

TOWN GOVERNMENT: FACILITIES & SERVICES

This chapter of the Master Plan presents a general overview of East Brookfield’s town government, municipal facilities and services. For this chapter, each municipal department head was interviewed and information was collected regarding organizational structure, budget, staffing, equipment, facilities, responsibilities, programs and anticipated capital needs for the next decade (2020 as an ultimate time horizon). Before presenting an in depth analysis of each municipal department, it is important to know where the Town gets its revenue and the tax implications for East Brookfield households. Towards that end, data has been collected regarding the local tax rate, average single-family home tax bill, average single-family home assessed valuation, local tax levies and State aid.

**Table TG-1
Year 2006 Local Tax Rates**

<u>East Brookfield</u>	<u>Brookfield</u>	<u>Charlton</u>	<u>N. Brookfield</u>	<u>Spencer</u>	<u>Sturbridge*</u>
\$9.42	\$13.50	\$9.19	\$10.16	\$8.49	\$11.80

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue. Tax rate is per \$1,000 of assessed valuation. Please note that the Sturbridge tax rate is for residential properties only. For commercial and industrial properties, Sturbridge applies a tax rate of \$16.48 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation.

East Brookfield’s 2006 tax rate fell somewhere in the middle when compared to its neighbors. While not nearly as high as Brookfield’s tax rate (\$13.50 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation), it was not as low as the Spencer tax rate (\$8.49). East Brookfield’s current tax rate is at its lowest rate since 1999, when the tax rate was \$9.40 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation. Between 1990 and 2000, East Brookfield’s tax rate saw a steady rise from \$7.00 in 1990, to \$9.40 by 2000. East Brookfield’s adjacent neighbors also experienced a steady rise in their tax rates over the course of the 1990s.

**Table TG-2
Year 2006 Average Single Family Home Tax Bill**

<u>East Brookfield</u>	<u>Brookfield</u>	<u>Charlton</u>	<u>N. Brookfield</u>	<u>Spencer</u>	<u>Sturbridge</u>
\$2,456	\$2,950	\$2,512	\$2,213	\$2,061	\$3,352

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue.

Again, East Brookfield’s 2006 average single-family home tax bill falls somewhere in the middle when compared to its neighbors: not nearly as high as the Sturbridge average tax bill, but not as low as the Spencer average tax bill. It should be noted that East Brookfield’s average single-family home tax bill has *almost doubled* in the last five years: the year 2000 average tax bill was \$1,242, and by 2006 this figure has increased to \$2,456 (an increase of 98%). Between 1990 and 2000, East Brookfield’s average single-family home tax bill saw a steady rise from \$821 in 1990 to \$1,242 by 2000. Again, East Brookfield’s adjacent neighbors also experienced a steady rise in their average single-family home tax bills over the course of the 1990s.

**Table TG-3
Year 2006 Average Assessed Valuation Per Household**

<u>East Brookfield</u>	<u>Brookfield</u>	<u>Charlton</u>	<u>N. Brookfield</u>	<u>Spencer</u>	<u>Sturbridge</u>
\$260,749	\$218,543	\$273,387	\$217,856	\$242,746	\$284,054

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue.

East Brookfield's 2006 average assessed valuation per household falls somewhere in the middle when compared to its neighbors: not as high as the Sturbridge figure but not as low as the North Brookfield figure. The entire Central Massachusetts region and eastern regions of the State have seen a dramatic rise in the average household valuation during the last five years, and East Brookfield is no exception. East Brookfield's average assessed valuation per household has *more than doubled* in the last five years, rising from \$117,195 in 2000 to \$260,749 in 2006 (an increase of 122%). During the 1990s, East Brookfield's averaged assessed valuation per household held fairly steady. Land values are high throughout the region, development is on the rise, and existing homes are selling for much more than what they sold for during the 1990s. In short, the region's housing stock has never been valued higher.

**Table TG-4
Year 2006 Local Tax Levies**

	<u>Residential</u>	<u>Commercial</u>	<u>Industrial</u>	<u>Personal Property</u>	<u>Res. as % of Total Taxes</u>
East Brookfield	\$2,096,542	\$136,492	\$20,757	\$40,007	91.4%
Brookfield	\$3,282,585	\$136,510	\$19,938	\$63,094	93.7%
Charlton	\$11,034,074	\$579,502	\$431,516	\$408,280	88.6%
N. Brookfield	\$3,586,452	\$150,037	\$106,863	\$60,997	91.9%
Spencer	\$7,943,125	\$575,513	\$255,773	\$150,556	89.0%
Sturbridge	\$11,344,563	\$2,588,160	\$555,673	\$553,962	75.6%

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue.

While the table above indicates that East Brookfield collects the least amount of tax dollars, this is due primarily to East Brookfield having the lowest population of its adjacent neighbors and its limited amount of business and industry. It should be noted that residential property taxes are covering an ever-larger percentage of the Town's total tax base. In 2006, residential property taxes account for 91.4% of the Town's total tax base, whereas in 1990, residential property taxes accounted for roughly 88% of the Town's total tax base. Thus, East Brookfield has increased its dependence on residential property taxes to fund its municipal government. The general rule of thumb is that towns are considered "bedroom communities" if they derive more than 90% of its total tax revenue from residential property taxes. East Brookfield and the other adjacent Brookfields fit this description.

**Table TG-5
Year 2006 Non-Education State Aid**

<u>East Brookfield</u>	<u>Brookfield</u>	<u>Charlton</u>	<u>N. Brookfield</u>	<u>Spencer</u>	<u>Sturbridge</u>
\$294,053	\$544,846	\$1,397,077	\$859,789	\$2,217,245	\$899,861

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue. Presented figures DO NOT include State education aid.

Although the previous table indicates that East Brookfield receives the least amount of non-education State aid by far, this is largely due to having the smallest population of the communities compared. North Brookfield and Spencer received the largest amount of State aid per capita (\$150 and \$154 per capita respectively), while Sturbridge received the smallest amount of State aid per capita (\$88). The State distribution formula is partially based on local median household income figures and other measures of wealth. For the compared communities, North Brookfield and Spencer have lower median household income figures (thus the high amount of State aid), while Sturbridge has a relatively high median household income figure (thus the low amount of State aid). East Brookfield falls somewhere in the middle of compared communities with a per capita State aid figure of \$116.

The next section of this chapter is a review of the various entities that comprise East Brookfield's municipal government: how they are organized, staffing, budget, facilities, equipment and programs offered along with a list of anticipated capital equipment and staffing needs for the next decade. Most data was obtained from 2003 or 2004, unless otherwise indicated.

Budget: For Fiscal Year 2004, East Brookfield's public works received a budget appropriation of \$417,731, and actually expended \$388,302 leaving a positive balance of \$29,429. It should be noted that East Brookfield's water service is not an enterprise system and is funded through an annual appropriation of Town funds, as opposed to being solely supported through user fees. All user fees collected go back into the general fund.

Water Department & Highway Department

Organization: The Water Department and the Highway Department share staff and are essentially managed together as the Town's public works entity. Both departments are overseen by the Board of Selectmen, which serves as the Town's Water Commissioners and Highway Commissioners. One individual serves as both the Water Superintendent and Highway Superintendent, and this person is responsible for the day-to-day management of both departments. The Board of Selectmen appoints the Superintendent positions on an annual basis.

Staff: Other than the Water and Highway Superintendent position, there are two other full-time staff members.

Facilities: There is a highway barn located off of Stevens Road. The main building is roughly 100 years old and is in very poor shape. The roof leaks and there are structural problems that cannot be easily fixed. The barn contains an addition built in 1988 that is in fairly good shape. There is also a salt shed built in 1995 that is also in fairly good shape. The Highway Department is currently looking for a suitable location to build a new highway barn and hope to have a new facility up and running within five years time. In terms of Water Department facilities, there is one pump station located along West Street off of Podunk Road and a standpipe that can hold 250,000 gallons of water off Doan Avenue.

Equipment: The Highway Department currently maintains the following equipment list:

- 1999 pickup truck (good condition)
- 2003 one-ton pickup truck (good)
- 2002 dump truck (good)
- 2000 dump truck (good)

- 1991 sander (good)
- 1988 sander (fair condition)
- 1965 catch basin cleaner (good condition – used once a year)
- 1994 backhoe (fair to good condition)
- 1988 sidewalk plow (fair)
- 1956 grader (fair condition – used primarily for dirt roads)
- 1965 street sweeper (fair condition – used once a year)
- 1972 tractor/mower (good)
- 1979 small loader (good)

Water System Description: The water system is comprised of one gravel-packed well that went online in 1975. The water is treated for low pH. While the well can deliver as much as 600 gallons per minute or 864,000 gallons per day, the system is permitted for one million gallons per day (slightly more than what the well can actually deliver). The system delivers roughly 80,000 gallons of water per day and this daily usage can increase to as much as 160,000 gallons per day during the summer months; thus, the system is well under capacity even during the peak summer months. On an annual basis, the water system delivers roughly 36,000,000 gallons. The system has 612 connections, primarily residential but there are a handful of businesses and institutional uses. The Department uses a metered system to keep track of water usage. Currently 98% of the connections are metered with the cottages around Lake Lashaway being the only exception. At present only 10% of the system's water is unaccounted for - an excellent water retention rate for a municipal water system. Most water departments experience a water loss of anywhere from 20% to 30%, depending on the age of the system.

The majority of the system's pipes are approximately 60 years old (there are a few pipes as old as 90 years). The Department does not have a formal pipe replacement system; rather, the pipes are replaced as they break. In 2004, the Department replaced five water breaks. There are occasions when pipes are replaced during a road reconstruction effort; this is easy to coordinate since the Water Department and the Highway Department share the same personnel. The Water Department owns all of the land (22 acres) falling within the well's Zone I contribution area. Much of the land within the Zone II contribution area is privately owned and there are several potentially hazardous land uses falling within the Zone II well radii, including the highway barn, a gas station and an active railroad line. The Water Department occasionally inspects the private enterprises within the Zone II contribution area to ensure that all potentially hazardous chemicals are stored, handled and disposed off properly. The Department utilizes cross-connection controls to ensure that contaminated water does not make its way from buildings into the main water lines. The North Brookfield municipal water system serves as East Brookfield's backup water supply and the two systems are interconnected along Sylvania Road. A graphic depiction of East Brookfield's water system is presented on the map on the following page (Water System Map).

Upcoming Capital Needs: The Highway Department's major upcoming capital need is constructing new highway barn on Town-owned property. The Department would like to have a new highway barn up and running within five years time (2010). The Department would also like to replace the 1994 backhoe within five years, and the 1988 sander and 1965 street sweeper within ten years. The Water Department would like to put in a newer and larger water main along Route 9 within the next ten years. The Water Department may also want to ensure the standpipe is in good working order.

Budget: For Fiscal Year 2004, East Brookfield's public safety entities (Police, Fire & Emergency Response) received a budget appropriation of \$502,273, and actually expended \$476,731 leaving a positive balance of \$25,542.

Police Department

Staff: The Police Department consists of three full-time officers (this includes the Police Chief) and fourteen part-time officers. The Board of Selectmen appoints the full-time officers on an annual basis. The staff does not have any administrative support and thus the officers handle their own paperwork. Dispatch is handled through the State Police barracks in New Braintree.

Equipment: The Department leases their vehicles and pays them off during the course of the lease. Typically, the Department gets four years of service out of their vehicles. Currently, the Department's equipment consists of the following items:

- 2000 cruiser (55,000 miles on it, fair condition)
- 2001 cruiser (115,000 miles on it, fair condition)
- 2003 cruiser (60,000 miles on it, good condition)
- 1999 All Terrain Vehicle (good condition)

The 1999 ATV was a donation from a local business. The Department's computers were just replaced through an appropriation of the Town's General Fund and the Department has just received a National Security Grant that paid for a new radio system.

Facility: The Police Department is currently using the first floor of the old Town Hall building, but will eventually move over to the former Memorial School building on Connie Mack Avenue once the necessary renovations are complete. This move should occur within the next two years at the latest. The Department currently makes use of the Spencer Police Department's lock-up facility and occasionally the State Police lock-up facility in New Braintree. The Department plans to have three of its own lock-up facilities once the move to the former Memorial School is completed.

Programs: The Department offers a bicycle safety program for the local schools, hosts an annual Halloween party at the Elementary School and maintains its own web page.

Trends and Comparisons:

**Table TG-6
Community Crime Rate per 1,000 Residents - Year 2003**

<u>Community</u>	<u>Total of Crimes</u>	<u>Rate Per 1,000 Residents</u>
East Brookfield	33	15.7
Charlton	134	11.9
North Brookfield	73	15.6
Spencer	211	18.4
Sturbridge	201	25.6

Source: Massachusetts State Police Uniform Crime Report for 2003 (the last available full year). Please note that the Town of Brookfield did not provide its local crime statistics to the State in 2003.

Upcoming Capital and Staffing Needs: The Police Department would like to obtain some secretarial help in the near future, starting as a part-time position. A few more officers may be needed over the next decade as the Town's population continues to grow.

Fire Department:

Organization: A part-time Fire Chief manages the Fire Department, operating under the form of a strong chief statute. The Board of Selectmen has appointed the Chief to a three-year term. The Chief appoints all department officers and members. The Town's ambulance service is part of the Fire Department.

Staff: A Fire Department Captain and an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) are the only two full-time employees. There are 24 on-call fire fighters and 15 on-call EMTs that serve as needed. Staff positions include the Fire Chief, a Deputy Chief, a Captain, two lieutenants and part-time clerical assistance. The Department is part of the District #7 Fire/Ambulance Mutual Aid Compact, which consists of 26 Worcester County communities.

Equipment:

- 1967 pumper truck, 750 gallons per minute (poor condition)
- 1981 light rescue vehicle, (converted ambulance, poor condition)
- 1987 pumper truck, 1,000 gallons per minute (good condition)
- 1991 forestry unit (good condition)
- 1993 ambulance (good condition – scheduled to be replaced in the spring of 2006)
- 1997 pumper truck, 1,500 gallons per minute (excellent condition)
- 1999 Ford Crown Victoria (used for inspections, poor condition)
- 2004 forestry unit (excellent condition)

The Department pays for new equipment through Town Meeting warrant articles, after a purchase study committee investigates the specifications, and after obtaining permission from the Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen.



Facility: The current fire station is located at 273 East Main Street and was built sometime during the 1950s. An addition was constructed in 1979. The building is in poor shape, having cracks in the walls and problems with the heating system. In terms of housing the Department's equipment, the station is at full capacity and has no additional room for new equipment. The Department would like to construct a new facility sometime within the next ten years; however, the current property does not have enough land to construct a new facility. The Department would like to build a new facility in close proximity to the existing one.

Permits Issued: The Department issues numerous permits, most of which require on-site inspections. The Department conducts inspections for fire alarms and sprinkler systems for businesses, industries, residences, schools, rest homes, day care facilities and medical facilities.

Programs: The Department offers fire safety programs to a variety of audiences, particularly school-age children. The fire safety programs are made available through a S.A.F.E. grant from the Massachusetts Department of Fire Services. In addition to local funding, the Department uses funding from Fire District #7 to provide training for its firefighters.

Other Responsibilities: The Fire Department is the first line of response for hazardous waste spills. The Department will call in the State’s regional hazardous materials response team if the spill is more than they can handle. The Department also provides rescue services for auto accidents, rapid intervention teams, as well as search and rescue services. The Department provides each firefighter with a minimum of 36 hours of training per year, although most firefighters put in many more hours of training.

Trends and Comparisons: In addition to records kept by the East Brookfield Department, the Office of the State Fire Marshall maintains an inventory of fire statistics for all Massachusetts communities, the last available inventory year being 2003. The table below presents a count of the total fires for East Brookfield for the year 2003, as well as its adjacent neighbors.

**Table TG-7
Total Fires by Community - Year 2003**

<u>Community</u>	<u># of Fires</u>	<u>Per 1,000 Residents</u>	<u>Estimated Dollar Loss</u>
East Brookfield	17	8.1	\$0
Brookfield	3	1.0	\$0
Charlton	64	5.7	\$535,450
North Brookfield	0	0.0	\$0
Spencer	72	6.2	\$122,300
Sturbridge	60	7.7	\$351,200

Source: 2003 Annual Report of the Massachusetts State Fire Marshall.

According to the Annual Report, the Fire Department responded to 355 calls in the year 2004, a modest increase from the 333 call responses in 2003. It should be noted that the number of call responses has increased at a moderate pace every year during the past decade.

Upcoming Capital and Staffing Needs: As mentioned previously, the Department will be replacing the 1993 ambulance in the spring of 2006. The Department will go to the 2006 spring Town Meeting with a warrant article that asks for funds to replace the 1967 pumper truck. If approved, the Department would bring the new pumper truck on line sometime during 2007. Also mentioned previously is the need for a new firehouse sometime within the next ten years. The Department would also like to upgrade its ambulance service from a basic level to a paramedic level. Currently, the Department needs to call in paramedics from neighboring communities when such services are needed and the time it takes for the paramedic to arrive is jeopardizing lives. Lastly, the Department may need to add one or two full-time staff positions during the next decade as the Town’s population continues to increase.

East Brookfield Emergency Management Agency:

Organization: The East Brookfield Emergency Management Agency (EBEMA) currently consists of seven members. The Board of Selectmen appoints EBEMA's Director and Deputy to one-year terms.

Staff: EBEMA does not have any paid staff; rather, the appointed members handle all tasks.

Budget: For the 2004 Fiscal Year, EBEMA had an operating budget of roughly \$9,600.

Equipment: EBEMA has obtained numerous supplies for emergency response operations including:

- A 16-foot enclosed trailer (2005 – excellent condition). EBEMA is in the process of adding heat and air conditioning to the trailer. EBEMA is working with the Fire Department to turn the trailer into an emergency response command/rehab center. The trailer is housed with the Fire Department.
- 75 brand new sleeping cots
- 75 blankets
- 4 five-day coolers
- 2 playpens
- 10 battery powered lanterns
- 10 backpacks
- 2 folding tables
- One laptop
- One projector

With the exception of the trailer, all of the above supplies are kept at the Memorial Town Complex (the new town hall). In the event of an emergency, the new Elementary School would serve as a temporary shelter. The Memorial Town Complex could also provide some additional space in an emergency situation.

Duties: EBEMA is responsible for handling the response logistics for large-scale emergencies such as natural disasters and civil emergencies.

Upcoming Capital Needs: EBEMA would like to have some of the space at the Memorial Town Complex rehabilitated for its use. Currently, EBEMA has just a closet for its use at this location. The EBEMA would also like to obtain a command vehicle to pull the trailer noted above, and would also like to put in place an in-town high-band radio system.

Board of Health:

Organization: East Brookfield has a three-member elected Board of Health. Each member is elected to a three-year term. The Board meets on a monthly basis. The Board of Health appoints the Health Agent who handles all health inspections.

Staff: The Health Agent is part-time and only puts in two or three hours a week. One of the Board members provides 20-hours a week of administrative support.

Budget: For Fiscal Year 2004, East Brookfield's human services entities received a budget appropriation of \$33,243, and actually expended \$25,358 leaving a positive balance of \$7,885.

Programs:

- Home inspections (as needed)
- Rabbis and flu clinics
- Health inspections for restaurants, retail stores, taverns, tanning establishments, therapy establishments (including message), camping establishments and bathing beaches
- Household hazardous waste disposal days (four a year, in conjunction with five other towns)
- Title V inspections (including performing soil percolation tests for new building lots, reviewing septic plan revisions and witnessing the installation of all on-site sewage treatment systems)
- Permits and approves all private drinking water wells
- All housing complaints
- The Board administers a \$100,000 revolving loan program through the Spencer Savings Bank to help homeowners with septic system repairs. Not many East Brookfield homeowners have availed themselves to this program during the last few years, but the program is still in existence.

Upcoming Capital and Staffing Needs: Within the next few years, the Board of Health will need to expand the hours of the Health Inspector beyond the current 2-3 hours a week. There has been a steady increase in the number of inspections to perform, as well as in the number of items to inspect. It is quite likely that the State's health code will continue to expand rather than contract. More items to inspect means more time needed to complete an inspection. The Board has also had to devote some of its limited resources and time towards the Town's Emergency Preparedness planning effort for homeland security and its level of involvement is expected to increase over time.

Solid Waste Disposal Department

Organization: The Board of Selectmen serves as the Town's Solid Waste Commissioners and they appoint the Department's staff.

Staff: The Department does not have any full-time staff. The Highway and Water Department Superintendent offers periodic assistance to the Solid Waste Department, and a solid waste assistant agent offers assistance on a voluntary basis. The only staff paid out of the Department's operating budget is the administrative assistant who puts in six hours a week on behalf of the Department.

Budget: For Fiscal Year 2004, East Brookfield's public works received a budget appropriation of \$417,731, and actually expended \$388,302 leaving a positive balance of \$29,429.

Facility and Equipment: The Department has an office in the new Memorial Town Complex and uses a portion of the Highway Barn property to store its recycling bins. These bins represent the Department's only equipment. The Department contracts with Allied Trash Disposal (formerly BFI) for weekly household trash pick up and disposal. Thus, other than recycling, the Town's solid waste disposal needs are contracted out.

Programs: The Department offers a recycling education program for the Elementary School. The Department also joins with neighboring North Brookfield to sponsor twice a year (April and October) household hazardous waste collection days. The recycling center at the Highway Barn is open every Wednesday and Saturday and accepts the following materials: bulky wastes, clean metal, white goods,

tires, brush and composting material, fluorescent light bulbs, batteries, automotive oils and filters and anti-freeze. The site also contains a building material “take it or leave it” center. Other recycling items such as paper goods, plastic bottles, metal and aluminum cans, glass containers, milk cartons and cardboard are collected curbside along with regular residential trash. The Town’s average weekly amount of solid waste collected curbside was roughly 11.2 tons for 2005.

Upcoming Capital Needs: The Solid Waste Department did not identify any major capital equipment needs for the next ten years. Some of the recycling bins may need to be replaced over the next decade, but this is a relatively inexpensive proposition.

Recreation Committee

Organization: Board of Selectmen appoints this three-person committee (currently only two members in place). The Committee usually meets once a month.

Staff: None. Staff is hired during the summer months for field maintenance and to run the summer recreation program for local youths.

Budget: For Fiscal Year 2004, East Brookfield’s culture and recreation programs received a budget appropriation of \$72,847, and actually expended \$61,994 leaving a positive balance of \$10,853.

Facilities:

- **Connie Mack Field:** Located off of Connie Mack Road (south of Route 9), this facility consists of one regulation baseball field (fenced in) with three sets of bleachers and two water bubblers. There are no bathroom facilities on site but the Recreation Committee does rent a few port-potties for the summer months. The Committee hires students to perform field maintenance during the summer months.
- **Little League Ball-Field and Playground:** Located behind Memorial School at the end of School Street, this facility consists of a little league baseball field (fenced in with benches on either side) and a playground containing slides, swing-sets, monkey-bars, and climbing dome. The school parking lot is used for both the ball-field and the playground. The Committee hires area students to perform facility maintenance during the summer months.
- **Town Beach:** Although located along the Lake Lashaway shoreline in North Brookfield, this facility is actually owned by East Brookfield. The two towns share the cost of maintaining this facility although it is the East Brookfield Recreation Commission who is responsible for hiring lifeguards and students to perform facility maintenance during the summer months. The beach opens in late June and closes for the year after Labor Day. In terms of amenities, this facility contains a few wharfs in the water, six picnic tables, a gravel parking lot, a small playground with a slide, and a brick bathroom/changing building with a women’s room and a men’s room.
- **Town-Owned Basketball Court:** Located at the end of School Street, the Recreation Commission owns and maintains a basketball court that contains lights for night-time hours. The Committee hires area students to perform court maintenance during the summer months.
- **East Brookfield Elementary School:** The School maintains several recreation facilities on its grounds that are open to the public – a softball field with bleachers, a soccer field, basketball court and a tennis court.

Programs: The Town's Recreation Committee runs a summer recreation program. For this effort, the Committee hires two staff members (one male, one female) to oversee the program. Activities in the program include: baseball, softball, volleyball and a swim program for grades one through eight. The Recreation Committee also sponsors a women's softball team that competes in the women's regional league.

Upcoming Equipment Needs: None identified.

East Brookfield Public Library:

Organization: A six-person, elected Board of Library Trustees oversees the Library's operations. The Trustees meet monthly. The Head Librarian manages the Library on a day-to-day basis. The Library is open 28 hours per week, five days out of the week except Fridays and Sundays.

Staff: The Library Director is the only full-time employee (30 hours/week). There is also a part-time assistant (17 hours/week), a children's librarian (4 hours/week) and a library page from the high school (6 hours/week). Paid substitutes are used to supplement the staff when needed.

Budget: For Fiscal Year 2004, East Brookfield's culture and recreation programs received a budget appropriation of \$72,847 (the majority of which went towards the library), and actually expended \$61,994 leaving a positive balance of \$10,853. The Library also received two grants from the MA Board of Library Commissioners: a Library Equalization Grant and a Library Incentive Grant – totaling \$3,196. A revitalized Friends of the Library group hopes to supplement the Library's program budget through a series of planned fundraisers.

Facility: The Library is currently located on the 2nd floor of the old Town Hall on Depot Street, but will eventually move over to the Memorial Town Complex on Connie Mack Avenue once the necessary renovations are complete. The Library has been at the old Town Hall since 1974 and is beginning to run out of space. The new School location will provide the Library with roughly 2,700 square feet of floor area, a somewhat larger footprint than the old Town Hall location. The move to Memorial Town Complex is considered a temporary solution, as the Trustees would eventually like to see the Library have its own building if fiscally possible.

Circulation: The Library has an ever-increasing circulation of roughly 18,100 items. The staff is always willing to work with other lending libraries to obtain special order books on behalf of East Brookfield citizens. There are three computers available to the public, two of which have Internet connections. The library staff has its own computer with an Internet connection and a connection to the greater regional library system. It should be noted that the library plans on developing its own webpage during the upcoming year.

Programs:

Children – story times, lap-sit for toddlers (new this year), an all ages summer reading program, and crafts, performers, arts, and music are offered during the summer months.

Young Adults - a monthly after-school literacy program at the Elementary School (new this year).

Adults – monthly adult-oriented classes and performances, and two book discussion groups meet monthly (one at lunchtime and one in the evening). These programs are new and expanding.

The Library frequently looks toward outside sources to help supplement the budget. Funding from the East Brookfield Cultural Council helps support the summer reading program. The newly revitalized “Friends of the Library” group is planning a variety of fundraising efforts over the course of the next fiscal year. Local merchants and businesses have also been generous with contributions.

Upcoming Capital and Staffing Needs: Ongoing needs include replacing one of the four library computers every other year. New furniture and additional bookshelves are also planned. As mentioned above, the Library has a long-term goal of finding a building of its own. In terms of new personnel, new programming and an expanding circulation will create a need to increase the hours of the library assistant and children’s librarian at some point over the next decade.

Council on Aging:

Organization: The Council on Aging (COA) currently consists of seven members. Each member is appointed by the Board of Selectmen and serves a three-year term. The COA meets twice a month.

Staff: The COA does not currently have any staff members under its employ; rather, the COA makes extensive use of volunteers.

Budget: For the 2004 fiscal year, East Brookfield’s human service programs received a budget appropriation of \$33,243 (of which roughly \$6,500 went to the Council of Aging), and actually expended \$25,358 leaving a positive balance of \$7,885. State grants account for roughly one third of the COA’s budget.

Facility: The Town owns the Senior Center building located on Pleasant Street. The building has served as the community Senior Center since the late 1970s. The building is currently handicapped accessible through a ramp in back, although the ramp needs some minor improvements to fully comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) building code. The building is deemed adequate for meeting the needs of East Brookfield’s senior citizens for the next decade. The building condition and size may need to be revisited in ten years as the Town’s population continues to grow and the COA expands its programming offerings.



Programs: The COA offers a monthly blood pressure and podiatry clinic, luncheons twice a month (at the modest price of \$2), a spring fling event, a “second chance” flea market, yearly income tax help sessions, an annual newsletter, monthly outings (mostly day trips), and occasional speakers, performers, musicians and movies.

Upcoming Capital and Staffing Needs: As mentioned above, the Senior Center’s handicap ramp needs some modest improvements in order to comply with the ADA building code. The COA would also like to hire a part-time program coordinator and expand its program offerings.

Planning, Conservation and Development

East Brookfield has four entities that review, approve and monitor new development: the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Conservation Commission and the Building Inspector/ Zoning Enforcement Officer. All of the entities listed below keep their applications and forms on file with the Town Clerk's office. A general description of each entity and their major duties is presented below.

Planning Board: The Board currently consists of five members that are elected to three-year terms. The Board does not have any secretarial support and a Board member takes the minutes for their monthly meetings. The Board operates on an annual budget of \$4,400. The Board reviews and endorses Approval Not Required (ANR) plans, which constitute the majority of newly created lots in East Brookfield. The Board also reviews and approves subdivision plans and site plan review applications. Although the Board has not yet had to handle multiple subdivision applications at once, the regional growth pressure is such that the Board will need to simultaneously manage multiple applications in the near future. The Board's application, review and approval procedures are outdated and could use updating. The Board retains the services of a professional engineering firm to review submittals. At present the Board does not have a revolving fund and all fees collected are placed in the Town's general fund. In January 2004, the Board adopted a revised fee schedule. Fees were based on comparisons to those charged by surrounding Towns. Fees will be reviewed for budgeting purposes and adjusted accordingly.

Zoning Board of Appeals: The Board consists of three members (although only two are in place at present) and two alternates. The Board of Selectmen appoints the Zoning Board members to three-year terms. The Board does not have any secretarial support. The Board has a minimal budget and does not receive funding for training classes. The Board meets on a monthly basis. Its primary duties include hearing appeals for granting variances to the Zoning Bylaw (both use variances and dimensional standard variances), non-conforming uses, special use permits and appeal of Building Inspector/Zoning Enforcement Officer decisions.

Conservation Commission: The Commission consists of five members that are appointed by the Board of Selectmen to three-year terms. The Commission does not have any secretarial support. The Commission operates on annual budget of roughly \$3,000 and does not receive any funding for training classes. The Commission's primary duty is administration of the State's wetland protection and rivers protection acts. The Commission does not have any staff and Commission members conduct their own inspections, essentially serving the role as town conservation agent. The Commission is having trouble keeping up with its administrative requirements and secretarial support has been identified as an urgent need. Having Commission members serve double-duty as conservation agents could potentially create a conflict for the members, as they are being asked to gather data for decisions, render decisions on behalf of property owners, and enforce their decisions. Ideally, the Commission would have an agent to gather data and conduct enforcement, freeing the Commission to serve as a permit granting authority and overall conservation policy makers.

Building Inspector/ Zoning Enforcement Officer: The Board of Selectmen annually appoints this position. The Officer puts in an average of eight to ten hours per week, with office hours at the new Memorial Town Complex every Wednesday night. The Officer issues building permits, certificates of occupancy and certificates of inspection. The Officer is also charged with enforcing the State building code and the provisions of East Brookfield's Zoning Bylaw.

Public School System:

Organization: East Brookfield is part of the Spencer-East Brookfield Regional School District. There is a seven-person School Committee, which sets school policies as well as manages the district's operations. The School Committee is elected and consists of five people from Spencer and two people from East Brookfield. Spencer has more representatives than East Brookfield due to its larger population.

Budget: For the 2006 Fiscal Year, the School District had an overall operating budget of \$21,639,312. The operating budget includes \$12,578,370 in State education aid (Chapter 70), a slight increase from the previous fiscal year as shown on the following page in Table TG-8. Table TG-9 on the following page present the District's State education aid figures and per pupil expenditure figures in comparison with other regional school districts in the area.

Table TG-8
State Education Aid (Chapter 70) - Year 2006

<u>Spencer/</u> <u>E. Brookfield</u>	<u>Dudley/</u> <u>Charlton</u>	<u>Gill/</u> <u>Montague</u>	<u>Quaboag</u>	<u>Quabbin</u>	<u>Tantasqua</u>
\$12,578,370	\$21,174,932	\$5,898,326	\$7,574,888	\$16,657,112	\$6,707,029

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue.

Table TG-9
Per Pupil Expenditures Year 2005

<u>Spencer/</u> <u>E. Brookfield</u>	<u>Dudley/</u> <u>Charlton</u>	<u>Gill/</u> <u>Montague</u>	<u>Quaboag</u>	<u>Quabbin</u>	<u>Tantasqua</u>
\$7,832	\$7,005	NA	\$7,306	\$7,559	\$8,899

Source: Massachusetts Department of Education – 2005 is the latest year for available data.

Facilities: The School System currently consists of eight schools, but only the East Brookfield Elementary School resides in East Brookfield. The other seven schools are located in Spencer. A brief description of the three schools that East Brookfield students attend is presented below.

David Prouty High School

Location: 302 Main Street - Spencer
Built: 1966, no additions
Size: 90,000 square feet
Capacity: 700 students
Facility is compliant w/Americans
with Disabilities Act (ADA)
Students: 637, grades 9-12
Facilities: classrooms, library, gym,
auditorium & cafeteria

Knox Junior High School

Location: 73 Ash Street – Spencer
Built: 1994, no additions
Size: 90,000 square feet
Capacity: 500 students
Facility is ADA compliant
Students: 361, grades: 7 & 8
Facilities: classrooms, gym, library,
auditorium & cafeteria

East Brookfield Elementary School

Location: 410 East Main Street – East Brookfield

Built: 2002, no additions

Size: 52,950 square feet

Capacity: 350 students

Facility is ADA compliant

Students: 225, grades: pre-kindergarten through 6

Facilities: 17 classrooms, gym, library & cafeteria



The relatively new East Brookfield Elementary School is currently under capacity, as is the Knox Trail Junior High School in Spencer. Both buildings should provide more than adequate capacity for the volume of students projected for the next ten years.

Although technically under capacity, the David Prouty High School is experiencing a classroom space crunch. Currently, every classroom is utilized during every period of the day. The School District will need to address the High School's space needs shortly and towards this end, a building needs study committee was formed in late 2005 and will issue its recommendations before the end of the 2006 calendar year.

Other Town Government Entities: Board of Selectmen, Board of Assessors, Board of Registrars, Finance Committee, Cemetery Commissioners, Dog Officer, Inspector of Animals, School Building Committee, Historical Commission, Town Accountant, Town Clerk, Town Collector, Town Treasurer, Town Hall Advisory Committee, Memorial Day Committee, Technology Committee and Tree Warden.

Town Government Issues in East Brookfield

1. Long Range Capital Planning: East Brookfield has a long list of items to address during the next decade. One facility not mentioned previously is the old Town Hall building on Mechanic Street. Known as the Depot Square Building, this facility is very old, in poor shape and has long outlived its usefulness as a home for East Brookfield's municipal offices. The building has been plagued with broken water pipes that have resulted in a serious mold problem. The building is still structurally sound and the Town will need to address the mold problem before the building can be renovated for reuse. The table on the following page presents a brief description of the Town's upcoming capital improvement and staffing needs.

**Table TG-10
Upcoming Capital Facility, Infrastructure, Equipment and Staffing needs**

Department	Facility & Infrastructure Needs	Equipment Needs	Staff Needs
Water & Highway Department	New highway barn (by 2010), New water main for Rte. 9 (by 2015)	-- Replace 1994 backhoe (by 2010) -- Replace 1988 sander and 1965 street sweeper (by 2015)	
Police Department	Renovate space at Memorial Town Complex (2006)		-- Secretarial help (soon) -- One or two additional officers (by 2015)
Fire Department	New fire house (by 2015)	-- Replace 1993 ambulance (by spring 2006) -- Replace 1967 pumper truck (by 2007)	-- Upgrade ambulance service to paramedic level -- One or two additional firemen (by 2015)
Emergency Management	Renovate space at Memorial Town Complex (2006)	-- Purchase new command vehicle -- Purchase high-band radio system	
Board of Health			Expand hours of Health Inspector (by 2010)
Library	Renovate space at Memorial Town Complex (2006)	-- Replace one of library's computers (every other year) -- Purchase new furniture and book shelves (by 2007)	Increase hours for Library Assistant and Children's Librarian (by 2010)
Council on Aging	New handicap ramp for Senior Center		Hire part-time program coordinator (by 2010)
Town Government	Remove mold and renovate old Town Hall (by 2015)		
Plan Bd., Zoning Bd. & Con. Comm.			-- Hire part-time secretarial help (ASAP) -- Conservation agent

East Brookfield does not currently have a long-range capital improvement plan (CIP) in place at this time. A CIP is an on-going capital expenditure plan that identifies upcoming capital needs, schedules their purchase, and outlines how they will be purchased. Such plans usually look six-to-ten years down the road in terms of identifying capital needs. A capital need is a tangible item (equipment, building, etc.) that is above and beyond a municipal department's regular operating budget. East Brookfield currently plans its large-scale capital improvements on a year-to-year basis, based on departmental budget requests. If a department wants to replace a piece of equipment, it makes its case to the Board of Selectmen, and then approaches the Finance Committee.

A capital improvement plan (CIP) is composed of two parts: the first part is a capital budget for the upcoming year's spending plan for capital items (tangible assets that cost at least \$10,000 and have a useful life of at least five years), and the second part is a capital program for capital expenditures that extends five years beyond the capital budget.

If prepared properly, a CIP can have the following benefits:

- It will facilitate the coordination between capital needs and departmental operating budgets.
- It will enhance the community's credit rating, control of its tax rate, and avoid sudden fluctuations in its debt service requirements.
- It will identify the most economical means of financing capital projects.
- It will increase opportunities for obtaining federal and state aid.
- It will focus attention on community objectives and the Town's fiscal capacity.
- It will keep the public informed about future community needs and projects.
- It will coordinate the activities of municipal departments so as to reduce duplication of services.

There are generally ten steps involved with implementing a CIP.

STEP ONE: ADOPT A CIP BYLAW AND APPOINT A CIP COMMITTEE - East Brookfield voters would approve the CIP Bylaw at a Town Meeting. The Selectmen could appoint a stand-alone CIP Committee to oversee the plan's formation, or simply charge the Finance Committee with the bylaw's implementation if the Selectmen believe this committee is up to the task.

STEP TWO: PREPARE AN INVENTORY OF EXISTING FACILITIES – This will involve preparing an inventory of all town-owned properties and assets, including all buildings and equipment. The inventory should include documentation on the need for renewal, replacement, expansion or retirement of all physical assets. The inventory should also include information on the year each facility was built or acquired, the date of last improvement, its current condition, and scheduled date for rebuilding, replacement or expansion. Often, the Town's insurance carrier has a list of insured assets that can serve as the basis for this inventory.

STEP THREE: DETERMINE THE STATUS OF PREVIOUSLY APPROVED PROJECTS – The next step is to identify projects that are underway or about to get started and determine whether additional funds are needed and the amount of unspent funds available from completed or discontinued projects.

STEP FOUR: ASSESS THE TOWN'S FINANCIAL CAPACITY – With the assistance of the Town Accountant, Treasurer, and Board of Selectmen, the CIP Committee should analyze the Town's ability to afford major expenditures. This analysis should examine recent and anticipated trends in revenues, expenditures, debt and unfunded liabilities such as pension costs.

STEP FIVE: SOLICIT, COMPILE AND EVALUATE PROJECT REQUESTS – The CIP Committee should solicit departmental recommendations for eligible projects. Each department would submit its request that would include a clear statement of need for identified projects, the project costs, their net effect on the department's operating budget, and an implementation schedule.

STEP SIX: ESTABLISH A PRIORITY LISTING OF CAPITAL PROJECTS – This step will have the CIP Committee ranking the priority of each proposed capital project. This is often the most difficult aspect of a CIP effort. Many communities make use of numerical scoring sheets. Whether or not a scoring sheet is used, the CIP Committee should review each project utilizing a consistent set of criteria and evaluate each project in relation to other proposed projects to determine their relative importance.

STEP SEVEN: DEVELOP A CIP FINANCING PLAN – Based on the adopted debt and CIP policies (prepared as part of Step One) and the assessment of the Town’s financial capacity (Step Four), the Committee should recommend the method of financing for each project. Such financing can be through long-term methods (bonds, grants and loans, setting money aside in a stabilization fund, debt exclusion, etc.) or short-term methods (appropriation of current revenue, capital outlay expenditure approvals, bond anticipation notes, etc.).

STEP EIGHT: ADOPT A CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM – The CIP Committee’s complete report should be presented to the Board of Selectmen annually for review and adoption. The report should include a summary of the CIP Committee’s recommendations for the upcoming year’s capital budget and the following years’ Capital Program, as well as its analysis of the Town fiscal capacity.

STEP NINE: MONITOR APPROVED PROJECTS – The CIP Committee should monitor the efforts of all departments to put in place the capital projects approved in the CIP and periodically report back to the Board of Selectmen. The monitoring reports should include changes in the targeted completion dates, identify serious problems, and document the financial status of each project.

STEP TEN: UPDATE CAPITAL PROGRAM – Every year, the CIP Committee repeats Steps #2 through #9 and revise the CIP as necessary. After the first year has been budgeted, one year is added to the Capital Program and the remainder of the plan is updated.

2. Municipal Staffing Needs: regarding the Town’s future staffing needs as outlined in Table TG-10, most of the staffing needs identified for the next ten years involve expanding the hours of existing staff (Health Inspector) or hiring of part-time staff for administrative support. The Town might consider one central clerk position that would serve the needs of the Planning Board, Zoning Board and Conservation Commission. The Town could also work with neighboring communities to share staff, such as is currently done with the Building Inspector position (the Inspector works for both East and North Brookfield). Several of East Brookfield’s neighbors have expressed an interest in sharing the position of a Conservation Agent.

3. Over-Reliance on Residential Property Taxes: As documented previously, the residential portion of the Town’s tax base has increased over the years while the commercial and industrial portions of the tax base have decreased. This situation has increased the burden of East Brookfield’s property and homeowners to pay for the Town’s municipal needs through ever-increasing property taxes. This trend will continue to worsen unless the Town creates more opportunities for economic development and undertakes efforts to retain those businesses and industries currently located in East Brookfield. These issues will be examined in more detail in the Economic Development chapter of this document.

4. Uncontrolled Development/Outdated and Contradictory Zoning: As part of the preparation of this document, the Master Plan Committee has identified significant opportunities to correct the Town’s Zoning Bylaw and Subdivision Regulations. Both documents are quite old, out of date and in serious need of updating. The Zoning Bylaw in particular contains contradictory provisions, erroneous legal citations, minimal design criteria and little flexibility. The Subdivision Regulations suffer from the same flaws found in the Zoning Bylaw as well as poorly written procedural provisions.

In an effort to address the issues facing East Brookfield’s municipal government as identified in this chapter, the East Brookfield Master Plan Committee puts forth the following Town Government Goals and Objectives:

Town Government – Goal

Ensure that East Brookfield’s town government is professionally managed, responsive to citizen concerns, fosters citizen participation, is proactive instead of reactive, and maintains the Town’s high quality of life through sound planning in all aspects of town government.

Town Government – Objectives

- Promote long-range capital planning for the Town’s infrastructure and public facilities.
- Increase the Town’s grant writing capacity and its ability to qualify for state and federal funding opportunities.
- Ensure a stable and affordable tax rate for East Brookfield’s property owners.
- Follow through on the recommendations contained in this document.
- Promote two-way communication between East Brookfield’s town government and the citizenry, with the Town making a greater effort to share important municipal information with the citizens as well as providing options for citizens to offer feedback to municipal officials.
- Fund training and certification classes for all applicable municipal staff and pay them to attend said training.
- Keep the Zoning Bylaw current by having the Planning Board periodically review the various sections of the Bylaw, with newly adopted bylaws being reviewed within five years of initial adoption.
- In an effort to foster greater citizen participation, have the Board of Selectmen make a stronger effort to get out the vote for all Town Meetings.

The following set of recommendations should be investigated so that bylaws may later be considered for enactment or revision by Town vote:

Town Government – Recommendations

1. Capital Improvement Plan: It is recommended that the Town establish a long-range capital planning committee and charge them with the responsibility of preparing a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). The CIP should be a rolling five-year plan that identifies and prioritizes the Town’s capital needs, and recommends how such needs should be paid for. As noted previously, many of East Brookfield’s municipal departments have substantial capital needs coming up in the next decade. There are also a number of needed facility improvements on the horizon. East Brookfield should plan for its capital needs in a comprehensive manner with an eye towards the long-term, rather than the current piece-by-piece, year-to-year method of evaluating capital requests. Responsible Municipal Entities: The Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee.

2. Water System Expansion Policy – Establish Definitive Service Area: The presence of infrastructure such as municipal water often dictates where development takes place in a community and how intensive that development is. Water service that continues to radiate from the center, with no well-defined limits to the service area, results in an inefficient land use pattern and an infrastructure system that is expensive to maintain, let alone upgrade. The current practice of extending water ever further down the road as long as a developer/builder is willing to pay for it will eventually result in landowners pushing to increase the densities of these areas and reduce the minimum required lot size. Smart progressive municipalities use their infrastructure systems to encourage growth in those areas where it's suitable and discourage growth in those areas that they want to keep rural or where high-density development is not suitable. It is highly recommended that East Brookfield's Water Department work with the Planning Board and Conservation Commission to clearly delineate a definitive service area with the understanding that water lines will not be extended beyond the delineated service area. East Brookfield needs to start using its infrastructure to direct growth where it wants it to happen instead of extending the water service areas based on the ability of a landowner/developer to pay for service extensions. Responsible Municipal Entities: The East Brookfield Water Department in conjunction with the Planning Board and Conservation Commission.

3. Develop the Town's Grant Writing Capacity: East Brookfield is eligible for a wide variety of Federal and State grant programs, however, applying for them can be a time consuming endeavor that requires a great deal of research and narrative writing. Many town departments would like to apply for grants but simply do not have the manpower or time to adequately deal with the application process. With numerous capital expenditures anticipated, it is imperative the Town cultivates its grant writing capacity so that it may access the significant amount of money being made available through Federal and State grants. The Town's grant writing capacity could be enhanced through contracting with a professional grant writer on an as-needed basis. There are numerous private sector planning consultants that could work with East Brookfield on a specific grant application. Another option would be to utilize the grant writing services of the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC). As a member of CMRPC, East Brookfield is eligible to receive 24-hours of planning assistance every year. Many member communities have utilized their 24-hours of planning assistance for the purpose of having CMRPC assist them with a particular grant application. Responsible Municipal Entity: The Board of Selectmen.

4. Prepare an ADA Transition Plan for All Municipal Buildings and Facilities: East Brookfield does not have an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition Plan for its municipal buildings and public facilities. ADA Transition Plans outline what improvements are needed to municipal buildings and facilities in order to make them handicapped accessible. Communities must have such a plan in place in order to be eligible for federal funding. East Brookfield has already missed out on several grant opportunities because of not having an ADA Transition Plan. Therefore, it is recommended that the Town improve its grant eligibility status by preparing such a plan. Responsible Municipal Entity: The Board of Selectmen.

5. Hire a Shared Administrative Support Person for the Town's Land Use Boards: All three of the Town's land use boards (the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, and the Conservation Commission) have an increasing need for administrative support, yet none of these entities alone have enough work to support a full-time staff person. However, the administrative needs of East Brookfield's land use boards, if taken together, could easily support the establishment of a clerical support position. State mandates and the administrative requirements that these boards must follow are

ever increasing and will soon outpace the Town's ability to keep up with them. Therefore, it is recommended that the Town hire a shared administrative support person for East Brookfield's three land use boards. Responsible Municipal Entities: The Board of Selectmen in consultation with the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals and the Conservation Commission.

6. Establish a Master Plan Implementation Committee: The Town should establish a Master Plan Implementation Committee whose job it is to make sure that the Plan's recommendations get implemented. It may be that East Brookfield's current Master Plan Committee would be willing to take on this task; however, a master planning process is lengthy and demanding. Many communities have found that the members of their master plan committees are ready to close shop and move on with their lives. Thus, most communities seriously interested in implementing their plans end up forming implementation committees for this purpose, separate and distinct from the committee that prepared the plan. The Board of Selectmen would appoint the Master Plan Implementation Committee, who in turn would meet with the Town's other municipal entities that have Master Plan implementation responsibilities and work with them to keep the Plan on track. It is suggested that the Committee periodically brief the Board of Selectmen on the Plan's progress, on a quarterly basis or twice a year. Responsible Municipal Entities: The Board of Selectmen in consultation with the Master Plan Committee.

7. Expand the Capacity of the Town's Website: East Brookfield should continue expanding the capacity of the Town website in an effort to promote the sharing of municipal government information with its citizens, businesses and visitors. The Town should undertake this effort in a coordinated approach by establishing having each municipal department sponsor a page on the Town website, rather than having each department develop its own individual website. A partial list of benefits to be reaped by expanding the capacity of the Town website include: the ability to contact municipal officials by e-mail; on-line access of meeting notices and minutes; on-line access to permits, applications, forms and records; on-line access to information regarding the Town's development review process; on-line opportunities for citizen feedback (questionnaires, service satisfaction surveys, etc); and on-line access to maps and other geographic information. Having such services and resources available on-line will help reduce the number of citizen visits to the municipal office building. The result will be municipal personnel spending less time on face-to-face customer service and more time on other tasks. Responsible Municipal Entities: The Board of Selectmen in conjunction with the Technology Committee.

8. Completely Overhaul the Zoning Bylaw and Subdivision Regulations: As mentioned previously, the Zoning Bylaw and Subdivision Regulations are quite old, out of date and in serious need of updating. These two documents serve as the Town's policy guide for the utilization of its land resources, and yet they offer very few land development options and minimal direction for people seeking to build in East Brookfield. The Town should update these two documents concurrently so that they work together and do not conflict with each other. East Brookfield needs a Zoning Bylaw and Subdivision Regulations that are clear, straightforward and legally correct. Once in place, the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals should receive training on development review procedures and their administrative responsibilities thereof. Responsible Municipal Entities: The Planning Board with input from the Zoning Board of Appeals and Building Inspector.

9. Improve Coordination Between Municipal Departments: East Brookfield's Board of Selectmen should arrange a meeting of all municipal department heads to be held on a quarterly basis. Such meetings will help the various departments coordinate their activities, reduce duplicative efforts, and promote a team-oriented approach to town government. Such meetings will be especially important

during the annual budgeting process, and it is suggested that the Board of Selectmen involve the Finance Committee during the quarterly meeting where municipal department operating budgets are discussed. Responsible Municipal Entity: The Board of Selectmen.

10. Promote Two-Way Communication Between Citizens and Town Government: East Brookfield should utilize a variety of resources to promote two-way communication between citizens and town government. This initiative should involve all municipal departments in an effort to share important municipal information with citizens such as: upcoming board meetings, Town Meeting information including budget proposals and warrant articles, departmental hours of operation and contact information, availability of municipal facilities for public use, tax information, bylaws and regulations, municipal initiatives, community events and opportunities for citizen participation (volunteer opportunities, board vacancies, etc.). The Town should also create opportunities for citizens to provide feedback to municipal officials by occasionally polling them on their preferences. This attempt to create two-way communication between citizens and town government should include a combination of tools, including: the town government website, periodic newsletters, voluntary e-mail notification, announcements at public meetings and events, signage in prominent public places, an annual Town Meeting mailer, opinion surveys (both paper and digital), open houses, public forums and other opportunities for two-way communication not yet considered. The Town should commit the necessary funding to accomplish this recommendation. Responsible Municipal Entities: The Board of Selectmen in conjunction with all of East Brookfield's municipal departments and boards/commissions/committees.

11. Investigate the Need for a Town Administrator: As the volume of municipal business increases, the Town should investigate its need for professional management, whether it be through creating the position of a town administrator or a town services coordinator. The day is fast approaching when the volume of municipal business will be more than the Board of Selectmen can handle on its own. While Selectmen do receive a modest amount of compensation for their efforts, service on the Board is primarily a volunteer affair and the majority of Selectmen past and present have full-time day jobs, not to mention family considerations. Records of the Massachusetts Municipal Association indicate that two thirds of the Massachusetts communities with populations ranging from 2,000 to 5,000 citizens have some manner of professional administrative assistance. As East Brookfield's population continues to grow, and with it the volume of government business, the Town may want to investigate its options for professional municipal management. Responsible Municipal Entity: The Board of Selectmen.