TECHNICAL PLANS

### Utilities + Facilities

**VISION CONNECTION**

* **Affordability:** Utilities are a major expense in general for residents, and contributes greatly to the cost of living
* **Safe & Resilient Community:** Town facilities and services are crucial during crises or emergencies and must be able to withstand and act during disasters
* **Social, Cultural, and Recreational Offerings:** Many town facilities such as the library and Volunteers Green are used for recreational, educational, or artistic purposes
* **Economic Development:** Availability of municipal water and sewer service, as well as cellphone and internet coverage can play a role in siting of new businesses
* **Mobility:** Coordinated updates to highway department and water resources infrastructure helps reduce traffic, construction time, and increases the value of our streetscapes

The Richmond utilities and facilities have been discussed across multiple components of this action plan. For planning purposes, we are sorting this technical plan into three categories: Richmond Facilities, Richmond Utilities, and Private or External Utilities and Facilities.

The town owns multiple properties and facilities including the town center, library, Richmond Water Resources Department, Volunteers Green, Richmond Fire Department, Richmond Highway Department, and others. Several town facilities are currently being energy audited for potential upgrades and renovations. The town center and library are historic facilities and their maintenance requires more care and funding than others in order to preserve historic integrity and modernize the facilities simultaneously.

The town-owned library building was opened on the first floor in 1991 and had a subsequent renovation and expansion in 2003 (paid entirely by private donations and grants). As a result, the heating and cooling is comprised of two different systems, one boiler and one furnace. The first floor radiant system, housed mainly in a dirt cellar, is subject to rodent and rust damage. The building’s basic structure dates to 1879 and the entire building requires repairs (slate roof, siding) the steeple is in particular need of upgrading. The fascia and trim of the steeple is rotted or broken, slates are cracked or missing and the safety of the finial is uncertain. Space allocated to staff and work functions is nominal, and lines of sight, necessary to serve and monitor visitors, are poor. The community room and the mezzanine lounge provide an important venue for community, governmental, and cultural groups to meet. An average of 460 people a week visited the library in 2016 and close cooperation with the Community Senior Center has increased visits. It is essential that the building be assessed, maintained and enhanced on a regular basis to ensure safety and access and provide the multitude of services to a growing community. Citizens of Richmond have voiced a desire to strengthen and enhance recreational, community, and cultural facilities in the Town. The Library is an integral part in meeting those demands.

Among the services Richmond provides to its residents are a municipal police force and a volunteer fire department. We also contract with a local private rescue service. A town police force is uncommon in our part of the county; most towns in eastern Chittenden County rely on the State Police to respond to calls. Most Richmond voters have long supported and valued our police service, and feel that the benefits outweigh the cost, although the cost is still on the minds of many tax payers. Our police department consists of a chief, 5 patrol officers and a part-time administrative assistant, with 6 vehicles and a police station. One officer is a School Resource Officer (SRO), spending much of his time at Camels Hump Middle School. Police coverage extends from 6:30 AM to 3 AM, and dispatch is handled by the state police in Williston. Our officers are part of the regional New England Police Benevolent Association Union. A feasibility study conducted in 2016 concluded that the police station was inadequate to meet current needs. Discussions have ranged from upgrading the present facility (within the Town Center building or building a new facility. County-wide discussions on regionalizing some or all of the police services have also been held over the last several years. The town currently has a committee that is charged with exploring all potential options for the future of policing in Richmond.

Our fire department is still, amazingly, a volunteer squad. The chief, assistant chief, 2 captains and approximately 15 volunteer firefighters do receive a per-call stipend, but the town budget is small for this critical and high risk service. The department responds to a variety of calls, from accident assists on I-89 or local roads, to medical assists in addition to reports of structure fires. They are dispatched from Shelburne and participate in a mutual assistance program with neighboring municipalities. The fire station is a 1970’s structure, which will continue to be adequate for the fire department’s requirements if some improvements are made. Their vehicles – 3 engines, 1 heavy rescue vehicle and an off-road brush truck with a small water tank – are on a town maintenance schedule and are adequate for current needs. Our new water storage tank and town water supply provide good water pressure and volume for foreseeable firefighting needs. Richmond is lucky to have this service and will continue to celebrate its dedicated volunteers.

The Richmond Highway Department building is also a relatively new structure and is currently adequate for their needs. The Highway Department vehicles include a roadside mower, four dump trucks, an excavator, a grader, a bucket loader, two trailers, a small tractor with a snow blower, and 3 pickup trucks. Highway vehicles are replaced relatively often compared to other town vehicles and are maintained regularly due to their high level of wear and tear. The Highway Department also maintains other town vehicles including Water Resources vehicles and police cruisers.

Richmond Rescue, located on Railroad Street, is a private emergency medical and rescue organization that contracts with Richmond and other towns in the region to provide rescue services. Funds for the service are raised through subscriptions, donations, fees for service and town contracts. Dispatch is also provided by the Shelburne service that dispatches for fire, with some 911 calls being routed through the state police.

The town recently purchased forest land for municipal ownership, conservation, and public recreation. A long term management plan will be in place for the use of this property by the close of 2018. Volunteers Green is the main town recreational area serving farmers markets, sports, and general public use. The landmark Round Church is also under the supervision of the town and is maintained in a historic manner, used only for special purposes. More about the Round Church is located in the Historic Resources technical plan of this document.

Richmond has its own municipal water system. A high-quality well by the Round Church provides water to a 750,000 gallon reservoir which supplies water for customers and fire protection for the town. Substantial capital work has been done to modernize the system and upgrade supply lines concurrently with road improvements done by the town. A new water tank was recently constructed and the town is currently determining how to remove the old tank and what to do with the material. An ordinance governing the water system went into effect in 1965 and is on file in the Town Clerk’s office. It specifies allowed uses in the service area, specific requirements for system hookups and requires the system to be managed by a board of Commissioners. Richmond’s municipal Wastewater Treatment Facility is located on Esplanade. The secondary extended air facility underwent a $3.9 million upgrade in 2005 to full tertiary capacity with septage receiving, filtration and biological and chemical phosphorus removal with dewatering. The collection system also completed a $1.5 million upgrade in 2009 which included manhole replacements, pipe linings and line consolidations. An ordinance governing the wastewater system went into effect in 1972 and is on file in the Town Clerk’s office. It specifies allowed uses for the facility and in the service area, specific requirements for system hookups and requires the system to be managed by a board of Commissioners. In 1993 an ordinance was added and adopted for the allocation of future hookups. Richmond also has a stormwater system in the water/wastewater district to manage drainage. The system is currently undergoing a major upgrade on East Main Street, with Bridge Street and connecting streets soon to follow. The storm water is not a combined system, but customer drain lines will need to be addressed in the future to lessen impacts on the wastewater system. The Water Resources department manages the water/wastewater system and the stormwater is controlled by the Highway department.

Richmond has two major electrical providers: Green Mountain Power and Vermont Electric Co-Op. The capital budget is created and updated annually by the Selectboard with input from the Richmond Planning Commission, development review board, and other town boards and commissions. All upgrades or constructions are financed through the town fund or grants. This funding comes from the tax base, non-government organizations, state programs, or federal programs. Facilities and utilities that are constructed or maintained under the control or influence of the town shall take into account the 11 community visions as well as the goals of this and other technical plans.

**GOALS & ACTIONS**

**GOAL 1: Maintain and upgrade, where reasonable and necessary, municipal facilities and grounds at reasonable costs**

**ACTIONS:**

1. Ensure that Volunteers Green is maintained and publicly accessible/usable for residents and visitors
2. Follow the goals and intents of the Town Forest management plans
3. Support the efforts of the Historical Society in preserving the Round Church and its parcel
4. Maintain and upgrade the Town Center building and parking areas to support the needs of town officials and staff
5. Continue to rent or lease town spaces and grounds to businesses and organizations in order to best utilize space and maintain that income
6. Maintain and upgrade the Richmond Fire Department and Richmond Highway Department buildings
7. Continue efforts to create an affordable solution for the police department and their facility.
8. Implement stormwater projects on town properties identified in the Stormwater Master Plan
9. Ensure that the Water and Wastewater systems meet regulatory standards and have functional capacity as needed under the Town Plan.
10. Implement building improvement projects for the library in order to maintain the use of the historical building
11. Utilize multiple funding sources in conjunction with tax resources to implement facility upgrades and maintenance in affordable ways
12. Modernize town buildings with energy efficiency measures and accessibility measures to ensure continued usability, especially in the historic facilities

**GOAL 2: Maintain and upgrade, where reasonable and necessary, municipal utilities and associated infrastructure at reasonable costs**

**ACTIONS:**

1. Continue to upgrade water/wastewater/stormwater infrastructure in joint projects with the highway department.
2. Implement an Asset Management maintenance program in water/wastewater/stormwater and highway infrastructure and use it for a maintenance schedule.
3. Directly connect the capital budget to the Asset Management maintenance schedule to create collaboration and cohesion in all water/wastewater/stormwater/highway projects within the water/wastewater district.
4. Upgrade the water/wastewater/stormwater systems to meet functional capacity and regulatory standards
5. Extend water/wastewater/stormwater lines to protect public health and the environment where feasible
6. Encourage the upgrade of customer’s water/wastewater/stormwater connections in the service area
7. Encourage upgrades that protect critical infrastructure such as the water line under the Bridge Street Bridge.
8. Seek out and utilize multiple funding sources in conjunction with possible tax resources to implement the asset management maintenance program with the least impact to water/wastewater rates and town taxes.
9. Continue to charge impact fees to offset costs of operations.

**GOAL 3: Support the provision of external or private utilities and facilities for residents, such as rubbish removal, electricity, heat, and telecommunication services**

**ACTIONS:**

1. Identify opportunities to work with providers to increase internet speed and availability and increase cell service coverage in town
2. Utilize and support the initiatives of the Chittenden Solid Waste District
3. Work with Vermont Electric Cooperative and Green Mountain Power to ensure all residents have access to reliable electricity