

MASTER PLAN

FOR THE TOWN OF HARRISVILLE, NH



**ADOPTED BY THE HARRISVILLE PLANNING BOARD
OCTOBER 10, 2014**

TOWN OF HARRISVILLE, NEW HAMPSHIRE

MASTER PLAN

2014

A town's Master Plan is both a reference and a policy document. Local Planning Boards are charged by the state of New Hampshire to "set down as clearly and practically as possible the best and most appropriate future development of the [town] . . . to guide the board in [achieving] the principles of smart growth, sound planning and wise resource protection." NH RSA 674:2.

This Master Plan is woven from many strands. Certainly there is much continuity from the community goals and objectives in the 2000 Master Plan. There is also great energy and direction from discussions at the Harrisville 2020 forum of September 2010 and its follow-up committees and meetings. The many contacts and thoughtful discussions of the 2012 Natural and Cultural Resource Inventory (NRI) have indicated important vision concepts, as well. The goals expressed here represent thoughts and contributions of a cross-section of Harrisville residents and property owners. This Master Plan is meant to be the backbone of zoning ordinances and to provide guidance as to other regulations, and to decisions made by boards, committees and bodies of the town.

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INDEX

Introduction	4
Vision	5
Land Use	6
Water Protection & Management	8
Housing	11
Economic Development	13
Historic Preservation	16
Infrastructure	19
Energy	22
Education	24
Agriculture & Local Food Supply	28
Transportation	30
Recreation	34
Regional Cooperation	37
Governance	40

INTRODUCTION

The widespread ice storm of December 11, 2008 isolated and immobilized most of New Hampshire for up to two weeks and power crews from far and wide came to the aid of the stricken Northeast. One crew member reconnecting power to Harrisville said, “I gotta tell you, you live in the middle of nowhere. I’ve never been anywhere so in the middle of nowhere.” Another crew member noted, “People are so nice here. I might come back on vacation with my family . . . in the summer.” These two statements pinpoint some key features of Harrisville - seclusion, wonderful people, a sense of community, and natural beauty, all of which residents value highly.

Harrisville is a small town in a rural area of southwestern New Hampshire. It was formed in 1870 as a reaction to a proposed railroad line. This line was on an East/West course and the abutting towns and farmers of Nelson and Dublin resisted its intrusion. So mill owner Milan Harris received legislative approval to form Harrisville, which was made up of sections of Dublin and Nelson. The existing mill village sits on the former boundary line and the new railroad line ran nearby.

The 2010 population was 961. This population generally doubles each summer as owners and renters of seasonal properties enjoy the beauties and recreational opportunities of Harrisville’s ten lakes and ponds. These seasonal properties broaden Harrisville’s tax base, which is the second lowest in Cheshire County. Harrisville is also spectacularly beautiful with scenic hills folding around the lakes, and waterways coursing through the town. The ridge that runs south through Harrisville’s village forms the divide between the Connecticut River and Merrimack River watersheds. Harrisville Village is a designated National Historic Landmark District, the most perfect 19th century mill village in the United States. Harrisville’s location helps it sustain its privacy, for no major route passes through town. In order to get to Harrisville, people either plan their trip deliberately or make a wrong turn. Stumbling upon Harrisville is considered a serendipitous event, which attests to the town’s beauty and allure.

Attendees at the series of community vision events in September 2010, called Harrisville 2020, identified important, often contradictory, aspects of Harrisville they want maintained or created for the upcoming 10-20 years [See Appendix I: Harrisville 2020 Mind Map Tabulation]. People want Harrisville to stay as it is; they live here because they chose a small, quiet, beautiful, rural town. Others want Harrisville to become less quiet; they want more activities, jobs, affordable housing, younger families and more local economic vitality. [See Appendix 1: The discussion regarding continuity versus change provided a dynamic structure as the Master Plan committee looked to a vision of Harrisville in the future and tried to articulate what our town will require in 10-20 years. This plan’s objectives and implementations do not, in general, involve huge financial demands on the town right away.

A Natural Resource Inventory (NRI) was undertaken in 2012 by the NRI committee of the Harrisville Conservation Commission and The Monadnock Conservancy. 89 residents completed the survey by sharing their thoughts and concerns for Harrisville’s natural resources and special places. In addition, these themes were developed further in a series of workshops to better understand why residents have chosen Harrisville and how they see the town in the future. The entire NRI is posted on harrisvillenh.org. Look under Conservation Commission under the heading “Boards & Committees” and scroll to the [NRI link](#).

The town’s leaders (selectmen, business, education, non-profit, artist, trade and craft persons) and its *2020 Forum* work groups are obvious players in building such a vision and strategy.

Meanwhile, foundational work has been done to create an initial basis for understanding the land use planning needs of Harrisville.

The *2020 Forum* with 70 representative citizens in 2010, agreed upon the following elements of a vision:

- Protect natural resources: ponds, streams, trails, forest, farms, fields, aquifers
- Protect and preserve Harrisville's irreplaceable historic character and qualities
- Keep Harrisville Wells Memorial School by attracting more young families with children
- Retain a diverse, working populace, the mill village remaining the town center
- Develop an affordable housing strategy with a better mix of good rental/purchase options
- Enhance business infrastructure to retain and increase our entrepreneurs/workers and provide more amenities/capacities in the mill village-town center
- Articulate and market skillfully the town's uniqueness to attract independent, creative, viable workers, taxpayers and their families
- Decide balance of preservation/growth needed to keep the town's character and values, and its tax base strong and gradually increasing
- Explore possibilities of creating regional services with neighboring towns to save residents money or increase quality of services

The NRI placed specific emphasis on Harrisville as a source watershed for the Connecticut and Merrimack Rivers. As such, the quality of water downstream is dependent on wetlands and on water protection upstream. It is important that water be enabled to move more slowly and be contained more easily through well-forested, vegetated hillsides and wetlands.

The *2020 Forum* sessions and recent town School Board meetings have noted that there are immediate potential threats to the town's capacity to continue as a diverse, working town with a vital, historic center and well-conserved lands and waters, e.g.:

- Loss of its K-6 school
- Loss of younger families with children
- No affordable housing strategy to attract younger families with children
- Increasingly aging population
- Loss of entrepreneurs and workers due to lack of business infrastructure
- Fewer volunteers resulting from reduced diversity in population
- Loss of tax income due to poor water quality effects on seasonal property values

The Master Plan committee has strived to integrate these ideas, both traditional views and progressive approaches, as it articulates the town's vision of itself now and into the upcoming years. The three large areas of the vision are Land Use, Economic Development and Community Health & Vitality, with subcategories as follows:

Land Use: agriculture, energy, water, forests, scenic vistas

Economic Development: business opportunities, infrastructure, shared regional resources

Community Health & Vitality: building community, education, housing, volunteerism, governance, historic preservation, transportation, recreation

VISION

The vision for Harrisville can be categorized and considered in four critical segments, all of which will lead to concrete objectives and implementation recommendations. These components are suggested to guide the preservation of elements in Harrisville's character that we, as residents, enjoy and value in 2014. They also shape Harrisville's ability to absorb and succeed with inevitable shifts in technology, climate and demographics. The future leaders of Harrisville will need to consider these critical segments as they make plans and decisions for our community.

I. Conservation/Preservation

- Preserve natural resources: water, land, forests
- Preserve historic locations and buildings
- Preserve scenic natural beauty and open spaces
- Protect wildlife habitat
- Control air, noise and light pollution
- Plan sensible land use and development to prevent sprawl and encourage more housing density in central areas

II. Viability

- Improve opportunities so that people can afford to live and work here
- Enable economic development that is consistent with the town's historic and natural resources
- Plan for solid, reliable infrastructure: reliable power and energy supply, cell phone reception, high speed internet connection
- Diversify transportation options: public transportation, non-motorized local travel

III. Vitality & Health, Quality of Life

- Enhance social capital, citizenship, community involvement, governance
- Encourage a heterogeneous demographic mix
- Create opportunities for interaction and communication, physical spaces for community events
- Strengthen existing village of Harrisville, store, post office, pedestrian safety, parking, and create or enhance other sections of town.
- Expand recreational opportunities
- Create more locations for physical activity: walkable community, sports & exercise facilities
- Support strong, cost-effective public education
- Continue arts & cultural events that attract people and make the town a dynamic place

IV. Sustainability

- Support local food production, local farms and forestry
- Develop local energy production
- Preserve natural resources (see conservation/preservation)
- Conserve energy with incentives for renewable energy and energy-efficient building, energy efficient building codes, recycling
- Seek mitigation for impacts of climate change on natural resources of water and land

The vision's purpose is to identify measures that will ensure Harrisville continues as a vital, sustainable community with a high quality of life in the future. This requires conservation, civic engagement, business opportunities, innovation, and capital investments. Many components are long-term, up to 20 years or more, but the town should begin to work on these goals now.

LAND USE

A. Introduction:

Land Use Plan Must Support Town's Vision and Goals

A land use plan is the basis for land use regulations, implemented through zoning ordinances, subdivision, and site plan review regulations. The land use plan should reinforce and reflect the larger goals and priorities required to accomplish the town's longer-term development needs. Land use regulations, carefully administered and enforced, are a basic tool to meet the town's goals over the next decade, and should be revisited every 3-5 years.

Harrisville does not yet have a mutually agreed-upon town vision and strategy mapping its main goals and priorities for the next 10-20 years. The town has taken foundational steps in the past 4 years through its *2020* and *NRI* forums to identify and study key priorities. Town leaders, residents, volunteers, organizations and boards should meet in an ongoing process to keep their vision, strategic priorities, and land use planning current and relevant. As Harrisville's population shifts, the need for different types of housing will continue to be explored, keeping in balance land use, conservation concerns and the preservation of historic buildings and areas. More cluster housing and conservation sub-division developments may be needed to meet the needs of families, an aging population and protection of the town's rural and historic qualities.

Meanwhile, the Planning Board will encourage representative groups to consider and make recommendations on key priorities, especially addressing critical issues like housing, commercial zoning, natural resources and watershed protection and coordination of inter-town resources.

B. Objectives:

To study and make recommendations for action in these areas:

1. Effects of projected population changes on municipal service and facility requirements
2. Impacts of a potential loss of K-6 school and young families on the town
3. Demographic trends, impacts and needs of our aging town population
4. Effect of seasonal residents on municipal services, housing and natural resources
5. Long-term stresses on and needs of our current road and bridge network
6. Effect of town policies and ordinances on agriculture and on housing/building sprawl in relation to key town values
7. Current and future commercial/light industrial capacity and site needs
8. Increasing broadband internet and cell phone capacity
9. Supporting and expanding recreational opportunities within the town
10. Protection and enhancement of Town's historic qualities
11. Facilitating sound energy policies
12. Enhancing user-friendly transportation options
13. Analyzing and making provisions for the effects of climate change
14. Land use concerns, needs and initiatives, e.g. per the *NRI*'s assessment and recommendations
15. Inventory existing town housing units and assess their ease of access for different demographic groups.
16. Impact and effects of current zoning regulations (for cluster, multi-family and accessory apartments) on town resources and on a healthy "working" population mix
17. The potential for sharing municipal and other resources with surrounding towns, i.e. Dublin, Peterborough, Hancock, Marlborough, Nelson, Roxbury.

C. Implementations:

1. To map town growth rate for location of land uses that directly improve the physical appearance of the town, and the need for and access to public services and facilities
2. To attract young families with children through long-range planning
3. To address demographic impacts upon and needs of an aging town
4. To propose changes to the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that allocate necessary resources for municipal services, and housing, and the protection of natural resources
5. To propose changes to the CIP for road, bridge and other infrastructure needs
6. To propose town policies that support agriculture and reduce housing/building sprawl.
7. To recommend needed changes to commercial/light industrial zoning, including land purchase for parking and other actions to support those needs.
8. To recommend strategies that increase broadband internet and cell phone capacity/access
9. To propose allocation of funds and other actions that support recreational opportunities within the town
10. To facilitate synergistic operations of the Historic District Commission, Historic Harrisville, Inc., and Town Boards in preserving Harrisville's unique historical assets
11. To promote energy conservation, local energy production, and a reliable electric grid
12. To assess the viability of upgraded and alternative means of transportation, including sidewalks, bike paths, and modes of public transportation
13. To take into account the likelihood of more severe storms, and potential long-term changes in temperature and/or precipitation in all planning processes
14. To align town zoning policy and regulations with town values and priorities (per NRI)
15. To propose marketing and inter-town strategies, which can be used to help make housing opportunities within the town accessible to all demographic groups.
16. To recommend zoning changes for housing that align with NRI and demographic trends
17. To create and develop relationships with surrounding town(s) that lead to recommendations to share resources in areas of common need

Conclusion

The Master Plan is designed to give town leaders and boards direction and guidance in decision-making, based on recommendations for land use derived from the town's vision, goals and priorities as suggested in the 2020 Forum and the values articulated in the NRI survey of town residents. The Planning Board will use the Master Plan as a framework to charge various working groups to study and address the priorities suggested by these forums - and will oversee their work.

The Selectmen will need to work with the Planning Board to make sure issues of concern are addressed in a timely manner. The Planning Board can also help Selectmen to consider how working coalitions of town leaders across government, business, cultural and non-profit organizations can agree to promote and coordinate specific policies, actions and resources in the

interests of Harrisville's coming needs. These include groups like the Zoning Board of Adjustment, Conservation Commission, Harrisville Trails, Agricultural Commission, Historic Preservation Commission, Historic Harrisville, Inc., Harrisville Business Network, the Lake Associations, land trusts and other appointed positions and entities.

Unless the policies and goals proposed by working groups are implemented, the Plan will not accomplish its purpose.

Appendix Sections

- a. Land Use Development Patterns
- b. Land Use Zoning Categories (see current definitions - are they okay still?)
- c. Land Use Limitations
- d. Table 15?: Existing Land Use in Harrisville
- e. Table 16?: Limits to Development
- f. Community Facilities List
- g. Factors Influencing Land Use
- h. Historic Land Use Patterns in Harrisville (migrate relevant sections to MP Introduction)
- i. NRI (Natural Resources Inventory) Data and Maps

WATER PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT

A. Background, Vision and Intent:

Harrisville residents cherish the remarkable beauty of Harrisville's lakes and ponds. Water is a defining element of the town and has value in many ways. Surface and ground waters, such as lakes, ponds, streams, wetlands and their surroundings, are critical habitats for a variety of wildlife. The high quality water of the lakes and ponds provides recreational opportunities. Water is so critical to Harrisville's identity and way of life that the townspeople consistently emphasize the need for protection of land, aquifers, wetlands and wildlife habitat, as well as the prevention and control of erosion, flooding and pollution.

The 2012-2013 Natural Resources Inventory, undertaken by the Town of Harrisville and its Conservation Commission in keeping with RSA 36-A:2, addressed certain critical issues fundamental to the protection and management of our water resources. These issues require strong community leadership, involvement, and education if they are to be addressed properly. The issues include the following:

B. Objectives:

- 1. Major Watersheds.** Preserve and protect the high quality of the Town's watersheds. The top ridge of the watershed is the first line of defense, and the waterfront is the last line of defense.
- 2. Surface Water.** Protect and preserve Harrisville's surface water quality and quantity in its ten lakes.
- 3. Storm water management.** Control storm run-off that does not soak into the ground due to impervious surfaces and steep slopes; this is very important; and should be addressed in a specific ordinance.
- 4. Impervious cover.** Reduce these surfaces wherever possible.
- 5. Wetlands.** Protect with an up-dated wetlands delineation and ordinance.
- 6. Groundwater.** Enact a groundwater protection ordinance to inventory and address Harrisville's drinking and non-drinking water resources, i.e., water tables, wetlands, springs, rivers, aquifers.
- 7. Wells.** Ensure protection of well water.
- 8. Aquifers.** Delineate all town aquifers, recharge areas, and the condition and extent of any impermeable layer with the intent of protecting the quality and quantity of water in the aquifers. Initial work has begun with a delineation of the aquifer and recharge area for the Town Spring. The Town should be guided by the 2007 Town Warrant article on the protection of aquifers, which focused on how best to ensure the effective and continuing functioning of the aquifers and the prevention of their contamination and pollution.
- 9. Town Spring.** Protect the overburden aquifer from land uses that may contaminate it. Harrisville's Town Spring, fed by a glacial overburden aquifer, is not protected by an impermeable layer and thus is much more susceptible to contamination by land uses above it.
- 10. Steep Slopes.** Slopes in excess of 10%, especially within the Shoreland Protection Overlay, present significant challenges to storm water management. Erosion and sheet water flowing into water bodies call for resources and commitment to best practices in an ordinance to mitigate such hazards.
- 11. Wildlife Habitats and Corridors:** Wherever possible, continue to identify and protect large unfragmented land holdings critical to providing optimal watershed and wildlife habitat protection, whether with respect to wetlands or woods. Fragmentation of both watersheds and wildlife habitats should be prevented by clearly thought-out development plans.

C. Implementations:

1. Major Watersheds:

- Preserve large blocks of unfragmented lands on top of the watershed to protect those lands from development and increased disturbance.
- Create secondary watershed protection and buffering land along the shoreline of water bodies to filter many pollutants from storm water runoff.
- Strengthen the current overlay and buffer districts as they affect watersheds, to ensure consistency with current best management practices and the goals of the community.
- Planning Board will establish surface and groundwater protection ordinances such as wetlands protection overlay districts and floodplain overlay districts.

2. Surface Water:

- Encourage land protection from development at the top of watersheds and along undeveloped shoreline. This protection may be through conservation or ordinances concerning highly erodible soils and steep slopes, which comprise about 39% of Harrisville's land area.
- The Planning Board, in consultation with the Conservation Commission, will create a storm water management ordinance that includes buffering of surface water bodies.
- Officials and organizations of the town will maintain close adherence to Harrisville's Shoreland Protection Ordinance, especially within 150' from the reference line. Another priority will be to reduce runoff through buffers of native vegetation in the zone of 150-250 feet from the reference line.
- Bodies of the town will seek effective ways of preventing the introduction and spread of invasive species.
- The Conservation Commission will be pro-active in recommending best science and best management practices to maintain the quality of Harrisville's water resources.

3. Storm water management:

- The town should address excessive run-off of stormwater that is aggravated by impervious areas, steep slopes exceeding 10%, and loss of native vegetation with official regulatory action and civic voluntary participation.
- These actions will comprise a number of strategies to slow and absorb runoff, reduce or avoid sediment, nutrients, bacteria, toxic contaminants and thermal pollution by using low impact development practices (LID). These practices involve vegetated buffers, riparian buffers of 100 feet and native plantings. They also include basins for increasing infiltration and retention while reducing siltation and erosion, turbidity and conductivity.
- The town bodies will encourage practices related to forestry and agriculture that minimize the erosion and flow of soil into water bodies. These may also include: infiltration trenches for eaves and driveways, dry wells, pervious surfaces, rain barrels, rain gardens, vegetated swales, water bars and increased native plantings along the shoreline.

4. Impervious cover:

- Best practices will call for reductions in impervious surfaces, especially in the Shoreland Overlay. These include roads, buildings, roofs, decks, patios, driveways, parking areas, compacted soils, walkways and other similar hard surfaces. Reducing impervious cover will allow infiltration of water into the ground and filtration of water by plants and soil, thus diminishing pollution and erosion.

5. Wetlands.

- Harrisville should know specifically where its wetlands and their boundaries are located by undertaking a town-wide, up-dated, wetlands inventory and delineation.
- Harrisville's Wetlands Ordinance currently provides for setbacks only with respect to 100 feet for septic systems. This ordinance should include setback requirements with respect to buildings and other land uses.

- Wetlands analyses and model ordinances should be studied to identify best practice, and these should be included in Harrisville’s ordinances.

6. Groundwater.

- The Conservation Commission should inventory Harrisville’s water resources and identify the value and use of specific water resources, especially drinking water. There should also be a summary of current threats, as well as prevention of pollution and contamination through the use of injection wells. Finally, it should produce or contract to create an analytical approach evaluating how local land use controls will be needed to protect water resources now, and in the future.
- The Conservation Commission should advise the Planning Board in modifying existing ordinances to protect the town’s groundwater.
- Harrisville should involve communities sharing its aquifers in developing regional aquifer management plans or other collaborative efforts to protect shared groundwater resources.

7. Wells.

- Preventing contamination or destruction of wells in town should be a high priority.
- DES and Harrisville recommend testing wells periodically to guard against consumption of arsenic, radon, lead and other harmful materials. The town should undertake education about this need, as well as facilitating the testing process.

8. Aquifers.

- The Town should consider adopting an aquifer overlay protection district as a zoning ordinance allowing the town control over the uses permitted on stratified drift and glacial overburden aquifer areas.
- This ordinance would prevent activities from occurring on recharge areas identified by Nobis Engineering that could contaminate the aquifers.
- The number of wells drilled through any impermeable layer and the activities around those wells should be minimized to ensure contaminants are not allowed to infiltrate the aquifer.

9. Town Spring.

- The glacial overburden aquifer of the town spring, which is more susceptible to surface pollution, should be protected from land uses that may contaminate it by minimizing the number of septic systems placed on it.
- The town should create a no- or low-salt zone for roads that cross this aquifer.
- The town should limit the use of chemical pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers on the aquifer.
- The quality of the town spring should be maintained by not allowing businesses that deal in hazardous materials such as junk yards, auto repair shops, and gas stations to be located on or near the aquifer.

10. Steep Slopes.

- The Conservation Commission should spearhead education about the introduction and maintenance of native vegetation.
- Ordinances should include the use of best management practices to be exercised in respect to any earth disturbances.

11. Wildlife Habitats and Corridors:

- The Conservation Commission should seek information or studies that identify important wildlife habitats and corridors, often wetlands, woods, and un-fragmented land holdings.
- Planning Board should develop criteria to maintain these areas in larger rural parcels.
- The town will increase its capital reserve funds for land acquisition to permit protection of sensitive and critical areas.

HOUSING

A. Background, Vision and Intent:

Despite the advantage of having one of the lowest property tax rates in Cheshire County, Harrisville faces many substantial obstacles for developing more housing units:

- Predominantly hilly terrain, poor soils and lots of ledge make most of the land in town unsuitable for development.
- Old roads, abandoned and/or discontinued
- Very limited availability of larger tracts of land suitable for development.
- High cost of those tracts of land that could be developed.
- Lack of infrastructure, such as sewer systems, public water, or internal road networks, which adds to the cost of new construction.
- Remoteness from the region's major employment opportunities, stores and services in Keene and Peterborough.

Many residents of Harrisville are concerned about recent demographic trends, mainly the decline and aging of its population. They want to maintain some degree of demographic variety and achieve a more heterogeneous future population mix. Most frequently expressed is the desire for the town to encourage an influx of young families with young children who could attend Harrisville Wells Memorial School. They could also balance the current graying of its population, and to make it easier for senior citizens to remain comfortably and safely in Harrisville.

Developing more and better housing options is one of several important factors for achieving greater demographic diversity in town. The town should also encourage community efforts to make Harrisville a “happening” place, similar to the line from *A Field of Dreams*, “If you build it, [they] will come.”

A Housing Committee to study existing housing in Harrisville was formed at the Harrisville 2020 workshops. Its basic hypothesis was that Harrisville lacked enough affordable housing to attract young families with children, and it researched ways to provide more appropriate housing options for older folk seeking to downsize their living space. After analysis of all property assessments and properties recently sold or on the market, the Housing Committee determined that currently there is no lack of affordable housing in Harrisville. However, most housing units in the “affordable” range tend to be old, energy-inefficient, and/or non-conforming to present codes and standards. There is little available rental housing available in Harrisville village due to infrastructure needs of a septic system and good water supply. There is new technology in septic design that could create more residential opportunities; this should be pursued.

Future strategies for improving the housing situation in Harrisville should discourage further sprawl and focus primarily on upgrading the existing housing stock and on increasing housing density in central areas. Recently implemented zoning ordinances now allow for the establishment of cluster housing, with site specific issues to be addressed with the Planning Board. No recent cluster housing developments have been built or proposed.

B. Objectives:

Develop more suitable, flexible, cost-effective, attractive, sustainable housing options and increase housing density by encouraging:

1. Sensible and innovative use of undeveloped and developed land.
2. Small residential clusters with shared open spaces and village environments with

sidewalks to reduce infrastructure costs.

These efforts need to be combined with other measures, mainly with infrastructure and transportation improvements and more energy-efficient building practices, as discussed in other areas of the Master Plan.

C. Implementations:

1. The Planning Board will revise the town's zoning ordinances, and refocus them on increasing housing density and on preventing further sprawl.
2. Revised zoning ordinances should create more flexibility for property owners and the town's regulatory bodies to permit, if sensible and appropriate, measures such as:
 - a) Cluster housing on lots under 10 acres, with flexibility in lot size and/or dwellings per lot.
 - b) Creation of village settings, residential centers, and/or density zones.
 - c) Various forms of multi-family housing, including:
 - Accessory apartments with a maximum size exceeding the currently allowed maximum of 800 sq ft.
 - Construction of duplex and multi-family (3 or more) housing
3. Partner with non-profit organizations, such as Habitat for Humanity or Historic Harrisville to establish a limited number of low-income housing units.

Footnote:

Current Housing Opportunities Permitted by zoning districts are:

- Single-family homes are permitted in all districts.
- Duplex dwellings are permitted in the Village Residential, Commercial and Industrial Districts.
- Multi-family units are permitted in the Village Residential, Commercial, and Industrial Districts, subject to additional land area and increased setback provisions.
- Manufactured housing is permitted in the Residential/Agricultural District (which comprises the largest land area of town.)
- Accessory Apartments are permitted by Special Exception in Residential/Agricultural, Village Residential, Commercial, and Industrial Districts
- Backlot development is permitted in the Residential/Agricultural District subject to certain conditions.
- Cluster development is permitted by Special Exception in Residential/Agricultural District
- Conservation subdivisions are permitted in the Residential/Agricultural District

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A. Background, Vision and Intent:

A sound economic infrastructure will help assure Harrisville's long-term vitality. Harrisville's small businesses enhance the town's quality of life in many ways. Heightened employment opportunities and resources for small businesses here will attract new residents, including families, younger people, and persons with unique experience, knowledge, skills, and expertise. This will benefit our schools, local government, community activities, volunteer services, and demographic diversity.

In addition to numerous small businesses, we have a strong and vibrant community of craftspeople and artists in town. There are also non-profit, cultural, and arts organizations here. The businesses in Harrisville provide goods and services directly to local customers; others serve distant, specialized clientele. They include numerous home-based businesses, small offices, sole proprietorships, highly-trained and experienced professionals and tradespersons, acclaimed artists and talented craftspeople. We can thrive by building upon this enormous wealth of expertise.

The Town of Harrisville should actively assist in the development of new and emerging employment and business opportunities, while also helping to preserve and support the existing ones. The global economy requires innovation, flexibility, skill, and responsiveness. In Harrisville, we need a strong technical infrastructure to attract and sustain business so that they can compete successfully in both local and global markets. The Town can and should work toward ensuring these capabilities.

To supplement its existing business community, Harrisville could become a "destination town" for businesspersons; that is, a place where you would choose to work if you could work anywhere. To facilitate this, the town must have state-of-the-art communications and technology resources available to it. The more entrepreneurs, artists, craftspeople, and small companies that are located in town, the more positive the business climate here will be.

All efforts in support of economic development, however, can and must be pursued entirely in harmony with the principle of protecting our natural and historic resources, as well as the rural character of Harrisville. These attributes, and economic strength, are all critical to Harrisville's well-being.

B. Objectives:

1. Create and promote a "business friendly" community for new businesses. This would involve input and groundwork from both private and public perspectives, as reflected in zoning and other town ordinances, together with the activities of non-governmental entities, civic associations, and neighborhood and business groups.
2. Preserve and improve the existing village commercial center. This would include, at a minimum, the following: (a) heighten the availability of work/office space within the village commercial district, providing necessities such as clear and safe walkways, additional parking areas, water, and septic; and (b) generate support for the General Store and for any other local commercial entities providing goods or services to business and residential customers.
3. Develop the potential for one or more additional centers of commercial activity in Harrisville, located in Chesham or Eastview, or elsewhere in the village, where new or expanded businesses and employment could be fostered and encouraged.
4. Develop rules and practices that would preserve, support, and enhance opportunities for entrepreneurship and home-based employment in Harrisville. This would include sole

- proprietorships, home offices, small, low-impact or low-traffic businesses, and telecommuting.
5. Ensure that small businesses and residents have a reliable electric power grid and a dependable, cutting-edge communication infrastructure to enable and support sustainable economic development. The availability of reliable, affordable fast broadband that is powered by secure, uninterrupted electricity and complemented by universal access to cellular and similar cutting-edge communication technologies is a crucial component of a long-term economic development strategy for Harrisville. Building a fiber optic network has the potential to create future job and work opportunities in this rural community, since fiber-optic broadband allows to locate many businesses and their employees far away from traditional business centers.
 6. Find ways to engage the wisdom, experience, interest and volunteerism of those people living in Harrisville, as part of a broader process of enhancing and supporting local businesses.

C. Implementations:

1. A review of all existing zoning ordinances will be undertaken to determine whether they contain any actually or potentially adverse impacts on the development of small business in Harrisville. If such circumstances are found, a process of re-drafting will be considered to remove, reduce or ameliorate such adverse impacts. All newly proposed zoning ordinances will be considered with this framework for analysis in mind.
2. Zoning ordinances affecting home businesses will be updated in this same regard, with the intention of facilitating the ease of conducting small business operations from home, whether located in a currently commercial district or elsewhere in town. Efforts will then be made by the town to ensure full and continued compliance with existing zoning ordinances that conform to these new objectives.
3. An assessment will be made of all available options to improve local access to the latest technological advances in broadband, DSL, and/or wireless communications. Methods available to the Town in implementing such improvements and in keeping current with future developments will be analyzed. Consideration will also be given to methods of reducing the number and length of electrical outages. The Planning Board (or its designees) will be responsible for conducting these analyses.
4. To the full extent possible, Harrisville will stay abreast of developments in emerging high-growth sectors of the economy, such as those related to sustainable/renewable energy production and delivery, energy efficiency, recycling, health care, biotech and genome research and development, and nanotechnology. Harrisville will seek ways in which to attract compatible businesses and entrepreneurs to town.
5. The Town of Harrisville will consider whether there is any town-owned property that can be used in any manner to further the objectives set forth in this section of the Master Plan. If any such opportunity is identified, the Selectmen will prepare a proposal to be submitted at the next-subsequent Town Meeting in respect to such potential use.
6. A survey will be undertaken to determine the business activities and operations in town, solely for purposes of the economic development objectives set forth in this section of the Master Plan. An initial, consultative process will be undertaken to determine the type and extent of such a survey, how the data will be collected and how it will be shared or published, opt-out provisions, updating, etc.
7. To the extent there is a sufficient willingness among townspeople to serve in this capacity, a group will be organized to represent the interests of small businesses in Harrisville. The group will communicate among local business people, the town government, and regional, State, and Federal entities, on topics of interest or significance to businesses in Harrisville. This group will organize any appropriate events or activities

that might serve the interests of economic development in town, including:

- a. Creating a brochure listing businesses located in Harrisville, setting out the goods and services provided by that business, hours of operation, contact information, and the like;
- b. Coordinating business and economic activities and information-sharing on a regional basis with people, firms or organizations in nearby towns;
- c. Establishing volunteer internships or mentoring programs to provide assistance to local businesses and opportunities for students, apprentices, retirees, and other volunteers, which would allow them to gain valuable experience or training, or to give back service and input of value to their neighbors and community;
- d. Setting up a collaborative method of displaying and selling locally-produced wares, such as artwork, jewelry, textiles, crafts generally, agricultural and food products, etc.; and
- e. Organizing shared facilities or services for local businesses such as reception or other secretarial services, office or work space, use of technology, meeting space, access to financing, advertising or promotional activities, and/or accounting, legal, HR, or financial planning or reporting services.



HISTORIC PRESERVATION

A. Background, Vision and Intent:

The Harrisville Mill Village was named a National Historic Landmark District in 1977. It is the only industrial community of the early 19th century in America that survives in its original form. It is vital for Harrisville, New Hampshire, New England, and the United States, that this unique and irreplaceable asset not be lost or diminished. Experiencing the Village allows people, now and in the future, to comprehend the daily life of small nineteenth-century towns pursuing small-scale industrialization, blending agrarian and manufacturing work, building local economies, and producing goods for the wider world.

Harrisville is not a museum, however; it is a genuine, living, working historic town. Its historical pedigree enhances – not limits - the sense of community, desire for good governance, and pride of place.

In 1969, the Town of Harrisville established an Historic District Commission. This body was charged with preserving the vitality and integrity of our historical legacy. Now, Harrisville contains seven individual Historic Districts (HD's) that are entered in the National Register of Historic Places. These are: (a) Harrisville HD (b) Pottersville District; (c) Chesham Village District; (d) Silver Lake District; (e) Harrisville Rural District; (f) Beech Hill Summer Home District; and (g) Harrisville Village District.

Stewardship of the National Historic Landmark District has resided with Historic Harrisville, Inc. (“HHI”), a §501(c)(3) public foundation. HHI’s mission, among other things, is “to maintain the essential character of Harrisville as a small, quiet, vibrant community where people live and work in a healthy environment.” This central goal, of course, is in addition to “promot[ing] the restoration, maintenance, preservation, energy efficiency, and use of the buildings in the Historic District.” In May 2014, HHI received an award for outstanding leadership in historic preservation from the NH Preservation Alliance. This award recognized that HHI maintains stewardship of other historic assets in town, such as the Chesham Depot from the old Boston & Maine Railroad line.

HHI’s Operating Plan also requires it to “collaborate with the Town of Harrisville in preserving the character of the community and to participate in town planning activities for land use and development.” It is no less the Town of Harrisville’s duty to work with HHI in HHI’s mission of protecting the historical integrity of the village and “preserving” the village as a place where people actually work and live.

Currently, Harrisville has a Historic District Commission that has jurisdiction over proposed changes to properties in the Historic Districts. HHI also has stewardship over the National Historic Landmark District. As Harrisville moves forward it should explore options to preserving the integrity of the town’s history and heritage. Historic Harrisville and the town need ways to work jointly to see what works best.

Two options are: A town-wide Historic Commission that would encompass parts of the town beyond the National Historic Landmark District and the other Historic Districts in town; a Heritage Commission that could provide a more efficient and town-wide method of protecting Harrisville’s cultural as well as architectural heritage.

B. Objectives:

1. Harrisville will continue to commit to the goals of preserving and protecting the National Historic Landmark District, through the activities of the Office of Selectmen, the Planning Board, the Zoning Board of Adjustment, the Conservation Commission, and the Historic District Commission. This includes, among other things, all buildings in the District, their exterior walls (and, to the extent appropriate, interior spaces), signs, structures, roadways, waterways, plantings, views, and general appearances.
2. Equally, Harrisville will commit to preserving and protecting the other HDs and historic properties in the town, including those now registered and those that may be added for such preservation and protection in the future. This Master Plan will inform those serving in agencies of government or those who may seek to own or use property located in any of the Historic Districts that the Town of Harrisville is committed to preserving and protecting the HD's historical qualities.
3. The Town of Harrisville will seek to further the understanding, interpretation, and appreciation of life in Harrisville, past and present, and to foster the community spirit that such activities encourage. This may involve establishing a town-wide Historic Commission or a Heritage Commission. A short-term committee should be set up to study which combination of entities would best preserve the character that defines Harrisville. One logistical advantage of a Heritage Commission is that it can maintain non-lapsing funds.
4. The importance of preservation in the HDs requires that the Town of Harrisville consider and pursue opportunities for development, construction, business, and new recreational uses in locations other than the HDs, or at least in ways that would not adversely affect any qualities of the HDs. However, where new uses of historic buildings or districts can safely be utilized for such purposes without prejudice to the principles of preservation, these uses will further enhance Harrisville's vitality.

C. Implementation:

1. The Town of Harrisville will work with HHI to establish the best working relationship between and among HHI, the HDC, the Planning Board and the Conservation Commission. This may involve a memorandum of understanding that formalizes the process of application and permit granting in the Historic Districts. Alternatively (or in addition), the Town, through one of its Boards, will provide HHI with periodic questionnaires regarding what assistance from the Town will or may help advance the historic preservation goals in any or all of the HDs. Activities resulting from these questionnaires will be addressed promptly by the Selectmen or referred by them to another Town Board.
2. The Historic District Commission will meet periodically and regularly, according to its by-laws, in meetings that are open to the public following reasonable notice, with minutes of the proceedings being made available to the public. The Commission will consider, enact (if necessary), and publish its rules, guidelines and enforcement practices regarding historic preservation in Harrisville.
3. The Town of Harrisville will consider any and all requests from HHI that the Town serve as steward of buildings or other structures or space within one of the HDs, where HHI may not be able or best situated to do so itself. In addition, the Town will consider

requests from other persons or entities respecting property that such persons/entities would seek to entrust in the Town's hands for purposes of historic preservation. Where the Selectmen decide to assume such responsibilities, the Town will act as steward in order to protect, preserve, maintain and/or restore the historical qualities and integrity of the property under its care.

The Town will establish a committee representative of the town population to study, for no more than one year, which committee/commission structure overseeing Historic Districts would be best for Harrisville, with a report to make recommendations for town vote at Town Meeting.

4. The Town of Harrisville will consider acquiring property that may serve the goals and objectives set forth in this section of the Master Plan. Any time that the Selectmen are notified of a property having potential significance in respect of historical preservation interests, they will consider the potential for acquisition by the Town or, as appropriate, they may refer the matter to the Historic District Commission for its own consideration and recommendations. Such recommendations may specify means by which the Town could actively assist private interests with protecting and preserving properties having historical significance.



INFRASTRUCTURE

A. Background, Vision and Intent:

Infrastructure

The components of Harrisville's infrastructure fall under the responsibility of various entities: the town maintains town roads, culverts, bridges and one dam; the state of New Hampshire is responsible for Route 137, Dublin, Nelson, Chesham and Breed Roads and associated culverts and bridges. The State also owns five of the dams in town. Two dams are privately owned. The utility infrastructure consists of Public Service of New Hampshire for electricity, and FairPoint Communications for telephone and Internet. A significant number of town residents utilize cell tower and/or satellite technology for phone, Internet and cable services; several also have their own photovoltaic panels to generate electricity. The town, itself, has seen significant savings since it installed solar panels to offset power used by the Town Offices and Fire Station.

Severe storms can and do sometimes disrupt electric power, phone and Internet connections for extended periods. This affects levels of safety in our homes and can be harmful for home businesses. Private generators can ameliorate some of the impact of power outages but they are not enduring solutions. These storms can damage the transportation infrastructure, too. Harrisville needs an effective and robust infrastructure that will allow residents to communicate effectively with the world, to maintain small businesses without interruption, to telecommute, to access on-line educational opportunities and worldwide databases. It is also important that the town make the transportation system as invulnerable to weather events as possible.

Adaptation to Climate Change

Climate changes, with increased variation of weather patterns and more frequent extreme weather events, are already occurring globally, nationally and regionally. These are causing state planners to revise the standards for 10-year, 50-year and 100-year storms, which now occur with significantly greater frequency. Addressing these regional manifestations of climate change locally involves two simultaneous measures:

1. Reducing current and future greenhouse gas emissions within our community, which is reviewed in the Energy Section of the Master Plan.
2. Planning municipal adaptations to the impact of climate change requires comprehensive preparedness strategies. Roads, bridges, buildings, dams, stormwater control systems, wetlands, water quality, steep slopes, farmlands, forests, public safety services, electric and telephone grids will all be affected in one way or another by climate change. Harrisville must first identify potential impacts in specific ways, and then plan long-term community responses. With proper and timely planning, we can reduce vulnerabilities, protect lives and property, create better policies and incentives, make better long-term decisions, and become more resilient and sustainable.

B. Objectives:

Infrastructure

1. Over the next decades, take gradual steps towards building a sturdy and reliable electric, telephone and high-speed fiber optic grid that is less vulnerable to interruptions by severe weather events. Eventually, the entire distribution system of electric, telephone and fiber-optic cables will be running in protective and readily accessible underground conduits which are connected to every household, business and public building.
2. Have reliable wireless phone and Internet service with sufficient signal reception throughout the entire town.

Adaptation to Climate Change:

1. Develop an understanding of Harrisville’s specific areas of vulnerability to the expected impacts of climate change.
2. Develop a comprehensive plan for responding and adapting to climate change, which prioritizes goals and action measures for making Harrisville more resilient to the expected local impacts of climate change.

C. Implementations:

• Transportation Infrastructure:

1. Many recommendations about transportation are itemized in the transportation section. The Selectmen, in conjunction with the Highway Department, will oversee maintenance of existing roads and their culverts and bridges.
2. The Capital Improvement Plan, which is updated annually, should include important infrastructure items, as well as the traditional large equipment needs of the Highway and Fire Departments.

• Technological Infrastructure:

1. Building a reliable grid of electric, phone and fiber-optic cables in underground conduits is a huge and costly undertaking that can only be fully achieved over several decades. Steps will be both local and regional.

• High-speed Fiber Network

1. Fund and contract for a preliminary feasibility study to be completed by 2016. The preliminary feasibility study will examine options, requirements and challenges for developing an underground grid for electric, phone and fiber-optic cables, and make initial recommendations.
2. Establish a requirement for new construction to bury all utility lines in underground conduits. Underground conduits must allow easy access for retrofitting them at a later date with new lines or additional cables.
3. Actively support and participate in regional and statewide broadband initiatives, including the federally funded N. H. Broadband Mapping and Planning Program, the NH Fast Roads project in the Southwest and Upper Valley region of N.H., the Southwest Region Stakeholder Group, and the Monadnock Region Broadband Plan coordinated by the Southwest Region Planning Commission.
4. Consider the results of the preliminary feasibility study and, by 2016-2017, develop a comprehensive master plan for creating a fiber-optic grid for the entire town.
5. By 2017, develop funding options and specific plans for building the first section of a municipal fiber-optic grid, in proximity to the closest connection point of the regional broadband highway. Plans should be “shovel ready”, so that the town can act quickly when it is feasible to connect to the regional broadband network, and/or new federal funding becomes available.
6. Develop contacts with potential fiber network service providers (high-speed internet, telecommunication, TV and media content), possibly in cooperation with other towns in the region, to assess utilization interest and investment willingness in the municipal fiber-optic grid.

• Telecommunication Network

1. Map all dead spots for mobile phone reception, and work with cellular providers to improve cell phone reception throughout town.
2. Explore with the current land-line telephone service provider how land line connections can be made more secure on an intermediate basis until all wire-based telephone connections are housed in underground conduits.

- **Electric Power Grid**

1. Discuss with the electric utility (PSNH) how to reduce power outages by making existing aboveground power lines in our community more secure and less vulnerable to disruptions.
2. Explore the electric utility's willingness to participate in putting power-lines underground, initially with some major sections of the local power grid, or a pilot/model project that receives partial state or federal funding.

- **Adaptation to Climate Change:**

1. Within the next three years, conduct a comprehensive study that examines how current and future climate change will impact Harrisville's built environment and infrastructure, flora and fauna, natural resources, communication, emergency services, and energy and food supply. The study will identify areas of vulnerability to the expected local impact of climate change.
2. Develop a comprehensive long-term plan for responding and adapting to climate change based on the above study, with specific goals, measures, and priorities. The plan should be completed by 2017, and continuously updated as new climate change data becomes available.
3. Assess the entire storm water run-off situation in town in light of the increased risks of more extreme and volatile precipitation. Identify needed capacity and infrastructure upgrades, such as dams, culverts, drainage ditches, wetlands, to hold or divert increased volumes of water, and make appropriate improvements funded by a Capital Improvement Program.
4. Within three years, develop storm water management standards and storm water run-off plan requirements for all new construction and for all developed lots in the lakeside districts.
5. Design and upgrade roads to better handle changes in temperature and precipitation as a result of climate change. In order to decrease future repair costs, enhance safety, and increase durability and longevity, consider measures such as the use of road surface materials that are more tolerant to quick changes in hot or cold weather and drainage improvement through steeper pitches, better storm water design, and use of more permeable surface materials.

ENERGY

A. Background, Vision and Intent

At the 2010 Harrisville 2020 Forum, the community strongly affirmed its interest in renewable energy sources and in energy efficiency. Discussions at the time centered on individual actions, and several residents in town do have solar panels for power, hot water or both. In addition, the town has had a photovoltaic solar array by the town offices since 2011; the net metering of electricity generated has saved the town significant amounts of money on electric bills. Recent federal subsidies for commercial wind systems have caused many New Hampshire towns to examine potential effects of a large-scale system of windmills on wild and rural areas. Harrisville has not, to date, done its own study of the feasibility of commercial wind or solar systems and currently has no ordinances allowing them in the town. Harrisville residents' strong value in natural beauty and in wildlife protection suggests that any large-scale alternative energy system should not detract from natural beauty and wildlife habitat.

The Energy Committee that was formed at Harrisville 2020 has focused on education of energy saving measures in existing homes and on advocating energy efficient standards for new construction in town. While high insulation standards raise the cost of construction, they decrease heating and cooling expenses for years.

Town-wide and regional electricity grids need to be upgraded for better power security, as discussed in the Infrastructure Chapter.

B. Objectives

Take mitigation measures to reduce local fossil fuel consumption, greenhouse gas emission and contribution to global warming, increase community energy security through infrastructure upgrades, and build more self-reliance through increased local generation of renewable energy.

Energy Conservation

1. Adopt building standards and develop financial incentives programs that promote higher energy efficiency standards in residential dwellings and private energy conservation.
2. Increase energy efficiency in public buildings and realize energy savings in all areas of town government and town operations. Use the tool of energy audits in designing upgrades, and continue to seek and use grants to help finance cost-cutting measures.
3. Promote energy saving in transportation by implementing measures that encourage ridesharing, public transit, bicycling and walking (see transportation section).
4. Adopt land use regulations that facilitate denser settlement patterns and discourage energy inefficient sprawl (see land use section).

Energy Supply & Energy Generation

1. Seek to substantially increase the reliability of the electric power supply lines (see infrastructure section).
2. Become more self-reliant and less dependent on highly centralized energy systems by complementing large energy suppliers and traditional energy resources with residential and feasible public and commercial generation of renewable local energy.
3. Thoughtful impact studies should be done before any town approval of commercial wind or solar energy systems.

C. Implementations

Establish a standing energy committee that will be charged with the on-going implementation of the energy section of the Master Plan, including the development of specific energy related

proposals, activities and standards. This committee will seek out grants and energy savings for the town as well as monitor periodic energy audits.

Energy Conservation

1. Adopt the most current version of an appropriate building code that subscribes to high standards for building insulation, energy efficiency, resource conservation and green building practices. The town will continuously consider emerging innovations and improvement trends in energy conservation in construction.
2. Consider establishing an energy conservation fund that will be used to provide for:
 - a. Energy audit grants for existing residential and commercial buildings.
 - b. Financial awards for new and existing energy-efficient buildings.
 - c. Financial incentives for effective weatherization of existing buildings and for the installation of energy-efficient features, such as passive solar.
 - d. Rebates for the registration and use of energy-efficient vehicles and hybrid cars.
 - e. Other measures that promote private energy savings.
3. Engage in energy and resource conservation and promote energy-efficiency in town building and operations through:
 - a. On-going energy audits of all town and school buildings.
 - b. On-going implementation of cost-effective energy efficiency measures and modifications in town buildings.
 - c. Purchase of energy-efficient supplies and equipment, from energy-efficient light bulbs to fuel-efficient vehicles.
 - d. Energy-saving practices and policies in all town operations, such as no vehicle idling policy.
 - e. On-going improvement and expansion of current recycling, as well as introduction of composting and other measures that further reduce waste

Energy Supply & Energy Generation

4. Residential Energy Generation:

Develop, adopt and fund a financial incentive program for residents to install and/or upgrade domestic renewable energy systems in homes, such as solar hot water heaters, photovoltaic systems, geothermal systems or small wind turbines, to help residents become more self-reliant for their energy needs.
5. Public Energy Generation:
 - a. Conduct long-range studies and planning for potential community-controlled options for local, cost-effective generation of renewable energy, such as small solar and wind farms, and smaller hydro-electric facilities at existing local dams. This includes a town-specific wind assessment that identifies possible sites for wind farms, if any.
 - b. Look into possibilities for future pooled energy acquisition. Join and promote existing energy resource networks like the Monadnock Energy Resource Initiative.
6. Commercial Energy Generation (such as moderately sized wind or solar farms):
 - a. Identify potential methods and sites for future commercial energy generation facilities.
 - b. Examine their potential impacts (views, noise, wildlife) and benefits (tax revenues, discounted energy purchase for residents) to determine if, where and how such commercial projects would be appropriate and beneficial.
 - c. Proactively develop regulations by the Planning Board for potential future commercial energy generation proposals.

EDUCATION

A. Background, Vision and Intent:

Children in Harrisville begin their public education at the Harrisville Wells Elementary School (HWES), and then attend Keene Middle School and Keene High School. HWES, located in Chesham, was built in the 1950's on the Wells family's gift of land to the town for the purpose of a new school building. The building has been updated and maintained with major renovations to the building in 1991. HWES has developed a well-deserved regional reputation as an exceptional K-6 elementary school. The faculty is talented and dedicated to the success of students, Spanish is taught to all students in all grades, the school participates in the renowned New Hampshire Dance Institute, NHDI, and the Before and After School Program, BASP, has exciting curriculum choices and skilled teachers.

HWES also serves as the largest indoor facility for public gatherings in Harrisville, making it useful for community functions. It is also a designated emergency shelter in cases of emergency. At the 2014 Town Meeting, the town authorized the purchase of additional land to expand the playing fields at the school. This larger recreational space will be used by the school population and by residents of the entire town for athletic pursuits.

The HWES population peaked in 1998 with 82 students and it was estimated that the school population would continue to increase over the years. But due to an increase in small private schools, federal changes to education requirements such as "No Child Left Behind" and other socio-economic conditions, the school population has declined for the past 10 years. In the 2014-2015 school year, there were 51 students, although this number fluctuates year-to-year as well as within the school year.

Although the faculty and staff are at a very economical level, the small student population has resulted in a very large per pupil cost. New Hampshire's tax structure places the largest burden on property owners for education costs because state aid to education is the lowest percentage in the United States. And while Harrisville's taxes are the second lowest in Cheshire County, the high per pupil costs have prompted many questions about the feasibility of maintaining an elementary school in town. According to NH Department of Education statistics, Harrisville has consistently had one of the highest per-pupil costs in NH. For example, in the 2012-13 school year, Harrisville's cost was \$31,063 versus a state average of \$13,627.

Despite population changes and economic demands, Harrisville has continually reinforced its support for keeping K-6 education in town. There are, however, concerns about how significantly the School Board can control costs in the long run and how small Harrisville should allow the school to become.

The School Board initiated a program in 2011 called Affordable Choice that allows residents of area towns to pay tuition of \$4900 per year for their child to attend HWES and participate in the BASP.

Due to the intensity of conversations about the importance of keeping an elementary school in town *vis a vis* a frugal education budget, it becomes important for the School Board and the Town to initiate and sustain conversations about the school. The School Board needs to be transparent about its financial data so residents can all have the same figures and data sets to use in their thinking about the school's future. School populations are not always predictable but it would be of benefit to all town residents for the School Board to create a long-term strategic plan.

Town responses to drafts of the entire Master Plan were thoughtful and articulate and no section elicited a greater number of responses than Education. The committee received comments from eight households and these expressed the importance of continuing to have an elementary school in town.

Supporting responses cited the following:

- The excellent reputation of HWES as a key factor in their decision to move to Harrisville.
- The role the school plays as a catalyst in building community connections.
- Having a short bus ride for very young children.
- The consistent success Harrisville students have had at Keene Middle and High Schools.
- The true compassion and affection the teachers have for their students, even for years after teaching the children.
- The responsiveness of the teachers to the individual needs of the students.
- The direct correlation between high home values in communities that have a good local elementary school.
- The importance of local control over the curriculum and costs of the local school.
- The climate of safety, creativity, community and friendship created within HWES.
- Individual attention received by HWES students in the small classes.

Town residents who question the wisdom of maintaining an elementary school in town cited high costs that possibly absorb tax dollars that could go to other town needs. They also desired a town-wide conversations about the school's sustainability and cost-effectiveness.

The widespread and fervent support of HWES leads to directives to the town and School Board to continue to develop creative and effective ways of increasing the school population. In 2013, a survey by Harrisville's Town Clerk showed that the next five years will bring continued increases in student numbers, based on children in homes and registered births. Close monitoring of population trends, along with greater and more public financial transparency, will contribute greatly to the quality of town discussions about the education of its children.

B. Objectives:

Maintain the Harrisville Wells Memorial School for the following reasons:

- High Quality Education. The Harrisville Wells Memorial School provides an exceptional education in a small school setting. This reputation has been promoted outside the area by the Affordable Choice program that has brought increased visibility and new students to the school by creating a "destination school." This was advocated by Harrisville 2020 attendees, and also serves to attract families and new citizens to Harrisville. In the 2013-14 school year, seven students were part of the Affordable Choice program.
- Economics. The presence of a K-6 school in Harrisville buoys/elevates property values. This is important as 30 % of the town population is over 65 and these properties may flip to a younger generation within the next 10-20 years. This increases the importance of maintaining a K-6 school within the school border and of steadying property values.¹
- Heightened community involvement. The School Board will make all reasonable efforts to convey information about HWES's budget, enrollment, and programs, and will seek to

¹See appendix for research and discussion about the impact of schools on property values.

engage the widest possible involvement of the community in significant matters of future planning/decision making.

- Support to young working families. The continuation of a strong after school program is essential to parents who work outside of town. The program provides a safe place for homework help, exercise and extended educational activities for the town's youth.
- Financial asset. The school building is a valuable asset to Harrisville, and maintaining an operating school is far more cost-effective than reopening a building in the future. The building is paid for and currently acts not only as a K-6 school but also, also as the largest indoor gathering place in town as well as an emergency shelter for townspeople due to its space and backup generator. In addition, the town voted in 2014, under warrant article #6 of the school board meeting, to acquire land from an abutter for expanded recreational use.
- Business. In order to support and encourage the presence of small business owners, tradesmen, craftspeople, artists, not-for-profits and other workers in Harrisville, the presence of both a Childrens' center and a K-6 school is important to both workers and business owners.
- Local Control: The HWES School Board and residents of the town have the opportunity to vote on and influence curriculum choices at the school, which they would not be able to do if Harrisville students attended Marlborough School. Also, Harrisville would have little to no control over fees assessed by Marlborough in the future in respect of elementary education for Harrisville students. Ask the town and the School Board to have regular discussions about school matters, financial, social and curricular. The School Board will also pursue a strategic plan for the school and the town's education needs for at least a 10-year period. This plan will examine other options to the current situation, also.
- Leadership. The Staff and School Board will strive to contain costs and increase communication with the town, while providing the high quality education the community expects.
- The Middle and High school students of Harrisville attend the Keene schools offering greater opportunities for students as their interests and talents develop during their teen years. Currently Harrisville is in a 20-year contract with the City of Keene to provide education for grades 7-12 until the year 2026.

C. Implementations:

- Growth. The town will continue to attract students to the school through the Affordable Choice program, potential agreements with other towns, and making Harrisville more affordable for younger families.
- High quality education. The School and its leadership will continue to keep the level of education at an exemplary level in order to attract and maintain students to the Harrisville Wells Memorial School. Although the per student cost is high, it more accurately reflects the reality of maintaining an effective level of staffing for a small student population. However, it is important for the School Board to strive in this challenging environment to

contain educational costs, while providing the high quality education the community expects.

- Economics. Public schools like Harrisville may see a movement back to public education due to a new federal emphasis on a more rigorous curriculum. The Harrisville School Board is encouraged to begin to negotiate with SAU 29 in advance of the 2026 contract renewal date to establish more local control over costs and the quality of education provided by the SAU. An agenda of what might be negotiated in the short-term and by the end of the contract period should be set as soon as feasible so that negotiations might result in more SAU adaptability to local concerns.
- Other contiguous towns may share similar local “control” concerns. The Board should consider dialogue with such contiguous towns to determine if there are shared local positions from which a coalition of towns might negotiate with more clout with SAU-29.
- The town’s economic sector. The school and the Board will continue to work with the town’s business sector - the small business owners, trades people, artists/craftspersons, not-for-profits and other working segments of Harrisville - to maintain a mutually beneficial relationship and a school that supports economic growth.
- Financial Assets. The Town will continue to maintain the school building for use as a school, emergency shelter and location for town gatherings as well as both local community and nonprofit organizations. It will also seek additional ways the facility can be used by town groups when school is not in session.
- Strategic Plan: The School Board and Principal will provide a plan for long-term sustainability for the school. The plan should anticipate short- and long-term actions that might be taken based on cost and demographic shifts, considering the fact of the town’s long-term SAU contract. The Plan should also examine all available options, including but not limited to the feasibility of sharing school facilities with neighboring towns and other regional approaches to elementary education.
- SAU 29: The School Board is encouraged to begin to negotiate with SAU 29 in advance of the 2026 contract renewal date to increase local control over costs and quality of education, to the full extent possible. Public discussion and agenda-setting should begin well before such negotiations, to maximize SAU 29’s adaptability to local concerns and needs.
- Discussions: The School Board and the Town will encourage regular, informed meetings about school matters, whether financial, curricular or those about the culture and climate of the school.
- The Board should also strive to publish an annual “fact summary” that clearly shows the key cost and demographic considerations it takes into account in setting annual per pupil costs. Data transparency will help citizens work from the same data, regardless of their positions on school viability.

See Appendix: WMS School Statement

AGRICULTURE & LOCAL FOOD SUPPLY

A. Background, Vision and Intent:

Harrisville's economic base in its early days was agricultural, with sustenance depending on many hill farms. The livelihood was scrappy but critical to survival. This was a common pattern throughout New Hampshire. Now, New Hampshire produces less than 5% of the food it consumes and Harrisville wants to improve residents' access to good, locally produced food. Many residents have their own gardens; many others use plots in the Community Gardens on Nelson and Chesham Roads.

An Agricultural Committee emerged from the Harrisville 2020 workshops. This group reflected the strong concern by townspeople about the future of food availability and distribution in a world with a declining oil supply and erratic weather. The Agriculture Committee was approved as an Agriculture Commission in 2011, which gives the group official standing and a better means of speaking and listening to growers, consumers and experts in the many areas that contribute to NH agriculture. The main goals of the Commission are to support local commercial farmers, thereby increasing the local food supply, and to increase sustainability and the general quality of life in Harrisville.

In addition to activities of the Agriculture Commission, there are a lot of farming and agricultural endeavors in town. There are four substantial farms with livestock populations of sheep, goats, cows, pigs, chickens, turkeys, llamas and ancillary working dogs, as well as a maker of high quality hay. In addition there are honey producers, maple syrup makers, blueberry growers and many residents who grow vegetables, fruits and flowers in excess of what they will use themselves. Harrisville also has at least three businesses that cut and sell firewood in town.

In 2012, the Agriculture Commission initiated a bi-weekly farmers market in the center of Harrisville Village. This expanded to a weekly Farmers Market Friday (FMF) that runs from mid-June to late August. Nationally, there is an increasing trend in micro-agribusiness, which is well represented by FMF vendors.

The Harrisville General Store has been enthusiastic and loyal in supporting local agriculture. Much of the meat and produce at the store is from local sources and the store has begun monthly dinners with menu themes in keeping with produce of the season.

Objectives:

- Identify prime agricultural land and soils, and protect them through ordinance, conservation and other protective measures.
- Support backyard growers and local farmers through educational programs by agriculture experts.
- Continue support of Farmers Market Fridays and other markets of locally produced food from local growers.
- Develop ways that farmers and growers in town can share resources and larger pieces of equipment.
- Work towards having a voice in Farm Bills and other regulatory programs at state level.
- Continue support for the Community Gardens for gardeners who want to produce at least some of the food they consume.
- Consider ways the town can facilitate and educate about food storage, preparation and preservation.

C. Implementations:

- Make zoning changes to protect land that is currently used as farmland or is well suited for future agriculture use.
- Make it advantageous to preserve fields and create more open spaces.
- Continue timely educational programs on important skills, background knowledge.
- Work towards a work/equipment exchange program.
- Bring perspectives on issues and proposed legislation to the attention of townspeople.
- Continue with the oversight and operation of the Community Gardens.



TRANSPORTATION

A. Background, Vision and Intent:

In the coming decades, the risks associated with climate change and possible price/availability concerns respecting fossil fuels will have major effects on our transportation needs and patterns. Clearly, Harrisville should prepare for transportation challenges that will be influenced by these factors.

Even absent these factors (although especially considering them), a community that is friendly to pedestrians and bicyclists, and that affords other expanded and flexible transportation options, will be a much more attractive and desirable place to live, and property values will be stronger. Strategies for preparing Harrisville to deal with future energy challenges should also include the development of public transportation alternatives. All of these steps will be consistent with desired reductions in personal motor vehicle use, heightened care in energy use, and business/household expense savings. They will also provide other personal and public benefits, e.g., fitness and community spirit.

Road Design

The road network in Harrisville is adequate for the current and expected future levels of motorized traffic. The major and most heavily traveled roads (Route 137, Chesham Road, Silver Lake Road, Breed Road, Nelson Road, Main Street, Dublin Road, and Hancock Road) are mostly Class II roads that are owned, controlled, and maintained by the State. Overall, with minor exceptions, the town-maintained roads are in adequate condition. Necessary improvements of the town's roads and bridges should receive ongoing funding through the Capital Improvement Program.

In 2000 the New Hampshire Department of Transportation updated its Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan that was initially adopted in 1977. The stated primary goal of the current Statewide Plan is "to recognize, support and encourage bicycling and walking as alternatives to motorized forms of transportation". The plan requires the NH-DOT to consider bicycle/pedestrian concerns in all transportation projects, and where conditions permit, to provide pavement markings as part of normal re-stripping operations to create paved shoulders where none exist now. Despite this clear mandate, the DOT did not generate any bicycle/pedestrian markers whatsoever when major portions of the state roads in town were repaved in 2010 and 2011.

Currently the town's existing roads are designed exclusively for motor vehicle use, with virtually no provision for other uses. The main roads throughout town are not safe for pedestrian and bicycle traffic, as they lack designated sidewalks and defined bicycle lanes. This situation actively discourages any non-motorized use of the roads in Harrisville, even over relatively short distances.

The creation of a more pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly road system will increase non-motorized transportation options for residents and increase the overall quality of life in town. For example, it will:

- Make streets safer for all non-motorized users and increase mobility, especially for children and elderly residents. These groups (among others) will have more opportunities to be physically active; children would be more likely to walk or bike to school, possibly with attendant savings in school transportation costs.
- Promote increased physical activity and public health. Various studies have established a direct link between walkability of local streets and the health of residents. Inactivity is a major factor in many increasingly problematic illnesses: obesity, diabetes, heart disease,

and stroke. A future network of safe sidewalks and bike lanes on our roads will invite more people to walk and bike for their own health and pleasure.

- Increase the sense of community. People who live in more walkable neighborhoods tend to be more socially involved with their neighbors, and more likely to be active in their communities.
- Save energy and money. Such a policy would benefit the environment. Expense savings would apply both to the costs of operating and maintaining automobiles, and to health care.
- Reduce vehicle emissions and air pollution, and reduce traffic volume, dangers, injuries, and noise.

Public Transportation

Our low population density and isolated geographic location present huge hurdles for establishing a viable public transportation system. This has meant that living in Harrisville is less desirable, or even impossible, for persons who commute or travel elsewhere in the region but are unable, disinclined, or not equipped to drive there. For the most part, an integrated and coordinated public transit system cannot be developed by the town on its own. It needs to be built on a regional basis in cooperation with other municipalities, regional planning and human services agencies, school systems, and private transportation providers. It will also require some degree of funding via grants and/or provided directly by area towns and the county. The Town should be prepared to invest and actively participate in such future initiatives to create workable regional public transportation options.

Transportation Center

The possible creation of a conveniently-located, multi-purpose transportation center will further support development of future transportation options. Such a transportation center could accommodate many uses; e.g., a bus station/stop for school/public purposes, a park & ride station, a gas and/or electric charging station for private vehicles, a pick-up, drop-off and waiting area with a simple shelter, a location for bicycle racks, and ample parking for cars. The transportation center could also serve as a common parking area for events like farmers markets, old home days, or fireworks. Since it is difficult to predict what our future transportation needs and possibilities might entail, the transportation center should be developed carefully, after thorough analysis, in order to avoid any inefficient or unnecessary spending.

B. Objectives

Harrisville must begin the process of analyzing the creation of a transportation system that serves the mobility needs of all residents, establishes viable choices including alternative transportation modes, reduces the use of fossil fuels, allows people to be less dependent on their cars, facilitates physical health and community, provides a safe, well-maintained network of roads, sidewalks, trails, and bicycle paths, and offers a public transportation system that connects Harrisville to the region in an affordable, flexible, and convenient way. Such a process can and should include the following components:

1. Consider a comprehensive Road Policy, both locally and with state assistance and cooperation, that incorporates the development of a bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly road network and more walkable neighborhoods.
2. Plan, fund and gradually construct sidewalks in village centers, and safe, pedestrian and bicycle paths along road sections. The following road sections should be given priority:
 - Nelson Road from Tolman Pond Road to the Chesham Road intersection
 - Chesham Road from Wells Memorial School/Brown Road to the Nelson Road intersection

- Main Street from the Chesham/Nelson Road intersection to Skatutakee Road..
3. Examine options for traffic calming and safety features along the major roads, such as speed bumps, lower speed limits, crosswalks, pavement markings, narrower car lanes, increased overall road width to achieve wider shoulder space, wider paved shoulders, and designated bus stops.
 4. Actively coordinate the network of rails-to-trails pathways and other backland trails in town with Harrisville's need for greater pedestrian facilities.
 5. Participate in the federal Safe Routes to School Program, which provides funding for measures that encourage children to walk and ride bicycles between home and school.
 6. Support, fund, and participate in regional initiatives to develop regional public transportation options, and work towards establishing public transportation links to Keene and Peterborough.
 7. Research, plan for, and ultimately purchase a site for a transportation center, and develop it over time according to a variety of emerging transportation trends and needs.

It is very important that all sidewalks and paths are as continuous and interconnected as possible. They should seek to link major residential areas to frequently-visited locations (such as the post office, general store, Wells Memorial School, town beach, town offices, community garden, and a future transportation center) and could connect with or rely on recreational trails

C. Implementations

1. Establish a standing transportation committee that will be charged with coordination of all transportation-related activities, planning, and implementation of the transportation section of the Master Plan.
2. Fund a comprehensive feasibility study to take place within the next three years. Among other things, the feasibility study should examine options and challenges for creating more pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly roads, and provide recommendations and cost estimates for construction and maintenance.
3. Develop and adopt, in consideration of the results of the feasibility study, a long-term implementation plan for adding safe pedestrian and bicycle paths to our roads over the next two decades.
4. Develop, fund and maintain a capital improvement plan for financing the adopted long-term implementation plan for building pedestrian and bicycle paths and other safety measures on the town's roadways.
5. Study the possible relationship between rails-to-trails pathways and/or other backland trails on the one hand, and sidewalks and bicycle paths on the other hand, to develop a comprehensive network by which pedestrians and bicyclists can get around Harrisville safely and conveniently. This will or may include: (a) acquisition of rights or property; (b) necessary approvals; (c) cost issues regarding acquisition and maintenance; (d) rules governing uses; and (e) coordination with the Rails-to-Trails committee.
6. Work with the NH Department of Transportation (DOT) to implement its Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan in Harrisville. The town should insist on the safe accommodation of non-motorized users on all state roads, and seek state funding and cost sharing.
7. Work with school officials to ensure participation in the Safe Routes to School Program, and coordinate with them all transportation measures that involve school children.
8. Support and pursue future public transportation options by:
 - Funding and working with the Southwest Region Planning Commission in any efforts to establish or build a regional transit system serving Harrisville;
 - Reworking school transportation to accommodate public transportation
9. Investigate the possibility of a communally-shared bicycle use program, and install racks

- for storing and locking bicycles at regularly frequented town locations.
10. Consider participation in and support for any emerging initiatives towards more efficient automobile use, such as ride-share, car-share, or zip-car programs.
 11. Establish and fund a Capital Improvement Program for the purchase and subsequent maintenance of a transportation center site.
 12. Analyze relevant needs and options, identify properties that might be feasible for a transportation center, and purchase an available site if and when it becomes available.

RECREATION

A. Background, Vision and Intent:

Recreation provides multiple benefits. It fosters good health and fitness. Use of public space enhances a sense of community and creates a friendlier environment. A town with popular recreational facilities attracts residents, visitors, businesses, and community activity. Last but certainly not least, recreation helps put the stresses of life in perspective, improves attitudes, lessens tensions, and forges bonds between people.

Harrisville enjoys naturally existing resources for recreation. With the many lakes and ponds in town, we have abundant opportunities for water and ice sports. Our town beaches are well-maintained and are used frequently. Also, we have a network of hiking, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, and snowmobiling trails in town, as well as the “rails-to-trails” paths. In addition to natural assets, we have an oral history series, “Spinning Harrisville Yarns”, and other events at the Library, and traditions of July 4th fireworks, Old Home Days, town dinners, and occasional dances.

A plan for recreation - especially in a small town - should be informal, cost-efficient, flexible, adaptable and largely volunteer driven. Interests and levels of use can and do change considerably over time. Our natural environment provides many wonderful forms of recreation; we must protect these resources for such purposes (among others). Our own efforts to create recreational activities, however, should be capable of being tailored to fit evolving needs.

B. Objectives:

1. Many of Harrisville’s recreational opportunities are found in nature. Other resources for recreation can be developed by the Town. Opportunities may also exist, with the right encouragement, for purely private development or some form of a public/private partnership. Examples of privately run activities could include cross-country skiing facilities, the renting of canoes, kayaks, or rowboats, cooking classes/facilities, an art gallery or art classes, or even a restaurant, pub or music venue.
2. The Town of Harrisville’s Plan for recreation can be organized into the following categories: (a) Naturally-existing recreational resources; (b) Town efforts to provide athletic or leisure activities for residents; (c) Community-building activities; and (d) Children-oriented recreational facilities. Many of these subjects overlap, of course.
 - i. Naturally-existing recreational resources:
 - Our lakes and ponds are critical to recreation in Harrisville. We must protect them vigilantly; this subject is treated in the Water Protection and Management chapter. Also, we must maintain our Town Beaches (Sunset Beach and the South Beach), the boat launches/public access on all of the lakes and ponds, and the picnic area on Seaver Reservoir.
 - Harrisville Trails has performed excellent service over the years in maintaining, improving and extending the rails-to-trails paths. This group should continue its efforts in this respect, and also accept responsibility for oversight of other town trails, in addition to those on the railroad beds. This would not include the portion of the Monadnock-Sunapee Trail in Harrisville and the Eliza Adams Gorge trail, which are covered by other organizations, but would include trails around or near Skatutakee Lake, Russell Reservoir, and Eastview.
 - Upgrade and maintain a well-developed trail system that is linked to future

side-walks and provides connections to different areas of town, open spaces, recreational destinations, and surrounding towns.

ii. Athletic and leisure activities:

- The Town will analyze potential options for establishing a centrally located indoor Recreational Center. The purpose would be to provide residents with a place to congregate, exercise, seek out entertainment of various types, and socialize. Facilities could include such features as: basic exercise equipment; half-court basketball; vending machines; seating for such events as movies, music, other performances, and lectures; space for dances, exercise classes, etc.; and games and activities for all ages (from Scrabble and jigsaw puzzles to Ping-Pong and Foosball). This analysis will address whether some existing space could be utilized for this purpose, or if a new building constructed on town property would be preferable.
- The Town will analyze potential options for acquiring space for a centrally located field and/or public park land that serves as a public gathering place for recreation, physical activity and socialization for residents of all ages. It could have a playground for younger children, be a “hang-out” place for teenagers and provide opportunities for such uses as baseball, soccer, tennis, touch football, ultimate Frisbee, or the like. This field could also support functions such as the Fire Department’s Barbecue or approved uses by private groups, for instance a flea market.

iii. Community-building activities:

- Harrisville will continue to support such activities as Old Home Days, the July 4th Fireworks, a public lecture series, town dinners, occasional dances, and other events to which the entire town will be invited. As interests may evolve over time, other types of community activities or events might be added or substituted.

iv. Children-oriented activities:

- Harrisville took a positive step to provide quality facilities at the HWES for recreational purposes by authorizing, in 2014, the purchase of ½ acre of adjacent land to expand playing fields. When acquired and operational, this expanded recreational area could include potential uses beyond school hours. In addition, school use of new or upgraded facilities in town should be explored and encouraged.

C. Implementations:

1. The Selectmen will appoint a committee charged with analyzing, proposing and, as may be appropriate, implementing the acquisition of an outdoor field/public park property and playground, and/or the development of indoor recreational facilities for town use. This will include developing proposals to be submitted at Town Meeting to establish a capital fund for these purposes.
2. The Harrisville Trails group will prepare and make available maps of all public access trails in Harrisville. Copies of such maps will be available in the Town Clerk’s office. In addition, the Conservation Commission and the Rails-to-Trails Committee will convene a joint meeting to discuss: (a) should the efforts of the two entities be combined; (b) should certain designated trails in Harrisville be proposed for use by snowmobiles and/or horses, with other trails limited to pedestrian use; (c) how will the maintenance, improvement,

and extension of all trails in Harrisville be performed, including planning, volunteer support, funding, budgeting, materials, notices/rights-of-way, and decision-making processes.

3. The Conservation Commission, in cooperation with the Lake Associations, will closely monitor water quality on a regular basis, with careful attention given to the effect of motorized watercraft in small lakes and ponds. Regulation of the use of motorized watercraft will be implemented wherever necessary to reduce noise, to prevent degradation of the water quality in town lakes and ponds, or to ensure that these lakes and ponds remain suitable for the broadest possible uses.
4. On a periodic basis, town residents will consider ways in which to preserve and expand such community-building events as town dinners, dances, lectures, concerts, and other social gatherings. These events, as they are continued or new ones are added, will be open to all town residents.
5. The Selectmen will consider means by which private entities could be encouraged to establish and maintain businesses in town that will heighten recreational opportunities for Harrisville residents. Alternatively, the Selectmen will delegate this analysis to a designated committee or a local economic development organization.
6. The Conservation Commission will analyze the costs/benefits of any potential improvements or enhancements made to the picnic area on Seaver Pond, or to either of the two town beaches, for use by town residents. The Commission will make a recommendation to the Selectmen or directly to Town Meeting in respect of any proposals arising from this analysis.



REGIONAL COOPERATION

A. Background, Vision, and Intent:

Population growth in New Hampshire is slowing; in many places it shows an actual decline. In addition, median age is increasing. These trends apply generally in Harrisville*, and in certain other nearby towns. Also, in recent years, services and resources provided by the State of New Hampshire to towns have been limited or reduced.

In the long run, such trends may necessitate the coordination and provision of certain essential or useful services on a regional, rather than on a Town-wide, basis. Such an outcome may be inevitable based on demographics, economics, and simple numbers. Aging and reduced population, and other conditions, may favor transition to a regional approach that by its nature would permit enhanced economies of scale, quality of service, and cost-effectiveness.

Ultimately, all towns (Harrisville included) want access to the best municipal services; in one or more areas this might be optimally achievable on a regional or shared basis. There are innumerable ways in which this could be pursued and accomplished. It could occur on an incremental basis or by way of a larger structural change. Many services could be bundled for these purposes, or they could be treated individually or in small sets. As to timing, it could involve lengthy, tiered schedules or immediate transitions.

Such services could include, among other things: (a) Town administration; (b) Schools; (c) Police; (d) Fire and rescue; (e) Emergency management; (f) Roads; (g) Building inspection and/or property assessment; (h) Recycling; (i) Economic, technological, energy, transportation, and housing development; (j) Conservation; and (k) Recreation. Towns where regional cooperation involving Harrisville will or might be most logical include: Nelson, Dublin, Marlborough, Roxbury, Sullivan, and Hancock. Ambulance service is now handled through R. J. Dilusio Ambulance Service in Keene. Recently, Peterborough dramatically increased its ambulance service, which might be a better orientation for Harrisville residents in the eastern part of town.

In 2011, Harrisville passed a warrant article to “raise and appropriate the sum of \$6,000 as Harrisville’s share to contract with a consulting firm to assess municipal services within and abutting Towns of Dublin and Nelson. The intention of said study is to identify opportunities where shared facilities, equipment, personnel or services might lead to cost reductions, improved service quality, or further cost-avoidance for any or all of the three communities.” Unfortunately, both Dublin and Nelson declined to support any such study, and therefore the funds thus appropriated in Harrisville were never used for these purposes.

B. Objectives:

Naturally, in this context “it takes two [or more] to tango.” Harrisville’s Master Plan is not published to influence thought in surrounding towns; however, to the extent regional cooperation will be beneficial or vital in the future, we must begin to consider its implications for our Town. Planning is critical, and that planning might also address forms of communication and persuasion with other towns as well. Their perspectives, evolving needs, and planning activities must all be taken into account if regional cooperation is to progress.

1. See “Demographic Considerations.” For example, the 2000 population of Harrisville was 1021; by 2012 it was 961. In 1998, HWES had an enrollment of 82 students; as of September 2014, the enrolment stood at 51.

Some towns share resources on the basis of a “satellite” interacting with a larger body.* Given Harrisville’s location, there would likely need to be a more equal sharing of management and execution responsibilities between our town and other cooperating municipalities. An exception to this is our grade 7-12 schooling, which is provided for us by Keene; other such exceptions might exist as to future planning, as well. However, the realities suggest that most planning in this direction would require true engagement with and the participation of other nearby towns, from an early point in the process.

For this reason, Harrisville’s first objective is to find common ground with towns in this region regarding the study/analysis of sharing town services. Overly elaborate steps toward pursuit of this analysis by Harrisville alone would be counter-productive. Obviously, geography, mutual interests, and cohesive planning operations all constitute critical aspects of the process of advancing regional cooperation.

However, evolution of a planning process must emerge from somewhere. Coordination may make sense with Nelson and Dublin, but we cannot ignore possible connections with such other towns as Marlborough, Roxbury, Sullivan, and Hancock. Harrisville can and should be willing to look forward, to anticipate economic, demographic, and political changes, and to begin outlining approaches to improving the quality of local municipal services on a regional basis.

C. Implementations:

1. Focus on regionally-shared services must commence with the Selectmen. Over the next several years, possible options should be discussed among the Selectmen and with the Town leaders responsible for the relevant services in Harrisville. Written reports on these discussions should be made to the Town periodically. On a regular and timely basis, outreach should be made by the Selectmen to the officials of one or more nearby towns regarding interest in any such options that may be under consideration in Harrisville.
2. In the event of any expressions of interest in other towns, the Selectmen will submit a new warrant article (like the one passed in 2011) supporting the funding of study of municipal services provided on a regional basis, conditional on such funding being provided by one or more other towns.
3. Each town official responsible for a service that could be provided on a regional basis will consider it part of his or her responsibility to consider any planning, discussions, analyses, consulting, recommendations, or other steps involving regional coordination that may be appropriate, in respect of his or her budget-making duties. Hence, at a minimum, thought will be given to such issues annually, and in the context of assessing the necessary expenses for providing such services on a Town-only basis in the coming year.
4. The Planning Board will consider, at least on a triennial basis, the evolving need for or potential benefits from regional coordination of services. To the extent possible, this will include review of any new practices of this sort in New Hampshire, other experience or studies, and input received from town officials. In advance of such consideration, the

2. For example, the town of Sharon “shares” police, fire, and recycling services with Peterborough, charged out on the basis of the relevant population or property values ratios between the two towns; in each case, these services are administered by Peterborough town officials.

Planning Board will solicit specific input/comments from the relevant town officials, including any input that might be available from leaders in nearby towns.

5. Any invitation from another town, or proposal generated by any town official in Harrisville, regarding the study or implementation of regional cooperation in providing municipal services, will be made the subject of a written report by the Selectmen contained in the next Annual Report, or sooner as they may deem appropriate.

Governance

A. Background, Vision, and Intent:

Good governance exists on a local level when town matters are handled thoughtfully and competently, in a timely manner, with clarity and openness; and when people are treated respectfully, with fairness and consistency. These are important goals for governance, even in a town as small as Harrisville.

Harrisville is administered by a three-member Board of Selectmen. The Town Meeting is the legislative body of the Town, and the Selectmen represent the executive, or administrative, branch. In addition to the Selectmen, other local boards participate in municipal government, i.e., the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Adjustment, School Board, Conservation Commission, Historic District Commission, and Agricultural Commission. Also, other public servants are elected at Town Meeting or appointed by the Selectmen.

Most people serving in these capacities are volunteers, and none of them are fully compensated for the value of their services. Necessarily, many issues addressed by the operations of local government involve the officials' own friends, acquaintances, and neighbors. There has been a long tradition of informality in many aspects of local government in Harrisville, as is the case in most towns of a similar size and nature. Further, there are many ways – necessarily, in a town like Harrisville – that matters of public interest are managed by private organizations (such as Historic Harrisville, Inc. or the Lake Associations) or by individuals. These circumstances each present distinct challenges to the implementation of good governing practices.

Harrisville would like to preserve an element of friendly informality in its governance, but not to the detriment of any principles of fairness, consistency, clarity, transparency, inclusion, professionalism, or attention to necessary detail. The primary tool for protecting these values is the understanding and use of appropriate governing procedures and processes. Significantly, most of these best practices do exist currently in Harrisville. The objectives are to strengthen them and improve consistency as needed.

B. Objectives:

1. Local government works best when town officials have a correct and common understanding of the roles of their office or function, and of the roles of other officials with whom they must work. Harrisville will want to create (where necessary) and preserve clarity about the relationships between and among Town officers and Boards, and about the breadth and purview of their various responsibilities.

2. Consistency is served when good precedents are created and followed. In local government activities, deviations from existing ordinances and precedents tend to foster discord and disorder. Naturally, there are many shades of gray in our ordinances and procedures, but there are also various techniques for dealing effectively with the ambiguities that may result. These include: (a) appropriate training or education; (b) openness, consistency, and transparency in governance; (c) procedural rules being carefully established and implemented; (d) objectivity in the interpretation and application of rules and practices; and (e) broad participation in decision-making activities. These techniques can always be honed and improved, in Harrisville the same as everywhere else.

3. Governance, of course, strives to excel both on procedural *and* substantive grounds. Sound judgment involves, among other things: (a) careful thought, research and analysis, (b) review of the relevant facts and principles, (c) input from all appropriate sources and perspectives, (d) available expertise, and (e) due deliberation. Often, there are pertinent requirements in State RSAs and other legal authorities that must be interpreted and applied. Harrisville is well-suited to follow through on good decision-making practices. It has a highly sophisticated population which is also well-represented in our public offices, a wealth of various types of expertise working or residing within Town, and the active participation of certain influential non-governmental organizations serving in leadership roles, such as Historic Harrisville, Inc., the several post-2020 Vision committees, and the Lake Associations.
4. A central objective regarding governance in Harrisville is to continue to obtain the maximum available benefit from volunteer or minimally paid Town officers. This is an ever-present challenge, given demands of town residents' work and home lives, a more mobile population, greater and more complex demands on Town officials, and the likelihood of reduced resources available from the State of New Hampshire. Naturally, the benefits of utilizing volunteer services must align with the more limited time demands that can be placed on such persons. This will always involve a tension between the desire to facilitate training, experience and professionalism in our Town officials, versus an appreciation that these people will have other legitimate obligations and interests beyond their governing roles. Harrisville could meet the challenge of expanding the base of board and committee volunteers by creating involvement strategies and succession plans for all boards and commissions.
5. The overall professionalism and successful long-range planning of Harrisville would be greatly aided by the development of concrete methods of implementing the objectives described in this Master Plan.

C. Implementations:

1. The Selectmen and representatives from other boards, commissions, committees, and citizen groups should undertake a regular, shared process of analyzing, prioritizing, and implementing elements of this Master Plan. This process of strategic planning will also reflect and interact with the annual Capital Improvement Plan and periodic forums within the town. There should also be periodic assessment and evaluation of progress made.
2. The Selectmen should consider the preparation of a description, whether in the form of an organizational chart or some other format or set of guidelines, of the specific roles and responsibilities of each of the entities (Boards, Commissions, officers) of Town government, their legislative rights, duties and limitations, their exclusive authorities, how they may or should interact with each other, and how they may or should interact with other entities, such as State government or private organizations. This will help educate new members, and enhance clarity about the relative roles of the various entities of local government.
3. It would also be useful to have clear descriptions of qualifications/experience that would be desired in candidates for roles in Town governance. Each official or Board responsible for selecting persons for roles in local government should consider some formal description of these desired qualities; this would provide additional clarity for candidates and the selecting entities in the process of soliciting new members, etc. The descriptions could be prepared in writing, and even maintained centrally, so that potential volunteers

could consider skills and interests needed by the various functions of Town government in a more coordinated fashion. Perhaps even more significantly, this would formalize a process by which greater thought and attention may be given on a regular basis to succession-planning for our various Boards and positions.

4. Some planning should be done regarding issues of training and education for Town officials and Board members. As noted, this must take into account that volunteers will likely have less available time for lengthy coursework. However, there may be training opportunities that could be offered collectively, or tailored to specific needs, or already conveniently available through sources such as State agencies or online facilities. In the past, Town officials have generally been responsible for seeking out and pursuing their own training needs and those of their Board or department, and this undoubtedly will continue. However, it would be helpful for the Town to conduct some type of periodic review of training/education needs on a broader basis, and as to what might be available or deliverable on a *collective* basis for multiple Town officials. Also, the Town should identify an officer or body that would be authorized to help implement or facilitate such training needs.
5. Harrisville must always ensure that certain basic procedural rules are being observed in its governing functions. These are necessary to provide our community with fair and consistent practices *and* to eliminate any perception of subjective treatment or inappropriate “favoritism.” These procedural rules should be memorialized in writing, and posted on the Town website, for use by all persons serving on Town Boards or Commissions. There may be many diverse subject matters contained in such a manual, but typically it would address: (a) The holding of regular meetings; (b) Sufficient notice of meetings; (c) Minutes taken at the meetings and made available thereafter; (d) Meeting rules (*e.g.*, Robert’s Rules of Order) being followed; (e) Other record-keeping being performed timely and accurately; (f) Use of agendas and publicly-available materials at meetings; (g) Creation and implementation of document retention policies, including as to electronic records; (h) The generation of written recommendations, reports, or memoranda, circulated as may be appropriate to other bodies, for the Town Meeting, and to the public; and (i) Full transparency in the operations of Town business, including decision-making activities, the process for approving various permits, entering into contracts, the setting of priorities, planning processes, availability of meeting minutes, and the selection of new officials and Board members.
6. To the extent possible, the Town should encourage the use of “good governance” principles by its prominent private organizations. Town officials, representatives of private organizations, and individuals involved in public activities should all be encouraged to understand and use productive methods of resolving conflict and of performing high quality decision-making practices.
7. Consideration should be given to the shared use, regionally, of code enforcement officers or other Town officials. This would have the following potential advantages: (a) generate cost savings; (b) permit a possible improvement in expertise or professionalism, together with efficiencies that may result from a more highly trained or higher paid individual serving in such role(s); (c) ensure the appearance (or possibly even the reality) of more even-handed and impartial treatment, where the officer was not necessarily connected directly to Town people or institutions; and (d) allow for further coordination with our regional partners on matters that might be of common interest, or to deter counter-productive or confusing distinctions between neighboring towns. Obviously, there are

also many potential downsides; hence, we are recommending this for study, not immediate implementation.

8. Further to this concept of regional cooperation, such an approach may also apply to the retention of a professional Town Administrator, hired to be responsible administratively for certain functions across several towns. This could potentially have many of the benefits identified in paragraph 5, above. In addition, it might free the Selectmen from some of the more mundane (and demanding) aspects of their work, permitting a more strategic and dynamic job description for the role of Selectman in Harrisville.
9. It is critical to good governance in Harrisville that we establish and maintain clear and consistent “conflict of interest” rules for all persons serving in local government, and that these rules are in writing, are provided to all officials and Board/Commission members, and are impartially enforced.
10. Our ordinances and other governing rules should be clear, straightforward, and capable of being implemented or enforced rationally, effectively and with minimum amounts of cost, burden or disconnect with other laws or ordinances. Harrisville should undertake an orderly process to review, assess, simplify, and clarify its existing ordinances to enhance these qualities.

APPENDIX I

Harrisville 2020 Mind Map Tabulation of colored dots (3) that each participant placed to indicate their highest priorities.

- i. Sustainability (Growing own food) [25]
- ii. Zero-net energy homes [3]
- iii. Family
- iv. Community
- v. Green streets and rain gardens [1]
- vi. Green burial [1]
- vii. Support small farms [8]
- viii. Revitalization of solar energy, hydropower, wind energy [18]
- ix. Recycle
- x. Reliable electricity, underground power/phone lines [9]
 - Climate Change (Goodbye Sugar Maple; Hello Parsley Hawthorn) (Melting ice caps)[8]
- xi. Deteriorating Infrastructure (Potholes) [6]
- xii. Lack of technical updating (cell phone, internet, etc.) [16]
- xiii. Pandemics (Alt. schools in emergency) [1]
- xiv. Have a generator as we are “last helped”
- xv. Revitalization of solar power, hydropower, wind energy [18]
 - Decline in Volunteerism and Community Involvement [2]
- xvi. More awareness of ambulance in community [2]
 - Value the talented members of our community
 - Many skills are represented
- xvii. Need for better communication to link volunteers to perceived needs [5]
 - Locally organized walks and bike rides for charitable causes [2]
 - Doggie play groups bring people together
 - Need to be welcoming and supportive of young families (jobs, educ, housing) [7]
- xviii. High density-low cost housing [23]
 - For elderly and young families [2]
 - Co-housing communities [7]
 - Housing commission [1]
 - Zoning change and enforcement [12]
 - Establishing communication [2]
 - Shared (group) wellness opportunities (swimming, yoga, bike rides) [4]
- xix. Multi-generational recreation opportunities [2]
 - Indoor and outdoor [2]
 - Tavern at the mill or pub at the church [2]
 - Pub to hear music, meet, have a beer in the evening [5]
 - Open mic
 - Decrease in access to arts
- xx. Need to travel out of town for kids to receive/participate
- xx. Bring children together (painting, music, plays) [13]

- A play with the whole community (all ages) about Harrisville/stories
[1]
- Before/after school children's project (gardens, etc)
- xxi. Adult art groups
- Increasing affluence of our community and state and opportunity it presents [6]
- xxii. Economic inequality leads to lack of equal access (internet access, education)
- Decreasing equality in shares of aggregate income
 - Increasing population growth globally [1]
 - Protect the pride in Harrisville [2]
 - Increase regional support for services (fire, police, bldg. insp) [2]
 - Strategies to encourage, enable, and support volunteerism [2]
 - Changes in political landscape (taxes and other issues)
 - Regional ___ coop among towns [8]
 - Develop self-sufficiency to insulate from external problems [2]
 - Create quality education [3]
 - Access to capital (small business loans) [5]
 - Creative financial _____ for community priorities [2]
- xxiii. Communal assistance for small business (shared services, training, support, etc) [5]
- Assisted living facility [1]
- Finding the Harris family [6]
 - Mass consumerism (sharing resources) [2]
- xxiv. Making optimum use for building community
- Make optimum use of school building as a community center [2]
- Mega-banks removing local money [2]
 - Revitalizing traditionally old life skills consciously brought
 - Focus on community events that bring community together [6]
- xxv. Healthy Harrisville
- xxvi. Awareness of history and where it will take us [3]
- Lack of public transit and energy crisis [11]
- xxvii. Bus service to Keene and Peterborough
- xxviii. Bike paths [2]
- xxix. Walking paths [13]
- xxx. XC ski trails and hiking trails
- xxxi. Recreation opportunities for youth
- Increase in land conservation [10]
- xxxii. Conservation of farm land [4]
- Interest in historic preservation [5]
 - Decreases in available employment [3]
 - Concern for safe water [13]
- xxxiii. Improve quality, preventing weeds [3]
- Relative decline of education _____ [9]
- xxxiv. Harrisville can do a better job
- xxxv. Keep our school strong [4]

- xxxvi. Using older generation to volunteer in school, like in the very successful
“generational school” [2]
 - Spiritual life decrease (increase in individuality and not community) [8]
- xxxvii. Declining church affiliation and attendance [1]
 - Housing turnover [1]
- xxxviii. Consideration of village areas for further development (housing/business) [7]
- xxxix. Green housing
 - xl. Transitional housing /Affordable downsizing opportunities [4]
 - xli. Affordable housing for young and older-elderly housing in town center [5]
 - Aging population [20]
 - xlii. ____ this population to contribute to youth [1]
 - xliii. Medical services not easily accessible
 - xliv. Interest in lifelong learning [2]
 - xlv. Intergenerational activities [1]
 - xlvi. Elder housing
 - Appropriate for town character-No RiverMead!! [1]
- xlvii. Difficult for elderly need to leave town due to difficulty navigating in town
[8]
 - The summer vs. winter factor
- xlviii. Social support resources (psychosocial, wellness) [1]
 - Integration with younger population via jobs, experiences [1]
 - Hanging out, community facilities, community center