transfer station in the area as well. Actual power production began in 2011.

Timber Harvesting and Agricultural Operations

Over 70% of the land in Dummer is devoted to timber harvesting and agricultural operations. At any given time, there are several such operations ongoing in town. Timber harvesting is monitored by means of Intent to Cut and Report of Cut filings. Every year, the town derives income from yield taxes assessed on timber harvesting operations. The timber industry is of vital importance to the town of Dummer, as it provides employment for many of our residents. In addition, timber sales are a source of income for landowners and timber taxes are an important, though unpredictable, source of revenue for the town.

Historically, timber has been harvested primarily for pulp wood to supply area paper mills and saw logs for various mills. Wood lots were managed for sustained production, with selective cutting being the predominant strategy. In January 1998 the region experienced a severe ice storm which caused extensive damage to forested areas, particularly in the higher elevations. As a result, many landowners accelerated the pace of their harvesting operations; often clear cutting large tracts of land. There was a major increase in production for the next 2 – 3 years, but the depletion of resources continues a downward trend that continues to this day.

The timber industry has also been impacted by the dismantling of the area's paper mills, which has significantly decreased the demand for pulp wood and high-grade chips. Production of biomass chips, which are usually burned to generate power, has increased, and there are biomass facilities in Berlin, Whitefield and Tamworth. At current prices, however, production of biomass is far less profitable than that of the production of pulp wood and high-grade chips. The only local outlet for the tree-length pulp wood is in Shelburne NH where it is chipped and trucked to the areas only surviving paper mill, which is in Rumford Maine.

Information on production was obtained from incomplete Report of Cut forms on file in the town office, and anecdotally from individuals involved in the logging industry. Over the past 20 years, production of various species of saw logs has been stable. Production of pulp logs and high-grade pulp chips has declined significantly. There has been an increase in production of biomass fuel chips and a recent increase in demand for firewood. Overall production has trended downward significantly since the short-term spike that followed the 1998 ice storm.

Aside from timber harvesting, there are very few other agricultural activities in Dummer. Many families maintain small vegetable gardens and/or livestock primarily for personal use. Some areas are devoted to small scale agricultural operations, such as maple groves, apple orchards, hay fields, and vegetable gardens. Some residents supplement their incomes by selling produce from these operations, but large-scale farming operations are a thing of the past.

Future Land Use Patterns

Land use is monitored and regulated by the Planning Board and the Zoning Board of Adjustment, whose members are elected by the public. The Planning Board meets on a monthly basis and the Zoning Board of Adjustment meets when it is necessary to consider a request for a variance or an exception to the Zoning Ordinance. All meetings of both boards are open to the public.

Multiple surveys and comments have indicated a clear desire to maintain the rural, peaceful nature of the town. To this end, the Planning Board observes patterns of development and suggests adjustments to the Zoning Ordinance from time to time. The goal is to not only allow, but to encourage growth, but to guide it in such a way as to preserve the character of the town.

It is anticipated that Dummer will remain as a primarily residential community. Fluctuations in the regional or more global economy will probably create similar short-term circumstances in the future. We want to allow growth to occur, but not to a point which would necessitate major changes in the town's infrastructure.

Land Use Regulations

The town voted to establish a Planning Board in 1973. Subdivision regulations were adopted in July 1974 and amended in 1982, 1986, 1989 and in 1993. A Zoning Ordinance was approved in April 1974 and amended in 1989, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1997, 1999, 2006, 2010, 2012 and 2013. In addition, Dummer requires a building permit for any construction valued at \$1,000 or more.

There is concern about the future of the large tracts of land that are owned by management companies. At present, this land is used primarily for timber harvesting, but this is largely dependent upon the continued viability of industries in the region that use timber products. In recent years, several paper mills have either closed or drastically altered their operations. If the profitability of timber harvesting is adversely affected by changes in market conditions, then what will become of this land?

According to the surveys and other public input, the large tracts of undeveloped, forested land are an important part of the town's character. These lands are used extensively for activities such as hunting, fishing, hiking, and snowmobiling, and there is great concern that opportunities for these activities will be lost if the land is converted to some other use. We hope to preserve the availability of the land for scenic and recreational purposes, but without interfering with the landowner's ability to make use of the land for commercial purposes.

In 2013 the Zoning Ordinance was updated. It was changed from four different zones to one zoning district which is "Residential Use". The building lot size was voted to be adjusted from five acres to two acres. The Zoning Ordinance can be found on the town website.

CHAPTER FOUR

NATURAL RESOURCES

Natural Resources

Dummer's natural environment is comprised of clean air and water bodies, areas of good agricultural soil, vast forestlands and an attractive, rural landscape. Environmental features have factored significantly in the character of the Town's settlement; fertile agricultural soils supported a healthy farm economy, dense stands of hardwoods and softwoods yielded abundant resources for logging operations and a wood products industry and abundant fish and wildlife provided sustenance for Dummer's early settlers. Natural resources and environmental quality have continued significance in today's Dummer.

Climate

Dummer's climate is the product of its geographic location and topography. Like most of northern New England, Dummer's winters are long and cold with heavy snowfall and its summers are short and cool. The air masses that affect Dummer's climate usually originate over northern Canada bringing cold, dry air and over the Caribbean Sea bringing warm, moist air. Although the Canadian air mass predominates in the winter months and the maritime air mass predominates in the summer months, the boundary between these air masses shift as storms pass through. In this typical New England weather pattern, temperature, moisture, sunshine and winds change rapidly and dramatically.

Information gathered by the National Climatic Data Center at the Berlin Weather Station was used to develop temperature and precipitations estimates. The annual average temperature is 43° F with a typical winter/summer range of -40° F to + 93° F. January is the coldest month with an average temperature of 16° F. July is the warmest months with an average temperature of 66° F. Annual precipitation average is 38 inches. Seasonal snowfall averages 99 inches per year but varies widely and, in past years, has ranged from 45 to 147 inches annually. Precipitation is evenly distributed throughout the year and no season is particularly wet or dry. The typical growing season usually lasts 110 days from May to mid-September; however, frosts are not unusual in early June or early September. Homes must be heated from mid-October until mid-May.

Bedrock and Surficial Geology

The bedrock underlying Dummer is classified as part of the Abee formation. This formation of metamorphic rocks is believed to date from the Ordovician Period and was formed by the folding and recrystallization of ancient sediment layers. In the area of Dummer, the formation consists of various grades of quartzite and mica schist.

The surficial geology of Dummer is comprised primarily of deposits resulting from continental glaciations which occurred during the Pleistocene Epoch. These deposits, called till, consist of unstratified mixtures of sand, gravel, silt and clay laid down at various depths when the glaciers retreated. Sediments depths are generally greatest on bottom lands and lessen with increasing slope on the hillsides.

A second period of deposition occurred when the melting glaciers caused widespread flooding, creating lakes in low-lying areas. When water levels receded, a later of silt and clay was left over the previous deposits of till.

In many areas of Dummer, clay deposits occur in a compact layer close to the soil surface resulting in a condition known as "hardpan". This condition prevents percolation of water through the soil to lower levels and results in poor drainage and greatly reduced suitability. The varying septic suitability of Dummer's soil is shown on the Soil Limitations for Septic Absorption Map.

Soil

General Soil Characteristics

Soil is the layer of earth that lies directly over the bedrock. It is the layer through which rain and nutrients filter; upon which crops and trees grow; and on which houses and roads are built. Geology, climate, vegetation, relief and time interact with these sediments creating many types of soils. These soils and their functionally vary greatly from place to place throughout the Town. The particular bedrock, the glacial deposits, the cool temperatures, humid climate, river valleys and mountain slopes of Dummer have all contributed to the development of many types of soil found in the Town.

Understanding the characteristics and capabilities of these soils is important for planning the types, locations and intensities of further land uses. Information on soils is often a valuable guide for planning boards when reviewing individual subdivision proposals. Scientist of the USDA Soil Conservation Service have field-surveyed and mapped all the soils in Dummer and developed a soil interpretation sheet for each soil type that describes the soil and evaluated its capability for certain uses. Information on texture, density, permeability, depth to bedrock, flood hazard, frost action, depth to seasonal high-water table and other characteristics is available. Soils are evaluated for their suitability for construction of septic systems, water supply, recreation, farming, woodland management, and wildlife and resource material uses.

Soil series and soil phases have been identified and mapped in Dummer. A series is a group of soils which developed from the same parent material by the same formative process and which have similar layer thickness, arrangement and other characteristics. Each soil series was named for a town, river, or other geographic feature found where the soil was first mapped. Within a series, a particular soil can vary in slope, stoniness, surface structure, and other prosperities. These differences identify soil phases (groups with common characteristics) within a soil series... Complete soil map and soil interpretation sheets for all of Dummer's soil are located in the Town Building and may be examined by contacting the Select Board or the Administrative Assistant.

Soil and Agricultural Characteristics

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has adopted policies regarding federal activities on or near agricultural land and, as part of this process, has worked to inventory good agricultural soils. Following the federal guidelines, the Coos County Soil Conservation Service (SS) identified the best agricultural soils found in Dummer. The Important Farmland Map shows the location of these soils. The three highest agricultural soil categories are as follows:

Prime Farmland

- Identified by the USDA as important agricultural land.
- Land best suited for food, feed, forage, fiber and oil seed crops.
- Has good soil quality and adequate growing and moisture supply to give sustained yields of crops.
- Can be farmed continuously without degrading the environment.
- Requires least investment and least amount of energy form to maintain productivity.
- Land could be cropland, pasture land, forest or other land but should not be used for urban development.

Farmland of State Importance

- Identified as agricultural land by state agencies.
- Could be considered prime land because of low erosion potential.
- Requites greater input of fertilizer soil improvement and erosion control practices.
- Fair-to-good crop yield when managed properly.
- Some land in forest areas in which tree age is generally less than 20 years.

Farmland of Local Importance

- Identified as agricultural land by local agencies (e.g. historically farmed).
- Drainage improvement practices are established by poorly drained land.
- Fair-to-good crop yield when managed properly.

Soil Development Capability

After mapping Dummer's soils, SCS developed soil interpretations sheets rating each soil for several different uses and describing soil potentials and limitations. By evaluating factors such as slope, depth-to-water table, depth-to-bedrock, flood potential, drainage capacity, susceptibility to erosion and permeability, soils are rated for crop and woodland productivity, wildlife habitat, sanitary facilities, building site development and water management.

Favorable soils generally 6 to 8 feet deep with good, but not excessive drainage and slight slope can lower costs for most residential and commercial building and of road and septic system construction while minimizing adverse environmental effects. To avoid excessive soil loss and possible pollution, it is important that proposed land uses and soils on the proposed development site are compatible. Additional on-site soil investigative studies may be required of developers in locations where existing soil data appears insufficient.

Slope and Topography

The topography of Dummer, the shape of its land, is shown on the Topography Map. Topography affects the natural processes of drainage and erosion and significantly impacts access to certain land areas and should, therefore, be evaluated when considering land use proposals. Generally, land that is relatively level is considered good for development.

Dummer ranges in elevation from approximately 1,100 to 1,200 feet at the Androscoggin River to 2,196 feet at Cow Mountain. Other high elevations in Dummer include Cummings Mountain (2,085 feet) Dummer Hill (1,800 feet), Veezy Hill (1,782 feet), Sugar Hill (1,600 feet) and an unnamed hill located in the northwestern portion of the Town, which measures 2,005 feet.

Slope is defined as the change in elevation over horizontal distance. The slope of land influences its suitability for development; it is much more difficult and expensive to build on a steep slope than a gentle one. The slope of land also impacts ease of access and municipal service. Soil drainage characteristics diminish on steep slopes and erosion potential increases with steepness. In areas of 25% slope or greater, erosion potential is severe, and the safe disposal of septic effluent is quite difficult and costly. Conversely, in flat areas where there are poorly drained soils, water may stand in pools and special techniques may be required to ensure that development may safely occur on the land.

The majority of land in Dummer consists of 8% slope or less. The Slope Map shows the varying degrees of slopes in the town. The Planning Board should be aware of slope limitations when evaluating development proposals.

Water Resources

Dummer's water resources develop from the interactions of several factors including climate and rainfall, geologic and soil characteristics and vegetative cover. The Town's water resources include the Androscoggin and Ammonoosuc River; several brooks, ponds, and streams; wetlands and groundwater sources. Adequate water resources are vital to a Town's wellbeing and understanding these resources is important to land use planning. A proposed development's potential impact on water resources should be carefully examined. The Water Resources Map shows the locations of the water resources in Dummer.

The Androscoggin and Upper Ammonoosuc River

The Androscoggin River flows 164 miles from Lake Umbagog in Errol, through Dummer and on to the tidewater at the Brunswick Dam in Brunswick, Maine. The river provides Dummer residents and visitors with good opportunities for fishing and boating and is one of the Town's most important aesthetic resources. In addition, the Androscoggin's water is used to produce electricity at the Pontook Hydroelectric Facility (more information concerning the facility is given in Chapter Three "Existing Land Use."

The Upper Ammonoosuc River's headwaters are located in the Pliney and Pilot Mountain Ranges in Kilkenny. The river flows through the southwestern corner of Dummer and continues on to Northumberland where it drains into the Connecticut River. The New Hampshire Water Supply and Pollution Control Commission have classified both rivers as "Category 2—Class B" which is the second highest water quality rating. This level is acceptable for swimming and recreation, fish habitat and after adequate treatment, for use as water supplies. No disposal of sewage or solid waste is permitted unless adequately treated.

Ponds, Streams, Brooks, and Wetlands

Dummer's numerous ponds, streams and brooks are all classified as "Category 2--Class B" water. These water bodies are generally well stocked with fish and provide good fishing and swimming opportunities. The major ponds in Dummer are the Big Dummer Pond (117 acres), Little Dummer Pond (40 acres), Mud Pond (25 acres), the Pontook Reservoir (288 acres) and Sessions Pond (38 acres).

By using data from SCS soils survey, soils with very poor drainage can be identified. Areas with poorly drained soils are considered to be wetlands. Examples of the types of wetlands found in Dummer are marshes, shrub swamps and wooded swamps. Wetlands form due to a variety of soil and bedrock geology conditions and generally promote certain distinct types of vegetation. Wetlands serve as settling basins for sediments and pollutants, recharge areas for aquifers, retention basins for floodwaters and as habitats for many unique plant and animal species. Dummer's wetlands, shown on the Water Resources Map, are an important resource and developments impacting their integrity should be carefully considered.

Groundwater Aquifers

An aquifer is a sub-surface geologic formation which stores and transmits water. An aquifer can be till, fractured bedrock or sand and gravel deposits. The recharge area for an aquifer is the surface area through which precipitation infiltrates and replenishes it.

Groundwater aquifers are used to provide water to private wells and represent a potential source if the Town ever needs to develop a public water supply. Groundwater also provides water to the many other water bodies in Dummer during times of low flow or drought. The groundwater potential in Dummer is shown on the Water Resources Map.

Wildlife

Dummer's natural resources are enhanced by the amount and varieties of wildlife present in the area. Pontook Reservoir is recognized as an outstanding waterfowl habitat and numerous types of waterfowl (mostly notably present spring and fall), birds of prey and other birds are common to the area... Pontook Reservoir is also known as a fine fishing area with pickerel and bass as the primary game fish. Other fish found in the section of the Androscoggin River that flows through Dummer are rainbow, brook and brown trout and landlocked salmon. These fish are often found in the many other water bodies in Dummer.

Many forest game animals are common to Dummer, primarily white-tailed deer, black bear and moose. Other types of wildlife present are muskrat, beaver, mink, coyote, fox, raccoon, hedgehog, fisher, otter, woodchuck, bobcat, snowshoe hare and red and gray squirrel.

Vegetation

Northern hardwoods such as sugar maple, white maple, poplar, beech, hornbeam and white and yellow birches are predominant in Dummer. White pine, fir, spruce, cedar, tamarack and hemlock are also commonly found in the area. Various grasses, sedges and wildflowers are found in open areas of the Town and plants such as high bush blueberries, cattails and silky dogwood are present in Dummer's many valuable wetlands.

CHAPTER FIVE

TOWN FACILITIES

Town Facilities

Town facilities and services are essential in promoting and protecting the health, safety, and general welfare of the community. Adequate facilities help to make a town a secure, convenient, and pleasant place to live and work. However, changes in population, community expectations, legal requirements, and technology often create a need to update existing facilities and/or develop new ones. It is important that the town evaluate the adequacy of its various facilities and services periodically and that it establishes priorities for improvements as they become necessary. The following is a brief description of the major facilities and services provided in Dummer and/or in nearby communities for Dummer's residents:

Town Hall

The Dummer Town Hall, located at 75 Hill Road, was built in 1938 as a replacement for the original Willis School, which had burned down. It is a one-story, wood-framed building with a full, finished, poured concrete basement. The building has been used as the Town Hall since 1964.

At the present time, the Town Hall serves many functions. The upper floor provides a large open space and a small kitchen area. This space is used for town meetings, elections, and public hearings, as well as being available for various community and social functions. The basement contains offices, record storage facilities, and restrooms. There is some older playground equipment on the lawn behind the building.

In recent years, the Town Hall has undergone some minor renovations, primarily due to health-related issues. Insulation and other energy saving measures were updated. Basement-level floor coverings were replaced, and a ventilation system was installed to counteract mold growth. In the near future, additional work will be needed to remove asbestos, update plumbing, and maintain the exterior. A pellet boiler was installed in 2012.

Library

The Town Library is also located on Hill Road, beside the Town Hall. In 2000, the building was accepted as a gift from the former Dummer Community Church and converted to its present function. The library is a one-story, wood-framed building with a full basement. The upper floor serves as the active portion of the library. The basement is unfinished and is used primarily for storage. There are two entrances/exits to the main floor of the library, one of which is a handicap accessible ramp on the right side of the building. The library has a single, handicap accessible bathroom.

At present, the Dummer Library is open part time (hours are listed on the town website) and offers a computer with internet access. The library is overseen by the Library Trustees and employs a part-time librarian. There are books for all ages, electronic books, audio books and videos through the state library system and activities for younger residents. A four-week summer reading program is offered to children of all ages in conjunction with the Milan Library.

Police Protection

Law enforcement is provided by NH State Police Troop F, which is headquartered in Twin Mountain. The town periodically updates the 911 Bureau, so that all emergency services can be provided with accurate information when necessary.

Fire Protection

Fire protection and some rescue services are provided by the Milan Fire Department, which has stations on Bridge Street, in Milan, and on Old Route 110, in West Milan. The town pays a third of Milan's Fire Department budget annually. In 2017, that amounted to \$29,344. The Milan Fire Department is staffed by volunteers from Milan and Dummer and has mutual aid agreements with the communities of Stark, Berlin, and Gorham. Additional payments are required whenever a mutual aid response occurs.

The town also maintains a relationship with the state forest fire bureau, which provides a fire warden and several deputies. These individuals respond to forest fires, as well as incidences of illegal camp fires, brush burning, etc. The town pays for these services on an as-needed basis.

Ambulance Service

Ambulance services are provided by the Milan & Dummer Ambulance Service, which is headquartered at the Milan municipal building on Bridge Street. The Milan & Dummer Ambulance Service is jointly owned by both towns and is staffed by volunteers. The Milan and Dummer Select Boards function as the service's board of directors. The service is funded by appropriations from both towns and by fees for services to patients who are transported. The total amount appropriated from Dummer in 2017 was \$11,000. The ambulance service has mutual aid agreements with many of the surrounding communities.

Highway Department

Dummer's roads are maintained by a Road Agent who is appointed by the Select Board. Equipment provided by the town includes a five-ton dump truck and a one-ton dump truck; both with snow plows and sanders. The town purchased a John Deere backhoe in 2018. Other equipment, such as a bulldozer, loader and grader, are leased by the town when needed. Equipment is housed in the town garage, located on Hill Road next to the town hall. There is a small fuel shed located beside the garage and sand shed with a capacity of 700 cubic yards. Information on the town's roads is included in Chapter 6.

Health Care Services

The major health care facilities in the area include the Androscoggin Valley Hospital, Coos County Family Health Services, Northern Human Services (mental health), St Vincent de Paul Nursing Home, and Coos County Nursing Home. These facilities are all located in the Berlin area. Some residents prefer to travel to Lancaster for their health care needs.

The Androscoggin Valley Hospital is located on Page Hill Road in Berlin. The hospital includes 25 medical/surgical beds, an intensive care unit, and a women's' services unit. There are offices for various outpatient services and specialties, including orthopedic surgery, obstetrics, cardiology, neurology, and general surgery. More complex cases are referred to larger hospitals in communities such as Lebanon, Manchester, and Concord, NH; Portland, ME; Burlington, VT; and Boston, MA.

Coos County Family Health Services is a community medical center with three facilities in Berlin and one in Gorham. These facilities provide patient services with physicians and mid-level providers and administer community-based programs such as WIC and Response to Family Violence.

Northern Human Services is headquartered on Twelfth Street in Berlin and has satellite offices in several communities in northern NH. Outpatient mental health care is provided in these offices and in patient's homes. Inpatient care is referred to hospitals in other communities.

There are two skilled nursing homes in Berlin: St. Vincent de Paul Nursing Home, located at 29 Providence Avenue, and the Coos County Nursing Home, located on Cates Hill Road. There is a county nursing home in West Stewartstown, as well as private facilities in Lancaster, Whitefield, and Franconia.

Home nursing care is provided to the community by North Country Health Care and by AV Home Care. All of these services are accessible through offices in Berlin.

Waste Disposal

A private hauler is contracted by the town to provide weekly street side pickup of trash and recyclables. Disposal is conducted at the Mt Carberry Landfill and the Androscoggin Valley Recycling Center, both of which are operated by the Androscoggin Valley Regional Refuse Disposal District (AVRRDD). The town is a member of AVRRDD and appropriated a total of \$52,177.33 for sanitation in 2017. This amount includes a small annual fee for monitoring an old dump site in Berlin.

Hazardous Waste & Material

A state approved septic system is a requirement for all new residential buildings. Property owners must arrange for septic systems to be serviced by private contractors, who have access to several facilities for waste disposal in the area.

No known hazardous or toxic substances are produced in Dummer nor are any hazardous or toxic waste dumps known to be located in town. AVR RDD provides one day per year for area residents to dispose of small quantities of hazardous or toxic household waste at the recycling facility.

Cemeteries

Dummer has three cemeteries which are available to present or former residents. They are the Willis Cemetery, located on Hill Road across from the town hall; the Sand Hill Cemetery, located on Plain Road in West Dummer; and the Gates Cemetery, located on Route 16.

The Select Board is responsible for all aspects of cemetery operation and care. Activities are governed by the cemetery rules, which are periodically reviewed by the Select Board. Cemetery lots can be obtained through the town office.

Postal Service

Residents may have their mail delivered to mail boxes on state and town roads, or they may use post office boxes. The nearest post office is located on Bridge Street in Milan.

Water Supply

Dummer does not provide a public water system and has no plans for such a system in the near future. Residents must provide for their own water sources and most water is obtained from on-site private wells. Land use regulations address various aspects of where wells can be located. Water is supplied to town buildings from an on-site well. Various bodies of water located in Dummer cannot reasonably supply potable water without extensive treatment.

Schools

Education is provided to students from grades K – 6 at the Milan Village School. Education from grades 7 – 12 is provided at the Berlin Junior and Senior High Schools. The town provides transportation to these facilities.

Parents may opt to send their students to schools in Groveton or Gorham. If they choose to do so, they are responsible for transportation as well as any differences in tuition costs.

In the 2016-17 school year, the total amount appropriated for schools was \$449,901. Some of this amount was offset by state funds, but education remains the costliest item of the town budget by far.

The White Mountain Community College, located in Berlin, offers a variety of post-secondary education opportunities. These include vocational programs, such as nursing, forestry, and auto mechanics. Recently, the college has begun to offer programs that bridge to four-year programs in other, larger colleges and universities.

Recreation

Dummer's location provides residents and visitors with numerous outdoor recreational activities. These include fishing, hunting, boating, snowshoeing, hiking, snowmobiling, camping, and four-wheeling. Downhill and cross-country ski facilities are located within a 45-minute drive of Dummer.

Dummer and other communities in the area offer occasional festivals, such as the Strawberry Festival and Old Home Days. Dummer's Old Home Day is always the first Sunday in October.

Youth activities are provided by the library and by the Milan Recreation Department. In 2017, the town appropriated \$500 for the Milan Recreation Department and \$8,387.41 for the library.

Town Land

In addition to the town building site and the cemeteries, the town owns approximately 287 acres of undeveloped land. In 2009, timber was harvested from town lands, which provided a short-term positive impact on that year's tax rate. Timber will be harvested in the future, as needed.

CHAPTER SIX

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation

The location, capacity, and condition of a community's transportation network affects the ability of residents to conveniently and safely travel between jobs, schools, stores, and homes; of business to efficiently move goods in and out of the community; and of visitors to travel in and around the area. A community's transportation network, particularly roadways, also affects community development patterns. Good highways and access are necessary for most land uses and may serve to spark development in a particular area. Conversely, certain land uses generate an amount of additional traffic that may require expansion of the transportation network.

This section inventories the various components of Dummer's transportation network. Dummer's road network is shown on the Existing Land Use Map.

Highways

Roads are placed in one of seven administrative classes depending on which governmental unit is responsible for the road as stated in NH RSA 229:5. Highway classification is as follows:

Class 1 highways consist of all those on the State primary system except those segments lying within compact sections of cities or towns with a population of 7,500 or more. Interstate highways and toll turnpikes are considered to be Class 1 highways. The NH Department of Transportation controls and pays the costs of construction, reconstruction, and maintenance of Class 1 highways.

Class 2 highways are those on the State secondary system with the same exceptions as Class 1 regarding segments in compact areas. The NH Department of Transportation controls and pays the costs of reconstruction and maintenance of Class 2 highways.

Class 3 highways consist of recreational roads leading to, and within, state reservations as designated by the Legislature. Class 3 highways are the responsibility of the Department of Transportation.

Class 4 highways consist of all other traveled highways for which the towns have responsibility.

Class 5 highways consist of all other traveled highways for which the towns have responsibility.

Class 6 highways consist of all other existing public ways and include all highways discontinued as open highways and made subject to gates and bars, and all highways which have not been maintained by the town in suitable condition for travel for five successive years or more.

Class 7 highways are all other roads and include access to fire towers, fish hatcheries, etc. Class 7 highways are state-maintained.

The mileages of the various classes of roads in Dummer are shown in the following table. The publicly maintained roads within the Town of Dummer are depicted on the Existing Land Use Map.

CLASSIFIED ROAD MILEAGE	
Class 1 –	8.11
Class 2 –	6.06
Class 3 –	0
Class 4 –	0
Class 5 –	9.46
Class 6 –	2.30
Class 7 –	0
Total	23.63

Source: NH Department of Transportation

Traffic counts have not been conducted regularly or recently in Dummer. Anecdotally, State Routes 16 and 110 receive the heaviest average volume of traffic. Route 16, in particular, is an important corridor for the logging industry to transport forest raw materials to various manufacturing facilities.

During winter and early spring periods, Route 16 usually presents difficulties for large trucks due to the development of frost heaves. At these times, truckers will often utilize a network of privately maintained back roads to avoid Route 16. Access to this network involves travel along Dummer's Blake Road and Hill Road. In recent years, increased deterioration of these roads has been observed due to increased heavy truck traffic. The Select Board members are considering ways of addressing this problem.

Some of the roads in town are maintained by the NH DOT on a year-round basis. Other roads are maintained by the town. Still others (East Side River Road and Hill Road) are maintained by the town during winter months and by the state during the summers. Short term problems with town-maintained roads can usually be addressed quickly. Surveys have indicated a high degree of satisfaction with the status of the town's roads. Problems with state-maintained roads are sometimes addressed with less efficiency, due to the DOT's need to prioritize their work load.

The town has a long-term plan for major road maintenance. Over the past several years, significant sections of town roads have been converted from paved to gravel surfaces. This has been done to save the expense of pavement maintenance and has actually resulted in smoother road surfaces. It remains to be seen if this trend will continue.

Air Service

The Berlin Municipal Airport is located on the East Side River Road in Milan. This is a small, municipally owned facility with a 5,000-foot paved runway, landing lights, and various navigational aids. The airport has a full-time manager, storage facilities, and fuel availability. There are no regularly scheduled commercial flights, but charter services can be arranged.

Most area residents access commercial air services from facilities in Manchester, NH, Portland, ME or Boston, MA.

Railroads

The St. Lawrence and Atlantic line runs through the southwestern corner of Dummer for .68 mile.

Public Transportation

In the past, Freedom Express, now Tri County Cap provided public transportation to residents of Dummer. Currently there is no public transportation available.

Bus Service

Interstate bus travel by Concord Trailways is available. Concord Trailways has a route between Concord and Berlin, approximately twelve miles from Dummer, which runs once a day.

Taxis

Uber service is available in Dummer or other area communities by internet or phone app.

CHAPTER SEVEN

TOWN FINANCES

Town Finances

An examination of Dummer's expenses and sources of Revenue serves several purposes. The town's overall financial health is the primary concern. We must also consider financial trends and the processes used by the town to address short and long-term budgeting.

Expenditures

Over the past forty years, town expenditures have been as follows:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total</u>
1980	\$ 208,472.73
1990	\$ 368,541.71
2000	\$ 607,953.97
2009	\$ 1,067,004.88
2017	\$ 1,097,604.00

There are several factors that contribute to the significant fluctuation of expenditures from year to year. Over the past five years, the town has had some legal expenses, as well as equipment purchases, new employees and the ever-changing needs of the town, county and state requirements.

New Hampshire is the only state that has neither a sales tax nor a state income tax. The political climate makes it unlikely that such taxes will be instituted in the foreseeable future. For now, it is likely that property taxpayers will have to continue to fund the state and county budgets.

The school budget is, and has been, the largest component of the town's budget. On average, education expenses have accounted for about 2/3 of the town's budget over the years. Although the town has an elected school board, there is very little that can be done to reduce our school budget.

Due to our small size, it would not be cost effective for Dummer to establish and operate our own school system. Instead, we make arrangements with neighboring communities to send our students to their schools, and in return we pay per-student tuition to these communities. Tuition amounts are determined by the neighboring communities as a ratio of their overall school budgets. In 1980, the tuition rate for a junior high school student was \$1,497.22. In 2017, the projected amount to educate the same student has increased to \$14,214.

Increasingly, Dummer's property taxpayers are being required to fund expenditures over which we have little or no direct control. In 2017, the municipal portion of the town budget was roughly 53%. One of the largest expenses in the annual municipal budget is for Streets and Highways. This category includes summer and winter road maintenance, as well as a reserve fund to replace the town trucks.

Revenue

The town's revenue is derived primarily from property taxes, and to a lesser extent from motor vehicle registrations, yield taxes, and fees for various permits. Other potential sources of revenue include grants, bonds, charitable donations, and sales of town assets. The most recent timber harvest was in 2014.

Property taxes are calculated on the basis of the current year's budgetary needs and the most recent assessment of the overall value of all of the taxable property in town. Tax rates are expressed in terms of dollars per thousand. The owner of a property valued at \$85,000 would be billed for the given year's tax rate multiplied by 85. A sampling of recent overall assessments and tax rates is presented below:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Assessment</u>	<u>Tax Rate</u>
1980	\$ 5,389,582.00	2.66
1990	\$ 5,357,242.00	26.74
2000	\$ 22,865,795.00	12.59
2010	\$ 54,569,674.00	13.77
2017	\$ 100,776,462.00	12.34

The 1000% increase in total valuation over the past thirty years is due to several factors. One is inflation. A property that has not been improved in any way will be worth considerably more now than it was worth in 1980. Additions of new property and improvements of existing property have also increased the total value significantly. Most notably, since 1980, the Pontook Hydro Facility and the Portland Natural Gas Pipeline have been completed and added to the tax base. In 2014, Brookfield Power, which is a wind power company built a transfer and collection station in Dummer

Another factor that affects the tax base is the increased frequency of assessments. In the past, to avoid effort and expense, properties were reassessed infrequently. At times, this would create inequities in the system. A newly built home would be assessed upon completion and taxed on the basis of its current market value. If a town-wide reassessment had not been done for some time, the new homeowner might have to pay a disproportionately high property tax, as the other, older properties were being taxed on the basis of their lower values from years before.

With the introduction of state and county property tax levies, it became mandatory for municipalities to reassess property values more frequently, and to maintain assessments within a certain range of their actual market values. Dummer, like most if not all other municipalities in New Hampshire, employs a professional assessment service.

In most years, a statistical reassessment is used. This process consists of a look at properties that have been sold during the previous year and comparing their sale prices with their assessed values. If, for example, the average property has sold for 10% more than its assessed value, then the values of all other properties in town will be reassessed with a 10% increase. On a rotating basis, the town's assessors perform a physical inspection of every taxable property and update the property's value appropriately.

Of course, no one likes to pay property taxes. Any large-scale reassessment will elicit a flurry of inquiries from property owners who think their properties have been overvalued. When this actually does happen, there is a process by which the property value can be adjusted accordingly.

Budgeting Process

Toward the end of every year, the Select Board receives reports and budget recommendations from various departments. In Dummer, these departments include the Library Trustees, the Highway Department and the Tax Collector/Town Clerk. The Select Board also receives requests for funds from various agencies from outside of Dummer, such as the Milan Fire Department, the Community Action Program and the North Country Elder Program. Finally, there are proposals to consider from the town's insurance providers, the solid waste collection service, and so on. The Select Board combines all of this information with their own estimates of what will be needed for expenses, such as legal fees and public assistance, and prepares a budget of appropriations for the coming year.

This is not an exact science. It is far safer to appropriate a little more than is needed, than to appropriate less. If the entire amount of the appropriation is not spent, then the remaining amount creates a surplus that can be used to decrease the tax rate. If the appropriation is not sufficient, then a special town meeting may need to be called to authorize a budget overrun. The Select Board's budgeting approach is to hope for the best, but plan for the worst.

When the budget is complete, a budget hearing is held, usually in early February. Those who attend the hearing receive a copy of the proposed budget and a line by line explanation from the Select Board. Residents are afforded an opportunity to ask questions and to recommend changes. The final budget is then placed on the warrant and subjected to a voice vote at the Town Meeting in March.

The entire process of budgeting and generating property tax revenue is monitored and regulated by the NH Department of Revenue Administration. Throughout the year, various reports are submitted to update the DRA on total valuation, revenues, and the current budget. Toward the end of the year, the DRA consolidates this information and returns it to the town with a recommended tax rate. The Select Board reviews this information, considers short and long term budgetary trends, and then has the opportunity to adjust the tax rate.

Trends

One of the Select Board's most important functions is to use their judgement to balance the town's need for adequate funding with the taxpayers' need to maintain a reasonable tax rate. Although the Select Board has less and less control over expenses every year, it is important that they monitor short and long-term trends in order to perform this function.

One trend involves planning for major expenses that do not occur every year. Dummer utilizes capital reserve funds to meet these needs. If the town needs to replace a plow truck every ten years, and a new truck will cost \$100,000, we would rather appropriate \$10,000 per year than wait ten years and have to appropriate \$100,000 all at once. Currently, Dummer maintains capital reserve funds for plow trucks (two trucks, plus plows and sanders) and a bridge (Old Rt #110 in West Dummer). In the future, capital reserve funds may be established for other needs, such as major renovations to town buildings.

We must also track local and regional trends to consider their possible impact on Dummer's finances. Expenses are likely to continue to escalate, no matter how hard we work to trim the town budget. The school budget has increased many folds over the past 30 years, mostly due to mandates from our state and federal governments. A significant portion of the municipal budget goes to pay for expenses that are mandated, but not funded, by the state and the federal government. Now that the state and the county have tapped into property taxpayer's checkbook, this trend will continue to worsen.

Regionally, our population continues to age as older people can't afford to leave the area and younger people can't afford to stay. We must be careful, however, to monitor the growth of Dummer's population, and to plan for how this might impact our financial situation.

We cannot prevent young families from moving into Dummer, nor should we. What we should do is to continue to keep our land use ordinances up to date, to avoid the construction of large, inexpensive housing units that would add significantly to our expenses while contributing little to our tax base.

On the positive side, there are two important factors in Dummer's favor. One is the continuing ability to maintain our so-called Pontook Fund. This fund was established around 1986, when the Pontook Hydro Station was completed. At the time, the owners of this facility negotiated a Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) agreement with the town. Instead of paying property taxes, the facility paid a rate based on revenues received from the power generated by the facility. A percentage of this revenue went into an unspecified capital reserve fund, which came to be called the Pontook Fund. The original PILOT agreement has since expired, and for various reasons it will not be renewed. However, the fund currently contains approximately \$200,000, and is available to the town. The present philosophy is to maintain this fund as a sort of emergency reserve, to avoid hardship in the event of a budget crisis that might be caused by a short-term event.

Summary

In conclusion, property taxes provide Dummer's primary source of revenue. As Dummer residents and property owners, the Select Board members are all taxpayers and they are motivated to keep taxes as low as possible.

Expenses are escalating rapidly and will probably continue to do so. State and federal mandates are driving expenses ever higher and are decreasing the Select Board's ability to control spending.

Town budgets are formulated and finalized at public meetings. Every resident of Dummer is encouraged to attend these meetings, to express opinions, and to have questions answered.

For now, Dummer's financial health is secure and we have one of the lowest tax rates in the region. There are positive developments on the horizon. The Select Board is committed to controlling spending and keeping taxes low. If county, state, and federal governments continue to erode the Select Board's ability to control expenses, then the town's financial health could suffer as a result.

CHAPTER EIGHT

FUTURE PLAN FOR DUMMER

Future Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives listed in this section represent the recommendations of the Dummer Planning Board concerning the future of the town. These recommendations were developed from a collaborative process that included members of the Planning Board, the Select Board, the Zoning Board of Adjustment, and the general public. This group made use of information gathered from multiple community attitude surveys, election results, and public meetings.

The Master Plan, and this section in particular, is intended to be used as a guide in the municipal decision-making process. The overall goal is to assist in the management of future growth and development to maintain a desirable standard of living. The Master Plan is a non-regulatory document that describes where we have been, where we are now, and where we wish to be in the future. It will serve as a valuable reference in fine-tuning our land use regulations.

Past and Current Conditions

1. The town places extensive reliance upon volunteer services and cooperation with neighboring communities. Municipal government is managed by a three person Select Board and support is provided by a number of boards, committees, and individuals. None of these people receives more than a token annual stipend. The town has only one full-time employee, the Road Agent.
2. Dummer provides its residents with limited municipal services. Emergency services are provided, by contract, by a fire department and an ambulance service based in Milan, and by the NH State Police, based in Twin Mountain. Surveys have indicated a clear preference for this system, as opposed to taking on the expense of providing these services for ourselves.
3. Most of the land in Dummer is owned by large management companies, which have traditionally used the land to produce timber. These companies have allowed recreational use of their lands, and the townspeople have expressed a clear desire to maintain this opportunity.
4. The town owns some land, aside from the plots which include town buildings and cemeteries. These other lands are forested, and no development plans exist at present.
5. Townspeople value frugality in local government. We will gladly accept limited services in order to keep our tax rates down.
6. Property values in Dummer are significantly higher than those in Berlin, and there are very few rental properties located in Dummer. As a result, younger and lower-income families cannot afford to live in Dummer.
7. Dummer's very small population creates a potential for major fluctuations in municipal expenses. For example, if two or three families with school aged children move into town, this would cause a significant increase in school expenditures.

8. Elderly people comprise a significant portion of Dummer's population. The town provides partial tax exemptions for low-income elderly residents.
9. There is an extraordinary "neighbor helping neighbor" spirit that is alive and well in Dummer. Our residents tend to reach out to one another in times of need, and this enables the town to get by without providing a lot of expensive municipal services.
10. Dummer's population is primarily concentrated in three areas; West Dummer, Bayview, and the so-called Dummer Loop.

Current Concerns and Aspirations

1. As taxes increase beyond the control of municipal government, there is concern for those who are unable to pay. Our elderly, fixed income population is of particular concern, especially those who are struggling to hold on to large old family farms. Also, uncollected taxes could impact the town's ability to pay its bills.
2. In recent surveys, Dummer residents have expressed an overwhelming desire to preserve the quiet, rural character of our community.
3. Large, forested tracts of land have been harvested extensively in recent years. This creates concern about the future of these lands. Residents would like to see these tracts remain as woodlands, with continued access for recreational use.
4. There are certain areas of Dummer that have a high esthetic and environmental value, particularly the ridgelines and river banks. Residents have expressed a desire to keep the natural beauty of these areas.
5. There is great concern over any type of development which would cause a large influx of school aged children.
6. There are mixed feelings about industrial development. Some residents would like to avoid it entirely. Most are willing to allow limited development, so long as the industries have minimal impact on the town's character.
7. Long-term plans to maintain Dummer's infrastructure are limited. There are capital reserve funds to spread out expenditures for town vehicles and some roads. Repairs to town buildings are funded on an as-needed basis.
8. The town has come to the end of a multi-year plan which made use of capital reserve funds to rehabilitate town roads. This process included the conversion of several sections of road from paved to gravel surfaces as well as the replacement of the West Dummer bridge.

Recommendations

1. Review and update this Master Plan once every five to ten years as per the State of NH recommendation.
2. Review and update the Zoning Ordinance periodically.
3. Review and update Subdivision Regulations once every five years.
4. Monitor development and updating of various maps, such as soils, aquifers, and flood plains. Acquire and maintain current copies of such maps.
5. Monitor and limit growth. Although we cannot and should not discourage families with school aged children from moving into Dummer, we must avoid uncontrolled high density residential development.
6. Enforce existing land use regulations.
7. Consider consolidation of existing school systems to reduce expenses.
8. Keep property taxes as low as possible.
9. Consider establishment of town forests.
10. Consider expansion of capital reserve funds to avoid short term financial impact of major infrastructure expenses.
11. Develop a long-term plan for road maintenance.
12. Given that private ownership of property is the bedrock of a free and prosperous society, we strongly caution against allowing large tracts of land in our town to become federally owned as has happened in the neighboring town of Errol in recent years via the ever expanding so-called Umbagog Wildlife Refuge. Thousands of acres of property taken off the property tax/timber tax roles due to federal purchases has a perpetual negative affect on all town taxpayers as they must take up the revenue slack via an increased burden on the remaining private property owners.

Large tracts of land can be better protected with land transactions in the form of conservation easements and any federal monies be used for that purpose. This would result in sustainable logging practices and greater recreational opportunities controlled more locally by the state of New Hampshire and not Washington, D.C.